

Study program
Social Bond in Morocco: What roles do the State and other principal social stakeholders play?

Welcoming work
By
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Media and the Social Bond in Morocco: between what is local and what is global.

IRES, on April 4th, 2011.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the Royal Institute of Strategic Studies and thank you for accepting the invitation to come and share with us your thoughts and the results of your practice and expertise with regards to the topic “Media and social bond: between what is global and what is local”.

The IRES is a citizen forum for debate relating to supporting strategic decision making, on the light of the International think tanks and the privacy policy of Chatham House as an aid to free discussion. The goal is to offer anonymity to speakers and to encourage openness, information sharing and the emergence of innovative ideas.

For the attention of those who do us the pleasure to be with us for the first time, the IRES brochure is at their disposal. It explains the tasks, programs and organizational structure of the Institute.

The study day held this morning is organized within the framework of IRES program “Social Bond in Morocco: What role do the state and the main social stakeholders play? ”. It follow-up to a previous event organized by the Institute on October 30th, 2009 on “The media, new prescribers of social bonds?” Who aspired us to take a fresh look at the role of national and international media, including the Arab media, in the process of developing the Moroccan co-existence.

The results of this first event highlighted the growing role of media in our society and its every day powerful influence on social bond and order policy at the expense of other institutions of socialization such as family and school.

The findings of the study day held in October 2009 focused on the need:

- To establish a modern and transparent media system as part of an appropriate strategy for communication;
- To create regulatory mechanisms able to stimulate the vitality and creativity among young people while preserving margins of citizens' freedom;
- To develop media sociology;
- To make a thorough study of the Internet and the various uses by the youth.

This new medium of communication was developed rapidly in Morocco. The number of 3G Internet subscribers increased from 268 131 at the end of 2008 and 1 366 472 in December 2010 to reach 1.8 million at March 31st, 2011. According Socialbakers, a site specializing in Facebook statistics, Morocco occupies the third place in Africa with 3,013,100 users (9.53% of the population) after Egypt with 5,651,080 (7.02%) and South Africa with 3,761,160 (7.66%). The age group varies from 18 to 24 years old, which represents 46% of Facebook users in Morocco.

The media, in addition to being a fourth power, is also mirror against which societies look at themselves from within, and allow them to see the international outside. Moroccan media situation is no exception to this rule.

The excitement which characterized the media field in recent months has now a central position at the level of the Internet, which the youth use as a place where they can communicate and share information and express their expectations and demands, illustrate plainly the undergoing societal debate in our country.

International experience has shown that the the nature of a political system and the greater or lesser degree of tolerated freedom are the factors that restrain the configuration of national media systems. Today, it becomes difficult to separate between the political aspect and the media aspect. As such, it should be noted that the creation Chanel 2 (*2M*) in March 1989, the first private television channel, has contributed to the process of openness and democratization.

In Morocco, it is easy to draw a parallel between political openness since the independence and the widening of the freedom of expression, including media. The choice in favor of a political plurality favored the establishment of a paradigm of diversity, difference, opposition, or even protest, without which there is no democracy.

The advent of the Internet and its progressive affirmation as revolutionary media has changed the Moroccan and international media distribution. In its general sense, simplicity and democratization, the Internet has facilitated communication. Media became the creator of a new social bond.

The use of the Internet by the Moroccans youth and their active participation in social networks, confirm the tendency of a further openness of the Moroccan media system.

By organizing the study day this morning and which is about the “Media and social bond in Morocco between what is global and what is local”, IRES has extended the discussion that started in October 2009. While the traditional bonds of sociability and co-existence show signs of weakness, it is desirable to know that:

- How can media contribute to the current political and societal developments?

- To what extent can social networks on the Internet contribute to the emergence of a new social bond and what role can young people play in this respect?
- What conclusion shall we derive in terms of sociability, social bond and politics in Morocco in the immediate and medium term?
- What strategy Morocco would implement to take advantage of this media revolution and position itself definitely in the information society?

We will listen first while paying attention to the thoughts of Professor Jamal Eddine NAJI, who will address issues of the social bond of the accelerated development of the role of media in our societies at the global and local levels.

We will then follow carefully the statement of Si Ahmed GHAZALI, President of the High Authority of Audiovisual Communication, on the Internet status in the Moroccan media landscape and its usage by the youth.

The debate following the presentations of our two guests will definitely enrich our collective thinking on various issues regarding the role of national media in the arousal of democratic debate and its accompaniment. This is taking place in time when our country is engaged in an unprecedented deepening process of political reforms and the impact expected of such reforms on the consolidation of social bond and politics in Morocco.

Thank you all for responding to the invitation of IRES.

I'll turn to Mr. Mohamed Othman BENJELLOUN, IRES main researcher and moderator of this study day.