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doi:10.1017/S0022278X20000646

# ***Unravelling the adoption of youth quotas in African hybrid regimes: evidence from Morocco\****

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## ABSTRACT

Parliamentary youth quotas have been adopted by nine countries, mainly African autocracies. They have also attracted the attention of international organisations, which consider them indicators of democratic progress. Why were these quotas adopted? This article challenges the long-standing regime survival thesis by explaining quota adoption as the result of the convergent strategies of actors placed inside and outside the regime. It also provides new theoretical arguments that point to the transformation of representative linkages in hybrid regimes and shows how this is justified in the light of empirical evidence grounded on qualitative methodology

\* We are grateful to the Spanish Ministry of Economy, Industry and Competitiveness (MINECO), the Spanish State Research Agency (AEI), and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF, EU) for funding the research project ‘Crisis and political representation in North Africa. Institutional arrangements and protests’ [grant number CSO2017-84949-C3-2-P]. Additionally, we are grateful to the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness and the European Social Fund for financing the pre-doctoral contract of Marta González García de Paredes [grant number BES-2015-073256]. We extend our gratitude to Alec Dinnin, Patricia García Espin and the anonymous reviewers of JMAS for their constructive comments on an earlier draft of the manuscript.

and extensive fieldwork. By connecting the broader historical and socio-political context where youth quotas emerged—Africa—to the micro-level processes of quota adoption—based on the Moroccan case—this article provides a dynamic picture of how political representation is claimed and mobilised in contemporary Africa while shedding some light on the inclusive limits of quota policies.

**Keywords:** Youth quotas, parliament, political representation, hybrid regimes, Morocco.

## INTRODUCTION

Research on youth politics in Africa has been recently shaped by the emergence of massive social movements such as the so-called Arab Spring of 2011 or the Sudanese or Algerian protests of 2019. While these events have led to a vibrant literature interested in the political engagement of the youth outside institutional channels and social movements, their participation in political parties and formal institutions remains largely unexplored. This article contributes to filling this void by analysing a recent and relatively unknown phenomenon: youth parliamentary representation through quota policies. Parliamentary youth quotas are all, with the single exception of Tunisia, politically located in hybrid regimes,<sup>1</sup> temporally located as a 21st-century phenomenon and geographically situated on the African continent—only two out of nine countries are not located in Africa (i.e. the Philippines and Kyrgyzstan).

If youth quotas were not necessarily adopted to promote democratic inclusion, then, why were they adopted? This article answers the *why* by looking at the *how*. Focusing on the interactions and connections between different actors, temporalities and geographic contexts, it explores the socio-political background of their emergence in Africa and unravels their adoption in the specific case of Morocco. Exploring how the context in its different dimensions interacts with processes of youth inclusion is particularly important because beyond age, generational ties are key to understanding the emergence of this political identity. Authors such as Murphy (2012) in the MENA region and Iwilade (2013) in Africa have already pointed to the importance of generations when understanding youth politics in the region. Morocco represents an interesting example because in 2011 it became the first North African country to adopt youth quotas (Tunisia and Egypt did so in 2014) and because it has reserved the largest proportion of parliamentary seats for the young (Interparliamentary Union 2018):<sup>2</sup> 7.6% against 3.7% in Kenya, 2.5% in Rwanda and 1.1% in Uganda.

Compared with gender and minority quotas which have been widely adopted and studied (Krook & O'Brien 2010; Krook 2017), the spread of youth quotas has been largely overlooked (Belschner 2018). Most of what we know comes from multiple reports from international organisations which perceive this representative tool as progress from a democratic perspective and strongly encourage their adoption (Interparliamentary Union 2014, 2016, 2018; Azelton *et al.* 2019). In addition, quota adoption processes in Africa have been mainly

examined through the success–failure perspective that tends to focus on the factors, actors or contexts that led to the adoption, such as the international dimension (Edgell 2017) or the existence of women’s coalitions (Darhour & Dahlerup 2013; Kang & Tripp 2018), overlooking how events unfold in time beyond the ‘adoption momentum’. In this regard, Hughes *et al.* (2019) point out the need to incorporate a long-term perspective in such analyses.

When their adoption takes place in autocracies most authors uphold the regime survival thesis, like Donno & Kreft (2018) in the case of gender inclusion or Belschner (2018) concerning the youth, assuming the immutability of these regimes and the verticality of decision-making processes in these contexts. Muriaas *et al.* (2013), when analysing the relationship between democratisation and gender quotas in Africa, nuance this thesis by stating that, although contestation in non-democratic contexts differs from democracies, authoritarian regimes still enable some ‘room for manoeuvre’. Empirical evidence was provided by Kang & Tripp (2018), who showed how domestic coalitions in Africa have played a pivotal role in both democratic and non-democratic contexts. In a similar vein, but through national case-studies, Muriaas & Wang (2012) point to the adoption of gender quotas in Uganda as the result of a top-down policy encouraged by grassroots movements, while Tajali (2013) finds that in the Rwandan case political opportunity structures and the strategic interactions among different actors were decisive in the quota adoption process. Although these works do not always refer to the same context they reveal similar dynamics: the transformation of state–society relations in African hybrid regimes is favouring, on the one hand, an increase in the demands of certain groups and, on the other, a more favourable response from the regime.

By empirically exploring from below the long-term transforming interactions, claim-making and alliance-building between regime actors and group representatives this article seeks to rethink youth representation and political inclusion beyond the regime survival thesis and its co-optation strategies. In order to illustrate and justify this choice, we discuss Belschner’s (2018) findings for the adoption of youth quotas in Morocco where she concludes that they were the result of the survival strategy of the monarchy in the context of the Arab Spring. Without contradicting the strategic interest of the monarchy in introducing youth quotas, we show that they were the result of an ongoing process of inclusion that started years before the massive protests of 2011, and thanks to the claims of a sector of the partisan youth that found in the monarch a convenient ally. Beyond the dichotomist top-down and bottom-up perspectives, this article seeks the in-between space where both perspectives intersect.

The Moroccan case provides interesting evidence of how the ‘youth’ label is politically claimed and mobilised in Africa and how regime hybridisation has transformed the existing spaces devoted to political representation and to the role of youth in politics. As an example, we show how young claim-makers united around shared experiences of generational exclusion inside political parties instead of around shared experiences of societal marginalisation (as is the case for women). This article also contributes to the debates on quota

policies in general as well as to the literature on political change in hybrid regimes with unique qualitative empirical evidence on the subject.

The core of the research lies in qualitative methodology based on 23 semi-structured interviews with key political actors and long-term non-participatory observation<sup>3</sup> conducted in Morocco since 2007. We choose the interviewees according to their role in the adoption process and to their ideological and partisan affiliation.<sup>4</sup> This study gathers the testimonies of members of seven different political parties (PJD, PAM, USFP, RNI, PI, PPS, MP), opposition, civil society activists and members of the government. In order to triangulate the information we also carried out a systematic press review.<sup>5</sup> The choice of qualitative methodology was influenced by the valuable information it provides as a means of understanding complex long-term processes and interactions (Wedeen 2010).

The article is divided into two parts. The first part connects the historical and socio-political background of the emergence of youth as a political identity in Africa and Morocco to the theoretical arguments, based on the changing interactions between the state and society in hybrid regimes and its consequences for group representation. The second part empirically illustrates the previous arguments by unravelling the inclusion and quota adoption processes in the particular case of Morocco.

#### FROM NAIROBI TO RABAT: CONTEXTUALISING THE ADOPTION OF YOUTH QUOTAS

##### *The international and regional dimensions of youth inclusion*

Youth quotas made their first appearance a long way from the African continent. It was the Philippines that, in 1986, first introduced youth quotas to its national electoral party-lists<sup>6</sup> during the Cold War. Nowadays the Philippines is an exception. Of the nine countries which have introduced youth quotas, seven are located in Africa (the ninth is Kyrgyzstan, in Asia) and nearly all introduced them after the fall of the Soviet bloc and the beginning of the so-called ‘third democratization wave’ (Huntington 1991). Uganda introduced quotas in 1995, Rwanda in 2003 and Kenya in 2010. The second wave of adoptions occurred after the Arab Spring: Morocco in 2011, then Tunisia and Egypt in 2014 and Gabon in 2015. In all cases, it happened within a context of political crisis that induced a new step in the hybridisation of the authoritarian regime backed by electoral processes or the adoption of brand-new constitutions that did not lead to democratic transitions, with the sole exception of Tunisia.<sup>7</sup> The latter remains the only democracy to have adopted youth quotas in parliament.

Without denying the verticality of decision-making in these contexts, our main thesis is that three decades of regime hybridisation have transformed the established patterns of political representation and inclusion, affecting how collective identities are claimed and mobilised at the micro-level. This is

not surprising because, in spite of retaining control of the executive branch of governments, contemporary autocracies have institutionalised elections and introduced quotas for disadvantaged groups, contributing, as reported by Schuler & Malesky (2014) and Opalo (2019), to the strengthening of legislative institutions. In line with Brancati (2014), who suggests differentiating autocrats' motivations from the political effects of institutional change, we argue that beyond co-optation these transformative interactions are manifold and are producing competing and sometimes conflicting effects on group representation.

Although the political role of youth is not new, nor an exclusively African phenomenon, we argue that the socio-political transformations that have taken place in the continent since the 1980–1990s have brought together the conditions needed for its emergence as a political identity (Iwilade 2013; Mawuko-Yevugah & Ugor 2015; Desrues & Garcia de Paredes 2019). During this period, many of these countries went through Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) which involved a wave of privatisations and cuts in public spending, altering the role of the state in African societies (Campbell & Loxley 1989; Riddell 1992). While the cuts in public spending drastically decreased jobs in the public sector, the labour market became increasingly unstable (Resnick & Thurlow 2015). Both affected the expectations and prospects for the adulthood of a growing urban and educated young population. The main argument for the implementation of these policies was that economic development would lead to democratisation (Moss 1995). Instead, they increased social inequalities and enabled autocrats to remain in power through the adoption of a set of – nominally democratic – reforms legitimising these regimes in the eyes of the international community.

According to Oloka-Onyango (2007), during the 1990s, international narratives acclaimed the arrival of a 'new breed' of leaders in African politics (i.e. Paul Kagame, Yoweri Museveni, Mohammed VI, Ali Bongo). In contrast with their predecessors, the new breed were the 'true disciples' of globalisation and introduced a new way of autocratic governance based on pluralist and competitive politics. In addition, inclusive official narratives on the fight for equality shifted the emphasis away from social class towards group identities, as theorised by Fraser (2009), thereby putting disadvantaged groups on the agendas of many of these emerging African leaders (Muriaas *et al.* 2013). While women entered the political agenda by the mid-1990s, young people became increasingly visible in the official discourses in the 2000s. While their increasing demographic weight, combined with their economic and political marginalisation and their central role in social movements since the 1990s, as described by Federici *et al.* (2000), turned young people into a public problem, widespread official youth-friendly narratives opened new windows of opportunity for the emergence of representative claims and collective action. The Bobi Wine movement in Uganda and the rising claims among the partisan youth in Morocco during the 2000s are just some examples.

In the light of these events, we argue that the spread of group-friendly narratives increased the agency of certain marginalised groups while regime actors

became more likely to negotiate. Berriane (2017) made similar observations in the case of the inclusion of women in Morocco and Kagwanja (2006) in youth politics in Kenya. We therefore nuance Kang & Tripp's (2018) theory by explaining the increasing role of coalitions as an unexpected outcome of the hybridisation of authoritarian regimes in Africa. In other words, while autocrats got used to channelling social claims through representative institutions, broadening the scope for political contention in a controlled and institutionalised way, disadvantaged groups became aware of these windows of opportunity and representative claims began to emerge, turning identity politics into a contentious arena.

*From regional to national contexts: Morocco and its politics of inclusion*

As a mirror of these African dynamics, the increasing role of the youth in Moroccan politics can be traced back to the 1990s, when the challenge of a growing urban population<sup>8</sup> along with increasing inequalities became a visible reality. The deterioration in living conditions was one of the factors underlying the participation of young people in the wave of protests against the Gulf War in the spring of 1990 and the violent unrest in the city of Fez in December 1990. King Hassan II was aware of this emerging challenge, mentioning the youth in his official speeches and elevating it to a matter of public concern. He also announced in July 1990 the creation of the National Council of Youth and Future (Conseil National de la Jeunesse et de l'Avenir, the CNJA) to fight youth unemployment. In 1991, the emergence of the National Association of Unemployed Graduates of Morocco (Association Nationale des Diplômés Chômeurs du Maroc, ANDCM) gave voice to the thousands of young graduates<sup>9</sup> who struggled to find work in the public administration (Emperor Badimon 2013). In 2003, after the terrorist attacks in Casablanca, the problem of unemployment among young graduates merged with that of the excluded youth living in slums.

Politically, the king has maintained, despite exceptional periods of state of emergency, the existence of a controlled multi-party system and elected institutions such as a parliament. Both the constitution, which has been reformed several times (1970, 1972, 1992, 1996), and the elections have been used to satisfy certain demands of political parties and to address the risks of social and political instability. When Mohammed VI inherited the Alaouite throne in 1999, the political regime was already on the path of hybridisation. However, the new king wanted to mark a turning point by leading the country in a 'renewed' and 'modern' way. This consisted of the strengthening of political institutions, the renewal of political elites and a governance style based on the principles of efficiency and technocracy: it was time to make way for the next generation of entrepreneurs and technocrats (Catusse 2008). This entailed a fundamental shift in the methods of power and the techniques of government with strong political and economic ties to both western and African countries (Fernández Molina *et al.* 2019).

However, this reforming agenda could not be achieved without the cooperation and collaboration of political parties, which he nevertheless viewed as cumbersome bureaucratic machines (Bennani-Chraïbi 2013). In this context, the inclusion of subaltern groups, like women and young people, became one of his main priorities by publicly encouraging political parties to rejuvenate their decision-making bodies and their candidates for the elections (Desrues & López García 2008). These youth-friendly narratives did not fall on deaf ears: the existing generational gap within political parties became the breeding ground for the emergence of a youth consciousness based on their institutional marginalisation and their difficulties to be placed in the top positions of electoral lists. As a consequence, the leaders of some youth wings gradually demanded political inclusion and gained visibility in the media, first at the party level and later in the national debates.

*Political and generational conflict inside Moroccan political parties*

According to their role in the political system, political parties<sup>10</sup> in Morocco can be divided between those that represent the institutional opposition<sup>11</sup> (Parejo 2015), known for entertaining conflictual relations with the monarch (which they formally support but informally challenge his hegemony); and those that represent the administration,<sup>12</sup> meaning that they are strongly connected to the palace. Although this distinction does not apply systematically, it remains useful to understand partisan behaviour and the role of militancy within political parties. While the members of the institutional opposition have traditionally relied on ideological affiliation and militancy to gain power through the elections – which is the case of most left-wing parties and more recently of the moderate Islamists – members of administration parties have tended to rely more on patronage networks, family relations and economic resources (Bennani-Chraïbi 2013; Desrues & Kirhlani 2013). Relying on the declarations of some youth secretaries<sup>13</sup> there could be around 30,000 formal young party activists in Morocco.<sup>14</sup> The PJD now has the largest youth wing with ~20,000 members, followed by the USFP – which has suffered a significant decline since the 2000s, the PI – with the oldest youth wing structure (1956), and the PPS – which in spite of their reduced number of members remains active through diverse associational networks, with 2–7,000 members each. Only two administration parties have created youth partisan organisations, the UC and the MP, but the size of their membership remains unknown. As a former member of parliament put it, ‘there are political parties that are only seen during the elections. Other political parties, such as the USFP, the PI, the PJD, the PPS, do really exist. The others do not exist; they do not work. They do not play their constitutional role. They are just waiting for the elections to mobilise some profiles with money and that’s all’ (current MP of the USFP 2018 Int.).

In spite of the low number of party members and the autocratic nature of the regime, institutional opposition parties are far from being empty shells and have

instead been shaped by internal pressures. As shown by Desrues & Kirhlani (2013), the evolving relationship of these parties with the regime remains of pivotal importance in understanding the rationales of their youngest members: they not only accused their party leaders of excluding them from the decision-making bodies, but also of betraying their political commitment due to their close relationship with the regime.

Starting in 1970, the PI, USFP and PPS formed a front of opposition to the monarchy which ended in 1998 after their inclusion in a governmental coalition, entailing their loss of credibility and an ongoing point of contention within their militancy. Their downfall was reinforced by the increasing success of the newly founded Islamist party, the PJD, which quickly became the symbol of the official opposition to the regime, leaving the other parties in a complex and contradictory position: ‘until 2008 youth wings exercised counter-power within political parties, especially the youth of the USFP. Today this has disappeared, there is only the youth of the PJD that remain strong’ (former USFP youth activist and participant of the M2oF 2018 Int.).

Indeed, the youth wing of the USFP went from being a breeding ground for left-wing activism and opposition to the regime to being a source of conflict within the party. The multiple splits that this youth organisation has suffered ever since have diminished it so much that nowadays it is quite irrelevant, especially compared with the youth wing of the PJD. The Islamist youth wing was created in 2002 and grew considerably by recruiting new members in urban areas and particularly among university students (Tomé-Alonso 2016).

Apart from the political conflicts between youth wings and their party leaders, the generational gap also played an important role in the emergence of representative claims (*La Vie Eco* 2004). Whereas after independence most party leaders were relatively young, by the 2000s they had aged considerably. In 2004, Istiqlal’s youth secretary Abdallah Bakkali was re-elected at the age of 43, while the youth secretaries of the two administration parties, Mohammed Rachid (MP) and Abdellah Firdaus (UC), were 52 and 50 years old respectively. The USFP stood as an exception with a youth secretary younger than 30. The USFP’s youth organisation was the first to impose an age limit on their members: first of 35 years, and soon after of 30 (former member of the USFP youth executive bureau 2019 Int.).

The ongoing generational conflict affected not only political parties but was also reflected in the electoral turnout. For example, in the 2007 elections, 66% of potential young voters between 18 and 24 years old declared that they were not going to register<sup>15</sup> and the turnout was the lowest then recorded (37%) (Desrues & Lopez Garcia 2008). While during the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s young people had become a public problem due to their exclusion from the labour market, their participation in social movements and their potential for radicalisation, their low electoral participation during the 2000s along with the increasing generational conflicts within political parties turned the official narratives of youth inclusion from the social to the political sphere.



## THE MOROCCAN EXPERIENCE AND THE POLITICS OF YOUTH REPRESENTATION

*Before the Arab Spring: the spread of youth representative claims and the adoption of party quotas*

Three major events served as the inspiration for the emergence of representative claims: the adoption of a gender-based parliamentary quota in 2002, the process of adopting a new law on political parties in 2004, and the creation of the National Institute for Youth and Democracy in 2006 (Institut National de la Jeunesse et la Démocratie, INJD).

First, the decision to earmark 30 seats reserved for women in 2002 was a stimulant to change in an institution accustomed to an almost negligible female presence. This quota was adopted by a government led by a technocratic former Interior Minister (Driss Jettou) with the tacit agreement of the parliamentary forces after years of women's campaigning (Darhour & Dahlerup 2013). While the number of reserved seats did not challenge male domination in parliament (they represented only 9% of the total number of seats), their adoption meant their symbolic recognition and increased their presence in the institution (Sater 2007). The partisan youth echoed these changes and began in turn to demand their political inclusion, revealing the role of institutional learning in the process. In the following years, the partisan youth would make concrete demands, presented both to the parties and later to the ministry of the interior, inspired by both the substance and the form of the gender quotas.

A window of opportunity opened two years later, during the process of adopting<sup>16</sup> the new law on political parties, which offered the possibility of establishing a party quota to guarantee the inclusion of the young in the decision-making bodies (Bendourou 2007). Once the rumour on the adoption spread among political parties, the socialist youth wing of the USFP organised a conference with a range of political and civil society actors where they called for the adoption of a party quota (former USFP youth secretary and former MP (youth quotas) 2019 Int.). They also lobbied in 2005 to establish a mandatory proportion of youth representation (as was the case with gender party quotas) but they did not succeed due to the resistance from most party leaders, who perceived that they had already conceded too much by including women. Youth party quotas were finally included in the final law on political parties. Nevertheless, although political parties had to ensure the representation of young people in the decision-making bodies of the party, it gave them carte blanche to decide how to implement them.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, youth claims did not stop there and in a development that was symptomatic of the increasing generational gap within political parties, other youth wings called for quotas within their parties. Between 2006 and 2011, most political parties introduced party quotas to ensure a minimum of 20% youth representation in their governing bodies. In some cases this was adopted straightforwardly (e.g. the PJD and the

MP) (PJD party executive 2019 Int.; Popular Movement (MP) party executive and former Minister of Youth and Sports 2019 Int.), while in other cases it was approved after lengthy debates and internal conflicts (e.g. the PI). Far from being a co-optation strategy of the regime, party quotas were adopted thanks to an institutional innovation – a new law. Although it responded to the regime’s narratives on youth inclusion, this legislative reform was implemented largely thanks to pressure from the partisan youth. This episode helps to highlight the often ignored role played by this type of party structure in group representation, as pointed out by Cowell-Meyers & Patrick (2017). Age limits varied between 30 and 40 years old, revealing that party quotas were more of an instrument to gratify and recognise long-term activism and loyalty to the party than a matter of fostering youth representation per se.

Finally, the creation of the INJD in 2006 (*Le Matin* 2006) symbolised an important step towards spreading youth representative claims. Created to build up a democratic culture among the partisan youth by fostering their political socialisation, the INJD became an arena to discuss politics on a peer-to-peer basis and create new alliances and ‘solidarities’ (former MP (youth quotas) and PI youth secretary 2018 Int.). According to Berriane & Duboc (2019), the development of these networks and alliances is crucial to understanding the emergence of coalitions – such as the one that would emerge five years later and press for parliamentary representation.

The 2007 legislative elections fuelled this inclusive environment and youth demands proliferated within the walls of the INJD and beyond: youth-related movements and associations connected to the regime also began to emerge. This was the case of the *Daba 2007* (meaning ‘right now 2007’) which appeared as an ‘independent’ association willing to increase the voter turnout among the women and the youth. With strong connections to the palace,<sup>18</sup> *Daba 2007* emerged as an ad hoc electoral tool that served to legitimise the regime by adopting the king’s inclusive narratives, while implicitly delegitimising political parties (Zaki 2009). In the same vein, the Circle of Young Moroccan Democrats (Cercle des Jeunes Démocrates Marocains, CJDM) was created in 2008 under the umbrella of the Movement of all Democrats (Mouvement de Tous les Démocrates, MTD), a political movement formed by personalities with close ties with the king. Soon after, Fouad Ali El Himma (considered the most influential king’s counsellor) transformed the MTD into the PAM party to counteract the increasing electoral success of the PJD. While the young members of the CJDM inherited the rationales of *Daba 2007* and explicitly defended the regime, young activists from the institutional opposition felt menaced by these emerging activists with no party records that were gaining visibility and claiming to be representatives of the Moroccan youth (*Le Matin* 2010).

However, the leap to young people’s representation at the parliamentary level took place only in 2010, when the leaders of the PI’s youth wing called for the adoption of a youth quota at the national level (former youth regional secretary and member of the PI executive bureau 2017 Int.; former member of the USFP youth executive bureau and former MP (youth quotas) 2019 Int.). In

accordance with their long militancy records and the first-line role of their party in the governmental coalition, these activists strategically seized the opportunity to push the debate at a higher level. While the claims did not succeed at that time due to the opposition of the main party, leaders' negotiations between youth wings and the regime were already underway. This first demand at the parliamentary level – by a party that had historically embodied the opposition to the monarchical hegemony – and the negotiations with the regime that began shortly afterwards illustrate the transformation of state–society relations. While the youth of the institutional opposition continued to press for greater representation, the regime decided to negotiate with them without any direct threat to the stability of the regime.

As we have shown, the process of political inclusion began well before the Arab Spring. This process was not the result of a one-dimensional strategy of the monarchy, but more a combination of the monarchical youth-friendly narratives, the increasing generation gap within political parties, the emergence of new spaces where youth activists were called upon to play a major role and their institutional learning. However, the specific context of the Arab Spring served to crystallise this process, as well as to facilitate and speed up the negotiations. These negotiations took place between April and August of 2011 and resulted in the adoption of youth quotas.

*The Arab Spring and the adoption process: the 'Shabab Al-An' (الشباب الآن) coalition and the monarchical agenda*

Mass protests started in Morocco in February 2011 in solidarity with the Tunisians and Egyptians who were protesting against their regimes. Acknowledging the date of the first protests the Moroccan version of Arab Spring named itself the 20th February Movement (M2oF) (Desrués 2012). Predominating at the core of the movement were mainly young activists unified by shared experiences of previous activism or virtually connected through social networks (Desrués 2013): 'the M2oF was a free rally where we could find some sectors of the partisan youth. However, during the protests we left the labels out: we were together as young people' (former USFP youth activist and participant of the M2oF 2018 Int.). Despite describing itself as an independent movement, most of the supporters of the M2oF were engaged in left-wing political parties, human rights associations or Islamist groups.

While most institutional party leaders remained loyal to the regime by not supporting the marches, some young activists – mainly from the PJD and the USFP – joined them, deepening the pre-existing generational conflict inside political parties (Bennani-Chraïbi & Jekhllaly 2012). As events in the region evolved, precipitating the downfall of the Tunisian and Egyptian regimes, the Moroccan regime decided to introduce political reforms. On 9 March King Mohammed VI announced a new constitution and brought forward legislative elections to November 2011. Once this reformist agenda was launched and the announcement of early elections confirmed, young party activists feared

that their call for the much-desired rejuvenation of the electoral lists would fall on deaf ears. While the M2oF expressed scepticism about the democratic sincerity of these reforms and called for a real transition, some young activists belonging to the CJDM organised a parallel march to support the monarchical agenda. This was perceived by the youth wings of the institutional opposition as an opportunistic strategy and they quickly organised a common front to channel youth representative claims (a member of the CJDM 2017 Int.; former MP (youth quotas) and PI youth secretary 2018 Int.). By April 2011 young activists were divided between those demonstrating, those supporting the monarchy and those negotiating the quota, revealing the factionalisation of youth representative claims and the implicit constraints to political inclusion in a non-democratic context. These divisions mirrored the ‘divide and rule’ strategies of the regime, revealing ‘corporatist’ rationales as noted by Muriaas & Wang (2012) in the case of Uganda.

The adoption process began with the creation in April 2011 of the Shabab Al-An coalition, which literally means ‘Youth Now’ (former MP (youth quotas) and PI youth secretary 2018 Int.). This movement comprised only those political parties that had formal youth organisations (i.e. PI, USFP, PPS, PJD, UC and MP), as well as other small parties and some civil society associations with little influence in the institutions. The exclusion of young activists with no affiliation to formal partisan youth organisations was a clear sign of the desire of the Shabab Al-An members to exclude the members of the CJDM, as well as other newcomers willing to gain visibility and participate in the negotiations. The Shabab Al-An coalition implicitly wanted their militancy and loyalty to the party to be rewarded and explicitly claimed that the monarchic plans for the renewal and rejuvenation of political parties should finally be put into practice.

In order to push for young people’s parliamentary inclusion, they first established negotiations with the Prime Minister Abbas El Fassi (Former MP (youth quotas) and PI youth secretary 2018 Int.). However, an immediate response was not forthcoming and the contacts with the government had to be relaunched several times. In the words of some activists, the youth quota was directly supported by ‘the State’ meaning that it had the king’s support (former MP (youth quotas) and PI youth secretary 2018 Int.; Former USFP youth secretary and former MP (youth quotas) 2019 Int.; Former member of the USFP youth executive bureau 2019 Int.; Member of the PPS youth executive bureau 2019 Int.; Popular Movement (MP) party executive and former Minister of Youth and Sports 2019 Int.). This was illustrated by the central role of the Minister of Interior (who is the right-hand man of the king in government) during the negotiations.

One of the points of contention between the coalition and the Minister of Interior Taïeb Cherkaoui, was the establishment of the quota age limit: while the latter proposed 35 years, the Shabab Al-An coalition proposed instead to increase it to 40. This reflected not only the ageing of most youth wing leaders (who were nearer their 40s than their 30s) but also their perception of the quota as a tool to reward their commitment to the party. This turned

the coalition into opportunists in the eyes of the M2oF supporters: ‘in Morocco, the creation of the youth quota has been perceived as a kind of instrument to reward the loyalty and work of party activists, especially those who have remained faithful to the party and the official discourse ... In the end, the youth quota has become a bone of contention among young party members: young people no longer fight for a future project to improve the situation of young people but fight to see who gets on the list’ (a member of the PPS youth executive bureau 2019 Int.). As happened years earlier with the incorporation of the institutional opposition into the governmental coalition of 1998 and their consequent rapprochement with the monarchy, youth wings were mirroring the same ambiguous rationales that their party leaders had exhibited previously.

The adoption process took several months, during which time discussions took place with other political actors, namely party leaders and other members of civil society, such as the National Council of Human Rights (Conseil National des Droits de l’Homme, CNDH). Most negotiations and interactions were held at the PI’s headquarters in Rabat, where the coalition also mobilised the media by organising press conferences and public appearances (*Al Bayane* 2011). In spite of having the king’s support, the coalition had run up against the resistance of their main party leaders as well as the women’s movement. Whereas party leaders perceived the quota as a fast track to Parliament, the women’s movement argued the young did not deserve the quota and felt threatened by male dominance. To counteract these objections, the coalition increased their visibility by organising additional public events, like youth marches in the north and south of the country and by drawing up a joint manifesto published in August 2011.

The youth quota was finally adopted at the end of August 2011, immediately after the king’s speech delivered on 20 August where he encouraged political parties to ‘introduce new blood’. In order to satisfy the opponents of the youth quota, the total number of seats in the lower house increased by an additional 70 seats (from 325 to 395) and seats reserved for women were doubled (60 in total). The youth quota was finally established at 30 reserved seats for (exclusively) male candidates under 40 years old. This nearly doubled the presence of MPs under 40 in the lower house going from 12%<sup>19</sup> in 2007 to 22% in 2011. However, most young MPs were not elected because of the youth quota, but instead thanks to their presence in the open constituencies and in the women’s quota (women represented 15% of young MPs in 2011). Despite the controversy in the media over the scope for favouritism and nepotism implicit in the lists, in general youth lists constituted a vehicle for rewarding those young activists with long records of militancy (*L’Economiste* 2011) and relatively scant economic resources to enter parliament.

Five years later, in 2016 an ad hoc coalition of youth wings re-emerged in the wake of rumours about the abandonment of the youth quota for the forthcoming elections. Ultimately the quota was retained but was amended to make it accessible to women prior to the October 2016 legislative elections.

## CONCLUSIONS

This article has explored the adoption of youth quotas by non-democratic regimes in Africa through an in-depth case study based on the Moroccan experience. It has sought to contribute to the literature in three main ways.

First, it has connected the emergence of youth quotas in Morocco to the spread of youth quotas in Africa while contextualising conditions that had turned young people into a political identity. This contributes to the reconsideration of youth inclusion in its national and transnational dimensions and the role that generational exclusion has to play in the emergence of young people as new political actors.

Second, it has offered renewed theoretical arguments by dissecting how the hybridisation of these regimes has transformed representative linkages and opened opportunities for group political inclusion. In accordance with Opalo (2019), it shows how African autocracies are far from being static and isolated from international influences and how state–society relations are increasingly evolving on the continent. This nuances Kang & Tripp’s (2018) theory and contributes to the understanding of political change in non-democratic contexts, by explaining the increasing role of domestic coalitions in quota adoption processes as an unexpected outcome of the hybridisation of authoritarian regimes. By separating the motivations—co-optation, regime survival—from the effects behind these democratic innovations—transformation of state–society interactions, quota adoption—as outlined by Brancati (2014), we contribute to rethinking group inclusion as having competing effects. Taking Morocco as an example, the will of the king to stabilise the regime in 2011, as noted by Belschner (2018), was not mutually exclusive with the active agency of the partisan youth and their fight for political representation, as we have shown here. However, the regime survival thesis did hide the pivotal role of the long-term, often conflicting interactions between the regime, the partisan youth and political parties before 2011. Youth quotas were the result of the evolving claims of a sector of the partisan youth, which found in the monarchy powerful support for their demands.

Finally, beyond static and institutional factors, this article provides a multidimensional and dynamic picture of how youth is emerging as a new political identity in Africa. The Moroccan case throws particular light on how group identities are displayed and mobilised in a non-democratic context, affecting the role of the youth in politics. Another finding of this article relates to the countervailing power that the partisan youth can exert inside political parties and their potential to induce gradual change inside official institutions. We believe these findings could inform future studies on youth politics in African hybrid regimes beyond social movements. They also call for more attention from the literature on quota policies to be given to the role of pre-existing networks and alliances of claim makers beyond the ‘adoption momentum’ as suggested by Berriane & Duboc (2019). A final recommendation emerging from the present article is to reconsider youth inclusion as an opportunity to explore

the many ways in which identity politics is becoming a contentious arena in African hybrid regimes, and the limits of quota policies.

## NOTES

1. Conceived here as a sub-category of authoritarianism (Diamond 2002; Levitsky & Way 2002). These regimes introduced or reinforced democratic institutions and processes without leading to democratisation or liberalisation processes.

2. The countries mentioned have adopted Reserved Seats, which guarantee a minimum number of seats in parliament beforehand. Tunisia, Egypt, Gabon, the Philippines and Kyrgyzstan introduced Legislated Candidate Quotas which guarantee the inclusion of specific groups in the electoral lists. In the last case, it is impossible to predict the proportion of members elected as it depends on the electoral results.

3. The authors have participated as international observers in the legislative elections in Morocco on several occasions (2007, 2011, 2016). Moreover, this research was conducted within a broader investigation of youth parliamentary representation that involved them observing the lower house of the Moroccan parliament over the course of eight months between 2017 and 2018.

4. The duration of the interviews was between half an hour and one hour long. The questions put to the interviewees varied depending on their role in the process. While those who directly participated in the negotiations (coalition leaders, claim-makers) were asked only to describe and explain the inclusion process and identify the actors involved, indirect participants (i.e. party militants and demonstrators) were asked general questions about the context and their perceptions and opinions on the inclusion process.

5. The information was analysed systematically by overlapping the narratives of the interviewees, the observations made in the field and the press review. Then we interpreted the results by connecting the events, actors and perceptions in a sequential order that aimed to rebuild the process over the long term.

6. Party-list quotas were not exclusively allocated to young people but were rather shared between a range of disadvantaged groups.

7. The Freedom House. *The Freedom in the World Index*, 2019. <https://freedomhouse.org/report-types/freedom-world>.

8. Most of the population now lives in cities and 61% of the population is under 35 years old.

9. Although Morocco has lower rates of enrolment in education than its North African neighbours, they have increased considerably in the last decades (Desrués & Garcia de Paredes 2019).

10. We only focus on those that have played an active role in the political institutions (parliament and government), because they were the ones involved in the inclusion process. They are eight in total.

11. The most significant are (1) the Party of Justice and Development (PJD), leading moderate Islamist ideology; (2) the Socialist Union of Popular Forces (USFP), representing the moderate left-wing; (3) the Istiqlal Party (PI), which is conservative; and (4) the Party of Progress and Socialism (PPS), the former communists.

12. The most important are (5) the National Rally of Independents (RNI), which is mainly neoliberal; (6) the Party of Authenticity and Modernity (PAM), which brings together heterogeneous left-wing and neoliberal ideologies that share progressive views on society; (7) the Constitutionalist Union (UC), whose members are mostly conservatives and economically liberal; and (8) the Popular Movement (MP), which was created to represent the Berber population and isolated rural communities.

13. PJD, Rabat, 13 November 2017; PPS, Rabat, 4 April 2019; PI, Rabat, 26 April 2018.

14. Belonging to the main youth wings.

15. Voters must register beforehand to participate in the elections.

16. The first draft of the bill was rejected in 2004 as it was perceived as introducing serious restrictions on the creation of new political parties and increased the discretionary power of the executive to ban and forbid political parties. After several debates and rounds of negotiation, the draft was finally approved by the Council of Ministers in 2005.

17. Although youth party quotas were maintained in the new law on political parties adopted in 2011 (Law 29-11, article 26), this was not mentioned in the IPU's reports (2014, 2016, 2018).

18. Founded by Nouredine Ayouch, a Moroccan businessman and activist after meeting with the King in 2006.

19. All the data concerning MPs was provided by the parliamentary administration between 2016 and 2017 and entered by the authors into a database. The Tafra association, and particularly Othmane Bentaouzer and Amin Derkaoui, helped us in translating and coding the database.

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### Interviews

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- Former youth regional secretary and member of the PI executive bureau, Rabat, 13.11.2017.
- Member of the PI executive bureau, Rabat, 7.12.2017.
- Former member of the Conseil National de la Jeunesse et l'Avenir (CNJA), Rabat, 20.11.2017.
- Former USFP youth activist and participant of the M2oF, Rabat, 8.2.2018.
- Former president of a youth association, Rabat, 13.2.2018.
- Former MP (youth quotas) and PI youth secretary, Rabat, 26.4.2018.
- PPS party officer, Rabat, 5.10.2016.
- PJD regional youth secretary, Rabat, 13.11.2017.
- Former USFP activist and current RNI local politician, Rabat, 8.11.2017.
- Former USFP youth secretary and former MP (youth quotas), Rabat, 29.4.2019.
- A former member of the USFP youth executive bureau, Rabat, 26.4.2019.

PJD party executive, Rabat, 25.4.2019.

Popular Movement (MP) party executive and former Minister of Youth and Sports, Rabat, 25.4.2019.

Member of the PPS youth executive bureau, Rabat, 29.4.2019.

PJD party officer, Rabat, 24.4.2019.

Current MP of the PPS (youth quotas), Rabat, 28.11.2018.

University professor Mohamed V University, Rabat, 7.6.2018.

Current MP (PJD, youth quotas), Rabat, 8.2.2018.

Current MP (USFP, youth quotas), Rabat, 5.6.2018.

Current MP (RNI, youth quotas), Rabat, 4.12.2017.

Current MP (PJD, youth quotas) and local politician, Rabat, 20.2.2018.

### *News Media*

*La Vie Eco*, Casablanca; *Le Matin*, Casablanca; *Aujourd'hui Le Maroc*, Casablanca; *Maghress*, online only; *Al Bayane*, Casablanca; *L'Economiste*, Casablanca; *Tel Quel*, Casablanca; *Le Journal Hebdo*, Casablanca; *L'Express*, Paris; *L'Humanité*, Saint Denis.