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Fall 2018

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Reid Leiter
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Missing Youth: The Absence of the Young Moroccan Voice in the Nation

Leiter, Reid

Dr. Belghazi, Taieb

University of Denver

International Studies

Africa, Morocco, Rabat

Abstract

Morocco has long maintained stability in a region historically known for fluctuating sociopolitical climates, considerably in part to a robust constitutional monarchy. However, the 20 February movement that coincided with the 2011 Arab Spring showed that the government is vulnerable to an energetic, organized, and a vocal youth population. Now, seven years after a constitutional referendum aimed at installing more democratic processes was passed, the growing youth populous feel more detached from their nation than ever, ignored by the government and monarchy, and ultimately lacking a voice in Moroccan politics. By excluding their voice and ignoring their opinions, the government is failing the young people of Morocco whose discontent could manifest itself in a far more disruptive movement in the coming years than it did in 2011.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge everyone who assisted me in this independent study project and played a role in its completion. Foremost, thank you to Dr. Taieb Belghazi and Dr. Ait Mansour for their guidance early on in the ISP process. I would like to also graciously thank all the Moroccan students who helped me in this project, both setting up meetings and allowing me to discuss this topic, without them I would not have been able to produce this paper.

Contents

i.   *Introduction*

The origins of the Moroccan experience go back centuries and has spanned several dynasties, countless Kings, as well as Spanish and French colonization which left the nation tattered. Throughout its history, two elements have remained pertinent in Morocco; Islam and the monarchy. Each goes hand in hand, and by that, the King wields near absolute authority by the grace of Islam. However, when the Arab Spring struck the Middle East and North Africa in 2011, King Mohammed VI's authority was challenged. The King was forced to call for a constitutional referendum or risk further unrest. Following this, democratic reforms were established to give parliament and in theory, the populous, more authority. However, this does not seem to be the case. In contemporary post-20 February 2011 Moroccan society, young people make up a significant portion of this populous and therefore represent a vast political contingent, but are they genuinely being granted a voice in the civics of the nation?

Given the research question above, I conjecture that youth participation in Moroccan politics is alarmingly low, particularly in relation to voting and involvement in political organizations. Many young Moroccans feel marginalized and controlled by the government despite the constitutional reforms in 2011, henceforth excluding a large demographic from the democratic processes of the Kingdom. With relation to this, the following study will look at levels of political involvement among young Moroccans ages 19 to 23 around three areas of political input: voting, party membership, and non-governmental participation, and whether or not this demographic feel included in the political arena within the context of Morocco's hybrid-regime.

This paper will first take a historical look at Morocco, from its early beginnings up until the modern day, to give context to the social and political climates surrounding the government

and the young people. Subsequently, the paper will move towards the presentation of the findings in conversations with Moroccan university students on their sentiments towards the question at hand.

ii.   *Early Beginnings of Maghrib*

Tucked away in the Northwest corner of Africa, Morocco is seemingly detached from the heart of the Arab world yet embodies the Islamic values and traditions inherent to the Middle East. The earliest tracings of Moroccan history date back to sometime in the eighth century. The name "al-Maghrib al-Aqsa" emerged sometime after that, which in Arabic means "Muslims furthest West or Morocco" (Bouqria, & Miler, 1999, p.19). Henceforth, one can see how the roots of Islamic tradition span back centuries. The first Moroccan Monarchy was established in 789 by a descendant of the Prophet Mohammed and would last until 959. The subsequent two dynasties took great strides in making Morocco a nation by legitimizing power in a central authority by the doctrine of Islamic jihad; they lasted from 1069 to 1147 and 1147 to 1269 respectively. The fourth and fifth dynasties, the Banu Marin (1258-1420) and the Sa'di (1548-1641) introduced new diplomatic practices in the civics of their kingdoms by doing away with the more aggressive means of public engagement contrary to their predecessors. These two dynasties ultimately connected with the population on a more personal level and formulated a relationship between the public and the crown that would stand the test of time, but this would be a relationship, as we will later explore, is deeply fractured in the eyes of the public, particularly by young people.

After 1500, showmanship and lavish rituals were employed by the monarchy as a means of legitimizing the crown and positioning it at the forefront of public consciousness. One of the most significant traditions began in 1593 by King al-Mansur, who established the performance of

the Prophet Mohammed's birthday. Al-Mansur established such a tradition in order to secure the lineage from the Prophet Mohammed in his dynasty as to be reflected in the public eye. A significant precedent he established during this lavish celebration was the white-rob of the ruler, in which the ruler wore the same white robs as every man in Morocco, built a strong link between him and the common man. Al-Mansur's tradition of the Prophet's birthday carried through the centuries and is still viewed as a powerful tool that legitimizes and connects the monarch to his people but is one that has been continuously challenged in the 21st century Morocco (Bouqria, & Miler, 1999, p.180). Of the many ways that the monarchy came to be in Morocco, its continuity has been most active under the sixth and current dynasty that began in 1666, the mighty 'Alwai dynasty.

The monarchy and Islam are the two enduring pillars of the Moroccan experience throughout the centuries and were utilized in various ways by its six ruling families all while maintaining a seemingly homogenous curve. However, this would later be challenged in the contemporary by a vastly different youth population. In the subsequent sections, the focus will be placed on the 'Alwai dynasty following their independence from French colonization in 1956, mainly looking at the reigns of King Hassan II and King Mohammed VI, who are the primary craftsmen of the modern Morocco and where themes of youth involvement in the sociopolitical setting are challenged and developed.

iii.   *King Hassan II: An Authoritarian Framework*

Prior to gaining its independence in 1956 from the French Protectorate, Morocco had been divided into three main zones of colonial influence between the French, Spanish, and an international coalition that controlled a smaller region around Tangier. King Mohammed V, who

negotiated for the independence of Morocco, was its first monarch and oversaw the reunification of these zones during his brief four-year rule as Morocco's first monarch. It would be his son, Hassan II, who would subsequently lay the framework for a contemporary Morocco under Mohammed VI. King Hassan II ruled for 38-years, one of the longest out of any Arab monarch, and he took the throne at a time when Islamic Kings were seemingly fading into history. King Hassan II's rule, however, was by no means a cherished one in Moroccan history, it is often characterized as a dictatorship and is known as the "years of lead" for the brutality of the regime.

Nevertheless, King Hassan II knew how to hold onto the support and he did so by recognizing the countries' historic Islamic roots and traditions, and more so, the divisions between ethnic groups over such customs. King Hassan II's success lay in his ability to transcend these divisions between rural and rich, Berber and Arab, and the many feudal tribes; he had "the ability to be different things to different people" (Gregory, 1999). Hassan II also attempted to democratize the country by introducing a new constitution in 1962, which provided elections for legislature but ultimately left the majority of power in the crown, given that these elections were never truly fair. Furthermore, Hassan II understood the historical importance of his position to the people, as the crown was a unifying force in Islamic society, and he truly did just that. As the Commander of the Faithful, he quadrupled the number of mosques over his tenure and played to the religious wills of the people all while strengthening the hand of the crown towards absolutism. By many measures, Hassan II did indeed rule with an iron fist and left a stain in the conscious of the nation. The aforementioned "years of lead" is the term most Moroccans would assimilate with the period of King Hassan II's reign. It was a period dominated by repression, marginalization, and torture. The monarchy targeted political opponents and framed them as rebels, and it suppressed Western Saharan activists, students and teachers, the press, and progressive ideology as a whole. All the

while, King Hassan II pleaded ignorance to torture or disappearances of such individuals, essentially shoving under the rug thousands of grotesque human rights abuses.

Despite his smeared record on human rights, King Hassan II did manage to keep Morocco's kingdom virtually intact during a time in which many other Arab regimes were toppled. He administered measured yet consistent economic reforms over his 38-year reign that helped keep the Moroccan political elites and royals pleased. Arguably one of Hassan II's most notable achievements were with his foreign policy. Hassan II quietly aligned himself with Western powers during his time on the throne, garnering a strong alliance with the United States as well as a few of its neighbors in Europe.

By the end of his reign, King Hassan II had ultimately left a more modernized Morocco, one in contrast from its Middle Eastern and North African neighbors. However, it should not be mistaken that Hassan II ruled with an iron fist. In the finals years of his rule, there was a slight shift away from authoritarianism however in what Hassan himself referred to as a "Hassanian democracy," by which the people enjoyed "widened political freedom" while the King still held a tight grasp on decision making (Gregory, 1999). Upon his death, his son would inherit just that, a false sense of political freedom among the public undermined by an absolute authority in the crown. Conclusively, this is what the subsequent sections of this historical perspective will look at, the democratization of Morocco under King Mohammed VI and how the burgeoning youth have been represented under it, particularly following the 2011 constitutional referendum.

iv.   *King Mohammed VI and the Emergent Youth Demographic*

Following Hassan's death, King Mohammed VI sought to take Morocco to new heights by reforming their social and political institutions. In his first few years at the helm of the

monarchy, Mohammed VI made a number of significant moves towards establishing Morocco as what would seem to be a more democratic nation. Among the most notable moves was the sacking of numerous ministers who had long been suspected of corruption and human rights violations as well as the establishment of a free trade agreement between the United States and Morocco in 2002, which aimed to facilitate trade between the two nations (Liddell, Monjib, 2009). Undoubtedly, Mohammed VI's vision of political liberalization was a refreshing shift from the regime-like rule throughout most of King Hassan II's reign, however in the few years prior to the outbreak of Arab Spring, it was evident that Mohammed VI's monarchy was seemingly a continuation of the Hassanian democracy doctrine. However, credit is due to King Mohammed VI in the sense that he did vastly improve Morocco's economic standing as well as its record on the human rights spectrum. Nevertheless, Mohammed VI's oaths of a more democratized Morocco in 2011 seemed hollow.

Democratizing Morocco for King Mohammed VI would mean amending the royal mandate, which at the time dictated virtually all "facets of society" and placed absolute authority with the King (Liddell, Monjib, 2009). Limiting the royal authority would mean giving more authority to Parliament. However, the crown has never truly done so since King Mohammed VI took the throne, and in 2011, it seemed that there was no intention to do so either. Nevertheless, King Mohammed VI continued to wield absolute authority over the nation's decision making in his first decade in office and showed little difference from his predecessor in the sense that he continued to silence public opposition to the crown. The King tried to present the Moroccan government as more transparent and democratic, but many could see straight through the puppeteering of the crown. In 2008, the Party for Authenticity and Modernity (PAM) was founded, backed by the crown, and finished first place in local elections in 2009 across the

board. Of course, the founding member of PAM was the ex-Deputy Interior Minister, Fouad Ali El Himma, a close friend of King Mohammed VI whose party quickly received backing from the crown. This is similar to a period under Hassan II, in which there were "partis administratifs," which are parties loyal to the King and utilized to wield complete control over government affairs (Liddell, Monjib, 2009). This is a significant reason why the younger generations don't trust political parties, the influence of the King on the political parties essentially delegitimize their status in the eyes of young Moroccans. King Mohammed VI would later run into the same dilemma that leaders across the Middle East were slapped within 2011: the Arab Spring.

In the years leading up to the Arab Spring, there is an apparent demographic parallel with the rise in social outcry, known as the "youth bulge" (Austin, 2011). In the early half of the 21st century, demographics across the Arab world shifted as a result of higher birth rates, socialized medical institutions, increased education, and increased wealth rates. The result was the most advanced youth population in the Middle East and North African history set to challenge the conventional sociopolitical structure in the countries of these regions. Parallel to the swell in youth population was (and still is) a high rate of youth unemployment and limited outlets for political input (Austin, 2011). These two juxtaposing trends ultimately catalyzed themselves into larger youth social movements. This demographical phenomenon emerged at a time of flourishing globalization, seemingly trapping the youth bubble in patriarchal autocracies throughout the Middle East and North Africa. The following section will look more at how the youth bulge manifested itself within Morocco and how the resulting 20th February movement forced the hand of the government.

    v.   *A New Youth in Morocco*

The intersectionality of the Moroccan youth identity with the state in the modern context is quite complex. When Mohammed VI ascended the throne in 1999, the expectations were a shift away from the authoritarian tendencies of his father. Accordingly, that state trended towards modernizing its institutions; education being at the forefront. Increasing knowledge, in turn, increased social mobility whereas young Moroccans born in the early 1990s and onwards had a heightened social, political, and economic awareness. This is where the youth under King Mohammed VI and say, the older generations, who grew up under Hassan II, differ significantly. Young Moroccans expect more: better education, welfare, jobs with good wages, etc., Additionally, with more social freedom under King Mohammed VI, comes more individualism and a realization of family and social values, which are inherently hierarchical and essentially monopolize power dynamics in Morocco. Henceforth, youth dissatisfaction grew in the early 2000s and coupled with technological advancements, social media, and access to both, accumulated in social movements like the 20 February Movement, where youth began to separate from the traditional youth ideals of the past. The following sections will take a more in-depth look at the 20 February Movement and the Arab Spring in Morocco, the Constitutional Referendum, and youth inclusion in the social, political, and economic domains following 2011.

vi.   *20 February Movement in the Context of the Arab Spring*

Aforementioned, youth discord with the state in the late 90s and 2000s was a result of a transitioning kingdom from an authoritarian regime to an expectedly more open and democratic one. Youth expected more social freedoms and welfare, and when expectations weren't met, they mobilized in high numbers during the first decade of the 21st century. A study conducted by sociologist Abderrahmane Rachik in 2014 found that protest movements, events, and actions

regardless of their nature "rose significantly between 2005 and 2012. Indeed, the number of protest actions rose from 700 in 2005, an average of two sit-ins per day, to 5,091 in 2008, 6,438 in 2009 and to 8,600 in 2010" (Akesbi, 2016). This was partially a result of increased political freedom of speech ushered by reforms from King Mohammed VI in his early years as rulers. Such protest actions would have been heavily suppressed under Hassan II, but the public clearly felt more empowered under the new king to speak out about issues in society, particularly the lack of democratic reforms that were assumed with King Mohammed VI's rule. Although protest actions were allowed, the crown still censored gregarious social movements through soft authoritarianism.

Exacerbating youth dissent against the government and crown during this time in the first decade of the 21st century is the actuality that youth are fundamentally excluded from political parties and politics. The King has repeatedly called for more youth inclusion both, before and after the Arab Spring, yet youth activism in party politics has been feeble, and only the PI, USPF and the PJD have youth divisions in their parties. Even though a bill in 2006 passed through parliament to specify a "proportion of youth and women in their organizational structures," political parties did not obey the law when forming their national assemblies (Akesbi, 2016). Therefore, one can conjecture the detachment that many young people feel with regards to the government. Many young Moroccans found themselves being marginalized by the political elite and being excluded from modes of upward mobility that they so much desire; such sentiments still remain strong among the youth of today. While not necessarily materializing themselves in the same way as Morocco did, similar attitudes and social awakenings among youth and young adults coincided across the Middle East.

The Arab Spring, now infamous for the widespread shakeup it caused in a multitude of Muslim-majority nations, began in Tunisia early in 2011. Longtime incumbent President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali was overthrown in January of 2011 after widespread protests against his suspected corruption and scandals. Ben Ali ruled for over two decades until the Tunisian people rose up against him. Less than a month later, Ben Ali's Egyptian counterpart, Hosni Mubarak was overthrown in Cairo. Mubarak, similar to Ben Ali, ruled for three decades. Young Moroccans, through social media and television, saw many of their same grievances played out in massive protests in Tunisia and Egypt that took down the individuals most responsible for such repression. Soon after, Morocco's own youth called for a widespread protest against the crown and the parliament, and thus the 20th February movement came to be in early 2011.

As mentioned before, the displeasures of young Moroccans had been boiling for quite some time prior to 2011, and the early beginnings of the movement were formulated in 2009. Social networking sites became a hub for young people to organize social justice and individual freedom groups that were initially an outlet for people to speak out about issues generally censored in public arenas. The beginnings of the 20 February Movement can be generalized as an 'underground' movement by which much of the organization went unbeknownst to the government. The most prominent actors in these arenas were students or graduates in their twenties in major cities, primarily Rabat and Casablanca (Sika, 2017). Hence, these two cities are where the 20 February Movement, and its proceeding protests, were centralized in. On February 20th, 2011, thousands of Moroccans went to the streets, chiefly in Rabat and Casablanca, to peacefully protest against the government and call for the King to relinquish some of his powers. Similar protests erupted in cities across the country and for the most part, remained peaceful. This is notable in the sense that the state allowed for such protests without any fundamental repression, which is seemingly rare

given the nature of the protesters' message. According to Maati Monjib, a political historian at the

University of Rabat, "It's the first time in Morocco that the king was openly criticized, and they

didn't shoot people," and instead Mohammed VI promised to bring change to Morocco and answer

the call of the people (Lewis, 2011). What the people demanded in streets was a more democratic

government, one in which the power to rule is not solely vested in the palace, and instead, the

Prime Minister, his cabinet, and Parliament would have more democratic powers.

vii.   *Constitutional Referendum, Real Change?*

The King and his government responded swiftly to the demands of the people and agreed

to draft a constitutional referendum. On July 1st, 2011, the constitutional referendum was held in

which millions of Moroccans turned out and overwhelmingly voted to reform the constitution,

with 98.5 percent of the voters approving of the alterations to the law (Ghafar, Jacobs, 2017).

The most notable changes are as follows: The King is required to name a Prime Minister from

the ruling party, the Prime Minister is given the power to dissolve Parliament as well as preside

over the Government Council, Parliament is given much more oversight over national issues, and

their share of power is to be expanded, Women are granted social, civic, and political equality,

and Berber was added as an official language of Morocco. However, did these changes really

appease the popular wishes of the public, particularly the youth? Essentially no, the King still

retained overarching authority, and it seems as if the referendum was more of a screen between

the people and the state rather than a structural alteration of government authority. So rather than

seizing the opportunity to establish more democratic processes and more democratic institutions,

the King essentially reaffirmed Morocco as an autocratic state where he retains overall decision making and control.

One significant change in the constitution catalyzed by the 20 February Movement was this addition of a youth quota in parliament. Throughout the first half of 2011, youth groups had lobbied the King for increased representation of young leaders in parliament. In the revised constitution that was ratified on July 1st, a new political quota in parliament was established in which "sixty seats for women and thirty seats for male candidates under 40 years of age in the Moroccan House of Representatives" (Belschner, 2018). According to a study done by the Inter-Parliamentary Union in 2016, 14.7% of members in Morocco's parliament were under the age of 40, while just 1.6% were under the age of 30 (Youth participation in national parliaments, 2016). These percentages are not abnormal with relation to other countries nor are they a measurement of political participation, but relative to the percentage of the population under the age of 40 in Morocco, this does illustrate that there is a vastly under-represented portion of the people in parliament.

As aforementioned, the inclusion of women and young people in parliament was prioritized by the King early on as a way to please the demands of advocates from both groups. In doing so, he had positioned himself as an ally to both young people and women. However, this policy was seemingly employed by political elites as a tool to stabilize the turbulent climate of 2011 as well as further legitimize the autocratic power in the monarchy rather than a fundamental step to include youth in Rabat's political sphere. Moreover, the most significant supporters among youth were from "a limited circle of members from the youth wings of political parties, who should rather be framed as part of the domestic political elites" (Belschner, 2018).

While the addition of the youth and women quota in the 2011 Constitutional Referendum represented a step in the right direction for many young Moroccans, it was greatly overshadowed by the lack of structural change actually put forth. On paper, it appears that the palace's control of the country is loosened, and more power is transferred to parliament, and to some extent it was. The referendum created a "space" that would've allowed political parties to better take advantage of the constitutional powers the referendum gave them and more so, include youth supporters in the conversation. In the years after the referendum, the political elite engulfed themselves in quarreling party politics and reaffirmed a continuation of King Mohammed VI as the "central holder of power" in Morocco, additionally showing the weakness of the parliamentary system and the democratic system in the wake of the 2011 Constitutional Referendum (Desrues, 2011). Conclusively, the social movements and constitutional changes that took place in 2011 had a passion and fury to them but this feeling seems to have faded into history as young people now feel disenfranchised by their government and are losing faith in their nation.

viii.   *Evaluating the Current State of the Youth Voice*

The present state of disenchantment among young people in Morocco vests itself heavily in this belief that their opinions, desires, and votes simply do not count. Corruption has long plagued parliament and even following 2011, nothing seemed to really change. Thus, young Moroccans have placed blame in political elites, essentially grouping together politicians, businessmen and women, and royal officials as an organization of oppressive oligarchs all working under the King. This has been popular sentiment both before and after 2011, however, after the referendum it appears that society folded on the idea of ousting these elites and instead

sociopolitical participation has dropped off, particularly among young people, which was evident in 2016's parliamentary elections. The reasoning for lack of involvement among younger Moroccan's in the polls is seamlessly illustrated by this excerpt from The Economist (More of the Same? Elections in Morocco, 2016):

> Outside the central train station in Rabat, Bilal, an urbane 32-year-old, said he hadn't voted, "because I don't believe it would change anything." As with many young people, he supported the 2011 protests; but the momentum towards democracy which followed the Arab Spring has been replaced by disenfranchisement and a reluctance on the part of the government to challenge the monarchy.

The poor participation is ultimately an energetic show of the discord among younger voters who believe their ideas and concerns are not being heard and this is where the actual problem lies in that the government is not addressing the major issues that the general population is concerned about, particularly jobs and the economy.

Unemployment in Morocco has wavered above 9% for the last few years and is unusually low among younger individuals. This is why the prominent Unemployed Graduates Movement emerged, to address the high unemployment among university graduates who are skilled workers that the state is just not putting to use. In 2018, even on a good turnout on Rabat's Mohammed V avenue outside parliament, the movement, and movements alike, seems to be losing the fight in convincing parliament to address their concerns. The lack of interest by the government in the voice of the youth has been a catalyst for young Moroccan's desire to leave the country and shows the faltering structure in the national unity. However, the fact of the matter is that young

Moroccan's do not have high mobility to leave the country for say Europe or the United States to seek employment or educational opportunities unless of course, they are among the very wealthy. Just two months ago of the coast of Tangier, a 22-year-old Moroccan girl, who was also a law student, was shot and killed by the Royal Navy while trying to illegally migrate to Spain, erupting widespread outrage from young people across the country (Moroccan woman dies after navy shoots at migrant boat, 2018). Moreover, this sense of disdain for the government among young people was only exacerbated when the government reinstated the compulsory military service for Moroccan men and women ages 19 to 25 back in August. Morocco's Ministerial Council, which is headed by the King, approved the reinstatement of the draft in an effort to "promote patriotism among the young, within the framework of the correlation between the rights and responsibilities of citizenship" (Eljechtimi, 2018). What is interesting is that the King seemingly took the position that this measure was one to ensure employment for "unemployed people" and the young generation "who find it extremely hard to access the job market" (Eljechtimi, 2018). The fact of the matter is that this policy came directly from the King, not for economic purposes but instead as a nationalistic measure to essentially further limit young people from leaving Morocco. The action was also seen as a way to increase the King's hand against possible young social movements that could lead to unrest in the near feature, which has been most evident in regions such as the Rif. Fundamentally, by placing youth in a year's worth of compulsory military service, the government disrupts movements and also takes away a great deal of a young person's ability to speak out. Would you speak out against your boss at work? No, and neither would a young man or women enlisted in the Moroccan military. This policy is reminiscent of the one King Hassan II implemented back in the 1980s in which he drafted student union protesters into the military to suppress outcry against the government.

Henceforth, one can see how the government, notably the King, is employing soft authoritarianism to more or less suppress youth voice in the sociopolitical spectrum. Therefore, what is left behind in contemporary Morocco is a young generation that is angry and disheartened with their country but merely have no outlets to express these sentiments. The following sections will present and analyze the findings of the research conducted in relation to political involvement among young Moroccans in the context of Morocco's hybrid-regime.

ix.   *Findings from Conversations with Moroccan University Students*

The field research of this independent study questioned young Moroccan students enrolled in university about their feelings surrounding a set list of questions. Prior to conducting this research, my prospects on receiving in-depth feedback were promising but probably a little too hopeful. I expected to receive feedback that was thoughtful and offered me results close to similar studies I had read on comparable topics. I believed that what I would find would be discontent young people shut out by the system but a young people who wanted to change the way things were going and change how their voice was treated in Morocco; this was somewhat close to the results I received, but ultimately my assumptions were slightly off target.

As aforementioned, I structured my interviews and conversations with the students around a few select questions which are as follows:

1) Voting

    a) How accessible is voting during Morocco's elections for people your age?

    b) Do you feel as if your voice and your vote count or does the electoral system seem unfair?

2) Political Parties

a) To what extent are youth involved in political parties?

3) Non-Governmental Parties

a) Are there any movements that young Moroccans feel empowered by?

b) Do you believe there are alternatives ways politics can be run in Morocco?

4) Governmental Views

a) How do you feel like the government supports your age group?

b) Do you like the way Morocco is heading into the future?

These questions offered a framework around which I could gauge political involvement among 19 to 25-year-old students living in Morocco. I chose this demographic because I believed that this demographic was the most atypical for "youth." Additionally, these years for young people are generally seen as years of flux, especially for university students who are working towards a degree in hopes of establishing a future for themselves.

While the questions are broad in nature, this was intentional to help foster more discussion-based interviews by which I was a facilitator of conversation rather than taking on the role and dynamics of an interviewer; this helped produce more candid results given the sensitive context of the topic. Furthermore, not all participants were asked every single one of the questions listed, but all were asked at least one under each denomination. My aim in this research was to retain as much information as possible in the time allotted. Therefore, some questions were omitted for some participants.

My interviews took place in three different sessions, two in Rabat and one in Tangier and covered six interviewees ages 19 to 23, close to the age range I initially aimed for. The two sessions in Rabat both last for a total of around two hours each while the one in Tangier was about 30

minutes long. The Rabat sessions had five male participants whose ages ranged from 19 to 23, and all were students at Rabat's University Mohammed V. The sole participant in Tangier, a male aged 21, was unfortunately not even from the north, he was a student from Agadir's Ibn Zohr University in the far south of Morocco. Furthermore, it is noteworthy to add that all six students were all relatively a part of the same socioeconomic class, which I would describe as working middle-class given that all participants were receiving education yet none of the participants were actively working a job on the side. There are some drawbacks to the subjects and research, however. First, I obtained no female input on the matter, which vastly biases my answers to a male perspective. Secondly, all the subjects were university educated students whose responses are far different from individuals of the same age not enrolled in a university. Third, this research does not take in any quantitative data; therefore, it is only empirical results rather than numerical. Finally, this project just gives a snapshot into the opinions of six young Moroccans, if it were to be conducted again and with more time, it would undoubtedly include far more subjects from different sexes, social classes, and regions of Morocco. Nevertheless, I was pleased with the following information that was recorded.

Across the board, the answers I received in the discussions were strikingly similar and correlated significantly to what I had retained in readings on the youth generation in Morocco. When presenting the results, the names will be redacted, and instead, a pseudonym and age will be provided. Consent was verbally given by each participant, and they were informed that the findings in this research paper would not be made public.

In my conversations with the Moroccan students, I was quite surprised to find that the information they provided was similar to what I had initially expected. As mentioned before, the answers were seemingly less articulated than I had hoped for, which may be a fallacy of the

language barrier as all the discussions were held in English. Beginning with voting, I was surprised to learn that only one of the six individuals had actually voted in an election before. The reasoning? Nearly every participant had said something to the nature of "elections are corrupt" or "elections are rigged." While one participant said it was "quite easy" and accessible to vote, he said that it, in the end, didn't matter (S, Boukadir, 23, personal communication, November 14, 2018). This was the common theme I found throughout my conversations with the participants, that they have no faith in the democratic systems in place. Speaking to this, a participant stated that when you vote, "you vote for someone but in the end, the King chooses who is elected" (Z, Kibou, 21, personal communication, November 19, 2018). One student summed up why he doesn't vote because Morocco "has no democracy" (A, Alami, 20, personal communication, November 16, 2018). Much of the feedback I got verified my original conjectures by which a considerable portion of young people (and the population as a whole) don't feel the need to vote because they believe that their vote just does not matter, which seems to be valid given the near unchallenged control that King Mohammed VI maintains over the elections.

I found that when I moved my conversations towards involvement in political parties that my results became far more dismal, chiefly because none of the students had any formal relationship, or interest for that matter, in political parties. I found it interesting that one of the individuals said that even for them as second and third-year university students, they did not have the proper education required to be formally involved in political parties. Additionally, at least three of the participants mentioned the fact that there are very few politicians, let alone political parties, that support issues that the youth want them to support such as education reform, jobs, and wages. One participant stated that politicians and their political parties only "make changes to help themselves rather than helping the public" (Y, Nour, 22, personal communication, November 14,

2018). One student also stated that the reason he doesn't get involved in politics is because there is a saying in Morocco that, when translated to English, goes something like "politics are a muddy place, and if you get involved you will get dirty, and the mud surrounds you" (Y, Youshi, 19, personal communication, November 16, 2018). I speculate that this saying parallels the saying in the United States in which many citizens compare Washington D.C. to a "swamp," where the politicians are driven by money and interests, breeding unethicality. Moving over towards involvement in social movements, I was again surprised to find that the students had minimal interest in any. However, much of their reasoning for not protesting or speaking out publicly against the government was out of safety and concern for their future. The student from Tangier said that the government "doesn't want us to organize" while another student stated that "at the end of the day" if you protest and are involved in a social movement long enough, the government will "suppress you" and there will be "hitting and beating" from the police (S, Boukadir, 23, personal communication, November 14, 2018). Nonetheless, nearly all the students expressed their support for the on-going boycott of the fuel, dairy, and water products. The Afriquia fuel stop chain (owned by Agriculture Minister Aziz Akhanouch), the French dairy brand Centrale Danone, and water brand Sidi Alli have all been targeted in an effort to show Moroccan frustration over their situations given the heightened prices and government involvement with these goods. Conclusively, participation in political parties and social movements goes hand in hand with the discussions we had on voting; young people don't believe that their voice matters in these settings. However, the most despondent answers I received were when I brought up overarching issues of government support and the outlook for the future.

What I found out of the six participants involved is that none were happy with their situation in relation to the government. The desire to leave Morocco outweighed any desire to

change internal factors. I received answers from "we are depressed" to "everything is shit" (H, Lachhab & Y, Nour, 20 & 22, personal communication, November 14, 2018). When asked if they think Morocco is heading in the right direction, I overwhelmingly discovered that students and young people believe that they are trending downwards and that there are no opportunities even if you have a proper education and a degree and that only the wealthy have the upward mobility to access good jobs and wages. The outlook among young people in Morocco is pessimistic at best, and a lot of the disdain seems to surround the King's control over the country. One individual said that the "King is a criminal and a bad man" and is ultimately the root issue in the country (A, Alami, 20, personal communication, November 14, 2018). He controls so much wealth and authority yet doesn't do much to help the people suffering in the streets or the students begging for educational and job reform. The youth population feels trapped in Morocco, and they believe they can't do anything about it. This raises the question, what will happen when enough of the already discontented population does decide to act? They did it in 2011, and it certainly can happen again, possibly on a much more vehement scale.

x.   *Conclusion*

In understanding contemporary Morocco's sociopolitical dilemma, it is imperative to point out that a significant portion of the tension between the government and the populous stems from an atypical youth population that is drastically different from generations of the past. The increase in technology and globalization has led to a more individualistic youth, one that sees an expansive world full of opportunity and socioeconomic freedom but seemingly out of grasp. The historical trajectory of the monarchy has led to an autocratic regime that suppresses youth mobility both in

a domestic and international sense unless you are among the political elites that stay close to the crown. The foregoing study affirmed my original conjecture that many young Moroccans do indeed feel left out by their government, leaving youth participation in civic duties such as voting, involvement in the political organization and social movements quite low. This is even more troubling given the youth bulge in the nation coupled with dismal economic prospects. So how does the country move forward with these two converging experiences? Certainly not by compulsory military service for young people.

While far-fetched, it would behoove the Moroccan government to listen to the interests of the youth on issues like education and economic reform, instead of, as one student put it, focusing on changing the clocks. By making structural economic reforms, the country could see a significant increase in economic growth on the backs of an educated youth population. However, politicians generally follow their own political and economic interests and the fact of the matter is that the youth population in Morocco is inherently ignored. The challenge that the growing youth population has in the coming years will be making their voice heard, particularly as the migrant crisis in north Africa intensifies and more and more Moroccans feel the urge to immigrate in search of social and economic opportunities.

While the government handled the 20 February movement and the Arab Spring with relative ease, it did not solve the overarching issues that were on the conscious of its citizens. The task ahead of King Mohammed VI and his government will be one that requires consulting the youth and including them in the politics of the country more so than in the past, otherwise the populous may revert to more violent means of social activism against the state in order to pave the way for the young Moroccans of the future.

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