



**MEDITERRANEAN DIALOGUE II:  
HARMONIZATION OF SECURITY POLICIES IN THE MEDITERRANEAN REGION  
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*The Perspective of Democratization in  
Mediterranean Regional Cooperation*

By: Dr Hassan Rahmouni [Morocco]

<http://www.hassanrahmouni.com>

Security cooperation between countries of the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean Sea has grown to become of utmost priority for all peoples of this region. Increasing security threats of all natures impart, more than ever before, a need for the development of closer partnership links between these neighboring nations. Yet, the gap might appear too wide to fill. Religious, cultural, social, economic and political divergences might make the building of any partnership appear to the observer as a difficultly achievable objective.

Beyond the concern of ‘hard security’ issues, for which the competent civilian and military officials are (certainly and) constantly meeting the rising challenges, ‘softer security’ issues will probably prove to be more difficult to tackle. Among them, the issue of “democratic building” has openly occupied the cooperation scene in the present decade. The focus on “democracy” as a bearing instrument against the terror threat has growingly been prevailing in modern political strategies of the west towards the MENA region. Public and private spheres in the region, civil society, activist groups as well as large trends of the media, have willingly expressed their readiness to jump on the democratization band wagon. Yet, for many leaders and governing bodies in the region, ‘democracy’ is still perceived as a threatening western virus.

The process is however embarked into and signs of change appear to be really occurring. How much of this change is really genuinely inspired and effect-bearing still remains to be proven; but, real signals of societies on the move are evidently clear. The problem about ‘democracy’ however is about choosing the appropriate democratic style that is adaptable to the thinking and cultural patterns of the region. The question also often arises about the possible reasons that may comfort our certainty about the would-be values of imported western democracy? In contexts in which democratically functioning systems have produced sanguinary leaderships at various times of

contemporary history, doubt in the potential virtues of ‘democracy’ may well be tolerated. For the average Arab citizen, the question is also ventured about the acceptability of the American model of democracy, knowing that social and economic injustice is still prevailing among considerable fringes of American communities. Others also wonder about the present justification of this drastically grown U.S. interest in the region, as a newly converted ‘apostle’ of Middle East democracy, after having fully supported ailing theocratic and dictatorial regimes for multiple decades? Furthermore, and in recent regional developments, Iraqi democracy has been clearly evolving towards what appears to be bearing all the seeds of a federal system. Applying the same pattern of ideas by the U.S. ‘Founding Fathers’ would have then led to what will presently be a federated union which includes among others a ‘Sioux’ state, a ‘Cheyenne’ state, and a ‘Navaho’ state on the bases of ethnicity and/or wealth of the territorial ores and mines... This thinking evidently undermines all democratization initiatives.

That is why all efforts have to be deployed in this cooperation initiative around the shores of the Mediterranean Sea to avoid a cheap sale of a ‘democratic panacea’ as a conjunctional remedy for temporary terrorist aches of international diplomacy. A deep and thorough reflection on the multiple facets of western hemisphere pluralistic democracy definitely needs to be appropriately undertaken in the context of these neighboring societies marked by the pertinent teachings of the Islamic ‘shoura’.



That is what this paper will seek to explore. Given the irreversible trend towards ‘democratic building’ in the southern shore of the Mediterranean Sea, styles and patterns of exploitable means and paths towards some satisfactory model of democracy will tentatively be looked into. For this purpose, four streams of ideas will be explored for the purposes of group discussion and debate:

1. The democratic choices for more secure societal values;
2. The prevailing democratic deficit in the southern shore of the Mediterranean Sea;
3. Meeting the newly defined challenges of democratic achievements;
4. Exploring partnership opportunities for regional democratic building.

## **I. The Democratic Choices for More Secure Societal Values:**

Through their writings, Greek historians and philosophers have described the prevailing of three main forms of Government: «*Monocracy*», «*Oligarchy*» & «*Democracy*». Both Herodotus' writings in the fifth century (BC) about the three Persian mages' political visions [1] as well as Socrates' "functional trilogy" of power summarize governing styles in the 'government of one individual', the 'government of a small group' and the 'government of a multitude'. Ever since, political history has seen alternating varieties of these three forms of government.

### **1. Monocracy:**

It is a form of government in which power belongs to one individual; he/she (usually a "he") can be a "King", an "Emperor" or a "Dictator". This form of power organization has been very common in "primitive societies". Through history, four forms of monarchies have emerged: monarchies, theocracies, popular 'cesarism' and dictatorships.

#### **a. Monarchy:**

It is the typical model of the government of "one individual". It implies a historical choice between two main styles of government:

##### ✓ "Absolutist Monarchies":

Only one individual prevails as a power holder. Power is transmitted on hereditary bases. The monarch exercises all powers: legislative, executive and judiciary. Power is generally based on "divine legality".

##### ✓ "Limited Monarchies":

They are also referred to as "constitutional monarchies". It is a mixed form of government combining "monocracy" to other forms of relative "power sharing".

#### **b. Theocracy:**

This is another form of "monocracy" in which all power is vested in one single individual. Historically, this type of regime has prevailed in situations where the power holder had been assimilated with a "Living Divinity" or a "Messenger of God". It is an absolute form of concentration of political and religious powers. It is generally also a form of power in which legislative and executive powers are concentrated. The "chief" holds unlimited powers.

#### **c. Popular "Cesarism":**

It is also a form of monocracy based on the leadership of one individual. Power is however exercised in the name of the "people". Trust of the people is constantly sought by the leading authority through the use of "plebiscite" as a legitimating technique. It is an authoritarian regime, disguised behind appearances of democratic practices.

**d. Dictatorship:**

It evidently implies a political regime in which power is generally exercised by one individual. Power is conquered by force and exercised in an absolute manner. There are various categories of dictatorships: military dictatorships and totalitarian dictatorships. Fascism and Nazism have represented typical models of dictatorial practices.

**2. Oligarchy:**

It is a form of government in which power belongs to a small group of individuals. They usually represent a minority. There are three forms of oligarchic governments: aristocracy, plutocracy and “partitocracy”. “Technocracy” is also accepted as a fourth phenomenon of power holding and power exercise.

**a. Aristocracy:**

It represents a privileged social class. The aristocratic approach to power is based on elitist theories. It tends towards “the government of the best”. “Apartheid” has been considered as a model of elitist theory of power.

**b. Plutocracy:**

It is a form of government in which power is vested in the wealthiest. It is therefore estimated in this context that those who have been successful in accumulating wealth deserve more than the others the right to govern. This conception of power has led to the application of the “electoral census” [an electoral tax]. In practice, other forms of power exercising are just other forms of deployment of the government by the wealthiest.

**c. “Partitocracy”:**

The main idea here is that power is held by political party leaders and/or by party militants. Changes of majorities therefore imply massive changes in key positions. These mechanisms have generally tended to transform political parties into giant scale “*placement bureaux*”. Processes of ‘Party-coalitions’ generally maintain power in the hands of alternating political parties.

**d. Technocracy:**

It is also estimated that ‘technocracy’ is a form of governmental organization in which power is held by a “*knowledge holding*” minority. Technocrats are often called upon for ministerial portfolios as an alternative to ‘party’ leaderships.

**3. Democracy:**

It is a form of government in which it is the ‘*people*’ who rule. The word “*democracy*” comes from the ancient Greeks. To them, ‘*demo*’ referred to the people and ‘*kratia*’ meant “to rule”. The apostles of modern democracy haven’t added much to what the “Greek Miracle” set forth more than twenty five centuries ago. Democracy has been praised by some thinkers as a virtual system and criticized by others as the impulsive power

of an ignorant multitude [2]. In Greek thought, democracy remains, however, a political phenomenon, implying a popular participation to the exercise of power. Quantitative criteria, the will of the people and the enactment process of laws are determining factors in the appreciation of a democratic regime. Classical writings of political thinkers such as John Locke (1632 - 1704) [3], Charles de Montesquieu (1685 - 1755) [4] and Alexis de Tocqueville (1805 - 1859) [5] are commonly referred to as bearing the basic ideology underlying the democracy of present times. Separation of powers, systems of checks and balances, prevailing in the presidential systems of government, as well as reciprocal controls exercised by the three branches of government within the parliamentary regimes are all deeply rooted in their respective political thoughts. All western democracies are profoundly inspired from their basic teachings. The U.S. President Abraham Lincoln (1860 -1865) has even gratified the universal political knowledge with his famous definition of democracy as being the “*Government of the People, by the People and for the People*”. Even Karl Marx’s and Friedrich Engels’ [6] critical writings about liberal democracies haven’t been able to erase the impact of such a strongly established system of government. Liberalism and pluralism have even gained further space in the aftermaths of the soviet perestroika. Time has even come now for the western hemisphere to deploy its system and to determine new criteria for the definition of its understanding of democracy.

Thus the political choice of government based on popular sovereignty and guaranteeing the “*respect of basic rights and freedoms*” is progressively prevailing. In this vision of a democratic system of government, the governing institutions are democratically elected and are controlled by a responsible opposition. Within democracy, three basic conditions must be met: “*Equality*” (in all its aspects, including equal opportunity), “*Legality*” (due process of law) & “*Liberty*” (implying all basic human rights and freedoms).

Thus, “democracy” [7] necessarily implies the rule of the multitude; popular sovereignty thus finds its full meaning and reaches its utmost deployment: the people then acquire the right to reign in the political world as “*the Deity does in the Universe*” [Alexis De Tocqueville]. Whether it is within the context of a direct democracy or in a representative one, there is an evident acceptance by the governed of the power exercised upon them; acquired legitimacy thus implies acceptance by the masses of their rulers, along with the possibility for them to change them if need be. Election becomes therefore an important instrument in such regimes. Real elections, not fake ones.

Furthermore, the exercise of democratic power implies a necessary separation of attributions between the vested authorities. “*Political power is potentially dangerous; power corrupts; absolute power corrupts absolutely; power must be stopped by power...*” [Charles de Montesquieu: Chapter VI, Book XI, “L’Esprit des Lois]. Constitutional provisions are thus made to separate the three branches of government: legislative, executive and judicial. Separation of powers is thus implemented by “*Checks and balances*”: reciprocal means of action that each branch has over the others. Regime choices are then possible between “*Parliamentary Regimes*” (implying a thorough collaboration of powers that includes “*motions of censorship*”, “*questions of confidence*” and “*dissolutions*” of the legislative body) and “*Presidential Regimes*” (in which the pressures are organized in such a manner as not to endanger the institutional continuity of the power holder).

Nationally or locally, the functioning of democracy thus implies the free full expression of the will of the multitude. Political pluralism, free elections and due process of law have proven to be sufficient ingredients for a correct functioning of such democratic systems.

Yet, if most countries of the northern shore of the Mediterranean Sea have successfully been launching their paths towards more or less satisfactory answers to the democratic expectations of “good governance”, their southern neighbors have unhappily been experiencing large democratic deficits.

## **II. The Prevailing Democratic Deficit in the Southern Shore of the Mediterranean:**

All six southern shore nations of the Mediterranean Sea [Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia] have been faced with various forms of democratic demands both by emerging voices of national movements domestically and by bilateral and multilateral diplomatic pressures. They have all developed trends to integrate the call for democratization launched by late President Francois Mitterrand in the “La Baule” Conference in 1991 and, more recently echoed with much insistence by President George W. Bush.

These initially authoritarian style systems, varying from a monarchical tradition to innovative military regimes, have thus been trying to adapt their basic institutional choices to pluralistic demands, electoral processes and various schemes of separation of power. All six States have built their institutional reform on written Constitutions. Long series of newly adopted texts and amendments have led to the presently existing documents: the Algerian Constitution of 1996, the Egyptian Constitution of 1980, the Libyan Constitution of 1969, the Mauritanian Constitution of 1991, the Moroccan Constitution of 1996 and the Tunisian Constitution of 1959. Most of them have been subject to multiple amendments, the most recent one having taken place in Egypt (May 2005).

All of these Constitutions acknowledge the attachment of these countries to their Middle Eastern Arab roots. In all of them, Arabic is confirmed as the official language, Islam as the religion of the State and the Maghreb and /or Arab unity as primary national objectives [8].

All six of them refer, in a form or another, to the importance of the ‘People’ as a source or justification of power holding by the governing elites [9]. Let’s not forget in this context that most classical political science theories (J.J. Rousseau, Charles de Montesquieu, Alexis de Tocqueville, and others...) underline the importance of the governed as a source of legitimacy. Furthermore, the American ‘Declaration of Independence’ (July 4, 1776) stresses the necessity for power to be derived from the consent of the governed: “...*That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed...*”.

Beyond all diversified forms of undemocratic access to power in the region, has grown a real conviction that some sort of referential needs to be made to the prevailing of popular will in power justification. In fact, a quick glance at the prevailing



institutions in the six target countries (and beyond them to most of the political regimes of the Middle East) will easily determine that the popular masses had initially little or no say in the choice of their governing leaderships. Besides the case of the only remaining multi centuries old monarchy in the area (Morocco), where the “Beya” (allegiance) process has been serving as a fundamental legitimating act for the whole system [10], all other regimes in the region have stemmed out of coups that ousted other formerly prevailing political systems: Houari Boumediene’s Coup in Algeria in 1965 against Ahmed Benbella, Jamal Abdennasser’s (and Naguib’s) coup in Egypt in 1952 against King Faruq, Muammar Qaddafi’s Coup in Libya in 1969 which ousted King Driss Essenoussi, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali’s Coup in 1987 which medically deposed the historical president of Tunisia Habib Bourguiba, and, finally, Mouaouia Ould Sid Ahmed Taya’s coup in 1984 that overthrew other colonels who had themselves overthrown the first president of independent Mauritania, Mokhtar Ould Daddah. President Ould Taya has also been overthrown on August 3, 2005 by Colonel Ely Ould Mohamed Fall.



**Algeria:** President Abdelaziz Bouteflika



**Egypt:** President Housni Mubarak



**Libya:** President Muammar Khaddafi



**Mauritania:** Pr. Ely Ould Mohamed Fall



**Morocco:** King Mohamed VI



**Tunisia:** President Zine El Abidine Benali

It is relevant to underline though, that all these dynasty founding leaders or their successors have been tempting to gain acceptance through various forms of legitimating electoral processes; the most recent ones having been: the September 7, 2005 first ever Egyptian pluralist election that brought President Housni Mubarak back to office for a fifth term (until 2011), with an 88.6% majority against his opponents Ayman NOUR (7.6%) and Noman GOMAA (2.9%); the April 8, 2004 Algerian presidential election that reelected President Abdelaziz Bouteflika for a second term with 85% of the suffrages, leaving very little to his political opponents Ali Benflis (6.4%) and Abdallah Djaballah (5%) and seemingly establishing his popularity over the multiple non apparent

forms of resistance to his power by military establishments [11]! the October 24, 2004 Tunisian presidential election that reelected President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali for a fourth term with 94.5% of the suffrages, again leaving too little casted votes for his opponents Mohamed Bouchiha (3.8%) and Mohamed Ali Halouani (1%) [12]; the November 7, 2003 Mauritanian presidential election which reelected President Mouaouia Ould Sid Ahmed Taya for a third term with 60.8% of the suffrages [13]. His successor, Colonel Ely Ould Mohamed Fall has promised free pluralist elections within a two year deadline; As of Libya's genuine system of "Jamahyria" (the state of the masses), it is based on Colonel Muammar Qaddafi's own political vision, the "Third Universal Theory" implementing a sort of military dictatorship dissimulated behind a seemingly popular regime governed by the populace through local councils; within this system, Qaddafi has continuously played the role of its "Guide" since September 1, 1969 [14].

In all six southern shore countries have grown forms of government concerned with stability and institutional continuity. To various degrees, they have all been facing significant challenges to their legitimacy. Pluralistic egalitarian patterns have been forged. Election has also stood to be more and more as an obligatory tool for choosing the governing elites. In all six countries, all national and local deliberative assemblies are elected; the conditions under which the elections are carried out need to be further scrutinized; but the process is certainly well established. In all six countries, and to various degrees, constitutional reforms have taken place and the momentum is certainly been maintained for the establishment of better functioning democratic institutions. Be it only for the purpose of clearly defining competencies of the various governing bodies and major institutions, thus generating more hope for protection against the arbitrary, it can be affirmatively ascertained that tangible progress is taking place. Both for genuinely local considerations and also under international pressure, democratic reforms are taking place. They may be timid and still unsatisfactory in many cases, but the launched process may be considered as irreversible. Within these reforms, and with the exception of Libya, the clear choice of Charles de Montesquieu styles of regimes of "Separation of Powers" in which the executive, legislative and judicial branches are independent of each other and effectively counteract within the constitutional process has been retained. To what extent it has been operational remains to be proven and appreciated. But, at least, it has the merit of being there to be capitalized upon and further developed [15].

Yet, while these countries and many others have been striving to modernize their governing patterns and bring them up to universally acceptable systems of political democracies, a new conception of democratic parameters has emerged. It originated from Washington and further elevated the expectancies. New rules of democratic appreciation have thus been established under the administration of President George W. Bush.

### **III. Meeting the Newly Defined Challenges of Democratic Achievement:**

The growing trend, after Jurgen Habermas's [16] thoughtful input about public sphere development, as well as the wide proliferation of civil society activism, has been much in favour of innovative conceptions of newly emerging democratic cultures. One of the most recent official definitions of what ought to be understood by acceptable



democracy has been set forth by Rick Haass [17], Director of the State Department's Policy Planning Staff. According to him, American foreign policy will be guided in the future mostly by concerns related to political participation, support for the civil society and due respect for the rule of law. It is definitely clear that, through his “new commandments”, it is not only the political functioning of a system which will be determining for the appreciation of a democratic culture. Societal progress is also becoming a fundamental factor. Henceforth, it is within this framework that approaches to democratic reform will need to be carried out. Haass sketches a list of new parameters of appreciation; among these, are:

- **Political Democracy**: It is evident that there is not a unique model of democracy. Paths and patterns for democracy are multiple and each environment may generate a democratic style adaptable to its context; yet, minimal conditions are to be met.

- **Pluralist Tolerance**: In this context, a mature development of the civil society is a prerequisite for a successful democracy. Elections per se are subject to manipulation. In order for the electoral participation process to bear its full meaning, it needs substantial accompanying measures in relation with a full maturity of civil institutions as well as an appropriate diffusion of power.

- **Relevant Education**: Not only does education contribute to the appropriate teachings of citizens' rights, but it also develops an adequately informed population. And as democracy is tributary to the level and quality of education of a target population, it becomes evidently apparent that sensible shifts will have to be made in this context towards developing critical thinking and creativeness. Education does not consist only in going to school. It implies more imaginative parameters.

- **Independent Media**: Freedom of the press is a determining clue to democratic progress. Yet, deontological rules need to be governing the extent to which this freedom is managed. Responsibility should be constantly underlying the deployment of this freedom. The role of a freed media from the pressure of government therefore becomes more of an educational job than a preaching mission.

- **Gender Equality**: The sensitive issue of gender is growing to be an unavoidable clue to democratic achievements. It concerns in most cases the access of more than half the population to its basic political and social rights. It is evidently understood that a society which fosters women's subordination to a dominant male leadership paves the social bases for more servility of subjugated men towards other men. This is, of course, a total negation of democratic values.

- **Interdependence of Economic and Political Reforms**: The shared standards of economic liberalism and free initiative exercise an inductive effect, as well as benefit from, the deployment of the politically democratic values. They both interact into generating economic progress and democratic decision making.

- **Democracy has to stem from within**: It represents a time consuming process in which the dynamics emerge from the concerned society itself. Democracy cannot be transplanted; it has to be deeply rooted in the target system.

Within this context of democracy and growing democratic values, as constantly evolving from mere political concerns to more societal preoccupations, involving gender, educational and media aspects, one might wonder about where the Arab-Islamic Middle Eastern and North African states stand in relation with the ongoing democratic reforms. How much progress has been made towards entrusting the southern shore countries, and beyond them, the 400 million Arab and Muslim inhabitants of this region [18] with their primary right to a democratically chosen leadership and to democratic forms of government?

In line with this primary concern, the then Secretary of State Collin Powell had boldly set forward an open scheme for bringing about democratic values to the MENA region. In his public address to the “Heritage Foundation” on December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2002 he clearly defined a “Middle East Partnership Initiative” [19] which *“involves partnering with community leaders to strengthen civil society, expand political participation, and lift the voices of women.”* In his answer to a question related to bridging *“democracy with the profound levels of depth of theocracy and theology which is prominent in the Muslim world”*, he unequivocally stated that *“there has to be a model found that will allow faith to coexist with political institutions that serve the people. Strong leaders will have to come forward and the peoples of the region will have to come forward to raise up strong leaders that are willing to find the balance between faith, theocracy and an open political system”*. Under the second Bush administration, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has kept the momentum; and the call for more democracy is on the agenda more than ever before.

It is needless to ascertain here that the sought model is not a mere theoretical vision. It does exist and its sought balance may prove to be reachable. But, in all cases, it needs to remain respectful of the deeply anchored values in the area, i.e. Islam and Islamic rules and traditions.

Managing Islam and the Islamic communities does not simply consist in a constant expression of good will. Nor does it confine itself in periodic mosque visits or “four” party speeches by key western leaderships. Through various political positions, interpreted as basically hostile to the Islamic world, substantial harm has already been done. Western attitudes, and most particularly U.S. policies, have also and most certainly tended to generate opposite effects among Islamic masses whenever individual Islamic targets have been singled out as blameworthy. They certainly do not, and may not generate any true and fruitful adhesion either, when they base their approach to Islam or the Middle East on multifaceted styles of bribery. Positively constructive approaches, either for diplomatic purposes or for cultural exchange and democratic institutional building will need to be based on a drastic policy revision for the area (*for the sake of generating more willing adherence*) and on a thorough knowledge of the target civilization (*in order for the democratic principles set forth to have better chances of real and effective implementation*).

Nowadays, it has become evident that the Islamic faith holds within its principles most of the fetched clues to the contemporary concerns related to the Middle Eastern and North African zone. Since the prevailing societal cement in these lands has constantly resided in the Islamic faith during the last fifteen centuries, one might logically wonder about the extent to which this religion may bear the seeds of a genuinely democratic evolution? [20].

#### **IV. The partnership Opportunities for Regional Democratic Building:**

Building democracy further consist in paving the way for democratically elected rulers. Cooperation opportunities are multiple in this respect both between the concerned countries of the region, within a context of experiment sharing, or in their relationship with their northern neighbours in the context of bilateral or multilateral assistance. It must be stated here, however, that national pride might make it a very sensitive mission to tackle. That's why assistance through training might prove to be more tactfully relevant.

The concerned populations have suffered so much from various types of political privation that they have legitimately become eligible for democratic quietude. There are high expectations linked with the democratic designation of authentically chosen representatives who will be called upon to lead, govern and administer a reform apparatus potentially generating more progress towards the launching of new democratic values and practices. Various challenging fronts will need to be faced as will be numerous the challenging missions to be carried out. If it is certain however that only democratically elected institutions can quench the growing thirst for change and sound institutional building, it is also as evident that regime determination and clear political measures to be implemented will have to be set forth from the outset.

Basing the preliminary reformative assumptions on stability preservation and on the maintenance of much of the prevailing socio-political equilibrium, parliamentary regimes, partly dosed with aspects of presidential forms of government have demonstrated an appreciated adaptation both to Monarchies and to Republics. The possibility is offered for the reform inducing authorities to choose among diverse prevailing political models all over the globe. The strengths and weaknesses of the various existing systems are known; and so is their adaptability to various political choices. Both of the most expanded of them imply a modern style Montesquieu regime of separation of powers. But some will allow for respective political action of one branch of the state on the other (such as the dissolution of the assembly or the overthrow of the government by a majority vote in the Parliament) while others will specify the precise exercise of a system of checks and balances without necessarily generating any executive instability or any legislative uncertainties. Whether there is a single Chief of State (King, Sultan, Emir or President) who governs with the help of a Cabinet directly responsible to him or whether the executive power is invested in a prime Minister appointed by the Chief of State, removable by him and directly responsible to the legislative Assembly, is a determining choice that only a duly elected Constitutional Assembly can determine for each state of the region. In some instances Constitutional drafting committees have proven to present some advantages. Introducing reform, will also have to benefit from

compared experiences and success stories of a wide range of world wide experimented intermediary systems.

The Islamic “Shoura” concept finds itself usefully updated to allow for authentic choices of the political rulers. Consulting an elected leadership makes its contributive function more representative of ground level trends and more stabilizing for the status quo. Valuable input can then be expected from democratically elected bodies both at the national level and at the regional and communal levels. Long run planning and implementation will however be needed to carefully and methodically determine the electoral lists, divide the territory into electoral districts, define the ballot system and organize the political campaign. The verdict of the ballots has proven to allow for democratically chosen and politically responsible decision makers. So, there is no doubt about the necessary call on the polls to arbitrate between the different pretenders to popular legitimacy. Yet, various electoral systems are known to lead to various pre-desired political situations. The issue of the vote will vary according to the applicable polling system: under the same conditions, the results will be different according to whether the voting age is 21, 20, 18, or as it has been fixed in countries like Brazil, Cuba and Nicaragua, to the age of 16. The issue will also be different based on whether it is a uninominal majority system or a uninominal proportional basis vote, on whether it is a direct vote or an indirect choice mode of elected officials. Some choices definitely favor conservative vote while others tend to favor more progressive political choices. Results may also vary according to the list system used (if deemed preferable to the uninominal candidacy system): blocked lists, preferential lists, mixed lists or incomplete lists offer a wide range of electoral organization choices. Other electoral techniques have also proven to have unquestionable pre-planned effects on the final issue of the poll. Campaign organization and proportional media use by the protagonists also needs to be carefully defined in order to avoid any undesired and harmful situation to the free democratic expression of choice.

Relevant lessons, both positive and negative, may however be drawn from recent successful experiences in the region. All these areas of knowledge and built in experience represent fields of potential cooperation, along with wealth of experience accumulated by the northern and western neighbors of the target countries. How can these “*Partnerships for Democratic Progress*” [Pdp] be initiated and implemented? Let’s jointly explore the offered opportunities in some of our group discussions.

**Casablanca, January 2006,  
Dr. Hassan Rahmouni.**

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[1] – As an Athenian reporter and a chronicler of his time, Herodotus, who was also called “the father of politics”, recalls the story of the three Persian Wise Men who successively criticize and make the apology of the main forms of government. He locates his story in Persia, after the death of young Smerdis. The seven plotters then opened a debate about the best suitable form of government for Persia. The Three Wise Men (Otanés, Megabastus and Darius) took part in the debate, presenting their respective views and opinions about each one of the then known forms of government.

❖ For Otanes, the political systems based on a one man's leadership ought to be avoided. They allow no contradictory criticism and lead to pervert situations. It is preferable for him to resort to the system of multitude sovereignty implying a popular regime based on "isonomy": law (nomos) and equal (isos). In such a system, it is a large number of people who contribute to decision making and to the appointment in public offices. And, for Otanes, this democratic form of government is the most likeable of all.

❖ As of Megabastus, he disagrees, in his oration, with Otanes, underlining that the power of multitude invests the people, ignorant and impulsive, with mass responsibility that they may not be up to. For him, a tyrant (then synonym of 'Monarch with no pejorative connotation) knows what he is doing; but the people do not, because of their lack of appropriate education. Excessive passion of the people is also to be feared. Megabastus compares opinion with an outpouring winter torrent that carries all it finds on its way. He then proposes the oligarchy as a moderate form of government: "let's elect a sovereign assembly of the best", he says.

❖ Then comes Darius, the third Mage; he criticizes both democracy and oligarchy. He advocates instead of them the form of government that lies in one single individual: a prudent, excellent man who manages with care. For him, oligarchy generates rivalry that further leads to competition for leadership, hatred and violence. He also considers that democracy cannot prevent evil. Within it, bad men can agree between them and impose their own will to others. Only a strong, good man can manage to bring about sound and stable leadership.

Monarchy, oligarchy and democracy are thus portrayed, praised and criticized in Herodotus' chronicles; but Hellenic liberty remains present in all his writings as a permanent model for the success of any form of government.

[2] – Ref. our paper presented at the first UCLA Mediterranean Conference on Mideast Security, in Athens (Greece): "Building a Democratic Culture: referring to Mythological Greece for Inspiration", by Dr. Hassan Rahmouni, October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2002 [<http://www.hassanrahmouni.com>].

[3] – John Locke, «Letters on Tolerance» (1689) & «The Second Treaty on Civil Government» (1690).

[4] – Charles De Montesquieu, «L'Esprit des Lois» (1748).

[5] – Alexis De Tocqueville, «Democracy in America» (Vol. I, 1835 & Vol. II, 1840)

[6] – Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels, "The Communist Party Manifesto" (1845)

[7] – Here are a few more selected quotations that try to define "democracy":

- **Democracy** comes from the Greek word "demos" meaning people. In democracies, it is the people who hold sovereign power over legislator and government.
- Although nuances apply to the world's various **democracies**, certain principles and practices distinguish democratic government from other forms of government.
- **Democracy** is government in which power and civic responsibility are exercised by all citizens, directly or through their freely elected representatives.
- **Democracy** is a set of principles and practices that protect human freedom; it is the institutionalization of freedom.
- **Democracy** rests upon the principles of majority rule, coupled with individual and minority rights. All democracies, while respecting the will of the majority, zealously protect the fundamental rights of individuals and minority groups.
- **Democracies** guard against all-powerful central governments and decentralize government to regional and local levels, understanding that local government must be as accessible and responsive to the people as possible.
- **Democracies** understand that one of their prime functions is to protect such basic human rights as freedom of speech and religion; the right to equal protection under law; and the opportunity to organize and participate fully in the political, economic, and cultural life of society.
- **Democracies** conduct regular free and fair elections open to all citizens. Elections in a democracy cannot be facades that dictators or a single party hide behind, but authentic competitions for the support of the people.



- **Democracy** subjects governments to the rule of law and ensures that all citizens receive equal protection under the law and that their rights are protected by the legal system.
- **Democracies** are diverse, reflecting each nation's unique political, social, and cultural life. Democracies rest upon fundamental principles, not uniform practices.
- Citizens in a **democracy** not only have rights, they have the responsibility to participate in the political system that [in turn] protects their rights and freedoms.
- Democratic societies are committed to the values of tolerance, cooperation, and compromise. **Democracies** recognize that reaching consensus requires compromise and that it may not always be attainable. In the words of **Mahatma Gandhi**, "*intolerance is itself a form of violence and an obstacle to the growth of a true democratic spirit.*"

- [8] – Thus in **Algeria** “*Arabic is the national and official language*” (Article 3) and “*Islam is the religion of the state*” (Article 2). In **Egypt** “*Islam is the religion of the state and Arabic its official language*” (Article 2). In **Libya**, article 1 of the Constitution stipulates that “*Libya is an Arab ...republic; ... the Libyan people are part of the Arab nation; their goal is total Arab unity*” while article 2 stipulates “*Islam is the religion of the State and Arabic is its official Language*”. Furthermore, the Preamble of the Libyan Constitution also stipulates that “...the Arab people in Libya...who will stand with their brothers from all parts of the Arab Nation in the struggle for the restoration of every inch of Arab land desecrated by imperialism and for the elimination of all obstacles which prevent Arab unity from the Gulf to the Ocean”. For its part, the Preamble of the Constitution of **Mauritania** stipulates that “*the Mauritanian People...solemnly proclaims its attachment to Islam*” and that “*the Mauritanian people, a Muslim, African, and Arab people, proclaims that it will work for the achievement of the unity of the Greater Maghreb, of the Arab Nation and of Africa and for the consolidation of peace in the world*”; Article 5 further states that “Islam shall be the religion of the people and of the State” and article 6 confirms that “*the official language is Arabic*”. The Constitution of **Morocco** pledges in its Preamble that “*An Islamic...state whose official language is Arabic, the Kingdom of Morocco constitutes a part of the Great Arab Maghreb*” and confirms in its article 6 that “*Islam shall be the state religion*”. Finally, in **Tunisia**, the Constitution stipulates in its Preamble that “*the representatives of the Tunisian People...proclaim the will of this People... to remain faithful to the teachings of Islam, to the unity of the Greater Maghreb, to its membership of the Arab family...*” before stating in its article 1 that “*its religion is the Islam, its language is Arabic*” and in article 2 that “*The Tunisian Republic constitutes part of the Great Arab Maghreb, towards whose unity it works within the framework of common interests*”.
- [9] – **Algeria: {Article 6}** “*The People is the source of all power. National sovereignty belongs exclusively to the People*”. **Egypt: {Article 3}** “*Sovereignty is for the people alone they are the source of authority. The people shall exercise and protect this sovereignty, and safeguard national unity*”. **Libya: {Preamble}** “*In the name of the Arab People of Libya... In the name of popular will, expressed by the armed forces...The Revolutionary Command Council etc*”. **Mauritania: {Preamble}** “*The Mauritanian People proclaim its will to...*” **{Article 2}** “*The People shall be the source of all power. The national sovereignty belongs to the People*”. **Morocco: {Article 2}** “*Sovereignty shall be that of the people*”. **Tunisia: {Article 3}** “*Sovereignty belongs to the Tunisian People*”.
- [10] – Article 19 of the Moroccan Constitution: “*The King, "Amir Al-Muminin"(Commander of the Faithful), shall be the Supreme Representative of the Nation*”; For further details about the Moroccan legitimating process through the institution of ‘Beya’, Cf. my paper “The Place of Islam in a Contemporary Arab Legal System”, presented at the Harvard seminar hosted by Professor Michael Ignatieff on “Religion and Human Rights”, May 7, 2004, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Studies, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. [<http://www.hassanrahmouni.com>].
- [11] – Article 71 of the Algerian Constitution: “*The President of the Republic is elected by universal, direct and secret suffrage*”.
- [12] – Article 39 of the Tunisian Constitution: “*The President of the Republic is elected by universal suffrage*”.



- [13] – Article 26 of the Mauritanian Constitution: “The President of the Republic is elected by direct, universal suffrage”.
- [14] – Article 19 of the Libyan Constitution: “The Revolutionary Command Council appoints the President and the Council of Ministers”.
- [15] – For further country by country details of the ongoing constitutional reforms in all these countries, ref. my paper in the *George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies* seminar on “Challenges to Nato’s Transformation: A Look across the Mediterranean”, held in Garmisch-Partenkirchen (Germany): May 3, 2005: Hassan Rahmouni, “The Maghreb, the Middle East and Mediterranean Cooperation: A View from the South” [<http://www.hassanrahmouni.com>].
- [16] – Habermas, Jürgen. “The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society”. Trans. Thomas Burger. 1962; Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989. Habermas, Jürgen, “Legitimation Crisis” Trans. Thomas McCarthy. 1973; Boston: Beacon Press, 1975.
- [17]– Richard Haass, “Reinforcing Democracy in the Islamic World”, Presentation to the “Council on Foreign Relations”, Washington, D.C., December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2002.
- [18]– In this paper, the target region is defined as including all the member states of the “Arab League” along with their Turkish and Iranian neighbours.
- [19]– Collin Powell, “The Middle East Partnership Initiative”, Presentation to the “Heritage Foundation”, Washington, D.C., December, 12<sup>th</sup>, 2002.
- [20]– For a detailed analysis of the topic of Islam’s compatibility with western style democracy, refer my paper “The Place of Islam in a Contemporary Arab Legal System” presented at the Harvard seminar hosted by Professor Michael Ignatieff on “Religion and Human Rights”, May 7, 2004, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Studies, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. [<http://www.hassanrahmouni.com>]; op. cit. note # 10.