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"At a crossroads. The third year of the Arab revolutions".

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Abstract: The ongoing revolutionary processes in the Arab world have been analysed from many different perspectives. Among all these perspectives, there are two that stand out. On the one hand, those that emphasise the sociocultural characteristics of this region, and which sometimes take a certain "orientalist" approach. On the other hand, those that tend to subsume too easily these processes within an abstract and standard theory about modernisation and democratic transitions. While it is true that valuable contributions can be drawn from these two perspectives, both suffer from a trend towards unilateralism and formalism, however. It is therefore necessary to develop an alternative that takes account of the complexity of the social structures along with the existence of different social and political forces at stake. At this point, the contributions of Marxism are of great interest. This analysis must, in turn, be linked more closely with a theory of modernisation devoid of certain teleological and evaluative tendencies.

Keywords: modernisation, revolution, Islamism, Arab world.

I. Changing scenarios and stagnat approaches.

Three years after their emergence, the Arab revolutions represent a very complex image which is accompanied by sudden oscillations and abrupt changes in the alliances

between those forces at stake. This situation has temporary winners, who will be later vanquished by those who have been firstly defeated. With a clear conscience, there is nothing surprising in all this confusing context. It is part of the long-term revolutionary process as history itself has demonstrated many times. This kind of processes are characterised by their fluidity and a remarkable unwillingness to be intellectually apprehended, and particularly, to confirm the predictions about their probable further steps. This confirms, in quite a distinct way, a characteristic feature of every human reality. After all, the natural complexity of social life is also accompanied by that other complexity derived from extremely unstable situations by which part of the population stops accepting, believing and submitting certain realities, ideas and rules. However, this rejection does not imply the proposal of a clear alternative since this people are pulled back and forth between several ideas. This is precisely the reason why they do not have a system of institutions and rules or the ideological frameworks eligible to receive enough support in order to strengthen themselves over time. In view of this instability, one of the major mistakes made in a revolutionary process is to consider any transitory phase as the final outcome. In doing so, it is easy to start waiting for the events to take place unequivocally along with the corresponding and intermittent states of exaltation and depression, depending on the situation and the individual tendencies.

 Nevertheless, this is the procedure adopted by many analysts when dealing with this region of the world. For a very long time, the longevity of the ruling authoritarian regimes gave way to a clumsy essentialism, according to which the Arab and Islamic culture, conceived in a quasi-monolithic manner, would be incompatible with democratic values. This fact would lead the populations permeated by this culture to comply with the dictatorships imposed on them. In this respect, the partially secularist orientation of some of those dictatorships was of little importance. The beginning of a revolutionary wave in December 2010 put this recalcitrant orientalism, very much criticised by Edward Said, (2003) in a predicament. Unfortunately, the self-interested pessimism of this perspective was replaced by a rather naïve optimism which was encouraged by the shocking celerity with which both Ben Ali and Mubarak were overthrown. Faced with the one-sided insistence on a caricatural cultural idiosyncrasy, it was found that those people's desires were very similar to those demanded in any other country. However, these societies were subsumed under abstract and formal prototypes which might presumably be applied to the entire humanity.

Albeit with some delay, it seemed like Arab societies were just being incorporated into certain democratic transition processes which were clearly defined in advance. Not only their "culture", but also their specific social structures and particular position within the global economic system were relegated to mere accidental factors. Everything was taken to the extreme, but this tendency to hypostasize partial aspects within broader frameworks and specific moments within more general processes did not end here. The strong predominance of democratic demands in the first massive demonstrations along with the profile adopted by Islamist movements, led several experienced analysts like Olivier Roy (2011) to anounce the beginning of a new "post-Islamist" era. One year later, these Islamist movements, prematurely brushed aside, congently succeded in the first democratic elections. The general opinion was that those movements were the great victors of the Arab spring. It could have represented something positive for those who, with good will, integrated them into the western Christian Democracy. The turkish experience would become the role model and the future would belong to those moderate Islamists able to combine a certain degree of conservatism towards traditions, with an adherence to democracy and a clear commitment to liberal globalisation accompanied by a defence of social justice. In conclusion: social market economy and respect for local culture. Those who were critical of these movements would tend to highlight their strong conservatism towards traditions, the dubious aspect of their complete commitment to democracy and the evident presence of openly fundamentalist sectors among their ranks. In view of these correct but unilateral

findings, it was not complicated to go further and state that not only the winners of this process had been the most reactionary forces in society, but also those assertions about the undemocratic nature of "Arab and Islamic culture" were fully confirmed. The orientalist approach reared its head again and stated that in view of the extreme difficulty, and even the impossibility, of establishing democracy in these countries, the option of having "responsible" dictatorships with a moderate foreign policy (in favour of the western interests) was not such a bad idea.

Thus, those who highlighted the cultural peculiarity of these societies, and those who dissolved it into an abstract and unilinear evolutionism found good reasons to confirm their hypotheses in the course of events. The problem was that this prediction about the rampant victory of Islamism was called very much into question in a little less than a year. The violent overthrow of Morsi's government in Egypt was followed by an increasing mobilisation against En-Nahda in Tunisia. The remarkable capacity of resistance shown by the Syrian regime was not only possible thanks to some clientelistic and communal loyalties, but also to the fear of many citizens towards a political opposition very much influenced by radical Islamism. Thus, the equation changed significantly since non-Islamists also entered the scene. Their influence, cultural attitudes and their strong rejection towards Islamism need to be considered. Some people are already predicting the beginning of the end of this political and religious trend along with the end of its inherent deviation. Some others, with an impressive self-confidence, see the events of the last three years as a return to the starting point, almost as an example of "cosmetic change". Either way, it is very clear that the course of events has not been kind to any of these approaches but there is always a solution. Initially, the orientalist approach would be very much called into question, at least in its more monolithic versions, since a large part of the population does not satisfy its stereotypes. Nevertheless, a democratically elected government was overthrown by a military coup in Egypt, but in other countries the risk of a civil war was quite evident and this might be taken as a reliable proof of the lack of democratic disposition on the part of these populations. Despite the fact that a lot was said about the sincerity of Islamists' respect towards the rules of democracy, the truth is that the laity did not show much respect for them either. As for the supporters of an easy evolutionism, what had happened could also be interpreted in different ways. It could be seen as an unfortunate regression in the democratic process, but also as an appropriate rectification against the danger of a teocratic drift. These regressions and deviations might be considered as unfortunate accidents in the course of the development of a predefined project, or even as a signal that these societies were more lagged behind than previously thought.

II. In the search for theoretical alternatives. Sociological tendencies and social and political forces.

However, it seems quite obvious that this reasoning is forcing a series of frameworks which are too rigid and simple. The price to be paid for preserving them and believe that one is right, lies in a growing formalism that moves further and further away from the empirical facts but it is always able to guarantee right answers in hindsight... until the next rectification. This procedure leads to a kind of a persistent headlong rush. In order to escape this vicious circle it is necessary to become aware of the complexity of the processes which are currently being observed. Any linear and automatic perspective about these processes must be avoided. We are not facing a harmonious concatenation of forces or social tendencies that push these societies in a predetermined direction, but unstable crosslinks between very different forces that seem to go in opposite and different directions. These crosslinks may give birth to several temporary configurations caused by the different balances that might get established among the forces involved. Of all such configurations, liable to emerge at a given point in time, only some of them would crystallise and develop, in a more relaxed way, to the point of

contributing decisively to conform the internal structure and dynamics of these societies. Of course, some of these crystallisations would be more probable than others and also more desirable in view of the values they promote. We would then move on from a unilinear vision to a multilinear one which is far away from any fatalistic determinism.

All this would be reduced to a vague declaration of intent if the nature of those aforementioned mysterious "forces" or "tendencies" are not clearly defined. In order to correct this inaccuracy, we are going to recognise two radically different sets of phenomena. The first one covers those macro and long-term sociocultural tendencies. In the particular regional context we are dealing with, this refers to general processes such as urbanisation, ruralisation of cities, expansion of education, development of major bureaucratic States, changes in sexual and social division of labour, dissemination of capitalist economic relations, partial and dependent industrialisation, spread of both clientelism and communalism, secularisation, re-Islamicisation, etc. Along with these macrosocial tendencies we have to add a second set of "forces" which are of particular interest to us: the action of different social forces, human colectivities that can either be in alliance or in confrontation depending on the circumstances. Even though such colectivities may partially refer to the class structure in society, they should not be considered as a mechanical reflection of this. In other words, although this highly complex class structure, which is also subject to different theoretical approaches, contributes to its realisation, it is not the only factor involved in this process. That is why we can assign to them a genuine and relative autonomy with respect to that class structure[1]. Thus, it may even happen that not all members of the same socioeconomic class take part in a given social force, or that the latter incorporates several classes or subclasses. The reason for this imperfect correspondence lies in the action of other factors such as their links with different organisations and institutions, both public and private, and their different life styles, ideologies and collective identities that may adopt on the basis of the above. Although these issues will be further examined, especially in relation to the specific historical problem we are dealing with herein, we can point out some of these collective identities currently present in the Arab world, like those based in ethnicity, lineage, and religious faith. All these groupings have a clearly "inter-class" nature, since they join together individuals with different positions within the economic structure. Such a structure is basically capitalist, albeit with some particularities specific to the medium to low-level development in comparative terms (Escribano, 2013), the peripheral position within the global economy (Amin, 2011), the strong public sector involvement in many places, and the remarkable entanglement between capitalist social relations and other type of relations of clientelistic and communalist nature (Castien Maestro, 2012a).

This kind of entanglement has very different effects. On a more general level, the integration of those non-capitalist relations contributes to the conformation of a particular type of capitalism which is usually considered as a mafia-like, clan-based or crony capitalism. But on the other hand, as soon as these social relations combine with

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[1] This concept of "social force" is modelled on the one developed by Nicos Poulantzas (1976: 87-100). The aim of this author's work, based on a comprehensive study of the classic authors of Marxism, was to avoid that class reductionism which is so characteristic of many Marxist analysis, whose significance is, in addition, unquestionable. We are well aware of the vagueness of the tentative concept we are using in this text. However, as our exposition moves forward, we believe that both its meaning and use as an analytical tool will be clearer. On the other hand, we think it is not convenient to make this concept operational prematurely as it might lead to a decline of the concept, as it is often the case (Harris, 1982: 30). That is why we prefer to leave the term in a relative vagueness in order to maximise its fruitfulness, albeit at the cost of its scientific accuracy (Lefebvre, 1973).

other purely capitalist relations and operate in a context which is also fundamentally capitalist, their nature will be somehow altered. They will not be the old clientelistic and communalist relations of premodern societies anymore. They will turn into something qualitatively different. Although they may distort the specific capitalist rationality, they also must somehow adapt to it and this demand delimits the circumstances in which they can operate. But along with this general interaction between these two types of relations we find a more particular one that refers to the conformation of forces and social classes. Firstly, with regard to class structure, it seems clear that the access of people to different jobs, professions and positions like becoming entrepreneur, for example, is widely conditioned by their relationships with a series of clientelistic and communalist networks. A licence to start a business can only be obtained by means of the required contacts and the same applies when it comes to finding a given job. Beyond this influence on the possibilities to gain access to certain social positions, and therefore, to a series of goods and services, these networks also influence the acquisition of those goods and services in different ways. This is often the case when someone who is holding a position in the public administration can also participate in some profitable corrupt practices. At the same time, the involvement in more "modern" organisations and institutions also influence the methods of participation in all these networks. Anyone who holds a good position in some of the aforementioned entities, will have both wealth and discretionary power and will also be able to participate within those networks as a generous giver of valuable perquisites, instead of being a mere labourer forced to provide small services in payment for small favours.

As for their role in the conformation of social forces, the action of these relations is wider but less clear-cut. Alongside the role played by the ascription to a given social class, other forms of influence must also be taken into account. Firstly, the fact of belonging to a given social class and enjoying a specific standard of living tends to affect both lifestyles and world views very much. These lifestyles and world views, which are linked to a discrete identity, are one of the key factors in the configuration of social forces. This is perhaps the main influence that the class condition indirectly exerts on the conformation of a social force. But it is obvious that neither lifestyle nor world view can refer exclusively to this class condition since they also depend on other factors like community belonging or regional, ethnic, religious and tribal characters. Thus, the role of these communal bonds with respect to the configuration of social forces goes further than an action strictly circumscribed to its participation in the conformation of classes[2].

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[2] All this reasoning requires some theoretical explanations. Firstly, the interweaving of capitalist social relations and other type of non-capitalist relations happens everywhere to some extent. A "pure" capitalist system is just an abstraction, albeit outstandingly operational. Of course, this general statement does not mean that capitalist relations cannot show any degree of "purity" in a given society, but it is not going to be displayed in all its fullness. The same applies to class structure. We think that any social class must be conceived as a specific totality and therefore, as the result of the articulation between different stratification processes whereby the degree of control over productive forces is regulated. One of these processes, and one of the most fundamental is the strictly capitalist process. It is based on the logic of optimisation of capital, but it operates along with others such as those based on social categorisation, that is, on the ascription of people to several collective identities related to different series of rights and obligations (Castien Maestro, 2007b). Therefore, these non-capitalist relations do not only participate in the configuration of social forces but can also do it in the very configuration of social classes with which they have a very complex relation. Our conception about social class, and those factors that shape them, shows a character which is relatively broader than usual. Accordingly, it seems clear that, regarding this specific aspect, those differences between what happens in central capitalist societies and the peripheral ones are quantitative rather than qualitative. Not for nothing, clientelistic and communal relations, which are getting a lot of attention in this article, constitute a particular variant of those based in social categorisation as a general sociological process. However, with respect to all these cases, it does not seem very feasible that these relations are able to organise productive activity for themselves, that is, to operate alone as relations of production, in accordance with classic Marxist terminology. It seems like they only

Anyway, the formation of those social forces is not limited to the action of those specific communal bonds. It is a much more complex issue and the elucidation of those factors which operate in each case demands much more definite analyses. As an example, we can point to the fact that the division between more secularist social sectors and those more Islamist constitutes one of the key factors in delimiting the social forces which are present in the Arab world. Obviously, the conformation of both sectors is partly a consequence of the influence of class and communal ascriptions but it is not at all limited to it. Other factors can also exert an influence, such as migratory experiences to the West or to Gulf countries, with opposite results many times, the specific idiosyncrasy of the individual, which is partly dependent on his biographical trajectory.

The breakdown of those different social forces which are present in a given context is, without a doubt, one of the main interpretative keys to be used in our analyses. However, we must also take into account that these forces may change over time in such a way that some of them increase their power and magnitude while some others decrease, or there may even be further mergers or demergers between them. It is the rapid pace at which decisive changes may sometimes occur what tends to characterise revolutionary processes. Either in revolutionary or calm periods, these changes may have a clear qualitative character, and in this case they will reach the point of generating new collective groupings based on approaches which will be different from those that had previoulsy prevailed. Following the same example, one of the most striking and hopeful facts regarding the ongoing Arab revolutions lies in the conformation of broad social groupings, that trascending traditional community and class divisions focused on the united struggle against dictatorial regimes. This was also outlined by the solidarity between secularists and Islamists, at least for some time. Nevertheless, these groupings have shown a remarkable fragility. Their underlying criteria are not well established and those of more communal character have been reactivated after a brief decline since they had not been displaced. Either way, these facts show the possibility that, within the limits of a given population in a given period of time, different matrices of social forces based on different criteria can coexist. Some of them will prevail over others, depending on the case. Just as these social forces cannot be reduced to classes in the strict socioeconomic sense, neither can political forces be assimilated by those social forces. These strictly political forces also have a relative autonomy with respect to them. Thus, social forces provide them with acceding members, institutional infrastructure, grass-root identities, ideological bias and specific demands.

They constitute, to say the least, the basis on which political forces are built and they partly provide a cultural and ideological environment where they can unfold properly and where their specifically political proposals can be more credible and acceptable. All these materials must then be processed by political forces, something that will be done with varying degrees of skill. A faulty processing can sometimes hamper a political development on the same level achieved by the corresponding social force. But also, in some other cases, the effective action of those political forces will contribute to a clearer conformation of the social forces associated with them. It could be said that, metaphorically speaking, even though social forces provide a basis on which political forces are built, the latter may decisively strenghten that basis which is immediately below them. A good example of this reciprocal action is provided by Islamist

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can operate in cooperation with more powerful relations. That is why, it is not appropriate to postulate concepts like "clientelistic or communalist mode of production" or anything of the kind. In any case, these modes of production might be used when referring to a much more simple type of society, built up on relations which are based on "reciprocity" and "redistribution", and by means of a terminology very rooted in the anthropological tradition (cf. Sahlins, 1983: 117-166).

movements. These are supported by a powerful underlying tendency towards a "cultural Islamisation", that is, an Islamisation of the lifestyles of great part of the population which is also linked to a strong interest for certains aspects of the Islamic doctrine, even in its more conservative versions. The roots of that cultural Islamisation are very complex and they will therefore not be accounted for in this article (cf. Castien Maestro, 2012a: 100-106). Our interest is to point out the fact that Islamism relies on it and recreates it, it is both cause and effect. This way, Islamist movements have been devoted for decades to promote an "Islamic" lifestyle and thought within the framework of a more ambitious strategy regarding the organisational position of its acceding members. These activities have allowed them to generate a thick and broad social fabric. The result has been the communitisation of certain sectors which has provided them with greater solidity as social forces. The most paradigmatic example of this modus operandi is probably the one set by some Salafi movements which have been assembled in parallel societies (Castien Maestro, 2013b).

Another question we have to tackle, although very briefly, is the relationship between these social and political forces and those aforementioned sociocultural tendencies of a more general character. We could say that these long-term sociological tendencies contribute to shape social forces. The arena in which they shall act will be largely given by the result of the previous action of these macro tendencies. This means that the analysis of these social and political struggles is linked to a sociological, historical and macrosocial analysis, while retaining its relative autonomy. Thus, despite the fact that these major sociological trends favour the eclosion of some specific social forces and strengthen some of them over others, thereby posing specific responses for specific demands, there is no reason to postulate a rigid determinism. Social and political forces may turn out to be weaker or stronger than expected and succeed or fail to an even greater extent[3]. In a broader sense, the action of these general tendencies and these more organised social and poltical forces may be seen as different versions of social dynamics as a whole. The action of social tendencies is impersonal, unconscious and it operates by means of the aggregation of a myriad of individual actions which are motivated by purposes which are probably removed from the logic of those tendencies as a whole. The action of political forces represents a much more conscious and personalised action. It is also a more organised and unified action, in contrast with that mere aggregation of individual acts that characterises the action of social tendencies (Castien Maestro, 2015). As for the action of social forces, we can consider it as an intermediate case between these two extremes. In a more general sense, we can also see these social forces as a mediating variation between political forces and those macrosociological tendencies.

Additionally, it seems quite reasonable to suppose that the actions of social and political forces will probably be more effective insofar they coincide with the dominant cultural principles, while helping to satisfy certain social needs. They will then be more effective when tailored to some general sociological tendency. A good example of this is

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[3] It is obvious that the model outlined herein is very much influenced by the Marxist analysis model which was inaugurated by two masterpieces: *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* by K. Marx (1985) and *The peasant war in Germany* by F. Engels (2009). Perhaps, the most complete example up to now is represented by *The history of the Russian revolution* by L. Trosky (1971). One of the most important features of this approach is its attempt to articulate the long duration of historical processes with an analysis of the situation in the short term. However, there are some differences between our approach and that outlined by these authors. Along with the greater autonomy of political and social forces with respect to socioeconomic classes, we are also attempting to avoid those teleological tendencies ascribed to large part of this theoretical tradition. Generally speaking, we aspire to soften up the most deterministic, teleological and appreciatory aspects and also want to enrich our perspective by incorporating more explanatory elements.

provided by the social and cultural activity of Islamist movements. This activity, as it has been just mentioned, has allowed them to effectively consolidate and organise the social forces on which they rest. Thus, the comunitisation of large part of their social basis has involved, to some extent, the conformation of new communal groupings, added to those already existing, which are based on filiation and affinity bonds, ethnic identities, religious affiliation or belonging to Sufi brotherhoods. Thus, the Islamists' activity responsible for this communitisation has strong similarities with previous social practices that give it a clear continuity with respect to the latter. With no doubt, this modus operandi which is traditional in some respects, has been one of the secrets of their success, since they fit much better with the expectations of the target population. And this surely applies to particular needs and demands as well as the functional needs of society since all these communal practices, as with those clientelistic practices, constitute a response to a very clear need. It is about to recreate social bonds in places where the weakness of modern institutions hampers the creation of other type of institutions. They ultimately constitute a sort of palliative for substantial weakness and fluidity affecting the social structures; what we called 'lax society' in a previous article (Castien Maestro, 2012b: 172-174). More specifically, they also constitute a culturally determined response to the need to establish broader social links as a consequence of urbanisation, the creation of a more integrated economy and the weakening of some old communal bonds. This takes place at a moment in which the aforementioned laxity of sociality makes the eclosion of alternative organisations and institutions more difficult, thus representing a vicious circle.

However, as a consequence of operating in such specific contexts in accordance with very well defined cultural models and social needs, the communal practices of these Islamist movements generate ambivalent effects. They certainly create social fabric, thereby contributing to a greater structural integration of society. Similarly, they provide identities and more inclusive frameworks for social relations able to integrate people with different ethnic, tribal and local ascriptions. All this gives them an unquestionable modernising character (Burgat, 1996: 49-101). At the same tame, however, their own communalism creates new divisions within society such as those that separate Islamists from the most secularist sectors, but also from those who profess a more traditionalist Islam. The same goes for the social divisions between different Islamist sectors like those that have engendered conflict between groups close to the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafist groups (Castien Maestro, 2013). These communitising practices ultimately generate both integration and division in a parallel way. Their ambivalence shows the limits of communalism as a vehicle for social integration, something very similar to what happened for centuries with the communalism of Sufi brotherhoods, whose conciliatory action has also been traditionally balanced out with other of a more divisive nature.

III. Modernisation, cultural specificity and social forces

All the foregoing simply constitutes a first general approach that requires deeper developments. Its aim is based primarily on delimiting some initial explanatory elements that are necessary to take into consideration. But these explanatory elements could only be genuinely operative when defined in greater depth, and especially when their specific particularities according to different specific context are established. In order to achieve these aims it is first necessary to locate the different social forces present in the area along with the several processes which are participating in their configuration. Production structures, the distribution of property and income, the nature of the State and its relations with society should be considered as well as those religious, tribal, regional and ethnic communities. It is equally necessary to consider other fundamental division which proves to be cross-cutting with respect to these groupings, referring to the level of "westernisation" or "traditionalism" in both lifestyles and worldviews. These kind of differences can also be explained, to some extent,

according to the contacts established with foreign people through migrations or tourism, the nature of the education system and the action exerted by the mass media. The fact that the established approaches, as referred to in the first section, are characterised for being heavily biased in this respect is quite significant. While those approaches with a more orientalising nature focus primarily on tribes, clans, religious affiliations and other communal groups, and tend to overlook the most modern aspects of these societies, those approaches more related to an abstract evolutionism usually keep their hands off local peculiarities. This partiality which is appreciated in both types of approaches hampers the possibility to achieve a right understanding of the real situation and its changeable nature and leads them to the reiterated and aforementioned errors of judgement.

Nevertheless, despite these shortages, both approaches still have so much to teach us, once subjected to a pertinent work of critical appropriation. As for the most culturalist perspective, already screened out from its primary essentialism, it gives us some valuable analytic tools. Its contribution is especially important regarding two fundamental aspects. Firstly, and in broad terms, it prompts us to not to lose sight of the particular specificities of each society, warning us about the dangerous effects of subjecting them to abstract and formalist schemas. Secondly, and in more concrete terms, it contributes to do justice to the real complexity with which the objective conditions of each society are processed by those ideologies professed by its members. It also makes it possible to overcome the demand for these conditions to be immediately reflected in the consciousness of individuals. This assumption implies a logic counterpart: the fact that these individuals would be conducting themselves as strictly rational agents in accordance with their own objective and socioeconomic interests derived from their real life conditions. The concept of "interest", which is above all a "class-based interest" in the classic Marxist tradition, requires some readjustments which are perfectly compatible with the bulk of this tradition. On the one hand, it is necesssary to take always into consideration the difficulty of this interest to be thought, that is, the fact that the people involved come to the same conclusions as some analysts or political actors do. From this point of view, the classic perspective about ideology as "false consciousness" retains a large part of its validity. Perhaps, this will be particularly intense in this region of the world. It is then worth considering whether certain and widespread versions of Islam are really providing an adecuate solution to solve the undergoing problems, and if they allow a realistic interpretation of that reality which is being experienced.

Two examples, perhaps a bit extreme, may illustrate this diagnosis. First of all, we find that many social problems are often interpreted from a echatological and millenarian perspective. They are thus inserted into a preconceived model in which they are seen as symptoms of a deeper evil, that is, the deviation with respect to God's commandments, irrespective of their interpretation according to the several versions of Islam (Sivan, 1997). The link between the symptom and the disease can be altered. The deviation may have corrupted the Muslim community and diffused chaos within it, the feared "fitna". But along with this relatively secular interpretation, arguably, God himself would be punishing his believers because of their disobedience. In any case, the solution to all evils will only come from the obedience to his mandates. This is an explanatory and normative model which is already explicit in the Old Testament. This type of model narrows the specific and complex facts down to mere episodes of a preconceived, simple and repetitive script, and is unable to show asolvent evidence. Consistency with other well known forms of mythical thought is quite clear (Eliade, 1985: 11-50).

The second model offers similar effects. It consists of an interpretation of different events from a given perspective that prioritises its conections with sexual morality (Ayubi, 1996: 59-77). Thus, the focus lies on the sexual aspect of any social problem, and at the same time, this sexual component operates as the main explanatory factor

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and the main resource which any eventual resolution should point out. This is often the case for problems like households, transports and study centres suffering from critical overcrowding, thus encouraging promiscuity; poverty, which forces women to abandon their homes in search for employment and therefore represents a new source of sin; emigration, by which those dependent members of the family are left unsupervised, etc. Just as the risk of sexual corruption gets a lot of attention, the same would often hold true when identifying possible local factors. This enables us to consider that this widespread naughtiness is the main factor leading to chaos, social disorder and hence to other forms of moral corruption, especially of economic nature. The recovery of decency, starting with an appropriate clothing, becomes a privileged antidote against social ills. This is the kind of proposal which is often provided by Islamist movements, whose broad social support tells us much about the dominant mental outlook among a large proportion of the population. It seems obvious that the use of such model of interpretation largely matches certain habits of thought that are well established in those societies where patriarchal family is the central institution. Thus, this way of thinking tends to be mechanically transferred to a broad range of issues. This propensity towards semiautomatic transference hinders the attempt to rethink about them in all their complexity and specificity leading to a new kind of formalism and to an inclusion of the event within an abstract and prefabricated framework. The fact that these ways of thinking are easily understandable in such a specific cultural context and provide simple and reassuring answers to complex and disturbing problems, does not in any way alter this fundamental diagnosis but only confirms it.

Along with this real ideological confusion, there is a second powerful factor that also blocks the perception of these socioeconomic interests and seems to enjoy a notable influence in this region. In contrast to the abovementioned ideological distortion, the confusion that is found in this case does meet the action of some agents situated in the world of ideas and beliefs. It is also a consequence of a number of factors which are located within the sphere of properly constituted groups and all the relations that exist between them. Both social forces and classes which are objectively present, rest on the combination between the action of capitalist social relations and those based on social categorisation with respect to the ethnic group, religious affiliation, etc. According to this, we find out that the conception of personal interest, as mediated by the belonging to those social classes and forces, signifies a clear exercise in realism and an effective method that preserves personal interests. However, these first ascertainments do not by any means solve the problem. The human groupings made up by these different categorisation processes are not at all monolithic entities. On the contrary, those processes integrated by those human groupings generate a number of communities separately whose limits do not completely coincide. By way of example, not all members of the same religious group share the same regional identity or have the same socioeconomic conditions. Of course, the individual may be absolutely conscious of these facts and may prioritise some specific identities and interests according to the situation. Anyway, this individual may not always be able to do it and perhaps, these different groupings are in practice too intertwined to let their itemisation be in accordance with the circumstances. When this is the case, certain group affiliations and their subsequent interests will have to be sacrificed in favour of more central but different ascriptions and interests belonging to a broader group which is represented by the specific social class or force. However, since not everyone, within these social groupings, needs to have the same group affiliations, and therefore the same interests, some of the basic interests of some members will be sacrificed to the benefit of other members of the same social force or class. Thus, at any given time, the poorest sections of any community group which finds itself confronted with other community groups, might support the well-off sectors of their own group in this fight despite the differences of interests and the similarities with respect to the interests of the poorest sectors of the rival group. What we have here is a sort of trap of collective identities (cf. Castien Maestro, 2007a).

As long as both communalism and clientelism have a strong presence in this region of the world, all these identity-related alienations (Castien Maestro, 2007a: 7) will be commonplace. This fact helps us explain the difficulty experienced by the poorest sectors in developing a unified collective conscience as well as the existing obstacles when trying to form broad and stable citizen groups against the abuses committed by the ruling oligarchies. At the risk of generalising too much, we can assert that social classes and other types of socioeconomic groups are somehow "absorbed" or "dissolved" in other communities where communal criteria play a key role. This "absorption" would greatly hamper the perception of their existence and, therefore, their choice as a basic principle for the configuration of the social and political forces. As for those other anti-oligarchy citizen groups, the problem is quite the opposite to some extent. The communal rupture is so powerful here that it is complicated to locate that common citizen condition within each grouping that would make possible to trascend these divisions.

If we now focus on evolutionist and abstract approaches, especially those based on some variant of the modernisation theory, we will find out that they can also provide some valuable explanatory details. But this will only be possible if we get rid of its teleologism, automatism and implicit value judgements. The main benefit we can obtain from a conveniently reinterpreted modernisation theory is a better understanding of the requirements that any society with a high technology must satisfy in order to function properly. This means to keep developing its productive forces and enhancing the collective welfare as well as maintaining a minimum degree of social cohesion and peace, the only safeguard against shifting towards destructive anomie. Such requirements would consist in the achievement of certain levels of structural differentiation and integration, secularisation, individuation and institutionalisation (Castien Maestro, 2012b: 159-162). The existence of these functional needs and the processes by which they are covered contributes, at least to some extent, to define the nature of the competing social forces, their margins for manoeuvre and their specific demands. In this way, modernisation processes, even those which may be partial, often result in a particular structure of social classes and forces. They strengthen urban population and sometimes set it against the rural one, and this may constitute a basic criterion for the establishment of different social forces or even increase the contrast between those more innovative sectors and those which are more traditionalist. But most importantly, they recreate a modern class structure in which the differentiation between capitalists and salaried employees is very important as well as between different sectors of salaried workers according to their level of qualification, branch of activity, or their location in either the public or the private sector. In addition to these general features, typical of any society which undergoes a modernisation process, we have to add some new characteristics in the case of peripheral societies, such as the Arab ones. On the one hand, it should also be taken into account the rupture between more modern economic sectors and those which are more traditional, as well as the significant division amongst people with respect to the degree of access to the centers of political power. On the other hand, we also have to take into consideration the fact that all these structural divisions are articulated with different communal divisions, either new or old. To sum up, the process of modernisation, with its specific variants, contradictions and the forms of resistance that generates, may be conceived as the great sociological tendency in which more particular trends would gain meaning. And also, the huge process that shapes social forces with its different degrees of strength and its specific interests.

However, the modernisation process also plays another important role. The requirements of modern societies help to set a global agenda which is liable to be accepted by broad sectors of the population. This agenda will be guided by a number of general values by which these social requirements are translated into collective and

individual aims which will be assumed by people in a very conscious way. This is, for example, the case with the meritocratic imperative as opposed to the processes of communal and clientelistic cooption. This imperative is obviously linked to the presence of a greater individualism and the concomitant tendency to reward the individual for his qualities and personal achievements, instead of doing it on the basis of his collective ascription. In addition, it is also the consequence of a search for greater efficiency so that the best prepared individuals can be selected over all other considerations. This latter requirement is explained as the consequence of the greater structural diversification whereby different autonomous spheres of activity are developed and governed by their own excellence criteria. Such structural diversification also favours secularisation, that is, the independence of broad sectors of existence with respect to the religious mandates. But this secularisation may also encourage the development of a more mundane and hedonistic mentality, that is to say, more oriented to the full enjoyment of life, in its various facets, as an end in itself. Hence the probable and greater resistance to those religious mandates which can now be largely seen as a heavy and meaningless imposition. This tendency will be strengthen thanks to its articulation with the general assessment of individual freedom, indissolubly linked to the development of individualism. Finally, this higher appreciation of individual freedom along with the relative erosion of major worldviews, generally of a religious nature, brings greater tolerance of difference and certain ideal of equality. All this will favours the emergence of a generic democratic ideal. This brief analysis of some of the most feasible values in a modern society has, in our opinion, several important implications.

The first of them is the existence of certain objectives that cannot be reduced to the particular interests of any social force or class. On the contrary, these objectives are capable of being shared by people belonging to very different social forces and classes. This is the reason why they can operate, to some extent, as a factor for integration among them. Their presence also entails a kind of corrective action for any rigorous materialistic approach that tries to reduce everything to the clash between different collective economic interests. Nevertheless, nor would it be appropriate to see these values as completely disconnected from those interests. This is something that constitutes another fundamental implication. In particular, those social groups enjoying a more modern lifestyle will be the most likely to support these values in contrast with those other groups which have a more archaic form of existence. Consequently, the degree of identification with these values may operate as a basic criterion when delimiting different social and political forces. Furthermore, certain classes and social forces may act as a vanguard that will guide broader sectors in the fight for the achievement of those values. But of course, the activity developed by this vanguard role does not necessarily involve a disinterested action. On the contrary, it may constitute an activity which is also aimed at promoting the particular interests of the so-called vanguard. It may happen that the promotion of a more modern society serves these particular interests, and it is easy that this leadership can use the alleged fight for shared values to achieve its own particular aspirations. In this respect, the history of the role played by bourgeoisie in the Western liberal revolutions is highly instructive.

This global agenda will often be a national one and sometimes even a regional one. Given that our entire world is still largely structured around national societies, it is possible at least for certain issues, to talk about generic national interests, despite the profound divisions affecting these societies. This is why the functional requirements we are referring to, mainly concern those national societies. Inasmuch as these societies are able to meet those requirements they will also be able to succesfully cope with the competition with other societies by securing their own sovereignity. This demand is especially important for an Arab world which is currently subdued by a permanent neo-colonial intervention. The promotion of any kind of modernisation therefore seems to

be the only way to overcome this dependency, despite the fact that this also raises new questions. It is perfectly feasible that certain social sectors stand up for a partial and technologically-focused modernisation that can satisfy these national interests and which is not so much concerned with the so-called values of modernity. They may opt for some troublesome combination between "tradition" and "modernity", or even for some authoritarian modernisation. This type of modernisation without democracy can be very effective in some contexts as it is powerfully illustrated by the current situation in China. But the experience in other countries shows that as this process moves forward, the social demands for freedom increase in agreement with a sociological rationality which is easy to understand. The Arab world has witnessed during the past century several interesting experiences of modernisation, either selective or authoritarian, or even a combination of both. Significant progress has been made regarding these projects but eventually they showed clear signals of paralysis and exhaustion. Not only have they blocked a breakthrough in modernisation by repressing individual freedom and the development of a dynamic civil society, which is a vehicle for greater social integration, but they have also acted against modernity sometimes. They have fostered both communalism and clientelism as strategies to widen and strengthen their social base, to divide and weaken society by draining away its capacity of resistance and making it more dependent on their arbitration role. All this has been a fundamental factor hindering the establishment of stable and efficient institutions and has promoted a huge waste of material and human resources against the development of productive forces and therefore, against modernisation itself.

Let us now go into detail about the relationship between modernisation and social forces as it is an issue that remains to be discussed. Although modernisation is the combined effect of a number of unconscious and automatic macro tendencies, it is also the result of a much more conscious action carried out by a series of social and political forces. Modernisation can thus be the motive for the struggle between different forces, or preferably, the coalition of forces supporting projects that are either against modernisation or in favour of it. In the case of the former, their victory is not always unavoidable. Secondly, it is also possible that these modernising projects may vary to some degree with respect to their willingness to assume the values of modernity to a greater or lesser extent. Thus, some conservative forces may hold some modernising aspirations. The Islamist project could be seen as an example of this, as well as that funny mixture of technocratic dictatorship, tribal clientelism and religious fundamentalism on which the Saudi regime is based (Castien Maestro, 2007c). Thirdly, all those proposed modernisation projects can be more or less effective, independently of how ambitious they are. In other words, they may respond to a more or less correct strategy according to the local and international conditions. In our case, these differences would be largely related to those existing between the strategies that give priority to western cultural elements and those that opt for a more endogenous modernisation based on the recycling of certain aspects of traditional culture and religion. This is an alternative in which certain Islamist sectors might be included (Burgat, 1996, Castien Maestro, 2012a: 102-103 y 2013). Finally, all these projects, either in favour of modernisation or against it, with varying degrees of ambition and different strategies, will probably be associated with different social coalitions. The specific nature of those social coalitions and their particular interests will foster the choice for certain and specific modernisation projects. Therefore, the possible fight that might take place between those projects standing up for modernisation and those which are against it may refer to the fight between different social forces.

IV. The challenges of building up a democracy for the Arab world.

After this long theoretical detour, it seems like we are in the right position to formulate a general diagnosis. The Arab revolutions have been revolutions that went against the ruling oligarchies. At least this has been the experience of large part of the population

with respect to them. These revolutions have been guided by a strong desire to get rid of the authoritarian regimes, and by an explicit democratic aspiration. Personal freedom and the dignity of the individual have been defended against their continuous undermining on the part of those in power. But the demands went beyond this. The prevailing and otrageous corruption was harshly criticised as well as the excruciating contrast between the prosperity of a few people and the abject poverty suffered by the majority of the population. The same applies to the terrible exclusion affecting well-trained people who lack the necessary well-known contacts. By bringing together all these features, we can outline a first general portrayal. The ongoing revolutions are democratic revolutions despite the fact that not all the sectors involved in them are equally touched by the democratic ideal. With no doubt, this objection is true for a broad sector of Islamism but also for a large part of the secular social and political forces, just as the events in Egypt have vigorously demonstrated. It can be said that, as in so many other places, a large part of the population is democrat but with reservations. They are democrats as long as the democratic procedure does not imply a series of policies that collides head-on with their fundamental values and interests. However, there is nothing to be surprised about. Liberal democracy is based on a series of consensus, but when these are non-existent each side is free to bust it down in order to prevent the victory of its adversaries. Consequently, building up democracy requires a number of conditions. One of them is the development of a greater tolerance towards other views, and this demands greater acceptance of certain values which are inextricably linked to the modernisation process. Additionally, the presence of a whole range of shared interests will ensure that in case of conflict, what is lost is more important than what is gained. Such condition is also linked to a key aspect of modernisation, namely, a high level of social integration. The existence of shared values and cultural features will also be useful in this respect. However, we should not overlook the fact that building up a democracy cannot be exclusively based on the development of a democratic culture. To fail in this respect would mean falling into a naïve idealism.

Anyway, the western-style modern democracies, as yet the only existing type of democracy, do not lend themselves to idealisation. Many of the agreements on which these democracies rest are the result of the compliance of the weakest social forces and classes with respect to their own weak position. Thus, subordinate groups accept the sacrifice of their objective interests to the benefit of dominant groups as though it were an unalterable natural state of things. In other words, the distance between the democratic ideal and the reality of actual democracies is evident. The assimilation of the former into the latter clearly illustrates the one-dimensional nature which was reported by Marcuse some time ago (1985). We firmly believe that a capitalist economy can tolerate a political democracy only if based on a consensus which ought to be necessarily biased in favour of the bourgeoisie. However, it is still possible to find within capitalism the possibility to establish new agreements in order to strengthen democracy. In any case, we are not going to provide here a critical insight into the existing democracies, whose most significant achievement is, nevertheless, an extraordinary step forward for Arab peoples. Our main interest is to point out a logical corollary in all this situation. The agreeement among several social forces that makes it possible to build a democracy, may be clearly biased towards some specific forces, that is, a consensus based on greater concessions in favour of certain sectors. Some democratic transitions which are considered to be exemplary, like the one in Spain, illustrate these basic imbalances. It is not a static consensus, but on the contrary, it may change over time in accordance with the new balance which might be established between the forces involved. Yet despite these imbalances, if we can still talk of democracy that is because even the weakest sectors enjoy some minimum social guarantees. This is only achieved when everyone is, to a greater o lesser extent, within the scope of an institutional machinery and its automatic functioning. Such institutional machinery is all the more necessary since this consensus is often combined

with a conspicuous lack of commitment on the part of citizens. A large proportion of the population is quite indifferent and passive towards political life. This indifference is closely linked to the modern individualism, which prompts people to become inward-looking and focus on their private affairs. This represents a serious threat to democracy as pointed out by Tocqueville two centuries ago (1985: 243-280). Nonetheless, it is precisely this lack of commitment which makes the existence of this biased democracy possible. It is then functional with respect to this democracy, but just like Tocqueville also pointed out, in such contexts of social inequality and apathy, institutions are vital since they are able to provide the democratic system with a minimum of "vegetative life".

These considerations lead us to formulate new proposals which are more focused on the Arab world. The possibility of a democratic transition in some States of this region might be feasible. Perhaps, the ongoing revolutions may end up establishing viable democracies and even it is possible that some existing oligarchic regimes, like the one established in Morocco, may prolong its opening and reform process thus leading to the establishment of a democratic system in accordance with the international standards. We are rather more sceptical with respect to this latter possibility but however, even if this possibility comes true, a number of problems will still remain. In the first place, these democracies may be based on agreements which will be biased in favour of the most privileged sectors. The result would be a "democradura", a hybrid form between democracy and dictatorship. The outcome of the democratic struggle in countries like the Philippines and Indonesia constitutes a serious warning to this respect. In this case, the aspirations of many people for a more ambitious modernisation were bitterly crushed. Under this type of regimes, the existing and serious economic inequalities are rarely reduced, and the promotion of the values of modernisation is quite limited. Furthermore, they do not contribute much to weaken the power held by communal and clientelistic networks, and finally, it is hardly to be expected that those institutions of a State governed by the rule of law would be developed too much. Under such circumstances, the possibility to achieve greater social integration, individuation and other fundamental components of modern societies would be cut short. Perhaps, in a longer term perspective, sustained and high economic growth might foster the modernisation process. But it may well be that this growth does not become a reality, or if it does, its consequences might be quite different, especially when we know that positive macroeconomic figures may be hiding huge imbalances and inequalities. For all these reasons, we believe that a deeper democratisation is a precondition for a global and genuine progress in the process of modernisation.

However, the possibility of attaining a far-reaching democratisation and modernisation clashes with the fundamental feature of these societies and their States, that is, their oligarchic and clientelistic nature. The struggle for democracy and modernisation must necessarily involve the fight against these two structural features. Certainly, and as seen above in the examples provided at the beginning of this section, this type of aspirations has always been present. Condemnation of abuses and criticism of both cronyism and illicit gain have taken place continuously. But even so, all this criticism has often focused too strongly on a group of leaders, their relatives and partners, without paying much attention to the real scope of this oligarchy. The case of Egypt provides a good example: in this country, the huge economic empire in the hands of the military leadership is hardly questioned (Springborg, 2011). Nonetheless, it is reasonable to assume that these oligarchies will retain its power if they do not suffer a decisive blow, thus allowing to maintain distorted democracies at most. This represents one of the major risks for the Arab revolutions, including those which have succeeded. The events that took place in Egypt were an instructive example. Here, a coalition made up of military officers, bureaucrats and businessmen all belonging to the old regime ousted Islamists from the government, an act that represented a clear assertion and recovery of their power. Against this threat of reversion, we have the emergence of broad social

coalitions confronting those oligarchies in power. It is, in short, about creating a broad coalition formed by those who have been economically and politically excluded. Well-off sectors, such as professionals and businessmen, must be considered within the group of those politically excluded, although they were marginalised from those clientelistc networks which control the State apparatus and large part of the private sector. It is well known that moderate Islamism tends to get involved with these latter sectors very often, thus forming a sort of alternative elite (Ayubi, 1996: 223-278; Kepel, 2002). The promotion of this new elite might shape a scenario made up of several elites in competition, which may lead to a form of diversification and political openness on the part of the system as a whole by moderating its oligarchic nature. But it also might happen that the newcomers begin to intermingle with the more established elite. In this case, the old oligarchy would be incorporating new elements, thus allowing it to enlarge its membership, get involved in new spheres of activity, increase its contacts and acquire control of those clientelistic networks provided by these new members. The outcome of this whole process would be a clear reinforcement of this oligarchy. That is the way the policies for political openness in Morocco have largely applied over the last decades; by incorporating a large number of its old enemies, now adequately coopted and domesticated, into those networks which hold political power.

In such eventuality, the emerging elite would be clearly using a broad proportion of the population which would be mobilised in order to support their interests. This is a inherent risk associated with any vanguard, irrespective of whether it is a political force or a broader social force. The best way to avoid it lies in an active participation on the part of popular sectors in such a way that they become able to generate their own organisational structures with their own leaderships, thus making it possible for them to develop specific demands. The aim would be that these sectors could obtain greater autonomy with respect to these potential replacement elites. Of course, this autonomy regarding their organisation and demands is difficult to preserve and can be lost at any given time. There is, therefore, an additional danger: once those popular sectors push the change process forward, they may be back to their usual apathy or forced back into it. That will be the appropriate moment for political fixes between the old and the new elite. We would be facing a process of partial setback after the more radical stage which part of the Marxist tradition has used to compare with the Thermidor of the French revolution (Soboul, 1985; Trotsky, 1991: 108-126). Certainly, the difficulties encountered by popular sectors in obtaining this autonomy are now clearly visible. A large part of these popular sectors support Islamist movements in which "green capitalists" have a prominent influence. The populism involved in these movements is very different from Latin American populisms, where organised popular sectors have much more weight. Other sections, which also have a significant number of members, support secular forces, some of them with a clear leftist orientation. But in the latter case, what we find is a strong tendency towards subordination with respect to secular and liberal right wing forces and those people belonging to the old regime. We have seen how broad popular sectors belonging to both the trade union movement and the political left, have supported the coup d' État in Egypt. They have thus provided it with a larger social base and ideological coverage. Something similar is happpening in Tunisia, with the alignment of broad sectors of the same nature with the survivors of the old regime against En-Nahda. In short, the difficulty to implement independent policies seems to be one of the greatest limitations of those popular sectors. If these limitations are not overcome, it will be difficult to accomplish the necessary reforms and establish a system beyond the actual mixture of democracy and dictatorship. A more genuine democracy will be only possible by means of a broad mobilisation which forces the government to take the perspectives and interests of social forces into consideration, irrespective of restricted elites, either new or old.

However, in this region, the emergence of this broad social coalition is hampered by several important obstacles. The primary one is the fragmentation of society into

communal sections or some other forms like those based in the opposition between laymen and Islamists. Since all these social fractures are both cause and effect of that stagnation undergone by these societies in their process of social integration and, therefore, modernisation, we find out that it also hampers the emergence of that broad social coalition. By promoting anti-oligarchy reforms, this coalition would be able to accelerate those processes of social integration and modernisation. There will be several adverse effects affecting these processes if those social fractures are not overcome. Firstly, it may block the emergence of these social coalitions. It is not by chance that democratic revolutions were quicker in becoming established in those countries where the communal fracture was less serious, like in Egypt and Tunisia. In Syria, on the contrary, the anti-oligarchy coalition collapsed and gave rise to a progressively communal war. But even in those places where the dictators were relatively easily overthrown, the initial coalition broke up into warring sections, thus making it possible to partially return to the pre-revolutionary situation. Therefore, the strong survival of communalism threatens to stabilise dictatorial regimes or support the establishment of new ones, which is something that can be perceived as the lesser of two evils by part of the population, in the face of a possible triumph of the enemy. It is by no means easy to overcome these social fractures. Undoubtedly, it requires the establishment of several minimum agreements between certain Islamist and secularist sectors regarding mutual respect, pluralism and democracy. The task of coming into terms with these agreements falls to both Islamists and laymen. Similarly, it would also imply the acceptance of rather different modernising ideas, that is, more rooted in local culture, a culture which is largely shaped by Islam. Then it would be necessary to undertake a more endogenous cultural modernisation (Castien Maestro, 2012a: 107-108).

The decrease of communalism, within a broad-based national and popular project must fight clientelism. Revolutions must not only be democratic in a formal sense, neither must they have a mere anti-oligarchy character. They ought to be determinedly anticlientelistic or, rather, the purpose of fighting corrupt practices and abuses derived from clientelism must have a programmatic form. Otherwise, several risks will be taken. Firstly, the possible emergence of new replacement oligarchies derived form the old clientelistic networks. Secondly, their action may continue to hinder the economic development and the building up of stable and predictable institutions. Obviously, we are talking about long-term struggles, since they are more time-consuming than the overthrow of any dictator. They involve a change process in many fields and mentalities which are deeply rooted and require a collaborative breakthrough with other forces. If the fight against clientelism may strengthen public institutions, their strengthening may serve to weaken clientelism.

The challenges are huge. They are not boiled down to a mere political issue, to the rule of the State, but are closely related to the deepest foundations of society. In this light, our approach is different from a particular widespread perspective which is represented in Spain by a remarkable author called Gema Martín Muñoz (2013). According to this other approach, the problem is focused on the existence of a closed-minded, authoritarian and corrupt elite which excludes people to a greater o lesser extent, and has become one of the main obstacles that blocks modernisation. However, such capacity to stop modernisation would be relative since it would not be able to block it completely. The resulting modernisation, in spite of its shortcomings, would have provided the ground for the current revolutions and generated a huge, well-informed amount of people with unfulfilled expectations. Patronage networks would not work as efficiently as before within this urban and trained population since individuals with more spatial and professional mobility would protect their freedom against authoritarianism. Similarly, their awareness about personal merits, based on meritocratic criteria, would lead them to reject clientelistic practices as well as the excessive hoarding of resources. The structure would be quite similar to the standard

narrative about the transition in Spain, from the developmentalism in the final years of Francoism to the democratic system. Therefore, society would be "healthy" and only the State, or some of its institutions, would be "sick". Thus, the challenge seems to be attainable because large part of the economic and social process of modernisation would have been carried out. According to this, an additional political reform would be enough. Nonetheless, our opinion is different. We do not deny that there has been some steps forward in the process of modernisation, nor do we deny the negative role played for decades by those oligarchies in power. Still, we wonder if all this processes are this simple. In this respect, we are less optimistic. We think we are facing deeper problems and the task to be undertaken by modernisation ought to be more ambitious. Our approach wants to disassociate itself from any kind of naïve optimism which is linked to a mechanical implementation of the abstract model of democratic transition wherever it may take place. But it also wants to avoid any kind of orientalising pessimism. It appears that only by means of avoiding these two theoretical obstacles, we will be able to explain what is really going on, formulate more or less reasonable predictions, and suggest more or less viable courses of action.

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