

# YOUSSEF AMRANI

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## Miguel Ángel MORATINOS

I was going to start with Youssef Amrani, diplomatic adviser to His Majesty King Mohammed VI, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Morocco, and a veteran diplomat. He has only one flaw: he comes from the Real Madrid, and I do not, but I think we can forgive him. Aside from all of that, I think it is good to start with Morocco, because we are in Marrakesh. And Marrakech is the thousand-year-old with influences from the Arabian, Almoravian, Southern and Almohadian world....

At a few points in history, the people of the Mashrek looked at the Maghreb just when everything was in motion, the political situation was moving around the Mashrek, the Gulf countries, with a certain distance. I would not say with “disdain”. Morocco now can talk forcefully about what it has done and how it looks with its Arab solidarity and commitment to the Middle East, about the model that has resulted in positive relations and reports and results. That is why I believe that starting with the West can give us a little more perspective, but also a clear vision of what is happening in the Middle East.

## Youssef AMRANI

Thank you. Let me first start by saying that I am very happy to be here and to share some concerns about the region. Of course, I have eight minutes, so I will try to be very brief.

You invited us to talk about trends in the Middle East. Firstly, I want to make one point. We cannot dissociate the Middle East, the Maghreb and the Sahel because we face the same challenges and the same serious threats and also we cannot ignore Europe as a key player in the region and notably through its neighbourhood policy. I will talk about Europe later on in the debate, but let me say today that, as you have said in the beginning, the situation today in the region is chaotic. We have complex challenges to face, such as fragmentation and deconstruction of the Arab world. This is the reality. More than that, we do not have the necessary tools to manage these conflicts at the level of Maghreb, at the level of the Middle East, so we need some tools to be able to face these challenges. If we add to that the division within the Security Council, which makes it impossible to manage these kinds of conflicts, we are not moving anywhere.

I will limit myself to three trends.

First, very briefly, are the on going conflicts. Unfortunately today, Syria, Iraq, Libya and Yemen are definitely sinking towards a failed state. There is no longer any effective central state that can impose solutions, promote development, promote democracy or propose solutions for the problem of identities because at the end of the day, the big problem we face today in our region is the problem of identity, the Shia-Sunni dimension and others.

Today, the Middle East is one of the few regions without any semblance of original security architecture, economic order. We have failed at the level of the Arab League to promote something consistent to manage conflict. Even the original integration schemes like the GCC or the Arab Maghreb Union have found it impossible to move forward in conflict resolution. We saw that in the case of Libya. Despite the Skhirat Agreement, we were not able to promote any solution for this conflict. Then of course my other colleagues will talk about the key Palestinian issue, which remains unresolved, but has been relegated in the hierarchy of emergencies.

Of course despite this rapprochement between Hamas and Fatah, are we moving forward? Maybe later on, my colleagues will talk about it, but in fact we are lacking leadership, vision and commitment, not only from the regional players, but also from the international players. We cannot move forward today in the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict if we do not have these three prerequisites of vision, commitment and leadership. Is the two-state strategy still valid today? Are the parties still committed?

This leads me to a question of why has the international community failed to achieve this? Why do we remain so deeply divided on the approach, methods and means to help us solve these ongoing conflicts. This Israeli Palestinian conflict, which continues to fuel frustrations and violence in the Arab world, cannot be detached from its regional environment. To think that the Middle East could regain stability without finding a lasting solution to this conflict is an illusion.

The second trend. I want to tackle is the issue of bad politics and the problem of economic and social development in our region. I think the governance deficit and the lack of development today have become more problematic. If you add to this the lack of cooperation, weakness of institutions and bad politics, we are again going nowhere. I cannot develop these points further because we do not have enough time, but the Arab world today needs to adapt itself to the current context. This can no longer be based on shared values or common language, but instead should be based on how to promote economic development and how to create jobs because at the end of the day, the number of jobs created and the amount of growth added are the most important. Unfortunately, today, according to international figures, the level of growth in the Arab world remains very low, at an average of 2% for the last year. In parallel, governance deficits and the lack of development have become even more problematic. The many crises in our region have severely hurt economies, destroyed state infrastructure and restricted the space afforded to basic human rights. In this context, an efficient cooperation is urgently needed to address the lack of effective regional collaboration.

The third issue is the terrorist threat. Today, this common threat to the region is violent extremism and it seeks to create its own entities political entities. It is true that we were able to defeat or to effectively combat Daesh and ISIS in Iraq and Syria, but militarily only. This brings us to the threat of Daesh and other radicalized groups, which have taken hostage our faith and used it to exploit the fear of disenfranchised individuals in order to spread hatred, ignorance and division. The fight against terrorism needs today, more than ever, a pragmatic and responsible approach through an effective security cooperation. Regional and international initiatives are increasing (United Nations, EU, League of Arab States), but the fight against this serious threat needs more progress. Addressing the issue of the fight against terrorism under the exclusive prism of security concerns is an incomplete response that involves significant risks in terms of reversibility. This confirms too that no state or multilateral actor, however powerful it may be and also military interventions, cannot impose alone, crisis and terrorism exit solutions. What does all this mean for our region and for the Middle East's future? All I can tell you is that the answers to our common challenges have one obvious common denominator: We need to work together through a common strategic vision for the region.

Finally we do not have to blame the others, the international community, our partners. We need to do our own homework internally in our region as far as good governance, democracy and so on. You invited me to talk about Morocco. I think we were able to move forward in this region thanks to the leadership His Majesty King Mohammed VI that has led the country on a gradual, endogenous and irreversible reform process that has helped our country build up its resilience and strengthen its institutions. This process was founded on a vision for a democratic, plural, open society and an approach seeking inclusive partnerships and realistic local solutions to specific problems. Morocco has always considered change as an opportunity for improvement, rather than wasting time and efforts resisting it.

Definitively I will say that we need collective answers. We need a vision based on these three tracks. Security of course is important, but also the political track of democracy and good governance to fight terrorism. The major challenge today in our region, in the entire Arab world is to deconstruct the jihadist narrative and also to propose an alternate narrative. The coherence of strategies and communication endeavours in this regard is also essential in order to counter the extremists' narrative, as efforts made by States individually will always be insufficient to fight a global threat. It is up to us to set up the necessary mechanisms that can make our region immune to the terrorist threat. This requires an approach based on a realistic, comprehensive and consistent strategy and vigorous engagement through the media: the religious leaders have a powerful role in promoting peace and tolerance. This can only be done by experts through an inclusive approach that gathers all the players, including the young and the women. This is important and this is what we did in our country.

Let me conclude, by quoting by His Majesty King Mohammed the VI in his last Speech before the parliament "Moroccans today need balanced, equitable development which ensures dignity for all, guarantees income, provides jobs - especially for our young people - and contributes to building confidence, promoting stability and ensuring integration into professional, social and family life. Today, Moroccans want a good education for their children that



guarantee integration into the knowledge and communication. Although Morocco has made tangible progress, which is recognized throughout the world, we have to admit that our national development model no longer responds to citizens' growing demands and pressing needs; it has not been able to reduce disparities between segments of the population, correct inter-regional imbalances or achieve social justice. In this regard, I call upon the government, Parliament and all the institutions and organs concerned - each in its respective fields of competence - to reconsider our development model in order to keep abreast of changes in the country"

**Miguel Ángel MORATINOS**

Thank you, Youssef, for your introduction and your reference to the lack of security architecture and crisis management and the fragmentation of conflict and crisis in this part of the world and the way you have to address issues in the Moroccan model.