THE ACADEMIC FRAMEWORK AND THE RELIGIOUS VALUES AS WELL AS THEIR PRACTICE

NAJWA HAMAOUI

Chargée D'Enseignement, FTI/EII, Umons, Belgique, Perry

ABSTRACT

Can we imagine an economic and social development in Arab and Islamic countries without democratic bases?

Isn't the absence of democracy the major reason for the fall of any system?

If development is possible and stable without democracy, then what happens to distributive justice, freedom or human Rights?

Many Arab and Muslim countries did not obtain democracy because of the education system, Muslims and Arabs themselves. They have been refused to get democracy in the name of Islam without being consulted on this possible choice.

KEYWORDS: Challenge, Values, Needs, Democracy, *Shura*, Social Justice

INTRODUCTION

As any democratic person who respects the values of tolerance, liberty and brotherhood, I am in a total confusion for what is happening on the other side of the Mediterranean Sea, and, at the same time, I feel the sufferings of this population.

All citizens found on the other side of the Mediterranean Sea speak Arabic, except the part taken by Israel. The majority of this population is Muslim, but there are Arab Christians and Arab Jewish, who were present in the region before Islam was founded. There is also a secular community issued from all the other communities that are established, but very discrete.

Do the Arab Muslims perceive democracy in the same way as other Muslims in the world?

Can the Arab Christians contribute to accelerate the democratic evolution in the region as was done so during the cultural *Nahda* period?

Is democracy (as suggested by the Arab Spring) a condition for social and economic development?

Can the secular part represent a source for democracy more than any other party?

I will analyze this problem in the framework of these particular questions and will consider the uncertain context in the region. I would like to state my objectives by suggesting some solutions to the questions that very often confront herein.

To reach my objectives, I will focus my study on the specialized bibliography while the future perspectives and the conclusion may justify the choice of subject and its importance concerning the evolution and the future of this region.

When we mention democracy, we should not forget human rights and other concepts that constitute important issues related to tolerance, freedom, justice and equality, in other words a complete system of values. In democracy we cannot accept some values and reject others.

Democracy represents a lifestyle for society in general where every person is to be treated as an active citizen with rights and obligations.

The important question on this issue is:

Can we consider countries that organize free elections as democratic?

Probably not, even though the universal suffrage is considered as democratic expression.

Linked to this, I believe that democratic expression comes best in the form of municipal elections where the citizen understands the importance of his/her consultation and the reasons for the concrete organization. It involves an approach of closeness, that of the daily concerns of the citizens in their districts, the real interests of the citizens in a proximity approach[1], in their daily life and their occupations in their streets and districts etc.

Would this "partial democracy" be sufficient in a phase of awareness and preparation?

Is democracy a priority for less favored populations and for less developed countries?

Is it considered as a condition for their evolution?

If yes, what measures could it take to avoid the shock or the rejection?

If in 1995, Europe required democracy as a condition for the Euro-Mediterranean relationships and agreements of Barcelona, in all the countries that are partners[2]. It is surely by conviction of the EU that this is the best means to move closer and to prepare the population in an ideal situation to stop extremism and to avoid any political incompatibility between both sides of the Mediterranean Sea in a pacific vision and in good neighborhood relations in order to install peace in the region.

There is a contradiction between the Mediterranean partners concerning the geopolitical threat that alters the Euro-Mediterranean relationships.

Will the democracy brought by the Arab spring avoid the military dispositive by both parties?

Democracy and Islam

Democracy was born in Athens in the 5th century BC when people used to exercise their rights equally. At that time, Athens was a political, economic and cultural Metropolis. A direct democracy was established where people could exercise their sovereignty without any intermediary of any representative organ. Only Athenians could take part in political action. It was understood that Governors and Governed were exchangeable; they were nearly all qualified to be politicians due to their level of knowledge of city affairs.

The elective process was established in Europe in the XVIII century of our era during the "Age of *Enlightenment*". "The pure democracy" was considered as the vision of the Spirit. Jean Jacques Rousseau said in his book III of The Social Contract: "*If there were People of Gods, they will govern themselves democratically. A perfect Government as this one is not for ordinary men. A pure direct Democracy would not be possible?*"[3]

This idea will be enforced by the installation of a Parliament in Great Britain. The liberal theory will play a great role where individuals are tied by a common interest.

In fact, we will have to face a paradox: on one hand, this theory will prone the people's reign and on the other, the governance of the population that rime in the Liberal spirits with revolution and turbulences. This problem was resolved by permitting only those who possessed good fortune to vote.

They noticed later that only the universal vote would avoid a population's revolt, because it permits the regulation of any conflict pacifically.

My goal in this study is not historical, but history cannot be encountered in such analysis. Democracy is not only a way of installing institutions, but, most probably a value (where people will take their destiny into their hands).

That is why there is no unique definition for democracy, as long as the values are transferred by the culture of the society and changed with the effect of time.

Democracy is a dynamic concept that permits the evolution of any society.

If we analyze the problem from an Arab and Muslim point of view, we have to mention the perception of Great Thinkers like *Ibn Khaldoun* and others before getting to the heart of the subject.

The founder of the first discipline in social studies in the South was *Ibn Khaldoun* (1332-1406) to highlight the awareness of the mass. *Paolo Freire,* who continued this message hundreds of years later, is highly influenced by *Ibn Khaldoun's* thinking.[4]

The Arab Philosopher has elaborated concepts like liberty, justice, solidarity, etc. He confirms that sometimes to be fair we have to sacrifice some liberties. The most fundamental pre-mentioned concept is the "Social Justice". He has conceived the most important democratic objective in representing the hierarchy of Needs and its importance for mankind due to the social context. A developed and modern context invites people to declare new needs.

The American psycho-sociologist Maslow took the same theory of the Needs and their pyramid in the late fifties. He considered the "hierarchy of Needs" in a very interesting way, more detailed than *Ibn Khaldoun* who made a concrete job in this direction.

Maslow believes that every individual should have fulfilled and satisfied all of his or her physical and social needs (to join a social group for example), before reaching "the level of free expression" on the hierarchy of Needs and to search for democracy,

This means the ones who cannot satisfy the first levels on "the scale of Needs", which means feeling secure or eating will not seek to satisfy the needs that are on the top of the scale which are, for example, joining a social group. In some cases, they will try violence or stealing if necessary to satisfy their physical Needs. Some others will run away from society and live on the fringes of society.

In underdeveloped countries, how many people can say that democracy is a priority, without any assistance or help?

Their major priorities are to feel secure and to eat before thinking of other needs, like learning or joining other social groups. *Ibn Khaldoun* and *Maslow* have very modern approaches that are still useful nowadays.

Islam is certainly not anti-democratic as some people would believe; it contains in its premises some fundamental issues that could be considered as democratic. The question is: are the Islamic countries democratic? And what are the reasons? Is it because there is no stability?

Jackman and Miller claim that "measuring the stability of democracy is impossible because levels of democracy have changed greatly over the last two centuries. They argue that the expansion of mass participation makes it impossible to measure democratic stability from any given starting date because one cannot begin counting the number of years during which a society has been democratic until it becomes democratic by "today's" standards*."[5]*

For example: the *Shura* Concept in Islam (VII century AC) signifies literally the Canonic consultation might constitute a base for the practice of democracy in these countries. "Al *Ijma3 al Islami*", the representative association of Muslims in the world, has declared that "*the Shura*" should be considered as the philosophy to be followed not only regarding the government and the State but also regarding each person in his own family[6].

Cheikh Abd al Wahab Khalilaf[7] considers the *Shura* as one of the pillars of the Muslim State because, for him, every State should base its existence on the will of the people who are the source of each power.

Ibn Manzur[8] affirms that *Shura* is a synonym of democracy with regard to the century when it was born.

According to the author of Lisan al Arab, the encyclopedic book on Arabic language declares in the Chapter on the *Shura* that it constitutes a methodology, a way of living and even a sacred religious philosophy.

The *Coran* ordered the prophet Mohamed to consult all Muslims by the *Shura* concerning all their affairs[9].

Other verses tackle the issue, for example in the *Sourat "AlShura"*, Verse 37 – 39 in giving a profile of the believer that he or she should be tolerant and that all believers should consult each other for any affair.

Many Islamic thinkers believe that the *Muslim Chari3at* is obligatory to govern, but some others like Samih Attif[10] debate on the question and presume that Muslims should consider the point of view of the Majority as done so by the Prophet himself who followed the prescriptions of the revelation and accepted the views of the Majority even in sensitive affairs like in *Uhud* battle. For him, the Chief should accept the decisions of the Majority if they were right or wrong, especially in the elections or the destitution of an Administrator or in the adoption of a project.

The *Khalifa,* should be elected by the process of consultation and should be member of a Counsel constituted from all the tribes. This Counsel should play the role of consultation in interior or exterior affairs, finance or military domains.

Jacques Berque[11] from the *Collège de France* argues that the Prophet was always tolerant in his decisions and was open to discuss any question. He even questioned himself about the Prophet if he were secular in his attitude as he linked metaphysical values to human and social values.

Bruno Etienne[12] insists on the diversity in Islam and considers the difference between Occidental Islam and other forms of Islam. He says that Muslims in France for example respect the Institutions and democracy and there is no incompatibility between their convictions as Muslims and the respect of democratic laws.

In his article in the *Moustaqbal al Arabi*, *Mohamed Abed Al Jabri* tries to demonstrate the compatibility between the Arab Societies and the practice of democracy. According to him, there is a parallelism between the beliefs of Arab authors and democracy. He severely criticises the society without mentioning the system of values in the Islamic and

Arabic culture. As he asked for a real democracy in the Arab society, he was criticised in his turn by many other authors in the same magazine.

Sayed Qutub[13], Al Qiradawi and Yusuf Al Assaf[14] do not believe in any program before putting the Ideas of Islam in every citizen's mind, and then as a second step to elaborate a Muslim society and a third step to elaborate an Islamic power everywhere. The European Islamic Counsel declared Human rights in Islam and many authors asked the Islamic Summit to adopt and to publish this declaration in all countries. Salim Azzam[15] considers that the problem resides in the beliefs of the Elites of this culture and questioned them if they were partisans of the *Shura* and the control of Governors by the governed or if they were partisans of the dictators who do not care for populations or their interests?

Some Arabic and Islamic countries followed the universal suffrage concretely, simply by organizing elections, but this fact did not protect them from the "Arab Spring". On the contrary, explosions and perturbations harmed those countries more than other countries where a complete Totalitarian Regime is in place. The secularity (*Al 3ilmaniah*) as it is originally defined: "the acceptance of others' beliefs can accommodate itself with a tolerant and modern Islam. If in the Occident secularity rhymes with atheism, on the other side they cannot accept this conception, especially after the new wave of extremism where there is no place for the other person.

Concerning the moderates in the Arab world, they prefer the expression that refers to "*3ilm*" the knowledge and generates the word *3almana,* to show that to be secular is to seek knowledge.

Development, Democracy and Future Perspectives

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Many Arab and Muslim countries did not obtain democracy because of the education system, Muslims and Arabs themselves. They have been refused democracy in the name of Islam without being consulted on this possible choice.

Although in other countries considered as democratic and modern, we might see people getting far from democratic practice because of unemployment, radicalism and political extremism. Let's stop hiding behind religions or culture to forbid millions of people from democracy and human rights. Populations need to take their destinies in hand pacifically and to be aware of the importance of this to prepare their citizens for democracy and liberty. Great knowledge brings new questions, new visions and new laws. A great change enthuses attentive spirits, but might disorient others who did not get the harmonious education to protect them selves, they would hide behind their communities and traditional values. This is the new challenge for education that needs to permit adaptation to the huge change in every issue and to guarantee success. Will is the key for success because sometimes we might be our worst enemy.

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