

Promoting the Culture of Dialogue between Cultures in the Arab World

by Sélim El Sayegh
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*Paper by Sélim El Sayegh**

1. Introduction

The major challenge of the Arab uprisings resides in the youth drive. Accounting for 60 per cent of the Arab population, Youth have been calling for political and economic reforms. During the revolts, these claims have become more radical seeking a fundamental change. This gradual evolution, from a relatively partial change to a more absolute comprehensive one, ushers in a new era with a different intellectual construct. With the ousting of dictatorships, all civil society forces are unleashed with huge actual and potential resources mobilized to contribute to building up the new order. Groups of solidarity, communities, parties, associations, and organizations of all nature among many others put forward new ideas and adequate action plans. Liberty thus acclaimed becomes the outcry for dignity, honor and pride.

Never before in the Arab world has the individual had such a central place as it does today. An individual fully grasping the possibilities of restored liberty and recognized dignity gives birth to a new citizen acting in a new paradigm; a new citizen that seeks a transcendence of the ego to relate the individual to the common good. This fresh paradigm empowers the individual as a citizen in the name of equality, while simultaneously recognizing the right of difference of each citizen when it comes to belonging to a culture or sub-culture. The right to be different involves more than the right to differ and to dispute and by the same token, the obligation of peaceful settlement. The right to be different, by belonging to a culture or a sub-culture means in a new era of liberty and dignity, the obligation to conduct a transformation of the patterns generating disputes and conflicts among cultures. Henceforth, the issue of promoting the culture of intercultural dialogue in the aftermath of the Arab revolts represents major characteristics that will be reflected hereafter.

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2. Framing the issue: culture of dialogue or culture of dialogue between cultures?

One should first differentiate between the "*culture of dialogue*" and the "*culture of dialogue between cultures*". The **Culture of Dialogue** aims at building collective customs and traditions that would lead to finding a peaceful solution to both the solving and the disagreement matters. Thus, the objective becomes inclusive to the community as a whole, without any distinction made between cultures or between cultural specificities which are the embedded components. The culture of dialogue has a public pattern that characterizes a given society, a given family and a given state.

As for the **dialogue between cultures**, it stems from the general culture of dialogue, but takes into account the cultural factor as the standard on the basis of which the points of difference and conflict are identified. It is therefore vital to examine the positive and negative effects of this cultural factor in order to recognize the evolution of the disagreement towards an open conflict, seeking to build a common ground that preserves on one hand the cultural specificity of the national components, while on the other hand it is linked to the principle of the common good, which is -in this context- to maintain civil peace as well as social and human interactions. The impact of the dialogue between cultures can be national and "internal" as it can be regional and "external".

In order to grasp all the dimensions of this paradigm shift, it is important to try to understand the concepts of and interactions between culture, conflict and dialogue.

3. Culture

Culture comes from the Latin term (*colere*). It refers to the placement of symbolic practices, often called "codes" into a theatrical scene. Those theatrical representations are designed to transmit a sense of belonging. They are derivatives of experience, more or less organized, learned or created by the individuals of a population in a sociological manner. However, dialogue is differently organized and includes images or "encodements" (*symbols*) and their interpretations (*meanings*) transmitted from past generations (traditions), contemporaries, and formed by the individuals themselves

(*modern*). Therefore, Culture becomes a set of shared and enduring meanings, values and beliefs that characterize groups and orient their behavior.

Culture is a community domain. Indeed, culture is essentially collective and it affects and influences human behavior. In general, culture often determines the criteria for what is good or bad. Values as part of the culture influence “the selection from available modes, means and ends of action” (Kluckhohn, 1951, p.395)¹. Actors may be guided unconsciously by cultural values that help reproduce learned behavior.

Culture helps people to build and preserve their own identity. Identity stems from the consciousness of difference. Sometimes, this identity sharpens after a confrontation. It strengthens the self-esteem of the individual, and it makes it easier for the individual to accept compromises in deals with other parties without being afraid of “losing face”.

Subcultures. Corporate or professional culture is a subculture that has its own meanings, norms of behavior and symbols. A corporate culture also has a transnational dimension which may conflict with the local ethnic cultures. This conflict may sometimes lead to opposed rationale and strategies. The family culture, the clan and the tribal culture, are all *infra* national cultures, making it even more difficult to assess the dominant characteristics of a person’s or group’s culture.

Culture also seeks an analysis of the past, to look and see what went wrong. This is a process of self-reflection which is a form of therapy in itself.

Culture is a positive organizing force that lends coherence, meaning and richness to life. It shapes a person’s values and identity. Identity stems from differences in Race, Ethnicity, Gender, Class, Religion, Nation, Language, and Geographic Region.

¹Kluckhohn, Clyde. (1951). "Values and value-orientations in the theory of action: An exploration in definition and classification." In T. Parsons & E. Shils (Eds.), *Toward a general theory of action*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

4. Characteristics of culture

In addition to dynamism that makes it open to the different interactions with its environment, culture has three major characteristics, heterogeneity, social complexity and individual construct.

- **Heterogeneity**

Though it gives coherence to organized individuals, the nature of Culture itself is rarely homogenous. Culture is rarely monolithic. It has a heterogeneous nature and is embodied by a number of internal paradoxes and contradictions so that decoding the behaviors of individuals requires a fine understanding of its complexity. It is composed of a major, a minor and sometimes of different minors. This intra-cultural variation helps interpret the cultural reference of a lawyer belonging to an Orthodox group from Lebanon located in a village in the Bekaa' Valley. He has a Lebanese, Orthodox, *Beka'i* and legal cultures which must be recognized in order to comprehend what motivates him. Such a cultural mapping shows the complexity of the cultural containers in a society, in our case, the national, the regional, the religious community and the professional subculture. Globalizing behaviors, jumping to shortcuts or oversimplification of the heterogeneous and pluralistic nature of Culture leads to false and sometimes dangerous stereotyping. However, this heterogeneous characteristic is not an impediment to resolving conflict. True cultural management by the choice of values, their development, and their reinforcement as a result of the learning process of the dialogue itself could lead to satisfactory ending of the dispute such as the Rhine water dispute (Faure & Rubin, p.216)².

- **Social complexity**

The heterogeneous nature of society implies that individuals belonging to a group with a dominant culture might not be sharing exactly the same cultural content. The Greek-Orthodox lawyer example illustrates the comparison that could be made with another Greek-Orthodox man from the same village, but who is a gardener.

² Faure Guy Olivier, Rubin Jeffrey Z. . (1993). Culture and Negotiation: The Resolution of Water Disputes. Sage Publications, London, UK.

The socio-professional subculture differentiates both individuals' cultures and therefore, would provoke different behaviors in certain situations.

- **Individual Construct**

A psychological approach to culture seeks to establish the link between the inputs; the way culture is integrated by human beings at both the levels of affect and cognition; and the output; the way behavior is affected by that integration and how it is generated. The introduction of psychology to the analysis of culture has another important effect: the constructive approach to culture. The individual, whether he is or is not aware of the culture embodied in him/her may consciously or unconsciously, use different cultural references according to the situation he is facing.

At the international level, with national groups distinct from his own, an individual could react as if he were most exclusively embedded with a national culture, allowing it to dominate his behavior. In Collective Bargaining, putting Labor Union and Business representatives face to face, the individual becomes ideologically motivated, with his predominating behavior animated by his professional culture. His functional interest supersedes his national or other interests. The same holds true when it comes to issues of ethnicity, gender, race, religion, geographic belonging or language. The integration of culture and the way it affects behavior depends on the situation involved and the connection of the issue to the hierarchy of one's interests.

5. Conflict

Conflict is a situation in which parties holding incompatible views take action against each other.

Conflict is therefore the willingness to make one's view prevail over that of another by using different coercive means, including the use of force. The incompatibility of views stemming from divergent ideas, interests or persons involves mental struggle because of the opposing needs, drives, wishes, and internal or external demands.

Not all conflicts are decisively influenced by culture. Culture's impact on conflict is a function of a number of variables. Among these are perceptions, interdependence, language and style, pluralism and national interest, legitimacy, leadership, gender, number of parties, power, and historical memory.

The **perceptions** of conflict, as a concept, differ greatly from one culture to another. Some cultures dictate conflict avoidance; others are more prudent, preparing for war to win peace. Still others apply the principle of an eye for eye. Would dealing with the other party in an open way be considered as a betrayal, or on the contrary, would it be praised as a wise move to preserve peace? In cases where **interdependence** is high, where common interests are greater than divergent ones, and issues of values and identities are diffuse, culture is likely to play a peripheral role in framing the conflict.

Cultural differences affect the **style and language** with which conflict patterns are expressed and transmitted. The problems of communication before and during the conflict become so central that a critical part of the process of conflict resolution must be consumed by the matter of assigning meanings to words and behaviors. Language structures reality and orders experience. Language influences perceptions and thinking. Language is linked to symbols and communication.

Culture either helps communication, or it may hinder it when stereotypes and differences lead to distortions and cause misunderstandings. If there are no perceptions of similarities or shared values, it may be hard to continue regular communications and the parties may be prone to accept a mediator or facilitator.

As for **pluralism and national interest**, the complexity of international relations and the extension of its domain has empowered new actors other than states. The diplomatic game is no longer the exclusive sphere of a few trained civil servants belonging to the same Foreign Service sub-culture. Other professional subcultures are involved in conflict and later in its resolution. Experts in different domains play major roles as facilitators or as influential resources in conflict management and transformation. The major difficulty that often arises out of this pluralism, before the resolution process starts, is to forge a coherent national interest between different domestic actors with different cultures and subcultures. In order to overcome such intra-national cultural clashes, the

conflict transformer must spend a great deal of time focused not only on the problem itself, but on related issues as well. Examples of those types of issues can include reconciling domestic views through inter-ministerial coordination or selling the draft agreement to the constituency. It frequently is a necessary step before sealing off any agreement; otherwise, it could ultimately be rejected during the ratification process. Even when the issue is technical, the need for domestic approval gives a political dimension and becomes then open to cross-national cultural influences.

Legitimacy, and its embedded notion of justice, is the driver of many conflicts. It is the very backbone of any solid agreement. For legitimacy and justice to be fulfilled, they should be the product of popular consent, adhesion, and appropriation; a very cultural process involving human beings, as individuals and as organized collectives. Producing conflict transformation may require faster processes than those involving long-term ownership by the public of the outcome that resolves the conflict. Most of the time, it requires strong **leadership** capable of taking risks in order to achieve peace. Those risks are taken with the knowledge of the other party. They will have often to face the resistance to change of one's own party. Here again, there must be a balance between the realistic approach, advocating the necessity of creating a compromise, sometimes at the expense of perceived legitimacy; and the cultural approach, in which one is tempted to see the world only through the lens of one's own rights. Leadership could then be tempted by demagoguery, using culture to promote or to block a deal. It could be historic, inspired by real statecraft, and taking initiatives regardless of the fluctuations of public opinion. In both cases, the involvement of public opinion in the settlement raises the political stakes and increases the influence of cross-cultural differences (Cohen R., 1990)³.

Women have unique interests and needs. A cultural perspective takes such specificity into consideration placing as much importance on the **gender issue** as any other cultural consideration. It integrates the perspective into all processes and all levels of conflict prevention and peace-promoting effort. Women are usually only regarded as victims of conflict, and are therefore

³ Cohen Raymond. (1990). *Culture and Conflict in Egyptian-Israeli Relations: A Dialogue of the Deaf*, 206 pp. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press. [This analyzes communication-based problems in Egyptian- Israeli diplomatic relations due to mutual cultural misunderstanding.]

overlooked in the conflict transformation process. In order for women to become actors of peace building, there should be a focus on their often ignored but important role during the conflict: women act as bridge-builders between parties. As the warriors are usually men, it is left to women to ensure the continuation of civil life, through education, arts, and daily tasks. In the post-conflict phase, the attitude of local populations to equal rights for women and men may become an obstacle to implementing a gender perspective (Karamé K., 2006).⁴

Degrees of **power** play a major role and therefore cultural factors might become less decisive in the determination of conflict parameters and their resolution. According to this approach, power suppresses differences, minimizes obstacles, simplifies relationships, and unifies language. Once the balance of power is evident, strategic forecasting may be increased reducing immaterial frictions. The intensity of the cultural dimension is not uniform, however. It is a function of the evolution of the conflict and the violence level tolerated.

The way a group selectively interprets past events is its **historical memory**. By doing so, it attempts to apply historical lessons to current needs. Here, “the present explains the past” (Braudel F., 1969)⁵. At this point, history becomes instrumental not only to the present but to the future as well. When it is applied to future-focused projects, historical memory serves a political objective, and reinforces the cultural cohesiveness of the group. Historical truth or reality has no meaning other the one appropriated by the collective memory. The dynamic relationship between culture, politics and the past affects the evolution of a conflict and its resolution.

⁴ Karamé, Kari. (2006). *The Gender Perspective in Norwegian Peace Efforts*. Oslo, NUPI. 60 pages. NUPI-report. This report explores the resources in including gender aspects in peace building processes.

⁵ Braudel, Fernand. *Ecrits sur l'histoire* (1969), reprinted essays; translated as *On History*, (1980).

6. Intercultural Dialogue for Transformation/Prevention

In this process, the parties change the patterns of conflict. They change the structure and the system that were conducive to the emergence of disagreement. The goal is integration of all concerns and interests into a new paradigm. This integrative approach goes beyond a mere win-in. The end result is greater than the sum of the component parts. Europe's post World War II era is a good example of preventing war between Germany and France through the integration of the ingredients of military industry, in the framework of the Steel and Coal European Community. Intercultural dialogue shifts the focus of the process from achieving a cessation of hostilities or negative peace to addressing the causes of structural and cultural violence or positive peace.

Actually, culture can read the situation through the prism of the actor of a conflict. This actor is primarily concerned with the data helping him deal with the day-to-day issues on the ground. He tries to identify all relevant details and the subtleties of language that are the key to understanding the precise scope of words used, and to encoding the behavior and attitudes of the others. This is case study approach. Culture can also seek to build categories that could be used in different situations across different cases. The idea is to determine the most salient parameters of culture in order to integrate them into a quantitative analysis. In using both approaches, the actor perspective and the categorization tool, one should avoid falling into the trap of reducing diversity, forcing homogeneity, assuming stability of dimensions of culture, and potentially, dictate some determinism of the behavior of individuals and groups. In order to avoid such oversimplification, a balanced combination of the case study approach and the category approach tries to organize the issue into categories before addressing the specifics of the case studied. Henceforth, the risk taking by the Youth is peculiar of dynamic societies, but then to determine the price this category is going to pay depends on the precise socio-economic and political context framing the specific perceptions of the actors.

7. Characteristics of Cultural Interactions with Conflicts And Dialogue In the Arab World

The major characteristics of cultural interactions with conflicts in the Arab world can be regrouped under four categories: the identity-based divide, the religious question, the North/South divide, and the problems of governance.

- **The identity-based divide**

During intense and prolonged conflict, identity conflicts take the form of a struggle for survival. Affirming one's existence in the climate of hatred becomes synonymous with the annihilation or reduction of the other. Maximizing one's share is essentially a fight for the right to live with dignity. The Palestinian Question is a good illustration of the centrality of such an identity-based divide. Other examples can be taken from the minority question in the Middle East, and it may concern ethnic groups (the Kurds or the Armenians) or religious ones (the Shi'a or the Christians). This issue complicates the traditional intra-state paradigm. It adds the dimension of non-state actors and forces the adoption of additional levels of analysis, focused on conflict genesis and transformation through intercultural dialogue.

- **The religious question**

Religion plays an active role in escalating and de-escalating a conflict because it influences the issues, parties, strategies, outcomes, and interveners. Religion helps to construct both the individual's and the group's value system and world-view. If an individual or a group has internalized a set of religious values, these beliefs can motivate changes in attitude and action.

- **The complex nature of religion**

- a. The demarcation lines are not defined between religions, but within the same religion as well. Instead of becoming a source of inspiration to build the common good for all humanity, religion thus used by politics becomes a source of differentiation to assert one's claims and demands in the name of the private good of the community. These new demarcation lines of politics embedded with religious alibi put more pressure on the inter-religious dialogue. The separation of religion from politics could have been

one venue to uproot the causes of such a divide. This approach remains theoretical and impractical. Theoretically, Islam is a way of life that encompasses all aspects of life, including politics. And practically, the religious awareness and the emergence of political parties claiming the implementation of Sharia as the major source of law make very difficult to operate such separation between religion and politics.

- b. There is however some genuine effort made to differentiate in Islam between the higher religious principles or Ibadat, and the other religious principles relate or Adat. The first set is the core body of law that creates imperative norms that suffer no exception and should be of universal application. Whereas the second set is open to interpretation and adaptation to the prevailing situation. The first one creates the obligation for the believer vis-à-vis his creator, whereas the second one creates the code of conduct or the social contract that binds the believer to the other citizens. That internal vertical separation within the hierarchy of norms of Islam replaces the difficult horizontal separation between religion and politics and by so doing, paves the way for a more civic approach to constitutions, laws and policies. A genuine common understanding of the possibilities offered by Islam for such an openness and flexibility is mostly needed with an outcome oriented research and development of the interreligious dialogue.

- **Intercultural friction**

A crisis, which may have been a simple intercultural incident, has overtaken its entire existential dimension. Regarding the notion of freedom of speech, misrepresentations are sometimes made. The respect of freedom of speech has been falsely opposed to the issue of lack of respect for the sacredness of human rights. Wrongly but surely, an opposition exists between Islam and the West, to the detriment of the effort to separate the domain of the private sphere and the domain of the public sphere. This resurgence of the question of values is charged with emotions. Dialogue both at the conceptual or the procedural level can't but remain durably affected.

- **Difficult isolation of religious variables**

- a. It is very difficult if not impossible to find a speaker in the name of the whole community of Islam. This religion has interacted with the different societies adopting many of their customs and opening it up to all kinds of interpretations and beliefs. It means that the perception of Islam as a structuring set of beliefs to determine the culture and then the behavior could be reductionist of a more complex reality. In the Arab world, the divide occurs between “religious” political parties and within them. Such a divide makes it even more difficult to use religion alone to determine the patterns of intercultural dialogue.
- b. Examples of the revolt in different Arab countries show that the issue of religion was diluted in the opposing positions taken by different referents in Islam. Therefore, the call of Ulemas to oust the dictators was faced by other religious opinions advocating the regimes in place. Issues such as dignity, honor and pride were the driving mottos behind the dynamism of the uprisings. But the religious parties, because of their organized force, were able to draw most of the votes cast in the elections. Such a result should not lead however to another simplification according to which institutional Islam rules the most revolutionary countries. Religion plays a role in mobilizing the masses along with ethical values but it does in a context embedded with more variables than religion, such as the North/South divide and the problems of Governance.

The North/South Divide

- **The problems of globalization**

- a. Those problems coupled with the slow pace of development in the Arab countries, have widened the gap between the haves and the have-nots. The patterns of opposition however, are not represented according to the traditional North/South divide but rather to the West in opposition to Islam.
- b. For example, the issue of the Prophet Mohammad cartoons has triggered unprecedented public and diplomatic reaction in the

Arab and Islamic worlds. Satirically mocking the most sacred person in Islam in a western country is viewed as an offensive behavior. It was perceived to be a lack of respect for the values of the other, and a violation of the sacred. The crisis, which could have been relegated to the level of a simple intercultural incident, has expanded into another level. It sparked tensions between core values in each culture, freedom of speech and the respect of holy symbols. As a result, the notion of sacredness has extended to cover a wide range of concepts and principles, such as human rights and religious traditions.

- **The social dimension**

Such a situation would have been much less likely to occur, had it not been for the fertile ground provided by social despair. The feeling of oppression and marginalization of the weakest towards the West that is wealthy, powerful and modern proved the conviction that international justice has been sacrificed for the interests of the powerful. The Arab revolts gave a strong indicator of the role played by the have-nots in the Revolutions. Social unrest and contestation were in phase with the prodemocracy activists. The alarming rate of poverty, the minimum income and wages, the degree of organization of the unions joined their efforts to give a decisive blow to the regimes in place. The strong unionized labor shaped beliefs and created a resistant culture of social strata seeking to protect the poor and the labor force from exploitation. In the post-revolutionary era, social issues remain central and will certainly cut across all other cultural dimensions. Therefore, to promote a culture of intercultural dialogue means to take into consideration the permanent need for collective bargaining between the partners of the Social Pact.

The problems of Governance

The recurrent problem of governance remains at the center stage in the current Arab transformations. Whether corporate or public, governance is intimately linked to the question of development in all its dimensions, whether human, social, economic or political. The perennial aspects of this development question give it a structural dimension, intrinsically shaping collective behavior, and becoming an integral part of the value system. It is against this cultural

background that perceptions of conflict in the Arab countries interact with issues related to Governance such as: gender, education and technology, the role of the state and civil society and transparency. **Human rights, democracy and digital divide** have required a special focus.

- **The Human Rights Issue**

- a. Human rights belong to each person on the basis of his or her inherent dignity as a human being. No difference is made on the basis of nationality, race, color, social status, gender, age, political beliefs, wealth, sexual orientation or any other discriminating characteristic. Dignity affords human beings certain fundamental rights and freedoms that are universal. They apply at all times in all situations and contexts. They relate to the principles of equality, security, liberty and integrity embodied in legal principles addressing concrete needs.
- b. The basic needs of human beings are: clothing, community, creation, education, food, freedom, free movement, health, identity, love, money, participation, protection, recognition, resources, respect, shelter, subsistence, understanding and water.
- c. To address these needs, international legal instruments have been developed and adhered to by most countries. They have a great deal of legal weight, even for those countries that have not ratified them. In fact, they are part of international customary law and most are considered part of *jus cogens*, or the imperative self-imposing rules of law. The most important of these needs are: the right to life, liberty, and security of the individual; the right not to be subjected to slavery, torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment; the right not to be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention, or exile; the right to be recognized as a person before the law, presumed innocent until proven guilty; the right to freedom of movement; the right to own property, to work, to the free choice of employment, and just conditions of work; the right to freedom of opinion and expression, and of thought, conscience, and religion; the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association; the right to take part in the government of one's country, and to equal access to public service; the right to an adequate standard of living (including food, shelter, water, medical care); the right to education and to freely participate in the cultural life of the community; the right to marry and to found a family.

- d. The denial of political, civil, economic, social, cultural, and other human rights infringes upon the dignity and integrity of human beings; and undermines their wellbeing and welfare, hindering their participation in public life. When it occurs over an extended period of time, it could provoke a phenomenon of accommodation. With the evolution of communication and the society of knowledge, the expectations for a betterment of one's conditions have increased. When those expectations are not met, they trigger frustrations, making this a definite source of conflict that may take two forms. An internalized form is characterized by the person or the group inflicting upon itself apathy and a negative attitude leading to civil disobedience and a lack of trust in the respective system or the government. An externalized form allows the claims to come in terms of social or political expression occurring through both the institutions or in the street.
 - e. This sustained denial of human rights must be addressed at the structural level over a long period of time. This can be accomplished through the development of legal measures and institutional reforms, or through grass roots training, education and development.
- **The issue of democracy**
 - a. The rule of the majority includes the rule of human rights as well. Cultural relativism has not served in this trend; thus, the question to be raised is "What is the counter model for the democracy coming from the West"? In point of fact there is no specific model for democracy; hence, there is and will be a cultural and intellectual pressing influence over the Arab countries until they develop a capacity to propose their own respective models. Democracy goes with freedom, and freedom goes with security. Yet, the more important factor in time of conflict, such that of the Arab-Israeli or the global war on terrorism is definitely security. Another question surfaces here: "Is the concept of freedom at odds with security?" "Does the issue of Security surface again?" What if the security issue, due to the nature of the conflict (the case of Israel) or the domestic threat to regimes or stability becomes not an ad hoc but rather a perennial matter? This means that while freedom is necessary to both generating and perpetuating democratic life, it will be forever subject to the most basic human rights: the right to the integrity and safety of the

human being. Traditionally, a culture of accommodation with the foundations of realism becomes the dominant aspect of political life. It was faced with a growing frustration from an elite eager to participate in public life but finally accepting institutionalized *clientelism* as a mere fact of life. Therefore, adhering to the President party became the exclusive way to win a ticket in the governance system. The Arab states were often faced with a dilemma: if they were to give more freedom they would face greater threat. If they were to offer no freedom there would be no democracy. That lack of democracy created in fact more frustration and became a fertile ground for further turmoil. By and large, many governments failed to find the right balance between security and freedom. The destitution of different dictatorships in the Arab regions bring about a new era in which security and liberty have to operate for the sake of justice and therefore, civil peace.

- b. This nationalization of the democracy issue led to another important justification. Some systems use culture as an alibi to avoid proceeding with the necessary reforms. This justification assumes that the population is not yet ripe for handling democracy, and thus the creation of a larger middle class is needed before opening the door to democratic regimes. This issue of ripeness is no longer a valid argument, as appropriate measures with an adequate calendar help accelerate the democratization process and further motivate the population to make the necessary efforts to gain democracy. Otherwise, issues of the security cycle, freedom, frustration and conflict feed off of the growing dissatisfaction developed by permanent cultural factors that largely influence conflict transformation.
- c. One of the major lessons of the Arab revolts is that the opposition does not have single leader. This is a turning point in the history of revolutions and a major breakthrough. From the cult of the leader, the revolutionaries passed to the cult of the people. The people express themselves culturally. The proper of this emerging culture of the opposition is that no shaping is imposed from the top, no inherited paradigms to be followed, no mores or beliefs to be adopted in the name of natural or divine law. Liberty is the liberalization from the leader. The success of the revolution of the masses, and the emerging Republic, is concomitant to the failure

of the personification of power. The sterilization of the political arena for a long term did not leave much chance for alternative leadership to prepare for power change or sharing. That repressive method of using threat against any emerging non-complying elite was transformed into an opportunity by the revolutions. The regime did not know where to concentrate its coercion when the moment of truth came. In the post-revolutions era, the democratic process has to recreate the political fabric allowing enough space for the emergence of new elite.

- d. Such a process seemingly leads to the emergence of a culture of the new Republic, a new Social Pact and a new citizen. The more the revolutionaries in power become embedded with the achievements of their democratic leap forward, the more the culture of dialogue spreads, and with it, the respect for diversity within unity. In that framework, intercultural dialogue takes another dimension, between the old timers, or reactionary forces, and the modernists, aspiring to consolidate the new regime. The purpose of such a dialogue is to reconstruct the civil peace by an inclusive and global approach for all citizens, regardless of their “cultural” divide.

- **The issue of the digital divides**

- a. The digital revolution and the technological transfer of know-how largely contributed to the creation of an information and knowledge society. The trend of globalization impacted the elite with a potential spillover effect on other social classes. However, it did not reduce the gap between the different social classes nor contributed to a redistribution of wealth or power. The digital revolution was accordingly perceived to have fallen short of producing a decisive change in relationships within the national system. For almost a generation, the digital revolution remained intangible in a sense; it did not change the patterns of social and political interactions in a decisive way. It needed the intersection with hard realities, with tangibles, to gain its strategic importance.
- b. The expectations of a higher level of transparency in government due to the possibilities opened by the internet and public information systems were not met. Corruption remained high by all standards, while administrative reforms managed to perpetuate patron-client relationships at the expense of meritocracy. The technological leap forward, where it happened,

failed to produce the social, political and cultural transformation necessary to support the much-needed change. This digital divide widened the gap between the governed, or the leftovers by globalization, and the governors still sponsored by the International Community largely identified with the North. In other words, the North/South opposition took an infra-national dimension importing by so doing all the traditional burden of that divide.

- c. The frustration from failing to harvest the fruits of globalization implicates two targets: the domestic scene and international one. Domestically, the elite were accused of not having grasped all the opportunities offered to them by globalization and the venue of new challenges. At the International level the rich countries supportive of the Arab governments were suspected of perpetuating a power structure ready to sell the interests of the population to obtain the favors of the West. Here, the conflict takes on the essence of an ideological strife, one of the elements of our definition of culture. Mixed feelings about being left behind by globalization and nationalistic pride coupled with religious fervor unleashed new forces driven by cultural values and claims.
- d. The different Arab revolts intensively used social media. The authors were improvised journalists, reporting news and often times making the news. For the first time, social media ensured by the democratization of the use of the internet in Arab countries became an important political vehicle. So far controlled by the regimes, social media succeeded in bypassing coercive measures put in place to cover and promote the new ideas emerging out of the street. In some cases, it brought people to the streets. It largely contributed to bring down the state wall or firewalls of fair. The social media came as a support of the traditional media whose coverage, through cell phones and amateur reporters, was determinant in shaping the international public opinion. In some instances, the social media even replaced the traditional media. The Egyptian revolution was loaded with all means of new technologies of information and communication; it was even a “downloaded” revolution.
- e. How social media becomes determinant of a cultural pattern to shape identity and promote differentiation remains uncertain. More certain is that social media has emerged as an instrument of

privileged expression or vehicle of Youth culture. It has played a major role in structuring the beliefs and claims of the Youth. In that sense, social media becomes a tool kit to better organize the underground in times of repression. Its role was less important during the organization of the elections. If Facebook was privileged by the candidate Barack Obama in 2009, it was neutralized during the Tunisian and Egyptian elections in 2011/12.

- f. These reserved remarks about the cultural impact of social media should not alleviate the importance of the role they play in shaping internally the cohesion of a group or community. The social media here plays a major role in “customizing” the awareness developed by different groups or communities by keeping a steady flow of information about a given situation or by maintaining an open line of discussion on different forums or digital platforms. Therefore, social media regardless of its role in the Arab revolts or in the post revolutions elections are expected to largely contribute to promoting, if not creating, the culture of intercultural dialogue.

8. As a Result to this Analysis, why there is Need for a Culture of Dialogue between Cultures?

In fact, the changes in the Arab world increasingly reflect the diversity that characterizes its various communities; and hence, it highlights the challenges/problems relating to the conflict of the generations, particularly in the light of the rising youth factor, the friction between religions and sects, the conflict between the urban and rural areas, in addition to the escalation of violence on ethnic basis. These are breeding grounds of extremism that feed creating an industry of fear and an abuse of the intimidation from the other. All these issues embed cultural factors that tear the social fabric, threaten the family unit and affect the system of social, civil and political rights. Therefore an approach of modern culture of dialogue must be adopted focusing on the cultural diversity as a platform to promote social cohesion, especially as countries in the era of changes are in the process of re-drafting their constitutions and their official institutions, as they are as well in search for a new social contract. Promoting the concept of citizenship is to provide equal rights and duties on one side, while on the other is to study the cultural factors

that create gaps between citizens as individuals belonging to communities. As a consequence, a culture of dialogue between cultures is developed, and further communication is reinforced between groups, keeping in mind the significance of the citizen's rights, which are the main goal and basis for every dialogue.

The call for such a dialogue between cultures does not mean that the dialogue should take place between the representatives of these cultures, such as a youth delegate in a dialogue with an elderly representative, or a representative of women groups with another group, or representatives of ethnic minority in a dialogue with certain majority groups. Moreover, a dialogue between two ethnic cultures is different from a dialogue taking place between two sectarian cultures and it does not neither resemble to a dialogue between two national cultures, nor so forth. Dialogue is by itself an introduction of awareness about the need to take into account these cultural considerations in any decision or public policy, away from embracing a single model or prototype reproducible in all cases. Therefore, each dialogue has its features, its assets and its framework. It is therefore necessary to identify the general concept of dialogue. For instance, the dialogue in both the Islamic and the Arab Worlds is at the same time a general principle that reminds of the peaceful resolution of conflicts. It is also a means of communication between the parties to the conflict through. Dialogue is also a way of life that is a duty before, during and after the emergence of conflict.

The dialogue in the traditional Arab culture has existed since before the advent of the Islam. It is part of the religious, ethical and moral duties, as expressed in a number of Coranic that state that resorting to force is the most hated actions. Therefore, there is a need to re-highlight these concepts so as to reendorse the mechanisms of resolution such as counseling and consensus and to link these decisions to the concept of right and justice.

The framework required for the culture of dialogue between cultures is a methodological framework that is generally applied, while it is left of the societal and national initiatives the freedom to adopt the private and public policies on this basis. Therefore, the proposed UNESCO "King Abdulla Bin Abdilaziz International Programme for a Culture of Peace and Dialogue" gives an outline of some of the key priorities that will stimulate the concerned countries to complement this framework with other priorities to be adopted as per their needs.

At this level of analysis, it is important to attribute high importance to the choice of the themes or topics to be addressed in the project, in particular the freedom of the media. Indeed, accountability and transparency stem from freedom, including the prospect of expression. It assumes legal and constitutional protections on one hand, while it guarantees the collective consciousness that enriches and the cultural diversity as a catalyst for the development of the society on the other. As a result, it becomes important building the capacities on the means of freedom of expression, as well as the importance of the press and the media, as it is necessary today to be closely interrelated with one of the key components of society, namely young people who can build on the negative cultural heritage and liberate it from the unbending tradition and therefore to put it into the dilemmas of modernity. A key dilemma is to participate in governance and to respect the other opinion, especially when this opinion is of a cultural construct.

The universities are a shared space that represents a marked common space of interaction between the components of the community free from the cultural heritage constraints. As such, the university assumes the responsibility of identifying the culture of respect for other opinions, learning about different cultures as well as respecting various groups' opinions. This task can be reached through the curriculum development as well as through reinforcing the student governance within the university, whereby students need to learn the various means of conflict resolution and dialogue assets. Accordingly, the university becomes the best tool to convert a multicultural society from the state of fear of the other to the state of building confidence.

When the issues of dialogue are approached, the extraction of the best experiences out of the history of this region shall ascertain for the recognition of a deeper maturity among their people, especially for the need to resort to peaceful means when any dispute emerges. What is true at family level is also applicable at public matter. The intensification of the historical accumulation would enhance the privacy of the Arab region, without underestimating the general commitment to the human values as to renounce to violence and adopt a dialogue in any case. On this basis, one must develop school and university programs that link between global principles and local experiences while avoiding any cultural appropriateness in the name of privacy and any cultural sterilization in the name of a universalism.