

Morocco: Group Affiliations and Individual Actions at Play

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The Anna Lindh/Gallup Survey findings demonstrate closer bounds with Europe, which may explain in part the cautiousness with which Moroccans judge the consequences of the Arab Spring. Jamal Khalil depicts a society divided, with citizens preferring to choose individual action over collective social acts, despite shared values of respect for others. In this context, the Moroccan Network of the Anna Lindh Foundation is focused on bringing civil society leaders closer to their southern neighbours, with whom they have drifted apart.

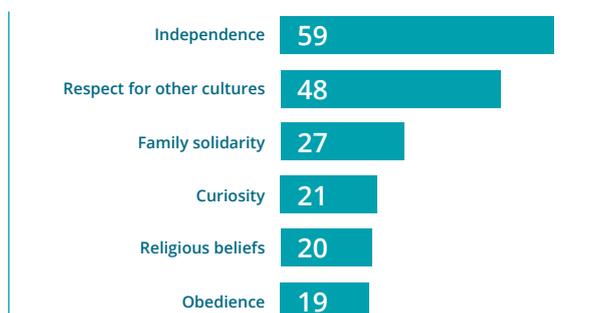
It is surprising that when we speak of the Mediterranean region to a Moroccan it is Spain that comes to mind on reflex. Borders provide the explanation: to the North - Spain and to the East - Algeria. It is easier to identify those who are in the North than those in the South, those who are closer to us geographically more than those who are historically closer and with whom we even think of sharing the same cultural heritage. Social bounds are more logical when based on economic interests and cultural interests come second. Political changes do not provoke the same level of interests, and beliefs and practices even less. It is worth noting that around 57% of Moroccans had the opportunity to directly interact with Europeans and did it mainly in their country by living in the same neighbourhood or meeting in the public sphere, or through business.

Individual priorities and social beliefs

As soon as it comes to the identification of priority values in the education of children in the European context, Moroccans recognise two recurring values: independence and respect for other cultures. The concepts of solidarity, religious beliefs and obedience are present but not decisive. It is interesting to note that Moroccans identify the same priority values for their own children (independence 52%; respect for other cultures 42%; and religious beliefs 30%) and when it comes to identifying the key values of other Southern and Eastern Mediterranean (SEM) countries, the order changes completely, with traditional values - which indicate control over children education - being placed first (Chart 24.1).

Despite the priority value scale presented, a large majority of Moroccans believe in the existence of absolute guidelines and this may denote a certain determinism when considering the position to take towards traditional norms (Chart 24.2). Moroccan society remains individualistic, since with regard to effective ways to solve the problems of the country, Moroccans state that their individual action would be the most appropriate. Collective actions, regardless of their nature,

Chart 24.1 Characteristics of the Mediterranean region for Moroccans



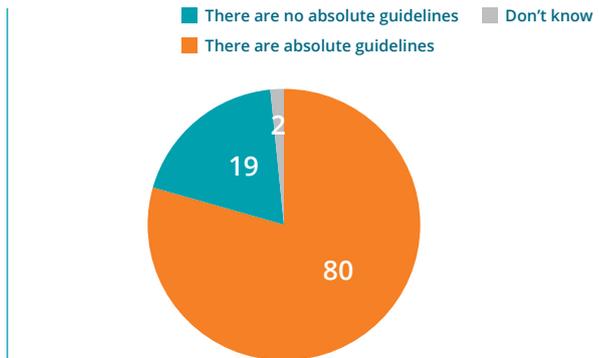
Survey Question: Assuming that we limit ourselves to six values only, I'd like to know which one of these six would you say is most important to parents raising children in Europe? And the second most important?
Base: % of all respondents of the sum of 'Most important' and 'Second most important' answers are shown (© Anna Lindh/Gallup Poll 2012).

seem to be ineffective, and for some – who demonstrate a rather fatalistic approach - there is no solution. Cultural diversity perspectives are nonetheless disparate, seeing that it is believed that the participation of different cultural, religious and political groups is a right and important for society, while on the other hand people consider that this diversity may pose a threat to society (51%).

When the Survey was carried out (September to October 2012), respondents declared that their life situation was better than 5 years ago and that they expect it will get even better in the next 5 years. They also recognised an improvement of women's role in society, a role that is considered important but whose meaning role is not specified. (Chart 24.3)

The Anna Lindh/Gallup Poll offers various elements of reflection. On initial review, opinions may seem contradictory, but if we look more closely we realise that some points appear as non-negotiable and that on some questions people show a certain level of closure as if the experience of several Arab countries does not

Chart 24.2
Moroccans' perceptions about the existence of absolute guidelines



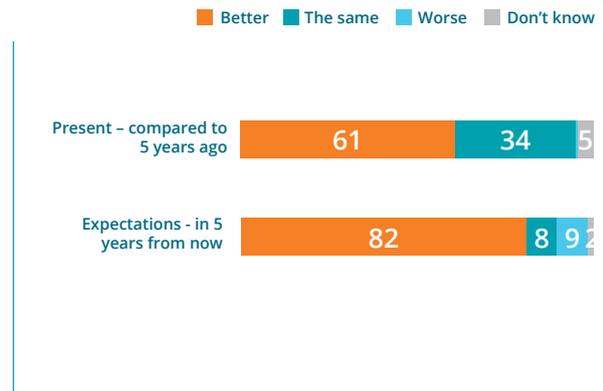
Survey Question: Some people believe that there are absolute guidelines to what is good and bad, and what is truth. Others say, that there are no absolute guidelines, things are relative and what we consider to be good or bad depends on the circumstances. Which view is closer to yours? **Base:** % of all respondents (© Anna Lindh/Gallup Poll 2012).

yet offer real opportunities for hope. It seems even that we share non-identical hopes and that people remain attached to their position waiting for tangible changes and changes which can be understandable according to their background and wishes. The analysis of the situation in other countries leads to the comparison with our own situation, and, since the beginning of the Arab Spring, a sort of mirror game started so that we wait for the implementation of a certain scenario elsewhere and observe its outcomes before deciding to adopt or reject it. We recognise the fact that there has been change, but we do not interpret it in the same way or understand it according to the same background and since we have become accustomed to waiting, we are willing to wait.

Understanding different levels of positioning

Observing the Moroccan society under the prism of the current situation on the ground, some personal attitudes may seem paradoxical: we want alpha and omega, and the two cannot work together. Looking closer, we see that they follow a certain logic. The postures are two levels of positioning. The first concerns the social actor itself that can be located and makes a representation of society without referring to his/her group membership, regardless of the shape, orientation and size of this group. He can say for example that he/she is for freedom of expression. The second level of positioning just frames and wraps the first. Group affiliations generate multifaceted influences to varying levels. The social actor, as soon as a practical implementation of a concept, a representation can see the day, finds himself forced to review his first perception so that it is consistent with that of the group and sometimes even dissolved. He/she may be for freedom of expression but as far as it does

Chart 24.3
Moroccans' personal life satisfaction



Survey Question: Taking everything into consideration, would you say, compared to 5 years ago, your present life situation is: Better, Worse or The same? And how do you expect it will change in 5 years from now? **Base:** % of all respondents (© Anna Lindh/Gallup Poll 2012).

not touch on traditions or alter the beliefs proclaimed by his/her affiliation group.

The two levels of positioning bring the ointment needed to live without internal conflicts. They can be activated simultaneously or diachronically. Only the individual perceives things in a certain way and he/she can adapt within the group. He/She can build an environment where he/she is neither within the group or alone. This leaves the possibility of becoming elusive. The social dynamics that may be created by a social movement are not immune to this variety of positioning. Positional instability of individuals can transform any collective dynamics in a status quo.

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