

Democratic Transition in Morocco: Achievements and Future Challenges

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Resumo

Transição Democrática em Marrocos: Conquistas e Desafios Futuros

A transição democrática é um fenómeno recente na maioria dos países em desenvolvimento. Marrocos não é excepção. Após séculos de poder absoluto, uma transição democrática tímida foi iniciada pelo Rei Hassan II em meados dos anos 1990. Enquanto que os primeiros passos foram iniciados pelo Rei Hassan II, o fortalecimento do processo só começou quando o Príncipe Mohammed foi coroado Rei, depois da morte do pai, em 1999. O novo Rei deu novo impulso à transição democrática com algumas medidas significativas: reforço dos direitos das mulheres, criação da comissão da verdade e da reconciliação e o lançamento de programas contra a pobreza. Contudo, um dos aspectos mais importantes da democratização foi a organização de eleições livres em 2002 e 2007. A maioria das iniciativas e políticas implementadas foram conseguidas através do trabalho do novo Rei e não dos partidos no poder.

Abstract

The transition to democracy is a recent phenomenon in most developing countries. Morocco is no exception in this regard. After centuries of absolute rule, a timid democratic transition was launched by the late King Hassan II in the mid-1990s. While the first steps of the democratic transition were launched by the late King Hassan II, the strengthening of this process began only when Crown Prince Mohammed became King after the death of his father in 1999. A number of steps were taken by the new King: strengthening the right of women, creation of a truth and reconciliation commission and launching anti-poverty programs. However, the most important aspects of democratization were in the form of open and clean elections held in 2002 and in 2007. As many of the positive initiatives and policies that have been enacted were the work of the new King and not of the ruling political parties, many people trust the King more than they trust the parties.

1. Background

Throughout Morocco's history, from the eighth century to 1934, the relationship between the Central Government and the "governed" was based on seesaw approach. Whenever the Emperor/Sultan is powerful, the "*Blad As-siba*" (the un-governed territory) is small and whenever the Sultan is weak, it is the *Blad Al Makhzan*:¹ the governed territory which is rather small. As a matter of fact, "the Imperial tents (were) never stored"² as the monarch was always on the go to submit rebellious tribes to his authority.

The *Blad A-ssiba* was led by powerful tribal leaders who pledged allegiance to powerful Sultans and withdrew it from weak ones, thus weakening the Sultan's legitimacy and threatening his tenure.

From the signature of the Act of Protectorate in 1912 to 1934, the French and the Spanish armies were able to put an end to the old-age tribal rebellions and paved the way for the Sultan to extend his power all over country.

Although the practice of *Blad A-ssiba* and *Blad Al Mkhzan* became obsolete after 1934, this dichotomy took another form after independence in 1956 in that during the first few years after the departure of the French and Spanish colonizers, some competition for the real exercise of power was perceived in the relationship between the Monarchy and the Istiqlal, the major nationalist party which fought for independence. After the left wing of the Istiqlal abandoned what it called the "bourgeois" party on 25 January 1958 and created a new party (which became the Union Nationale des Forces Populaires, UNFP, then the Union Socialiste des Forces Polulaires, USFP, a short honeymoon period between the Monarchy and the left prevailed from late 1958 to May 1960, when the then King Mohammed V expelled the left-dominated cabinet and replaced it with a cabinet under the effective leadership of the Crown Prince Moulay Hassan, later King Hassan II. However, the point of no return between the Makhzan government and the left occurred in July 1963 when the UNFP was the victim of a massive campaign of arrest and torture.

It was when the left "lost its teeth" that a new danger for the Monarchy appeared in the form of two failed coups d'Etat in 1971 and 1972. The torture machine then was applied to those who participated in the two attempts. In 1973, "... 58 members of the

1 Al Makhzan means literally a warehouse which was used to store the central government grain. It became also synonymous with the state treasury (Khazna). In Moroccan political parlance, the makhzan has been used to refer to the regime or government. It acquired a pejorative sense as it is used sometimes to describe retrograde government attitudes.

2 Harris, W. *Morocco that was* (Eland: London 1921). p. 1.

armed forces ...were transferred to the secret detention center of Tazmamart where they were held in conditions which led to long slow death”³.

Ironically, when the regime began to try to acquire some democratic credentials, it was to the battered left that King Hassan II turned to negotiate in the mid 1990s a Moroccan style “compromiso istorico”. A few constitutional amendments were agreed together with the establishment of a government of “*alternance*”, that is a government led by the USFP under the leadership of Mr. Youssoufi who was persuaded to return from France after two decades of voluntary exile. The Istiqlal Party and some other opposition parties were included in the Youssoufi government. However, despite the request of the USFP and the Istiqlal, King Hassan II did not want to part with his Minister of the Interior, Mr. Driss Basri, who was the master mind of the oppression machine during most of King Hassan II reign and who was expelled from the government by King Mohammed VI after his enthronement in 1999. (Mr. Basri died in voluntary exile in Paris in the summer of 2007).

The main reasons for the parties’ requests were based on the fact that Mr. Basri was instrumental for the era of terror during the last two decades and for his superior mastery in producing election results which did not bear any resemblance with the popular will in the election booths.

2. Democratic Transition: *Raison d’être* and Achievements. Hassan II and the “*Alternance*”

The internal and external reasons surrounding the decision of King Hassan II to embark on the first steps of the democratic transition.

By the mid-1990s, neither the left, as embodied in USFP which by then rejected violence means to change the regime, nor the Party for Progress and Socialism (PPS) which by then moved from communism (“scientific socialism”) to socialism represented any threat to the monarchy. If there was any threat, it was perceived to come mainly from the so-called Islamic fundamentalists who had acquired a new

3 Opgenhaffen V. and Freeman M., “Transitional Justice in Morocco: A Progress Report” quoted in Abelkarim Khatibi “Truth Commissions and Transitional Justice: The experience of the Moroccan Equity and Reconciliation Commission”. Unpublished thesis. Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane, Morocco, May 2006.

popularity, partly as a result of the war in Afghanistan against the “enemies of God” (the former Soviet Union). In fact, while the “revolutionary” student organizations in the 1960s and the 1970s were controlled by the socialists and the communists, their counter-parts of the 1990s were controlled by the moderate and radical “Islamists”.

In addition, a number of Morocco’s foreign friends, mainly France and the USA, started to express some concerns about the status of human rights in Morocco. Former President Francois Mitterrand of France characterized the level of torture as “gratuitous”. Furthermore, the EU linked the increase of its financial support to Morocco to the country embarking on major reforms concerning human rights, women equality and the democratization of Morocco’s political life. As a result, King Hassan II embarked on some reforms in the mid-1990s. Four areas were concerned by such reforms: “...improved respect for human rights, a limited increase in the power of parliament, enhanced opportunities for political participation by parties and civil society and some attempts to curb corruption.”⁴

As part of the deal with the center-left political parties, the King called upon the opposition to “govern”, despite the fact that it did not have a majority in the then-Parliament. The King also appointed Mr. Yousoufi, the leader of the USFP (who had spent the better of the two earlier decades in self exile in France), as Prime Minister. These moves paved the way for the semi-free elections of 1997 in which the USFP obtained the highest number of seats in the lower House of the Parliament.⁵

Mohammed VI and the strengthening of the democratization process

After the reign of Hassan II, the enthronement of Mohammed VI came as a breath of fresh air. Popular wisdom has it that “while people were afraid of Hassan II, they are now afraid for Mohammed VI.” The contribution of the young king to the democratization process and to the modernization of the country can be seen in two fields: human rights on the one hand and free elections on the other.

In the field of human rights in their wide meaning, the King embarked on three initiatives which are part of his strategic vision for the country: repairing the damage to

4 Ottaway, M and Riley M. “From Top-down Reform to Democracy Transition” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Washington. September 2006.

5 For a penetrating analysis of the policy of “*alternance*”, see Abdelkebir Khatibi, *L’alternance et les Partis Politiques*. Eddif: Casablanca. 1998.

human rights which occurred during the reign of his father, Hassan II, strengthening women rights, especially in the area of family laws and, finally, embarking on poverty alleviation within the framework of the “National Initiative for Human Development.

Human rights initiatives. Repairing the damage done to human rights from 1956 to 1999

Part of this period, especially from 1963 to 1995, is referred to in Morocco as “les années de plomb” or the “lead years” due to the excessive political oppression and torture which was widely used by the regime against the opposition.

Following on the example of South Africa, an “Equity and Reconciliation Commission” was established. As a Chairman of the commission, the King appointed a political leader who was left to rot for 18 years in dungeon before he was released as part of the early steps of the democratization process.

The Commission analyzed over 20.000 cases relating to the victims of state terror and determined the fate of around 750 cases of the disappeared. The Commission reported its findings to the King in November 2005. While financial compensation was awarded to the victims or to families of those who died or disappeared. However, it was not part of the commission’s terms of reference to refer the culprits to justice. The slogan was “to heal the damage without opening the old wounds.”

While the culprits were not brought to justice and while not all cases of torture were analyzed, the fact that the King embarked on such an initiative which, for all practical purposes, meant a criticism of the excesses of the old regime and helped to create a psychological atmosphere of openness and a process of re-learning good citizenship. In fact, no democratization process would have merited its good credentials without embarking on this first step.

Towards women’s equality through the reform of the “Mudawwana”

The Mudawwana refers to the body of family statutes relating to marriage and divorce, their legal implications and to inheritance. While most laws in Morocco are based on secular principles, especially emanating from the Napoleonic Code and from the French laws during the protectorate from 1912 to 1956, the Mudawwana emanates exclusively from Islamic Law (Sharia’a) and especially from the Malekite rite of the Sunni School. (There are two branches of Islamic Thought: the Sunni, the majority of Muslims

around the world and the Shia'a, who represent a majority of Muslims in Iran and Iraq and a minority in Saudi Arabia. The Sunni branch is divided into four rites among which the Malekite rite is prevalent in North Africa).

Prior to the reform instigated and encouraged by King Mohammed VI, the text of the Mudawwana was the result of the work accomplished by traditional scholars during the early years of independence. Despite the struggle of women organizations to amend the text with the view to grant women the right to marry without the "interference" of her male relatives or to be "heard" in case of divorce and while some clauses of the Mudawwana were not in line with the "Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women", of which Morocco was a signatory, the successive governments were putting permanently the reform of the Mudawwana on the back burner.

Even when paying some lip service to the reform of the Mudawwana while in opposition, such a support did not transform itself into action when these parties obtained ministerial posts.

The lesson from the reform of the Mudawwana which remains in the mind of the people (and of the electorate as we will see in due course) is that the new King can embark on endeavors that political parties cannot or do not wish to embark upon.

The National Initiative on Human Development

Due to a lack of social investments by the successive governments since independence, especially in the rural areas where 70% of the population lived in the mid-1950s and where 50% currently live, Morocco's record according to UNDP's Human Development Index (HDI) is remarkably low, especially with regard to maternal and child mortality, wide-spread poverty, lack of decent housing and other social services. The elites within and outside parties used to ignore these poverty-related phenomena and adopt the proverbial "ostrich strategy". However, the eloquence of the HDI's indicators and the low ranking of Morocco in the area of human development led the new King to embark on a new National Initiative on Human Development aiming to achieve the objectives of the Millennium Goals agreed by most Heads of State and Governments on the occasion of the Millennium Summit, held in conjunction with the UN General Assembly in September 2000.

While Moroccan Sultans were constantly on the back of their horses to fight tribal rebellion, one has to recognize that Mohammed VI is often than not on his horse to fight

poverty, a phenomenon that led a French newspaper to call Mohammed VI the “nomadic King”. There is hardly a day of the week or week of the month that does not witness Mohammed VI (or M6 as affectionately called by young people) opening a workshop, a boarding house for female students or granting property rights to landless farmers.

The magnitude of the projects launched by the King led people to ask: if there is such an amount of money for these projects, on what was the state’s money spent before his coming to power?

Another more important question (which will be raised in due course) is why is it that political parties did not embark on such poverty alleviation programs during the first fifty years of independence.

Needless to say, the major economic projects inaugurated by the King were and are part of the government’s plans. However, projects reaching the poor, especially in remote rural areas, have never been launched before with such frequency and a sense of social mobilization.

The fact that people perceive the King as the “originating” institution which is directly responsible for launching and guiding the three initiatives mentioned above led people to compare the role of the King and that of the political parties in political life and to draw some conclusions which will be crucial for the democratization process.

However, some political parties argue that news in the official media, and especially television, is entirely devoted to the King’s activities, especially those relating to launching economic and social endeavors, while activities of the (parties’) ministers are sidelined.⁶

Strengthening the democratic process through clean and transparent elections

Since the first elections in independent Morocco in 1960, the polls have been beset by corruption, pressure from the governments’ agents and, above all, by massaging the elections’ results aiming at minimizing the results of the opposition and improving the gains of the pro-administration political parties. Some of these parties were created at the order of the head of State just prior to the elections and despite their late arrival managed to become the election winners. This phenomenon led people to call these parties “partis cocotte-minute” (pressure cooker parties).

6 Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane. *Symposium on Pre-election Survey, Political Parties and Democratization: Lessons from the 2007 Elections*. Ifrane, Morocco, 26-27 September 2007.

For this reason, any comparative analysis of the results of the successive elections will be of little value. The last elections under the rule of King Hassan II in 1997 is no exception.

After Crown Prince Moulay Mohammed become King Mohammed VI, people aspired to a new era based on free, clean and transparent elections. This was accomplished to a large extent during the 2002 elections and fully in the September 2007 elections of the lower House of Parliament, the House of Representatives, which is elected by universal suffrage. There was a shadow over the 2002 elections in that rumors have it that the moderate Islamist party, the Party of Justice and Development (PJD) was allowed to file candidates only in half of the electoral districts. This anomaly was corrected on the occasion of the 2007 elections when PJD was allowed to file candidates in all districts.

Consequently, the 2007 elections will be considered by political analysts as the “reference base” for comparing future election results.

All international observers (who were officially allowed for the first time in Morocco’s history by the government to witness the regularity of the vote) as well as national observers agree that the 2007 poll was to a large extent transparent and free from the administration’s interfering.

Following the elections, Mrs. Ferrero Waldner, European Commissioner for External Relations and for the Neighborhood Policy, hailed the democratic climate surrounding the election, Mr. Javier Solana declared that the way in which the elections were held represented a strong signal about the country’s resolve to move along a democratic path. In addition, the President of the European Parliament, Mr. Hans-Gert Poettering, expressed his satisfaction about the good running of the elections.

The US State Department spokesperson, Mr. Sean McCormack, stated that the elections were conducted according to international standards.

Similar views were expressed by the Moroccan Human Right NGOs as well as by the representatives of the US International Democratic Institute.

The only reports of irregularities emanated from the representatives of political parties accusing each other of using money to buy votes.

In its “Preliminary Statement on the 7 September 2007 Elections to the House Of Representatives in Morocco”, the Berlin-based Democracy Reporting International indicated on 14 September that “there have been wide-spread allegations of cases of vote-buying...”⁷

⁷ Retrieved from www.democracy-reporting.org

In reaction to these accusations, the Minister of the Interior declared that the courts would take action in case these accusations proved to be substantiated. As a matter of fact, on the occasion of the renewal of a third of the members of the House of Counselors, a number of candidates were brought to justice and convicted for vote-buying offenses. This a sign of the changing circumstances of the democratic transition. “Yesterday”, it was the state which was the culprit, now it is the parties that are accusing each other of election-related corruption and this strengthens the disinterest of a large sector of the population in the political parties.

From 2002 to 2007: increased balkanization of political parties and increased abstention at the polls

In order to have a minimum number of women in the lower chamber of Parliament, electors were invited to chose between “Local Lists” of men and women candidates (285 seats) and “National Lists” reserved for women (30 seats). 36 parties filed candidates on the Local Lists and 25 parties on the National Lists. Such a balkanization would puzzle even the most sophisticated voters.

Partly as the result of this plethora of parties, those who were registered to vote abstained from voting. Only 37% took part in the polls as opposed to 52% in 2002. The highest abstention was registered in the industrial Casablanca region (73%). Furthermore, more rural voters participated in the polls (43%), while the percentage was a merely 30% in urban areas.⁸

Analysts advance a number of reasons for such a collective action (or rather, inaction): confusion of the electorate in the face of the high number of parties, the lack of trust in political parties, “the King decides on the major policies, so why bother to vote.”

As a result of the low turnout, no political party can claim a high level of legitimacy neither vis-à-vis other parties, nor, more significantly, vis-à-vis the King. The centre-right Istiqlal party which obtained the highest number of seats (52), obtained only 10.7 of the votes, followed by the moderate Islamist Party of Justice and Development with 46 seats and 10.9% of the votes. 23 parties obtained from 0.3 to 1.9% of the votes.

In addition to the low turnout, the only other surprise of the elections was the low percentage of votes and consequently the low number of seats obtained by the victor of

⁸ Declaration of the Moroccan Minister of the Interior, 8 September 2007.

the 2002 elections, the Union Socialiste des Forces Populaires: 52 seats in 2002 and 38 seats in 2007.

The disenchantment with political parties which partly accounts for the low turnout may have even deepened following the elections when the political parties which were hoping to form the post-elections government looked in the eyes of public opinion as to be involved in a fight to obtain the maximum number of ministerial posts.

2007 elections: post-mortem

Following the results of the elections, Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane organized a Symposium on Political Parties and Governance with the participation of representatives of Moroccan political parties (Istiqlal, USFP, Union Constitutionnelle, the Parti du Progres et du Socialisme, PPS - former Communist Party - and the Parti de la Justice et du Developpement) and some influential NGOs, including the Human Rights Elections Observatory.⁹

The symposium dealt partly with the following issues: growing role of NGOs at the expense of political parties, lack of internal democracy within political parties and women and youth participation in the parties' decision-making institutions.

On the assumption that political parties were losing ground to NGOs, the representatives of political parties indicated that prior to the political opening of the mid 1950s, many political parties created NGOs which were given more possibilities of airing political views, something which the opposition parties were not allowed to do. It was also stated that with the beginning of the democratization process, there was a mushrooming of NGOs which dealt with all aspects of life in Morocco, including serving as political think tanks.

There is a sentiment that NGOs are now competing with political parties to the point that some newspaper articles were calling for "putting a lid" on the NGO growth.

The symposium also dealt with the issue of whether political parties were losing their influence on public opinion, something that the low turnout in the September 2007 has confirmed. The participating parties denied such an assumption and expressed the view that the official media, especially television, has been saturated with news about the King's activities (launching major public works, opening factories, providing micro

⁹ Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane. *Symposium on Pre-election Survey, Political Parties and Democratization: Lessons from the 2007 Elections*. Ifrane, Morocco, 26-27 September 2007.

credits to poor farmers and to poor women. As a result, it was alleged that the media have been marginalizing the work of political parties and of party ministers in the government.

When asked how do political parties explain the low turnout at the elections, their representatives presented the argument that the high level of abstention should be seen within the framework of the general de-politicization resulting from poverty and from past political repression which made people afraid of being involved in "politics".

However, many political commentators pointed out the lack of internal democracy within political parties as a reason for disenchantment within parties as well as within the electorate as a whole. Two areas are worth mentioning in this regard: lack of internal democracy has led young leaders to leave their parties, especially the parties on the left-USFA and PPS and to create a multitude of small parties (hence the plethora of competing parties). The second reason (resulting from the first one) is an ageing leadership without touch with youth which further alienate young people within the parties and in the society as a whole. At this point of the symposium proceedings, a show of hand revealed that the majority of the audience, constituted by the university students did not have any trust in political parties.

The lack of democracy within parties and an ageing leadership may account for the fact that NGOs were more able than political parties to mobilize women and young people. As a matter of fact, these two population categories are not well represented in the parties' decision-making structures. When asked about this lack of adequate representation, almost all the representatives of the parties participating in the symposium stated that they opposed the idea of defining a quota for youth and women and that leadership development cannot be accomplished in a microwave fashion.

To this argument, a young women in the audience stated that the recent experience of political parties did not convince young people that age was synonymous with good decisions.

3. Democratic Transition: Future Challenges

There is no denial that an important progress was made in terms of democratization over the last decade. Human rights were rehabilitated, exiled opposition leaders were

allowed back into the country, a healing process relating to the human and political rights abuses under the regime of King Hassan II was initiated, elections, especially those held in September 2007, were free from government interference and the leader of the party which received the highest number of parliamentary seats was appointed by the King as Prime Minister.

In principle, there are no reasons to think that the democratization process would make a U-turn. It is in the interest of neither the Monarch nor the elites, which are more concentrated on professional and financial rewards than on political gratification.

However, if the threat of a U-turn can be discarded, the continuation of the democratic process is surrounded by a number of challenges. These challenges and the way they will be met would determine whether the 2007 elections represent a platform for further democratization or a terminus for the decade-long transition.

Poverty and its manipulation by fundamentalists

Following the terrorist attacks in Casablanca on 16 May 2003, the police and the press pointed out that the kamikazes came from Sidi Moumen, one of the poorest neighborhoods in Casablanca where young people have lost any hope of finding legal means of leading a decent life.

The successive Human Development Reports reveal the low ranking of the country in terms of human and social development as a result of the quasi neglect of rural areas by the successive governments since independence in 1956, the unchecked population growth and the chaotic migration to the cities.

For a long period of time, as it is the case of some other Middle East and North African countries, the field of poverty alleviation was left to civil society organizations. This avenue was fully exploited by politically-motivated groups (in Jordan, Egypt, Palestine and Algeria) which used the cover of religion to infiltrate the poor masses with the Quran in one hand and micro-credits in the other.

It is no secret that in order to limit the influence of both the moderate Istiqlal party or the leftist opposition (USFP and PPS), the Ministry of the Interior used to encourage the Islamists' emergence as a political force in the university. While in the 1960s-1980s the student leadership was dominated by the socialists and the communists, by the end of the last millennium, it was the turn of the Islamists, both the moderates of the PJD or the radical followers of the non-recognized Group of Justice and Charity, whose leader, Sheikh Yassine who prophesized the end of the Monarchy in 2006.

The National Initiative on Human Development (INDH) which King Mohammed VI launched in May 2003, two years after the terrorist bombing in Casablanca is seen both as a means to alleviate and eradicate poverty in accordance with the UN Millennium Development Goals, agreed at the UN Millennium Summit in September 2000 and as an act to gain over the poor and extract them from the influence of the radical Islamists.

While the country as a whole and especially the rural and marginalized areas is one vast workshop and while the King is leading the fight against poverty, it is too early to judge whether the Initiative would succeed in improving the low ranking of the country on the UNDP Human Development Index and whether the socio-economic transformation resulting from the Initiative would curtail the efforts of the Islamists to dominate the thinking of the poor regarding the political system.

One thing is certain at this point: the INDH is seen as a personal effort by the King to improve the lot of poor people were neglected by the various governments.

With a King like this one, who needs political parties?

Can a “democratic transition” be achieved without the active participation of political parties?

Both the Moroccan Constitution and the King emphasize that political life is based on multi-party system. In several of King Mohammed VI speeches, political parties are depicted as “schools of citizenship” which are needed to mobilize people for achieving the country’s goals and objectives. While King Hassan II was manipulating party politics through the creation of “pressure cooker parties” (what is called in Morocco “partis cocotte minute”), there has been no efforts by the current King to follow the steps of his father in this regard. Most of the parties which have been created since 1999 have been the result of splits among the existing parties.

Since his enthronement in 1999, the new King has been embarking on projects that were dormant throughout the period since independence or on which the political parties were not able to reach a compromise.

People see that if it were not for the new King, the issue of human rights would have not been put forcefully on the political agenda at the risk of exposing some of the oppressive practices of the former King. A similar situation characterizes the issue of the reform of the Mudawwana (family law based on the religion or on some of its interpretations). The progressive text which King Mohammed VI promoted (and which was voted by the previous parliament) went beyond what the parties would have been

able to agree upon due to the fear of being criticized by the religious establishment in both its legal and illegal varieties. Finally, no combination of ruling parties has ever put the issue of alleviating poverty in the same forceful manner as the King is currently doing.

In addition to the presence of the King and the absence of parties in the areas mentioned above, the struggle for ministerial posts which characterized the action of parties following the 2002 and 2007 elections reinforced the view that people held that political parties are more interested in cabinet posts than in achieving the pre-election promises.

Several interviews with potential voters prior to the last elections have shown the little hope that voters have in achieving anything meaningful through parties. Those among the voters who still had some relationship with parties declared that in any event, the government and the parties are mere tool for the implementation of the King's "grand design".

Corruption and lack of good governance

The "Targuist snipers" are now the talk of the town. The snipers in question are young people (from the town of Targuist in the north of Morocco) armed with video cameras who hide not far from road junctions to film the gendarmes (inter-city police force) claiming and obtaining bribes from poor and not so-poor drivers for petty traffic offenses. The internet Youtube is the media used by the snipers to show their films. From the time the first video was shown in August 2007 and up to the middle of October 2007, nine gendarmes and their victims/bribers were presented to the courts. The "opposition" weekly *Tel Quel* has been reporting in October 2007 that the authorities have been on the lookout for snipers. At the same time the magazine declared its support to the snipers and would-be snipers of the country.

This type of bribery is the tip of the iceberg of this phenomenon which has been acknowledged since independence and which received visibility through the reports of Transparency International in which Morocco ranked 44 in 1999, 78 in 2005 and 76 in 2006.

Despite many pronouncements by the government against corruption, this phenomenon is widespread in all sectors of society and undermines the work of the government. However, this is not a unique sign of the lack of good governance. There is still confusion between the concepts of right and privilege in the mind of the ordinary citizen and between the concepts of duty and favor in the mind of the authorities. Within such a

framework, bribery constitutes the bridge between these concepts and represents a real impediment to the democratization process.

Presidential Monarchy?

Following the death of General Franco of Spain, the late King Hassan II advised King Juan Carlos not to follow the examples of the British and Scandinavian kings of reigning, but not governing. In fact, "...Hassan II stated that Islam does not allow him to delegate all his powers without governing."¹⁰

Beyond the personal views of Muslim monarchs, there is nothing in the Islamic tradition which indicates the need for the separation of powers.

In his speech on 30 July 2007, King Mohammed VI referred to this issue. He stated that the executive prerogatives, the legislative bodies and the judicial authority are based on the principle of separation of powers which are different from those of the Monarchy which is based on four pillars of legitimacy: religious, historical, constitutional and democratic. The King identifies this system as of a Citizen Monarch (*Monarchie citoyenne*) which is also based on modern participatory democracy in which the Monarch can call upon the contribution of national capabilities (regardless of their party affiliation). To view that "...improvement in the conditions of the political process have stopped short of addressing two impediments to democratic transition, the concentration of power in royal hands and the absence of credible checks and balances."¹¹ (10), King Mohammed VI states in his 30 July 2007 speech that a performing monarchy cannot be contained in a concept of reductionism.

It is interesting to note that during the election campaign, no serious discussion took place about the possible amendment of the current constitution which limits the powers of the legislative and the executive branches. With the weakness of the parties which the elections amply demonstrated, any idea of challenging the concept of Presidential Monarchy has been deleted from the agenda. So, in sense, the democratic transition in Morocco may have entered a status quo period.

10 Hamzaoui, A. *The 2007 Moroccan Parliamentary Elections: Results and Implications*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Washington, September 2007.

11 Translated from French. Cubertafond, B. *Le System Politique Marocain* (Paris: L'Harmattan) cited in Valay-Nadeau R. *Transition Démocratique au Maroc*. McGill University, Canada. 2001.