

Democracy, Culture, and Social Change in North Africa

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Edited by

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To the memory of George Joffé

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INTRODUCTION

MOHA ENNAJI

The rationale

The purpose of this book is to discuss issues related to the right to cultural, religious, and political differences in North Africa. This is especially important in terms of promoting the culture of difference and diversity. It is the values of tolerance and coexistence which foster the process of building a democratic society, not the values of negation, exclusion, and extremism.

The book seeks to highlight the positive impact of identity and multiculturalism on social and cultural development, and to think about ways to promote a culture of dialogue, democracy, solidarity, and tolerance.

The objectives are also to highlight the cultural and civilizational diversity of North Africa, which has multicultural roots and common values such as community spirit (vs. individualism), hospitality, the importance of family ties, and the search for balance between tradition and modernity. These values are deeply rooted among all peoples of the region, regardless of nationality, culture, language, or religion. This positive legacy is strong, and remains the best bulwark against any form of extremism or tyranny.

Background

The North African region is characterized by cultural diversity, and Berber (Amazigh for the natives) is an important component of the national identity which belongs to the Islamic cultural identity, because the Amazigh population is mostly Muslim. In the history of the Maghreb, Islam has been a tool for the emergence of a new civilization in which the Amazigh culture has become assimilated to the greatness of Islam, and in which Arabic and the Amazigh language have always coexisted.

In response to the demands of the Moroccan Amazigh cultural movement, the Royal Institute of Amazigh Culture was instituted on October 17 2001. Amazigh was recognized as an official language in the

amended constitution in 2011. This was a pioneering decision in the region, with the aim of promoting Amazigh cultural heritage (Ennaji 2014).

In Algeria, after a struggle by the Amazigh population of more than half a century, the government created the Haut Commissariat pour l'Amazighité, a political-cultural institution whose aim was to integrate Amazigh language and culture into the school system, and in 2016, the language was officially recognized in the Constitution. On the other hand, French, although spoken fluently in the Maghreb, has no official status, and is taught in schools as a foreign language (Benrabah 2014, Layachi 2005).

In Tunisia, the Census of 2014 gives a figure of 30,371 inhabitants in the Amazigh-speaking areas in the South. It should be noted that the largest number of Berber speakers is in the region of Greater Tunis. But the new Constitution does not recognize the Amazigh language. The Amazigh identity consciousness, even if it remains strong inside Tunisia, is invisible from the outside. Linguistic studies of Amazigh dialects in Tunisia are almost non-existent. To remedy this void, urgent work is needed to engage in a process of reappropriation of the Amazigh identity.

The same is the case in Mauritania. The Amazigh language is on the way to extinction there too. The linguistic and cultural presence of Amazigh speakers is undeniable, but tiny and fragile in this North African country (Maddy-Weitzman 2011).

In Libya, the Amazigh language is experiencing a revitalization after the so-called Arab Spring, and parents are now allowed to give Amazigh names to their children, unlike during the Qaddafi period, when the use of the Amazigh language was prohibited.

In Egypt, Amazigh is spoken in Siwa, an oasis located 560km west of Cairo and close to the Egyptian-Libyan border, in the middle of the desert. It has 25,000 inhabitants, and is the Easternmost point of Amazigh population, and the only one in Egypt, which gives the place a special singularity.

We cannot fail to link the discussion about Amazigh culture with diversity, social change, and the democratization process that the region is slowly experiencing. There is a connection between Amazigh emancipation and the social movement for the consolidation of democratic culture (Ennaji 2014, Ennaji forthcoming). The Amazigh movement contributes to democratic change and the development of the capacity of citizens to create new types of cooperation and to participate actively in economic,

social and cultural development, democracy, and citizenship through continuous cultural dialogue, research, and creativity.

Multiculturalism can be considered a rich resource that can be used to involve everyone in the development process. It is understood that the integration of the Amazigh language and culture will help to establish equal opportunities for all citizens in such basic areas as education, justice, employment, and the economy.

In this context, the recognition of the Amazigh language in Algeria and Morocco as an official national language is an acknowledgment of linguistic and cultural pluralism, and the promotion of the Amazigh culture is a contribution to the consolidation of democracy, the establishment of the rule of law, and a barrier to all forms of authoritarianism and exclusion.

The advancement of the Amazigh language and culture can also contribute to the modernization of society, the dissemination of democratic culture, multiculturalism, citizenship, equality, and dialogue against attempts at backwardness and regression. There is no democracy without respect for multiculturalism and dialogue, and without freedom of expression and creativity. We also need to move on to face global challenges, including globalization, economic, social, and technological challenges.

The chapters of this book reflect on all these challenges, and urge all actors to raise the level of democratic awareness, and “eradicate illiteracy, promote the various components of national culture with a comprehensive openness to modernity, and build a society of knowledge and communication”, as stated in King Mohammed VI’s speech at the opening of the first year of the legislative term, Seventh session of Parliament.

The chapters

George Joffé’s chapter shows that the political context in North Africa nowadays is characterized by social disturbances that may gradually lead to the progress of the democratic culture and of the democratization process. For example, the revitalization and acknowledgement of the Amazigh (Berber) culture, as a key component of national identity, is today, a major advance. The chapter argues that the 2011 protests proved that alternatives exist, and that they are available to the people.

Filippo Bignani debates the issue of citizenship and city in its relation to democracy. For him, it is possible to build a democratic system starting from the city and the urban setting in general. He argues that African cities, and Northern African ones in particular, are at the vanguard

of this tendency, which may have disadvantages and strengths, given the demographic growth of the cities in the region.

Moha Ennaji's chapter argues that the Berber (Amazigh) movement in North Africa has gained its revival and recognition by the State. It is dynamic and has not been enfeebled by the concessions granted by the governments in the aftermath of the Arab Spring. The chapter predicts that the Amazigh movement will continue rising and impacting the debate about identity, democracy, and human rights.

Lydia Guerchouch discusses the impact of sociocultural representations conveyed by dialectal Arabic and French on the learning of the mother tongue, Kabyle, in an Amazighophone urban environment.

Abderrahman El Aissati examines the impact of agency on the consolidation of cultural democracy. He addresses particularly the fields of arts and politics, and the way individuals and communities express themselves. After outlining the inadequacies of the current ideological situation, with its weight on Amazigh culture, he goes on to analyze the tensions between local, national and international spaces and their impact on the democratization process.

Bouthayna Ben Kridis discusses aspects of multiculturalism and democracy in Tunisia post-revolution. Providing a synopsis of the evolution of the Amazigh cultural movement, she argues that, many years after the revolution, the country still faces challenges with respect to the integration of diversity and democracy. She underscores the need for reforms at the legal, social, and cultural levels in order to enhance the democratization process, including the revitalization of the Amazigh cultural identity.

Driss Bouyahya's chapter, titled "The Islam-oriented and Amazigh movements in Morocco" analyses the evolution of both Amazigh and Islam-oriented movements in the quest for inclusion, reform, and democracy. It discusses issues of identity, religion, and democracy as basic concepts in the Amazigh and the Islamist movements.

Fatima Sadiqi's chapter, titled "The Dynamics of Popular Culture and Gender in Morocco" stresses the role of oral culture and women's voices in the democratization and modernization of society. It argues that women have a great possibility to advance, through their cultural contributions, their economic and financial independence, and through their participation in civil society and social change.

Aziza Ouguir's chapter on Moroccan Amazigh women saints argues that Amazigh Sufi women have impacted their communities with their legacy throughout. Today, the Moroccan state has turned to these historical religious women as role models for socio-political purposes,

especially in the fight against radical political Islam. The accomplishment of Amazigh women saints today is entangled with the formal discourse on democratization, and paves the way for women to attain higher positions through democratic and political participation.

Hamid Bahri addresses the Berber perspective in the literary works of the Algerian writer Kateb Yacine and the Moroccan author Mohammed Khaïr-Eddine. While noting the peaceful cohabitation between the ethnic groups in North Africa, Bahri argues that more endeavor should be made at the individual, collective, and educational levels to emphasize cohesion among people who ought to embrace diversity and respect for difference.

Kwesi Prah underlines the rich history of Amazigh language and culture in Africa and how it can contribute to democracy and protection of human rights. He argues that use of indigenous languages and cultures is crucial for the development of democratic cultures at grassroots level.

Jan Jaap de Ruiter focuses on the way populist parties in Western democracies, particularly in the Netherlands, attempt to curb Muslim fundamentalists from North Africa. He concludes that populist parties are not without an impact on society, and that, because of them, the anti-Islamic discourse has spread to conventional political parties and media in Europe.

The book ends with an interview that I have had with the well-known Moroccan Francophone writer Taher Ben Jelloun.

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CHAPTER ONE

THE FUTURE OF GOVERNANCE
IN NORTH AFRICA

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Towards the end of his life, Alexis de Toqueville, the 19th century French sociologist and political scientist, opined that the essence of democratic governance was a question of ‘the habits of heart and mind’, far more than one of the institutions through which it was articulated. In essence, political culture was the key to democratic success in America.¹ He also noted that religion had a role to play in conditioning the moral environment in which it could be practiced. He was, of course, drawing his insights from his study of the political system of the United States, but his insights concerning American governance have a wider validity, for they also apply to contemporary democratic processes in regions such as North Africa, and they have an acute relevance to the issue of governance and *amazighté* as a specific example of the relationship between governance, identity, and the rights of minorities within democratic systems.

Democracy and North Africa

The general statement above is not meant to ignore de Tocqueville’s earlier views on the French colonization of Algeria, of which he remained an unabashed supporter throughout his life. He had first visited the country during the ‘scorched-earth’ campaigns waged by General Bugeaud’s forces against the resistance in Western Algeria, led by the Amir ‘Abd al-

¹ The phrase comes from his seminal study, *Democracy in America* where he suggests that, “I am thoroughly convinced that political societies are not what their laws make them but what they are prepared in advance to be by the feelings, the beliefs, the ideas, the habits of heart and mind of the men who compose them” (Roper 1989, 22).

Qadar in the 1840s (Speetjens 2016). His views, in part, reflected the widespread and profoundly illiberal belief in mid-19th century Europe, held by many internationally respected liberals at the time, of a European responsibility to impose Enlightenment-style governance and development on backward non-European societies through colonial occupation in order to civilize and modernize them – the famed French vision of *la mission civilisatrice*.

Ironically enough, the end of the 18th century and the early years of the 1900s had been the intellectual domain of Enlightenment liberals, such as Denis Diderot and Benjamin Constant, who had consciously rejected such imperial projects. The transformation of these ideals into their imperial mirror-image seems to have been related to the experience of the French Revolution, and the Bonapartism that succeeded it, together with France's loss of its colonial empire as a result of the Napoleonic wars. At the same time, however, they also reflected de Tocqueville's belief in the imperious need for a collective political project to mobilize France's population in support of its government, a need fulfilled by the colonial occupation of Algeria, as he argued (Pitts 2007, 12).

Yet, democracy in North Africa is not just a matter of imported political principle, as Western commentators frequently suggest when they bemoan the fate of the movements that emerged in 2011 to challenge the existing political order. Instead, its practice and survival may have much more to do with the innate political culture of the region. This chapter seeks to explore and identify such possibilities with respect to three separate considerations: the essence of democratic governance; the relationship of the citizen to the state; and the role of identity politics within democratic governance. It will then conclude with a brief comment on the remaining prospects for democratic governance in North Africa after the disappointments of recent years.

Democratic governance

The essence of democratic governance is captured by the dictionary definition of 'democracy', namely that it is 'a form of government in which power resides in the people and is exercised by them either directly or by means of elected representatives' (Brown 1993, 629) In effect, therefore, power is vested in the community over which governance is to be exercised, as it is its authority which legitimizes the process of governance itself – the community alone is the sovereign embodiment of political authority. However, this underlying assumption about the nature of the democratic purpose in certain circumstances conceals a problem

concerning the nature of that legitimacy, namely how can democratic theory, as defined, respond to belief systems that do not accept the overriding sovereignty of the community, seeing sovereignty instead as an attribute solely of Divinity?

That statement about community sovereignty, in turn, incidentally reveals the European origins of the dominant form of democracy which is current today, worldwide – liberal representative democracy in which individual interests and rights over a defined territorial extent, represented in an assembly by elected delegates, is the universalized essence of the democratic ideal. Yet this is an assumption that is not necessarily the case, as the pre-colonial history of many parts of the world reveals. Instead, it reflects the way in which European political culture and institutions have become the underpinnings of international law, as has the European-style state – a historical consequence of the colonial experience.

The dictionary definition does, however, highlight the idea of popular participation in the process of governance, and it also lists a series of essential characteristics associated with such political behavior – equal rights, rejection of hereditary class distinctions, and tolerance of minority views. There are also, of course, many more that could have been included but the list does highlight their essential shared character, in that they relate to the way in which individuals within the community are to be treated by the collectivity. As such, they relate to concepts of individual rights innate in the process of democratic governance which therefore form a distinctive element that distinguishes it from other forms of governance.

What the definition does not do, however, is to tell us precisely how such political power is to be exercised, or what constraints exist to ensure that the characteristics associated with it are guaranteed and protected. In practice, the institutions through which power is exercised usually consist essentially of elected representatives who are selected by a variety of electoral procedures gathered into a parliamentary assembly, although more direct patterns of engagement exist as well, as Switzerland demonstrates (Held 1987, 2006).

However, here too, there is a problem, for autocracies are also increasingly in favor of electoral procedures as the means of allegedly legitimizing and concealing their arbitrary power. Thus, institutions alone cannot define the democratic process, as de Toqueville pointed out in 1853, when he wrote to a friend, “[...] I accord institutions only a secondary influence over the destiny of men [...] I am quite convinced that political societies are not what their laws make them, but what sentiments, beliefs, ideas, the habits of the heart, and the spirits of the men who form

them, prepare them in advance to be, as well as what nature and education have made them” (Boesche 1985, 294).

The role of institutions within the state

Yet, despite de Toqueville’s strictures against the primacy of institutions – with which I, in principle, agree – the fact is that we are most often aware of these institutions as the instruments through which democratic governance is articulated and guaranteed. They are the visible symbols of its presence and, therefore, the most obvious objects upon which constraint can, if necessary, be exercised. In practice, this is ensured by recourse to the rule-of-law, and detailed in a constitution which it enforces.

A constitution is vital – whether written or, as in the case of my own country, Britain, unwritten – because that defines the neutral arena in which competing interests can be reconciled, and compromise can be negotiated as another institution in the democratic process. The rule-of-law is essential because that is the way in which that neutrality on the part of the state can be ensured and protected. Yet, that, in turn, gives rise to a further problem because it presupposes that those competing interests are all of equivalent status, otherwise how can they find common ground for compromise?

The most obvious way in which such equivalent status can be established is if democratic governance is expressed through a power relationship between the state, as the embodiment of the general will of society, and the individuals who collectively form the community that empowers it – hence the widespread perception that sovereignty is enshrined within the community. This, after all, reflects the sanction that it exerts over the process of governance, in which each individual theoretically enjoys an equal status to his or her peers. Incidentally, in customary international law, the state is defined as an entity consisting of precisely-defined territory occupied by a permanent population, administered by a government, and with the capacity to enter into relations with other states (Montevideo Convention 1933: Article 1). This definition, however, only tells us about the structure of a state; it does not tell us much about what a state can do – its agency – beyond its capacity to “enter into relations with the other states”.

To appreciate state agency, we need to turn to the other two common definitions of the state. The first – Weber’s famous definition of the state – tells us about the internal agency of the state, its ability to

coerce the society that occupies it for the common good.² The second – by Hegel – identifies the inherent legitimacy of the state in conditioning the behavior of individuals within it, for it is only through compliance with the law of the state that the individual can become truly, rationally, free.³ This definition, of course, implies that the law of the state is itself ideally designed to maximize the freedom of the individual within the confines of the collective needs of society, in other words to create an ethical environment.

The state, in short, must treat all its clients equally, disinterestedly in effect, as citizens and thus of equal stature, whilst the individual must have the confidence that this is the case, as guaranteed by the constitution and the rule-of-law. There is an obvious difficulty over this, for in reality, communities are not comprised of citizens of equal stature, each simply expressing his or her own interests yet through their collective action legitimizing the state in both its Hegelian and its Weberian aspects. They can also have other characteristics that bind them together and give them their unique characters – shared identities and characteristics that separate them from other, similar entities, for instance.

The implications for minorities

Indeed, it is clear that, just as the state often does not correspond to such high-minded principles, its clients are not merely disinterested and isolated ‘citizens’. They may well have other collective identities beyond such individual statuses, and thus may agglomerate into collective entities – minorities – with shared interests different from those of the majority. Yet this is a consideration for which democratic governance has often been poorly prepared. It is a problem that led Friedrich Hayek, who seems to have had a poor opinion of democracy, because he saw within it the potential for dictatorship by the majority, to nevertheless admire its potential to ensure the replacement of government without violence on a regular basis (Hayek 1978, 152).

Yet minorities have every right to expect to be able to express their interests as such in a democratic environment, but the fact that these interests are subordinated to those of the majority is a problem with which democratic governance has wrestled, with only partial success. One

² ‘A state is a human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory’ (Weber 1946, 79); for the original, see Weber (1912, 397).

³ “The state is the actuality of the ethical idea” (Hegel 1967, 257, 258).

solution has been consociationalism,⁴ as practiced in Lebanon in which each confessional community is represented in proportion with its population size, and there is then democratic choice within each community. It was, however, meant to be a temporary solution, in place until confessional identity ceased to have political significance, but has now hardened into a statement about sectarian identity rather than democratic choice.

Indeed, one of the basic reasons why minorities have such difficulty in finding a suitable democratic solution to representation is because of their intrinsic nature. Minority status, like nationalism, is a statement about collective, ascribed identity, a social attribute; democratic governance is based upon the politics of individualistic choice and has no mechanism by which a minority can empower it in a fashion that runs counter to the hegemonic consensus of the majority of individuals within society. Perhaps the only mechanism it offers is one of voluntary compromise, but that will only occur if the majority can see an advantage in such a concession.

There are, of course, many other aspects of the democratic experience that should be brought into the discussion but the points made above provide a basis upon which some comment can be made about the future of the democratic process of governance in North Africa. The discussion which follows focuses again on the three key elements of democratic experience, citizenship and the politics of identity, together with a comment about the informal and formal traditions of political participation within the region.

Alternative democratic models in North Africa

There is a widespread assumption in the West that Islamic societies, especially in the Arab world, are inimical to democratic governance, hence the persistence of autocracy throughout the region. This is to overlook the consequences of history, especially colonial history, and its effect on the political process. It is also to assume that there is only one path to political participation; that which developed from Enlightenment values. In fact, all three assumptions are false. Historically, there is plenty of evidence in pre-colonial times of participatory political processes. Indeed, as T.S. Eliot

⁴ 'A political system in which power is shared by representatives of different or antagonistic social groups' (Brown 1993: 486).

reminds us, “In my end is my beginning” (Eliot 1943),⁵ so this should hardly be surprising, even though it is often overlooked.

The Islamic constitutional model itself, although conceived of as a means of creating the appropriate environment for the social practice of Islam, was originally also based upon concepts of communal empowerment and consent, as expressed through the *baya'a* and as later codified by Al-Mawardi (Fagan 1982). Rural governance, particularly amongst sedentary communities, was expressed through the *jama'a* or the *'arch*, operating through consensus, although subject to pressure from leading notables. The rich complexity of urban life would furnish yet other examples, not least through its duality of civil and civic society (Schwedler 1995, 9-11; fn22; 26) as well as the guild system.⁶ There are, too, many other examples of political participation through mechanisms of consultation and consent that parallel the Western tradition, even if the locus of sovereign authority is divine, rather than secular (Joffe 2016, 722-734).

Independence, too, is replete with examples of participatory political awareness, particularly in North Africa, that long pre-dated the experience of the Awakening movements of 2011. Quite apart from the protest movements of 1965, 1978, 1981 and 1984 in the Maghreb, there is the experience in Algeria, in April 1980, of the Berber Spring, the event that marks the real beginning of the movements that were to lead to 2011. This was followed, first by the demonstrations in Constantine in 1986, and then by the country-wide riots of October 1988, which forced radical political change.

Admittedly, the actual form of that change was dictated by government, but it is worth noting that, even if it has degenerated into ‘façade democracy’ and presidential sclerosis today, the experiment was not eliminated by the civil war that took place during the 1990s. The same occurred during the 1990s in Morocco, culminating in the constitutional reforms of 1996 and subsequent amendments to them at the start of this century, and, of course, in 2011 (Maghraoui 2011, 679-700). The autocracies in place in Tunisia and in Libya prevented any similar evolutions there, but their differing natures were to determine what occurred to them in 2011. Tunisia as a ‘liberalized autocracy’ (the term is Daniel Brumberg’s

⁵ Although this quotation is usually attributed to T.S. Eliot, it appears that it has a much longer history, going back to Mary, Queen of Scots (1542-1587) who embroidered it upon a scarf as “En ma Fin gît mon Commencement.”

⁶ Indeed, there are two separate concepts that are used – *al mujtama' al-madani* (which really means ‘civic society’ and would include secular organisations) and *al-mujtama' al-ahli* (‘civil society’, including Islamic associations and organisations).

(2002, 56-68)) had inadvertently left sufficient political space for revolutionary social movements to emerge and sweep away the Ben Ali regime.

Libya, as an absolute autocracy, did not do that, but its regime lacked the authority and resilience to resist political challenge in 2011. The result was that this, together with an external intervention, was to lead to its destruction at the end of the civil war in October 2011. The consequent disappearance of the centralized state has, in effect, precipitated the fragmentation of Libyan society and polity into separate arenas of arbitrary control by a series of militias. Unlike the experiences of Tunisia and Morocco, Libya did not develop an explicitly political project to replace the Qaddafi regime.

That project had been encapsulated in two of the slogans that the crowds of demonstrators chanted in 2011 – *Ash-sha‘b yurīd isqāṭ an-nizām* (the people want to bring down the regime) and *Aish, hurriya, adala ijtimaiyya* (bread, freedom and social justice).⁷ It was a project that was revolutionary, in that it sought the removal of a political system from which the mass of the population was alienated and excluded, replaced by one based on egalitarian economic, political, and social institutions that would enjoy popular legitimacy. Yet, despite such sanguine ambitions, the initial promise of revolutionary change was to remain unfulfilled; although there may have been a ‘democratization of discourse’ (Lahlali 2014, 13), there has been little real change, even in Tunisia.

Democracy and *amazighité*

Whether or not the above discussion has its own intrinsic interest and relevance, it would be legitimate to ask what its relevance to the issue of *amazighité* might be. I have been prompted to consider this by two remarks made by Tahar Ben Jelloun in his interview (in this book) when he said that *amazighité* and democracy were intimately linked together, and that, beyond this, there was a need to determine what the real subject

⁷ The first slogan was widely used in Tunisia and, later, in Syria and Yemen, while the second was widely adopted in the Tahrir Square demonstrations in Cairo. It was often modified as “*Aish, karama insaniyya, hurriyya*” (bread, human dignity, freedom). There were, of course, many other slogans, some of them variants on the two cited here. The word *Aish* (‘life’) rather than the more usual *khubz* for bread underlines its crucial role in the Egyptian diet (*The New Arab* 2016, Al-Haq and Hussain nd).

of debate should be – *amazighité*, or a sense of ‘Moroccanness’.⁸ I interpret the latter remark to contrast minority representation against a wider sense of national identity of which *amazighité* is an integral part, as opposed to being merely a minority concern.

In parenthesis, I should note that, if it is the latter, then presumably, similar nationally distinct sentiments have arisen in Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, and even in Egypt. Further, if that is the case, then this also militates against the longstanding arguments of a supervening Arab nationalist identity throughout North Africa, and bolsters the argument for the emergence of national identity instead, as the dominant driver of political culture of the states in the region. This is important because, in reference to Tahar Ben Jelloun’s first statement, I would question the utility of seeking a supportive link between *amazighité* and democracy, if *amazighité* is solely concerned with the rights and interests of a cultural minority, since, as suggested above, democracy does not serve minority interests very well.

However, if his second comment implies a statement about the emergence of a national political culture, then the linkage is essential, as it becomes the way in which a democratic state is legitimized by the community it structures and serves. Its existence, by the way, does not exclude other forms of collective identity, as such multiple identities can, and do, co-exist. However, its universality within the national community allows it to become a hegemonic form of identity and, as such, to legitimize the state. It is here that the role of democratic governance becomes essential, as the application of its principles ensures that the state itself cannot become innately oppressive. There is, in short, a metastable and antiphonal dynamic balance of state and community that guarantees the legitimate interests of both, and ensures the rights of individuals as citizens within the state.

The balance is dynamic and antiphonal because it is under constant threat – from populism, which in essence, seeks to subject the community to a political discipline that prioritizes the collectivity over the individual, and from the state, given its inherently coercive nature, as Weber has made clear (Weber 1921, 397). Beyond that, there is also the role of history; colonialism was, after all, as Tahar Ben Jelloun reminds us in his contribution, an oppressive and racist enterprise. In addition, it left behind the essential administrative structures that were taken over by the independent states that succeeded it, and therefore perpetuated its practices.

⁸ Tahar Ben Jelloun, “Discours inaugural: Amazighité et démocratie” *Forum International: Culture Amazighe et avenir de la Démocratie en Afrique du Nord*, Fes (May 11 2018).

And that process, in itself, has been powerfully aided by the holistic ideologies that emerged in the wake of the dissolution of colonialism. It is in that context that the Awakening Movement in 2010-2011 was so important, as it was an essentially popular challenge to the oppressive absolutism that had preceded it. But it is also important to recognize that it had had precursors. There, the events in Algeria in 1980 were the original catalyst for the Amazigh revival that succeeded them, and for the emergence of authentic national political cultures. In that respect, in North Africa at least, the Awakening signalled demands for popular participation in governance and recognition of cultural diversity; demands that, despite the disappointments over the past ten years, have not disappeared.

What remains?

Yet, apart from Tunisia, there has been no meaningful change in political institutions either, and even in Tunisia, although a new Constitution and parliamentary process is in being, with regular elections contested by a large number of political parties, and the media have been able to shake off many of the constraints formerly placed upon them, the underlying structure of the state has not been fundamentally altered, thus providing a sad comparison with aspirations at the time (Mabrouk 2011, 625-636). Indeed, the revisionist approach of the then President, Beji Caid Essebsi, towards the provisions of the new constitution, backed up by the stealthy return to formal politics of many former activists in the *Rassemblement Constitutionnelle Démocratique*, the dominant – effectively single – political party of the former regime, has significantly contributed towards blocking revolutionary social change, through *Nida Tounes*, the political movement which the ex-President himself originally created.

Furthermore, some political institutions, such as the security services, have not even been formally reformed (Jebnoun 2017), a failure justified by the ongoing instability along Tunisia's borders with Libya and Algeria, particularly around Ben Gardane and Kasserine respectively. There has, indeed, been a dramatic change in terms of social justice, for the media operate without censorship, individual freedoms have been reinforced, and civil society functions without let or hindrance under constitutional guarantee (Joffé 2014, 615-638).

But even here, care must be taken; the President's well-known distaste for 'transitional justice' – an important aspect of social justice in Tunisia – has meant his opposition to continuing with the *Instance Vérité et Dignité*, Tunisia's own truth and justice commission instituted to provide transitional justice to 62,000 victims of the former regime. This

has been attacked by the President who dislikes its head, Sihem Bensedrine, and sees it as a challenge to his own chosen formulation of a reconciliation law to integrate former supporters of the Ben Ali regime into the new environment, even though the commission had, by the start of March 2017, settled 23,000 of the cases brought before it. A year later, however, the parliament, at Presidential behest, refused to extend its term beyond May 31 2018.

Nonetheless, Tunisia has just had municipal elections for the first time since 2010, and parliamentary and Presidential elections in 2018. *Ennahda* gained 29% of the vote in the municipal elections and *Nida Tounes* 21%, but turnout was only 33% of the electorate, indicating the degree to which Tunisians feel disappointed over the outcomes of 2011. The picture is equally ambivalent in economic terms; even though overall unemployment has dropped from a peak of 18.9% in December 2011 to hover at around 15%, according to the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank has reported that youth unemployment remains at between 30 and 50%. However, since President Kais Saied was elected in 2019, the political and economic situation has known a setback.

During 2011, the Moroccan government responded to the demands of the February 20 Movement by making cosmetic changes to the constitution, but preserving the monarchy's position as beyond constitutional sanction. Furthermore, since 2011, the monarchy has rowed back from even the very modest concessions it made then, as economic conditions in Morocco have become ever more difficult and have begun to disturb social order. It has had to face the *hirak* movement in the Rif, as well as disturbances over economic realities in Jerada. In Algeria, the situation remains as it appeared to be in 2013, marked by total stasis under a sclerotic and disabled leadership.⁹ Yet:

[Algeria] is not fully democratic; although the deep state has retired from the forefront of political life, its arbitrary potential still remains. Corruption remains a reality, alongside autocratic repression and neglect; but the rights of citizens are relatively well respected, and freedom of expression is, on the whole, unhindered. The economic crisis continues; to great and growing popular disgust and anger, but the state, despite its inertia and inefficiencies, also continues (Joff  2013, 210).

⁹ President Bouiteflika suffered a disabling stroke in June 2013 but remained in post, even being re-elected in 2014! As a result, a collective Presidency became the ruling institution instead, under the effective control of the President's (unelected and unaccountable) younger brother, with the result that political life was in suspension with fears growing that the President would stand for re-election and win, for a fifth time in 2019, whatever the cost to Algeria's political evolution.

The other major state that was profoundly affected by the events of 2011 was, of course, Egypt, where the outcome initially appeared to be an uncomfortable accommodation between the resurgent *Ikhwan Muslimun* (Muslim Brotherhood) and the army command (Alexander 2011, 533-554). However, within a year of a Muslim Brotherhood government coming to power, an army-backed coup, promoted by the United Arab Emirates (UAE), was to overthrow it, restoring military control over the Egyptian political process once again.¹⁰ Of course, the actual situation in Egypt was far more complex than a question of simple external intervention, as the Morsi government and its *Ikhwan Muslimun* backers had made a series of fundamental errors which had severely compromised their popular support. Nonetheless, at the same time, the UAE's intervention underlined the role of the new policy developed in the wake of the Arab Awakening that was to culminate, after a bungled intervention in Syria, in the subsequent intervention in Yemen, led by the UAE and Saudi Arabia.

The future

Although it is dangerous to make unilinear projections into the future, because the reality is that future developments are inherently complex and unpredictable (Taleb and Blyth 2011, 33-39), some general trends can be anticipated. Firstly, despite widespread disappointment, the Awakening movement is not dead. It provided evidence to a vast mass of people that change was possible, despite autocratic obstructionism. Tunisia, however frustrated Tunisians might now feel, also showed that a political democratic transition is possible, and indicated what that might be like.

Tunisia, however, also demonstrates an interesting evolution of the political process in terms of the engagement of overtly religious movements in the political process. Just as the Christian Democratic movement in Europe gradually abandoned its links to the Catholic church in the early years of the 20th century, so *an-Nahda* is now proposing that it should become a mainstream conservative party and create a new movement to continue its work in '*daw'a*'. It remains to be seen to what extent the PJD in Morocco – which now also has extensive experience of ostensibly democratic politics – follows a similar pattern, given the fact

¹⁰ The UAE seems to have funded the Tamarroud Movement, which was the vehicle through which the Egyptian army actually ousted the Morsi government. The UAE also used Egypt as a pathway for the delivery of weapons to Khalifa Haftar, the military leader in Cyrenaica (Kirkpatrick 2015).

that it has already created a shadow movement outside the formal political process for such purposes (Joffé 2017, 10).

Algeria, had offered a similar vision much earlier, despite the appalling brutalities of the civil war and the stasis of recent years. It remains to be seen to what extent it can overcome the current constraints that will control its future development, once the straightjacket of the Presidency can be overcome, and the real drivers behind those who control the political process can be revealed. Until then, popular participation in the political process is far more likely to be voiced through local unrest. Deficiencies in access to political engagement have been compensated by recourse to demonstration and riot to attract administrative attention and correction – 9,000 incidents in 2009, 10,910 in 2011, and 14,000 in 2015.

The situation in Morocco is much more problematic, for a predominantly technical reason. The monarchy still remains outside constitutional restraint. There are, no doubt, good reasons for this which lie beyond the normal conventions of democracy, for the monarchy claims the status of one aspect of the traditional caliphate – as *amir al-muminin* (Commander of the Faithful). It thus resonates to a quite different set of values from those traditionally connected to the democratic ideal, and the idea of it being brought within the constitutional umbrella would, no doubt, be considered to be a contradiction in terms.

Yet, until this is done, the Moroccan political system cannot claim to be truly democratic, whatever restraint it voluntarily imposes upon itself. The monarchy, too, has to make a choice between ruling – with its implications of continuing direct control of the political process – and reigning, with the implication that it presides over a political process without wishing to directly control it by guaranteeing its constitutional constraints. And that, of course, in turn, implies that it abandons its religious role; it is not clear that political stability inside the kingdom can be guaranteed by making such a choice.

Libya represents a major conundrum for the future, for which there is no guide to be found in the principles or aspirations of democratic governance, simply because there is still no state structure upon which such solutions could be built, despite the attempts of the United Nations to provide it. There are still two political poles and at least three autonomous centers of military power; none of them, in reality, more legitimate than the other. At present, the Eastern Libyan strongman, Khalifa Haftar, seems poised to try to extend power over the country as a whole. But he is rejected by the other two major militia formations, in Zintan and in Misurata, each of which is also antagonistic towards the other.

The United Nations has espoused the Presidential council and seeks nationwide elections, but there is no guarantee that the results would be accepted nationwide. Some observers consider that the only political base of any significance lies in the municipalities which continue to play a major role in ensuring that the country still functions, but there are major questions of financing the state and coalescing it into a viable unitary format to be resolved. Egypt remains the ultimate Middle Eastern autocracy with no intention of conceding power to general participation despite its domestic tensions or its recent past history!

Against such a background, there would appear to be ample reasons for skepticism about the political future of the region, quite apart from the growing uncertainties created by an ever more disruptive regional and international geopolitical environment. In many respects, the political situation in North Africa today recalls that of Europe in the wake of the revolutionary year of 1848, when the democratic and cultural gains made were then dismantled in the years that followed, only becoming anchored in stable democracies over a century later. But that is to overlook the ongoing demonstration effect that the events of 2011 have had. They proved that alternatives were possible, and that they lay within the popular grasp; they also demonstrated the means by which that could be achieved.

The overt cultural revival, however, has been far more immediate. *Amazighté* is now a recognized dimension of North African identity, accepted by government as a key element in regional and national identities, which, in turn, limit governmental power, and in that respect form part of a future democratic dispensation. It is very difficult to believe that such sentiments can be simply forgotten, despite the difficulties of the contemporary world and the intrinsic antagonism of political regimes. And that marks the real difference between 2011 and today, for those lessons, despite the intervening disappointments, can no longer be written out of the historical record.

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