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Morocracy

Abstract

The paper analyses morocracy as a form of governance based on the systematic promotion of incompetent, intellectually weak and ethically indifferent individuals into managerial positions. It emphasises that morocracy is not a passing anomaly but a persistent structural pattern that undermines meritocratic principles, encourages negative selection and paralyses decision-making. As a result, professional standards collapse, institutional integrity weakens and public trust in government erodes. Such a system affirms mediocrity, while excellence is systematically suppressed and advancement depends on loyalty, obedience and conformity. It further examines the cultural, institutional and epistemological foundations of morocracy and its consequences for society. Particular attention is devoted to the public sector, where political allegiance outweighs expertise, leading to stagnation, poor allocation of resources and the demotivation of capable individuals. The paper links morocracy to phenomena such as kakistocracy, partitocracy and nepotism. In conclusion, it stresses that overcoming morocracy requires the restoration of meritocratic principles, strengthening of institutions and the systematic promotion of critical thinking as the basis of responsible governance and social development.

Keywords: morocracy, governance, public administration, public sector, institutional degradation, meritocracy

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1. INTRODUCTION

In discussions surrounding governance crises within the public sector, there is a growing recognition of the need for more precise theoretical concepts and analytical instruments capable of capturing the complex forms of social and institutional dysfunction. Traditional categories such as corruption, nepotism, clientelism, opportunistic behaviour, normative relativism or ideological instrumentalisation, although significant, often prove insufficient to encompass the full spectrum of destructive patterns of personnel degradation and normative disintegration that afflict numerous public institutions and state-owned enterprises.

This essay introduces the concept of morocracy. It refers to a mode of governance grounded not in overt abuse of power but in the systematic promotion of intellectually weak, professionally incompetent and ethically indifferent individuals to positions of authority. It denotes an order in which competence, knowledge and responsibility are devalued and replaced by blind loyalty, conformism, pragmatic obedience and servility.

The danger of morocracy lies in its silent legitimisation, that is, in the passive normalisation of incompetence as an acceptable and even desirable social standard. It does not represent a temporary aberration in governance structures but rather a symptom of deeper value-based and societal regression. It signals a complete break from meritocratic principles and the disintegration of the normative foundations upon which public administration ought to rest.

The consequences of such a societal order are devastating. Decision-making becomes paralysed, professional standards deteriorate, institutional integrity is weakened and citizens' trust in the core pillars of governance becomes fragile and eventually disappears. Morocracy prevents capable and responsible individuals from gaining access to positions of influence, thereby obstructing any possibility of systemic renewal or internal strengthening.

Thus, the analysis of morocracy is not merely a theoretical contribution to the understanding of contemporary governance pathologies. It also represents a call for social reflection on how power is structured, to whom it is entrusted, how it is justified and with what consequences for the wider community. It is an attempt to illuminate, through a new conceptual lens, the patterns of social degradation and the devastation of institutional rationality, and to raise the question of the fundamental conditions for responsible and legitimate governance.

2. ONTOLOGY OF MOROCRACY: THE RULE OF THE INCOMPETENT

The term *morocracy* originates from the ancient Greek roots *moros* (μωρός), referring to a fool, someone irrational, unintelligent or intellectually limited, and the suffix *-kratia* (κρατία), denoting rule, governance or a system of authority. It signifies a particular form of governance in which positions of leadership are occupied by individuals lacking knowledge, competence and sound moral orientation — persons who, by any reasonable standard, should not bear responsibility for decision-making in either a professional or societal sense.

This phenomenon, in which socially, politically and organisationally immature individuals take charge, is not an isolated aberration. Rather, it reflects deeper and widespread societal dysfunction. It marks a condition in which incompetence becomes a normative value and a foundational principle for preserving the prevailing order. This is supported by a cultural climate that elevates mediocrity and sidelines excellence. At times, it becomes so distorted that incompetence among leaders at every level of society is accepted without collective resistance, largely due to social conformity and the tendency of the silent majority to uncritically embrace dominant views, empty ideas, impressions and sentiments in place of truth and evidence.

The roots of this rule by the unqualified lie in political practices, institutional fragility, cultural norms, economic interests and a shift in epistemology, where knowledge is reduced to mere appearance. It is also encouraged by the decline of meritocracy, in which belief in knowledge, excellence and effort as foundations for progress is steadily eroded (Sandel, 2020; Young, 1958).

Morocracy depends on ideology to preserve social structures and provide the connective tissue of society. A strong ideology establishes orthodoxy, derived from the Greek *orthodoxía*, as a set of unquestioned and accepted "truths" that form part of an ideological dogma, whose interrogation is discouraged or even forbidden.[1]

As a layered and enduring set of beliefs, values and perspectives, ideology serves to legitimise the dominance of privileged groups. Hannah Arendt (1951), drawing on examples from totalitarian regimes, shows how ideology can displace reality, allowing mediocrities and the incompetent to remain in power through narrative control, so long as they remain loyal to the dominant ideological order.

In societies that tolerate superficiality and improvisation, expertise often comes to be viewed as a form of elitism. In such a cultural atmosphere, unwavering loyalty to those in power, unquestioning obedience and intellectual invisibility are seen as the qualities most worthy of recognition, influence and advancement (Sennett, 1998).

Submission and loyalty corrode *symbolic capital*: the intangible social legitimacy that, as Pierre Bourdieu (1991, 1998) argues, strengthens authority through knowledge, distinction and public esteem. Authority and social standing are no longer gained through merit, but are distributed within closed circles governed by political loyalty, subordination and opportunism. Servility, ineptitude and conformism become the key principles for gaining and maintaining power, while skill, conscientiousness and thoughtfulness are pushed aside as disruptive forces that threaten stability.

Morocracy therefore functions as a component of hegemonic order, reinforcing an accepted structure of unequal power, ideological framing and the distribution of social and organisational roles. It helps sustain authority and shape meaning within the shared social reality.

Hegemony is internalised as common sense, inherited from the past and adopted uncritically, reinforcing moral and political inertia (Gramsci, 1971). At the same time, it legitimises ignorance and intellectual emptiness, presenting the existing social hierarchy as natural rather than ideological. The ruling elite impose their interpretation of reality across society in order to maintain the status quo. This social condition is seen as normal, and the rule of the incompetent appears unquestionable.[2]

Morocracy represents a rejection of the principle that power is first and foremost a duty, not a privilege. In doing so, it denies one of the key foundations of political thought, which since the time of Plato and Aristotle has held that authority should be entrusted to those who possess knowledge, capability and a sense of responsibility towards the common good.

Contrary to that tradition, morocracy establishes a regime in which power is separated from knowledge, and decision-making from reason and ethical responsibility. In such a neglected and impotent system, governance takes place without understanding, administration without conscience, and decisions are made without reflection or awareness of their consequences. It is a reversal in which competence no longer underpins authority, and power becomes an end in itself, freed from obligations to truth or the public interest. As Taleb (2018) warns, societies that enable the advancement of the incompetent are effectively rewarding those who bear no personal responsibility for their decisions.

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[1] We are *entirely enveloped* by ideology when we no longer perceive any contradiction between it and reality. It becomes *the vessel through which the collective spirit navigates an illusion experienced as genuine reality* (Tipurić, 2020). The ideological layers that surround the individual are interwoven and mutually reinforcing, forming a cohesive system in which personal conformity becomes an inevitable outcome. At its core lies social power and the pursuit of dominance, the central force around which everything in society revolves.

[2] Ideological hegemony encompasses all aspects of social existence and shapes individual consciousness through the construction of a coherent system of beliefs, accepted as self-evident across all levels of interaction. Power seeks its foundation in the comprehensive control of reality, including language, education, institutional structures, channels of communication and the economic order. It is maintained through the continual, both explicit and implicit, legitimisation of the social environment in which the dominance of an ideology of mediocrity is most clearly expressed.

As a result, such systems encourage a kind of cultural and intellectual egalitarianism, in which every opinion, regardless of its grounding or intellectual weight, is treated as equally valid. In this atmosphere, the distinction between knowledge and impression, between expertise and improvisation, begins to disappear. Anti-intellectualism grows, marked by increasing distrust of experts and the educated. Scientific and analytical knowledge is perceived as a threat to the political autonomy of the unqualified (Hofstadter, 1963).

Morocracy is sustained by a mechanism of negative selection, whereby the incompetent are favoured precisely because they pose no threat to those in positions of power. This dynamic leads to the formation of strong networks of mediocrity, in which devotion and harmlessness are valued more highly than knowledge or skill (Michels, 1962).

Moreover, morocracy can be seen as a form of institutionalised Dunning–Kruger effect (1999), a cognitive distortion in which individuals with low levels of expertise and knowledge overestimate their own abilities while failing to recognise competence in others. This effect helps explain both how underqualified individuals attain power and why they are convinced of their own suitability for leadership. It also serves as a structural mechanism of power, allowing the unfit to unconsciously reinforce their own authority, often under the guise of "rational governance" or acting in the "public interest".[3]

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[3] David Dunning and Justin Kruger conducted a series of experiments demonstrating that individuals with low ability often lack sufficiently developed metacognitive skills to recognise their own errors (1999). In other words, a lack of knowledge not only leads to incorrect conclusions but also prevents individuals from identifying those conclusions as erroneous. Interestingly, their research also revealed the opposite effect: highly competent individuals tend to underestimate their own abilities, assuming that others are equally capable. In the context of this paper, the Dunning–Kruger effect offers a powerful explanation for why unqualified individuals often assume positions of responsibility with great confidence. When systems fail to recognise and penalise incompetence and ignorance, and instead reward them, this effect becomes a key mechanism behind the rise of the unskilled and the establishment of morocracy.

The Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset, in his seminal work *The Revolt of the Masses* (1930), perceptively described a similar phenomenon through the figure of the *mass man* (*hombre-masa*) — an individual who, regardless of social standing, does not aspire to excellence, rejects authority and refuses to acknowledge any obligation to knowledge or truth. This archetype of modern society is marked by paradoxical self-sufficiency and intellectual superficiality. It is a person unaware of their own limitations, self-assured yet lacking authenticity, involved in everything and pronouncing judgment on all matters, without any sense of inner purpose or responsibility for the subjects discussed. Such a person scorns the authority of knowledge and culture, even as they unknowingly depend upon them, is content with mediocrity, yet demands dominance and public recognition. Their influence contributes to the relativisation of values, the inflation of empty opinion, and the moral and intellectual decline of society.

Although at first glance morocracy may appear to lead to disorder and dysfunction, in practice it often produces a surprising degree of stability. This is because it suppresses all forms of disruptive competence that might challenge or improve governance processes.

Furthermore, morocracy represents an ontological distortion of the system of meaning, in which it is no longer clear who has the right to speak, who bears responsibility, or how the rule of knowledge differs from the rule of opportunistic subservience. It becomes a system in which widespread silence is no longer seen as weakness but functions as social currency, while those who think, especially those who speak with integrity and from a position of knowledge, are treated as superfluous, unrecognised and unwanted by society.

The social environment comes to favour the immature and intellectually impoverished, while blind loyalty becomes the dominant mode of inclusion.

It begins to resemble the kind of society described by Jean-François Revel (1988), in which knowledge, despite being widely accessible, loses its essential function. Rather than opening

space for critique and emancipation and serving as the foundation for change and rational action, knowledge becomes a resource stripped of practical consequence. It remains present, but no longer carries any binding force.[4]

Resistance to knowledge becomes a defining feature of the morocratic order, embedded as a defensive mechanism against judgment, truth and excellence. In public administration and state-owned enterprises, this resistance manifests in human resource practices that prioritise political loyalty over professional competence, in procedures that simulate evaluation without any genuine judgment, and in a culture where critical discourse and independent thought are seen as liabilities. In an environment where arrogant ignorance grows ever more self-assured, and knowledge is met with automatic suspicion, a world of perverted values takes shape, in which those with expertise are pushed aside by the loud advocates of superficiality.

Contrary to the assumption that morocratic systems are devoid of elites, such an elite does emerge, not as a product of merit but through the long-term institutionalisation of obedience and mediocrity. This "negative elite" sustains itself through closed networks that systematically exclude autonomous, intelligent and capable individuals, who are seen as latent threats to the stability of the system. Rather than enabling meritocratic advancement, such systems operate according to a logic of eliminating difference, where competence is perceived as deviation and integrity as an undesirable irrelevance.

Morocracy can be associated with a number of related concepts that explore forms of social aberration.

Morocracy and kakistocracy are kindred terms that describe deviant forms of governance in which power is assumed by those who, by the

standards of reason, virtue or expertise, ought not to rule.

Kakistocracy, derived from the Greek words *kakistos* (the worst) and *kratos* (power), refers to rule by the worst - those who are simultaneously incompetent, corrupt and morally depraved. The term is used exclusively in a critical and pejorative sense, as a diagnosis of ethical and administrative collapse rather than as a description of a formally institutionalised mode of governance. Its defining feature is not ignorance or ineptitude as such, but the complete moral degradation of the elite, with incompetence merely serving as a symptom of broader cynicism, greed and corrupt networks.

The key difference between the two concepts lies in the intention, intensity and dynamic of destruction.

In morocracy, harm arises from ignorance, poor judgment and administrative paralysis. It describes a pattern of leadership selection within institutions and organisations whereby leading positions are systematically assigned to individuals lacking the appropriate professional, intellectual and ethical capacities. Their advancement is secured through loyalty, conformity and willingness to submit.

In contrast, kakistocracy acts deliberately and destructively. It undermines institutions from within through organised corruption, clientelism and ruthless self-interest, turning governance into an instrument of personal gain and control. Yet the ultimate outcomes are similar: social degradation, the erosion of public trust in institutions, the collapse of rationality and the disappearance of the public interest as a guiding principle of social order.

As Cipolla (1976) observed, stupidity is a particularly destabilising social force, even more dangerous than conscious malice. It is unpredictable, immune to logical argument and self-sufficient. Within institutional settings, when stupidity is combined with incompetence, it forms a destructive configuration that not only paralyses functionality but also gradually undermines the legitimacy of the system itself.[5]

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[4] Revel points to the paradox in which information is continuously produced, stored and disseminated, yet without any genuine will to apply it. The result is the emergence of a culture of semblance, where rhetoric, formal and procedural gestures, and institutional rituals take the place of actual decision-making, while the system's impotence is concealed beneath the illusion of rationality and efficiency (Astier, 2006).

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[5] Carlo M. Cipolla, a historian of economic history, pre-

The intellectually impoverished do not act on the basis of rational judgement, clear goals, or an awareness of the consequences of their actions. Their behaviour is shaped by impulsiveness, cognitive closure and an inability to anticipate complex systemic effects. The damage they produce rarely manifests in dramatic breakdowns, but is characterised by latent destructive force. It most often unfolds as a slow, capillary decay in which the structural integrity of institutions is progressively eroded, frequently without any clear awareness of the causes behind such disintegration.

A comparable form of social pathology is portrayed in the satirical film *Idiocracy* (2006), directed by Mike Judge, where the term "idiocracy" is used to depict a dystopian society shaped by stupidity, populism and anti-intellectualism.[6] The film presents a radical caricature of civilisation in which rational order is replaced by the rule of banality, impulse and degraded cultural norms. It is a grotesque allegory of civilisational decline in which there is no longer any space for knowledge, critical thinking or responsible governance.

Compared to such a vision, morocracy is neither loud nor farcical. It is subtle and systemic. It operates through formal rules, administrative procedures and the appearance of coherence. While idiocracy parodies collapse, morocracy normalises it. It is a dystopia without spectacle: a rationally irrational system with a tidy surface that halts civilisational progress, renders the work of thoughtful individuals meaningless, and promotes the moral corrosion of society.

Morocracy may at times overlap with kleptocracy, a form of rule in which the exploitation of public resources through corruption, conflicts of interest or outright appropriation becomes the standard mode of operation of the ruling elite. Although incompetence and immorality often intersect, the fundamental distinction lies in motivation: kleptocracy rests on a conscious intent to misappropriate, whereas morocracy may function even in the absence of criminal intent. Such intent may be present, but it is not essential or defining.

Morocracy may also emerge as a consequence of partitocracy, a political regime in which political parties establish hegemonic control over institutions, transforming them into instruments of self-preservation. In such a system, as Sartori (1976) warns, parties cease to act as intermediaries between society and the state and instead become ends in themselves. Major appointments and decisions are no longer based on expertise or ethical responsibility, but on unconditional loyalty to party hierarchy. In such conditions, incompetence ceases to be an anomaly and becomes a normative managerial standard. Loyalty replaces judgment, and political affiliation supplants meritocratic legitimacy. In this constellation, as Merkel (2001) observes, institutional rationality is subordinated to the logic of party interest, thereby undermining the professional and moral foundations of public governance.

Clientelism, nepotism and cronyism are the functional instruments through which the morocratic order is maintained and renewed. The result is a comprehensive devaluation of knowledge, competence and accountability in the public sphere.

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sents a provocative thesis in his satirical yet intellectually serious study *The Basic Laws of Human Stupidity* (1976), in which he argues that stupid people represent the most dangerous social group. Their destructiveness stems from the fact that they cause harm to others without deriving any benefit for themselves. Cipolla's classic matrix, which distinguishes between naive, intelligent, bandit, and stupid individuals, illustrates a social space in which foolish actors often rise to positions of power precisely because they are mistakenly perceived as harmless, until the consequences of their actions become irreversible. In this light, the 'mass man' identified by Ortega y Gasset can be understood as an institutionally legitimised bearer of stupidity: a figure who refuses to acknowledge their own limitations, rejects knowledge, yet nonetheless makes judgments and decisions that shape the social order.

[6] The film portrays a dystopian future in which human civilisation, following a prolonged glorification of stupidity, anti-intellectualism, and consumerism, has devolved into a society ruled by the profoundly incompetent. Through the story of an average man who accidentally wakes up 500 years in the future and discovers he is now the most intelligent person on the planet, the film employs hyperbole to expose the mechanisms of social decline, institutional collapse, and the trivialisation of knowledge. With humour, it addresses the consequences of the prolonged destruction of education, public discourse, and a culture of responsibility.

Clientelism refers to a form of governance in which political loyalty is rewarded with material or symbolic benefits. It involves the selection of personnel based on personal utility rather than institutional interest (Kitschelt & Wilkinson, 2007). Nepotism denotes the practice of granting privileges and positions to family members regardless of their qualifications, abilities or merit. While it may occasionally include capable individuals, provided they are loyal or family-linked, the logic of nepotism excludes meritocratic criteria. Similarly, cronyism entails appointing loyal yet unqualified individuals from personal or party circles. It is a form of personal patronage devoid of institutional justification, one that directly undermines professional standards (Fukuyama, 2013).

3. THE DESTRUCTIVE CONSEQUENCES OF MOROCRACY ON SOCIETY AND INSTITUTIONS

Morocracy does not produce crises; it is a crisis in itself. As a form of rule grounded in incompetence and the illusion of self-sufficiency, it systematically undermines institutions and the very foundations of society. When governance loses its grounding in knowledge, responsibility and ethical reflection, administration devolves into a regime of banal and hollow formalism.

The consequences are severe: trust in institutions erodes, the public sphere becomes deprofessionalised, incompetence becomes the norm, and the very notion of the common good loses its meaning. The result *is normative entropy* - a gradual disintegration of the moral fabric of the community, in which the boundaries between responsible and irresponsible, ethical and unethical, legitimate and arbitrary behaviour progressively dissolve (Boltanski & Chiapello, 1999; Offe, 2006).

Morocracy is not merely a political or organisational pathology, but a symptom of social degeneration, in which knowledge capital loses its value and governance is reduced to a series of gestures devoid of meaning or purpose. It no longer distinguishes between authority derived from experience and skill, and authoritarianism that demands unquestioning submission.

Its growth depends on the erosion of meritocratic norms, the colonisation of institutions by political interests, and the acceptance of practices in which appointments are no longer exercises in prudent selection, but expressions of loyalty, obedience and pliability.

When political elites gain full control over human resource policy and criteria of competence are replaced by criteria of loyalty and political affiliation, the ground is laid for the systematic placement of individuals whose defining trait is not capability, but a willingness to submit. In a morocratic order, decisions on appointments and promotions take the form of performative acts, ritual affirmations of conformity, obedience and passivity. Rather than expertise and integrity, what is valued is intellectual shallowness and readiness to remain silent.

At the heart of this process lies *patronal governance* (patrimonialism or neopatrimonialism), in which political and personal connections override all other forms of legitimacy. In such a setting, any display of autonomy or critical thought is perceived as a threat. What emerges is a closed, self-referential system in which incompetence is not an accident but a deliberately engineered mechanism of control and power reproduction (Fukuyama, 2014).

As in Orwellian dystopia, truth becomes subversive and ignorance a virtue. The measure of advancement is not what a person knows, but their capacity to avoid knowing what must not be known. Progress within the hierarchy depends on the degree of subordination, not on the ability to think, decide or act with credibility. Knowledge is treated as dangerous deviation, while the willingness to avoid asking the right questions becomes a ticket into the structures of power.

In such a context, the act of thinking takes on the character of a state of exception. Any attempt to distinguish truth from expected thought, or competence from compliance, is experienced as a transgression. The voice of expertise, if not aligned with the expectations of ruling structures, is ignored, mocked or silenced. In this way, an atmosphere emerges in which silence becomes a means of survival, and knowledge transforms into a latent act of resistance.

Mediocrity is affirmed as a protective mechanism, as the optimal balance between loyalty and harmlessness. The system not only excludes excellence, stripping it of social legitimacy, but comes to regard it as a kind of anomaly. This transformation leads to individual demotivation, reaches into the core of collective orientation and dissolves the notion of meaning. In such a distorted world, the healthy substance of society is eroded from within.

Gifted individuals, whose actions might breathe life into a calcified system, are pushed to the margins. Their very presence inadvertently exposes the hollowness of morocracy as a sign of banality and spiritual decay. Above-average ability and a sense of responsibility are displaced, while conformity and silence are exalted. Incompetent and underqualified actors are promoted and affirmed precisely because they pose no threat to the existing order and do not disturb its equilibrium. Excellence thus takes on the character of heresy, and those who embody it are either isolated or discredited.

The long-term implications of such a system are devastating: social resources are irrationally spent, while human capital, the most valuable and least replaceable developmental potential of any community, remains untapped. Morocracy engenders stagnation and spreads apathy, turning society into a bleak space in which progress is no longer expected.

One of the mechanisms of morocracy is the phenomenon of *defensive management*, which describes the tendency of superiors to select subordinates of lesser ability than their own (Wilber, 2000). This creates a chain of self-sustaining inferiority, in which each successive managerial layer is characterised by progressively weaker judgement, analytical capacity, and ethical integrity.

Negative selection in the morocratic order is not an aberration but an expression of its internal logic. It ensures survival by excluding competent and autonomous individuals from decision-making processes. Advancement is based not on merit but on loyalty, while evaluation becomes an empty formality, devoid of any real capacity for judgment. Effort and knowledge lose their meaning and become superfluous within a game governed by privilege, where the rules are fixed in advance. The less competent the administrators, the less they threaten the status quo.

One particularly destructive feature of morocracy is the neutralisation or dilution of responsibility. Decisions are collectivised, while failures are routinely attributed to previous administrations or external forces. In this context, *organisational mimicry* develops: structures and procedures remain formally intact, but function solely as mechanisms for maintaining the appearance of functionality. This creates space for institutional paralysis, a condition in which corrective mechanisms are blocked (Grindle, 2004; Pritchett, Woolcock & Andrews, 2013). Over time, such an environment produces a culture of institutional amnesia, in which errors are neither acknowledged, recorded nor corrected.

Morocracy has profoundly damaging effects on the legitimacy of institutions. It undermines not only institutions themselves, but also the very rationale for their existence, along with the moral architecture of society. Institutions, which ought to protect the public interest, operate instead according to the logic of closed patronage networks, tacit arrangements, mutual protection and fear of excellence.

In settings where the professionalisation of political and administrative personnel is insufficient, the normalisation of incompetence follows. The public loses the capacity to distinguish between institutional maturity and improvised management, while the media, often aligned with centres of political and social power, further obscure and distort reality. Through the constant production of nonsense and triviality, spectacles of banality, relativisation of truth and the social promotion of morocratic figures as aspirational models, the morocratic order is affirmed and reproduced.

Trust, as the foundation of social cohesion, is replaced by social cynicism, the widespread belief that change is futile and that only obedience and group affiliation guarantee success.

It is also important to recognise morocracy's tendency to conceal inefficiency through pro-

cedural correctness. Discursive and procedural frameworks become instruments of illusion. Decisions are made, strategies drafted, reports produced, yet all of this unfolds without genuine intent for implementation, evaluation or meaningful change. There is a constant stream of meaningless reforms and action plans that serve as a facade for total vacuity. Ad hoc solutions, superficial measures and procedures designed to impress rather than improve prevail.

What emerges is an aesthetic of governance devoid of substance: a form that exists solely for its own preservation. Institutions function as stages on which the illusion of effectiveness is sustained through the ritual repetition of formal procedures, while real objectives remain obscured, suppressed or replaced by symbolic gestures without tangible effect.

Yet the consequences of morocracy are not confined to institutional degradation or social atmosphere. Its effects extend into the economy, where it obstructs efficiency, stifles innovation and distorts resource allocation.

In an economy governed by morocratic logic, the foundation in knowledge, skills and measurable outcomes is lost. Decisions are often made without analytical grounding, clear objectives or reasoned deliberation. Economic activity is marked by irrational spending, misallocation of resources and irresponsible financial management. These are compounded by an avoidance of accountability and actions driven by narrow interests, clientelist networks and short-term calculations aimed at preserving control.

Such a system discourages and suppresses all forms of innovation, as any change risks disrupting a hierarchy founded on ignorance. Resources are allocated based on influence rather than actual needs or potential. Instead of being channelled into productive, innovative or socially beneficial initiatives, capital and institutional support are awarded to those who best fulfil the criteria of political conformity. This results in stagnant productivity, declining competitiveness and the erosion of human capital, particularly among the most educated, who are no longer recognised or rewarded by the regime.

The prevailing political–economic order is characterised by restricted access to resources and markets by ruling elites, with the aim of maintaining dominance and stability. Innovation is actively thwarted, as any significant transformation may jeopardise the existing distribution of power and privilege (North, Wallis and Weingast, 2009). As a consequence, organisations lose their capacity for adaptation, administrative structures expand without functional justification, and their ability to compete in domestic and international markets steadily deteriorates.

This points to a fundamental flaw in the normative architecture of economic life. When merit ceases to serve as a legitimate criterion for social allocation, market mechanisms lose their rational foundation. The economic system no longer rests on principles of predictability, competition, and the rewarding of effort, but degenerates into a framework of unrestrained opportunism among the unqualified.

These conditions closely correspond to what Acemoglu and Robinson (2012) describe as the operation of extractive institutions – institutional arrangements that enable political and economic elites to channel resources towards the consolidation of their own power, while simultaneously excluding the broader population from decision-making and the distribution of benefits. Within such settings, as the authors note, economic rules are not designed to foster innovation, entrepreneurship, or equal opportunity, but to perpetuate the privileges of a narrow ruling class. The meritocratic features of the market system are thereby eroded, and economic dynamism gives way to stagnation and clientelist redistribution. These dynamics create fertile ground for the spread of morocratic structures.[7]

The impact of morocracy is particularly evident within public and state-owned enterpris-

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[7]   Extractive institutions inevitably generate stagnation and long-term underdevelopment, as they prevent broader social forces from contributing to growth. Although they may achieve temporary economic effectiveness, for instance through forced labour or controlled investment, they ultimately prove unsustainable, as they encourage rent-seeking, corruption, and institutional decay (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2012).

es, which in many economies, particularly in post-transition contexts, account for a substantial share of the national economy.

When leadership positions in such enterprises are allocated according to political loyalty, the consequences are manifold: strategic focus is lost, operational efficiency declines, resistance to change increases, and organisational structures become rigid and closed to innovation. This mode of governance directly affects fiscal stability through the accumulation of losses and increased pressure on public budgets, while simultaneously undermining investment potential and reducing the long-term quality of public services.

State-owned enterprises frequently evolve into zones of institutionalised stagnation, where accountability is weakened and the primary objective becomes the preservation of political dominance. Protected from the real consequences of their decisions, they rely on guaranteed state support and direct intervention. In other words, they operate under soft budget constraints, a concept developed by Kornai (1992), whereby losses and inefficiencies do not result in market exit but are absorbed through political discretion.

The purposiveness of economic activity retreats before the imperative of preserving the political order, as criteria of efficiency are replaced by the logic of expediency. Under the influence of morocratic logic, state-owned enterprises are transformed into mechanisms for reproducing the past. They become entities no longer tasked with creating new value, but with maintaining the existing balance.[8]

The destructive effects of poor governance in the public sector spill over into the wider economy. Market signals become distorted, entrepre-

neurial initiative is suppressed, and instead of healthy market competition, parasitic subsystems develop: grey economies, opaque practices and networks of parallel loyalties, where political proximity substitutes for market criteria. Trust in economic institutions weakens, and the investment climate deteriorates. Risk is no longer assessed on the basis of economic variables but rather in terms of perceived political acceptability.

Morocracy acts as a powerful inhibitor of investment. Both domestic and foreign investors perceive a high degree of institutional risk due to the unpredictability of decision-making processes, the incompetence of those in charge, weak institutions and political interference in economic affairs.

It also creates an environment in which entrepreneurship is met with suspicion, bureaucratic barriers and various forms of obstruction. Since the entrepreneurial spirit presupposes autonomous thinking, creative problem-solving and a willingness to take responsibility, it stands in inherent conflict with the logic of a system grounded in conformity and risk avoidance. This generates distrust towards entrepreneurs and others who seek to create value outside of established and permissible frameworks. The result is a weakening of investment dynamics and the emigration of the most entrepreneurial individuals to more supportive environments.

Moreover, the nepotistic culture that accompanies morocracy has a profoundly demotivating effect on individuals, especially the young, as it undermines faith in the fairness of the labour market and the value of personal effort. The systematic neglect of the capable, the encouragement of opportunism, and the simulation of responsibility lead to the demoralisation of talented individuals, the emigration of skilled professionals, and the diminished mobilisation of human potential. A „culture of getting by" emerges, in which individuals no longer seek to change the system but rather to find ways to navigate within it. In such a culture, what you know matters less than whom you know.

When career advancement is perceived as the outcome of belonging to circles of influence, the

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[8] For certain state-owned enterprises, the true purpose of their existence is not oriented towards market efficiency or the creation of added value, but rather towards alleviating social tensions, employing politically affiliated personnel, and preserving the illusion of an active economic role of the state. Such enterprises function more as politically driven instruments than as economic entities guided by principles of efficiency and accountability (Shleifer, 1998; Megginson and Netter, 2001).

inevitable result is a decline in the motivation to invest in education and professional development. The long-term consequences of such a system include reduced investment in human capital, lower levels of educational attainment (as reflected, for example, in international assessments), slower technological progress, and a weakened capacity for innovation.

In a society that neither recognises nor rewards merit, talent does not vanish but gradually atrophies, it loses vitality and retreats from the public sphere. In this way, morocracy asserts itself both as a cultural pattern and as an obstacle to development, one that leaves the socially privileged untouched.

Empirical evidence indicates that countries characterised by high levels of perceived nepotism tend to perform more poorly in education and experience slower economic growth (Pérez-Álvarez and Strulik, 2020), a pattern that can likewise be observed in the case of morocracy.

At first glance, it might be assumed that morocratic systems ignore or marginalise education. Yet the reality is far more complex, for formal education is not rejected or denied, but rather instrumentalised as a means of legitimising the ruling elite. It becomes a colourful ritual of belonging, a ceremonial reaffirmation of status. Education no longer produces knowledge that strengthens judgement, encourages innovation, or opens space for social critique. Its function is to sustain *the illusion of meritocracy* within an order that uses knowledge as a mere façade.

Education ceases to be a space for intellectual emancipation and becomes a mechanism for producing subservience. It shapes individuals to meet the demands of an order in which people are not taught how to think, but how to adjust and conform (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990).

Educational institutions, particularly universities, once conceived as foundations of meritocracy and social mobility, are reduced to bureaucratic checkpoints for the mechanical production of formal credentials. When knowledge loses its social value, education is regarded merely as a means of accumulating symbolic capital rather than as a process of inner transformation.

The most dangerous aspect of such an education is not its inadequacy but its apparent legitimacy. It embodies the paradox of knowledge without thought, of position without substance. The system generates diploma inflation and the deflation of meaning.[9]

Academic titles, positions, and statuses become part of a morocratic choreography that increasingly conceals intellectual vacuity. The public sphere is populated by pseudo-experts, individuals who possess university degrees, impressive CVs, or institutional roles, yet lack the practical knowledge and discernment required for sound decision-making in real-world conditions (Taleb, 2018).

When morocratic profiles enter the education system as teachers, mentors, or administrators, the system turns inward. It becomes a closed loop in which knowledge is no longer transmitted but replaced by the craft of approval. Instead of the pursuit of truth, procedural correctness is valorised, and education evolves into a mechanism for filtering and legitimising conformity.

In post-socialist societies, the conditions for the emergence of morocracy have been particularly favourable. The superficial dismantling of party control over appointments did not result in the

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[9] The postmodern turn has made us aware that knowledge is inextricably linked to power, and that it is not produced outside political and institutional relations but within them (Foucault, 1980). In the context of morocracy, this relationship becomes radicalised: power no longer generates knowledge but its simulacrum, a formalised and sterile form of "knowledge" that satisfies procedural requirements while lacking substantive content (Baudrillard, 2001). This may be described as accredited ignorance—institutionally recognised authority without competence, endowed with decision-making power precisely because it poses no threat to the continuity of the existing order (Bourdieu, 1990). In such an environment, what one knows ceases to be essential; what matters is who confirms that something qualifies as knowledge. Truth loses its normative force and turns into a social choreography, something not pursued but performed (Lyotard, 2005).

establishment of a meritocratic system. Amid the turbulent processes of political transformation and the privatisation of public resources, institutional mechanisms were rapidly deconstructed without the parallel development of standards of accountability and professional selection.

Political elites retained decisive influence over appointments, relying on informal networks of loyalty and clientelism, while institutions remained weak, dysfunctional, or merely decorative, lacking genuine authority (Hellman, Jones and Kaufmann, 2000; Grzymala-Busse, 2007). Loyal cadres, often without adequate competencies, were placed in leadership positions, creating fertile ground for the institutionalisation of morocratic patterns.

Numerous examples across post-socialist contexts confirm the prevailing logic of morocracy. Particularly revealing are cases of appointments to leadership positions in state-owned enterprises, public institutions, and regulatory agencies involving individuals who fail to meet even the minimum professional standards prescribed by statutes or law. In some instances, appointees lack relevant education, managerial experience, or even basic ethical integrity. Political loyalty or personal proximity to those in power outweighs meritocratic criteria and secures access to positions of authority.

Reform efforts have largely been confined to formal compliance with external requirements, driven primarily by international pressure and the need to align with EU standards. There has been no profound transformation of managerial culture, nor any real break with the practice of political appointments (Meyer-Sahling and Veen, 2012).

The outcome of these processes is the emergence of what the literature refers to as *façade or simulated institutionalism* (Elster, Offe and Preuss, 1998; Krastev, 2004). Governance systems appear to adhere to the principles of transparency and accountability, yet in practice they continue to reproduce mechanisms of negative selection and managerial opportunism. Expertise is marginalised, and positions of power are filled by individuals chosen for their political suitability, preventing the development of genu-

inely functional and legitimate institutions.

Occasionally, symbolic co-optation takes place, involving the superficial inclusion of capable individuals within the system without granting them real power, thereby neutralising their potential influence (Bourdieu, 1990; Lukes, 2005).

In a morocratic order, incompetence ceases to be a contingent weakness and becomes a defining feature of the system. It allows for easier control, diminishes the likelihood of dissent, and eliminates threats to established power relations. Incompetence within institutions is not accidental; it is embedded as a mechanism for stabilising power. This process not only undermines the quality of governance but also transforms the very nature of the political-administrative class, which shifts from being a bearer of responsibility to a participant in the preservation of its own survival.

4. THE MOROCRATIC CAPTURE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

Morocracy exerts a profound influence on governance systems, particularly within state-owned enterprises and other organisations subject to strong political control. It erodes the fundamental principles of sound corporate governance, leading to reduced efficiency, heightened corruption risks, and a decline in public trust in institutions.

Although contemporary governance frameworks rest on the clear delineation of responsibilities, professional leadership, independent oversight, and the protection of both shareholder and stakeholder interests (OECD, 2023; Tipurić, 2008), these principles are marginalised or deliberately distorted within a morocratic environment. Core governance functions are deprived of substantive meaning, while their external form serves to legitimise particular interests, often at odds with market logic, professional responsibility, and basic ethical norms.

In state-owned enterprises, morocracy is most visibly manifested through opaque political appointments, where leadership positions are allocated on the basis of political allegiance,

party loyalty, nepotism, or personal proximity to power, rather than professional competence and integrity. For example, in Croatia, data from the Ministry of Economy (2023) indicate that over 85 percent of members of management and supervisory boards in state-owned enterprises are appointed through political party quotas, most often without prior corporate or financial experience. An OECD (2023) study further shows that more than 70 percent of state-owned enterprises in post-transition EU economies lack formal procedures for assessing competencies when appointing members to boards or executive positions. Croatia is no exception, as an analysis by the Institute of Public Finance (2021) reveals that only 19 percent of state-owned enterprises publicly disclose the criteria used in selecting members of supervisory bodies.

This situation produces multiple organisational consequences: a lack of strategic direction, operational inefficiency, the accumulation of financial losses, and chronic irresponsibility in the management of public resources (Bozeman and Feeney, 2011). The absence of instruments for the objective assessment of managerial capacity further exacerbates the problem (Chamorro-Premuzic, 2019).

Board members who lack expertise, experience, or independence are unable to supervise management effectively, make informed decisions, or safeguard the interests of shareholders and stakeholders. The same applies to public officials who, lacking competence, fail to understand the principles of modern governance. Moreover, the limited capacity of regulatory bodies favours vested interests and enables opaque, clientelist, and corrupt practices. Instead of setting standards and sanctioning misconduct, incompetent regulators often become passive observers, or even accomplices to mismanagement.

Without knowledgeable and qualified individuals capable of assuming governance roles and responsibilities, good governance cannot take root. The weakness of oversight and regulatory bodies further undermines institutional credibility. Investors tend to avoid such environments due to heightened risk, which in turn affects capital costs and diminishes the overall attractiveness of enterprises and markets.

One of the most damaging consequences of morocracy is the systematic erosion of merit-based and responsible decision-making. Decisions are not guided by analysis, long-term projections, or risk assessment, but by political expectations, informal cues, and opportunistic interpretations of circumstance. Managerial rationality is replaced by a kind of procedural absurdity: forms are observed, meetings held, and documents produced, yet with no genuine intention to act.

Morocracy does not produce decisions that improve; it produces decisions that do not disturb. Although change is frequently invoked, decisions seldom lead to genuine transformation. Governance structures exist, yet function more as ornamentation than as effective mechanisms of decision-making and control.

Independent experts, by virtue of their intellectual autonomy, insistence on transparency, and adherence to professional standards, represent a threat to the closed circles of loyalty and interest. Consequently, the system perpetuates itself through negative selection not because it lacks the capacity to do better, but because improvement poses a greater danger to those in power.

When resources are managed by incompetent actors, internal systems of control, auditing, and accountability lose their meaning and become hollow forms. Such managers neither understand risk management nor grasp the consequences of their decisions, and often inflict more damage through inaction than through poor choices. The ethical framework becomes irrelevant through processes of discouragement, marginalisation, and symbolic exclusion. The outcome is institutional decay, regulatory inertia, and the erosion of functional rationality within the public sector.

In the two-tier model of corporate governance, the management board naturally transforms into a service instrument of political or interest groups, while the supervisory board loses its corrective and evaluative function. It becomes either a ceremonial body without real authority or a tool of political control serving the interests of a privileged elite, regardless of the consequences for the organisation.

The supervisory board merely sustains the illusion of balance of power, governance oversight, and the protection of shareholder and stakeholder interests. Its actions are reduced to the formal approval of pre-determined decisions or to selective intervention aligned with political interests (Tipurić, 2006; Tipurić and Cindrić, 2024). Similar assessments apply to the monistic model of corporate governance, where the concentration of authority within a single board amplifies the potential for political influence and weakens internal mechanisms of accountability.

This ceremonial form of governance transforms decision-making into a series of rituals devoid of real impact on outcomes (Alvesson and Spicer, 2016). As a result, enterprises stagnate or regress while superficially complying with governance requirements. Simulations of transformation become instruments for the survival of an incompetent elite. Organisational change is continually postponed, opportunities are neglected, and inertia becomes the prevailing mode of operation.

When board members are appointed on the basis of political or personal suitability, the function of oversight is reduced to a ritual that conceals arbitrary decision-making. Oversight no longer corrects deviations; it normalises them, thereby inverting its very purpose. Instead of limiting power and balancing interests, it becomes an organ of justification for existing constellations, interpreting signs of power and political messages as its operational mandate.

Boards convene and adopt resolutions, yet often merely rubber-stamp decisions made elsewhere, typically at the political level. Strategies and plans exist on paper, produced for the sake of formality or to satisfy regulatory expectations, with no genuine follow-up or evaluation of implementation. Management focuses on fulfilling minimal procedural obligations - drafting reports, holding meetings, adopting policies - while neglecting the substantive leadership and strategic direction of the enterprise.

Moreover, board members are often bound to management through clientelist ties, eliminating the necessary distance for effective oversight. As a result, control mechanisms cease to function as correctives and become components of a closed, self-reinforcing system that perpetuates inefficiency and mediocrity.

The body that should embody the institutional conscience of the organisation is reduced to a decorative element within the governance façade, its real power confined to passive presence and the endorsement of pre-established arrangements. It serves to maintain personnel continuity within an incompetent elite and to preserve the status quo through the simulation of oversight, devoid of genuine scrutiny or accountability.

Contrary to the common assumption that state-owned enterprises are inefficient due to excessive political influence, one might argue that such influence is not a random deviation but a systemic mechanism for producing organisational incompetence. Incompetence is not a dysfunction, but a functional characteristic and a selection criterion designed not to threaten existing sources of power.

This logic reflects what Bourdieu (1990) describes as the production of symbolic power through structures that legitimise irrational outcomes. Weber (1978) warns of the paradox of formally rational systems capable of concealing deep substantive irrationality, while Michels, through his "iron law of oligarchy," demonstrates how organisations, regardless of their democratic ideals, tend towards the concentration of power and the exclusion of competent actors from decision-making (1962).[10]

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[10] In his 1915 study, Robert Michels highlighted the paradox that, regardless of their initial democratic principles, all organisations tend over time to concentrate power in the hands of a small elite. According to Michels, technical complexity, the need for effective management, and the passivity of the majority of members lead to the formation of stable hierarchies that reproduce themselves. The elite secures its own survival and dominance through mechanisms of negative selection, choosing loyal but insufficiently capable collaborators who do not pose a threat to the existing order. Mediocrity and conformism become the main conditions for advancement, while competent and independent individuals are systematically marginalised, as they disrupt the balance of power and provoke insecu-

Contrary to the common belief that inefficiency is a symptom of systemic weakness, it can be argued that within a morocratic context institutional ineffectiveness represents a rational outcome of a system deliberately designed to preserve political control. Governance is not oriented towards achieving organisational goals, but towards simulating functionality in order to conceal the ongoing selection of loyal and unqualified cadres. The avoidance of substantive decision-making, the performance of meaningless activities, and the enactment of empty bureaucratic rituals are not signs of weakness, but purposeful features of an order in which the paramount objective is to avoid disrupting the existing power structure.

State-owned enterprises thus become extensions of political will, serving the distribution of privileges and the maintenance of clientelist patterns. Their purpose derives neither from a pursuit of efficiency nor from accountability to citizens, but from the need to consolidate patterns of political loyalty. Their significance is measured not by their social utility, but by the extent to which they reinforce the architecture of power.

The management of such enterprises is entrusted to individuals whose value lies not in knowledge, experience, or vision, but in unquestioning obedience. Within such an order, the mediocre become the ideal managers: limited enough not to threaten the hierarchy, yet loyal enough to serve its interests faithfully. Mediocrity is elevated to a virtue, for it liberates one from doubt, inquiry, and ambition. The more ordinary and politically compliant the individual, the more secure and influential their position.

Competent individuals who, by advocating professional standards, greater organisational autonomy, or higher levels of transparency, might unsettle the morocratic order, are perceived as dangerous or eccentric and consequently marginalised.

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rity within the ruling structure. Michels's thesis can be clearly recognised in contemporary institutions, where the form of democracy often conceals the reality of rule by narrow interest groups (Michels, 1962).

What sustains the system is not repression but the breaking of the will of those who might seek to change it. When incompetence is consistently rewarded and promoted, experts and knowledgeable professionals withdraw, recognising the futility of their efforts. Pessimism, passivity, and resignation prevail.

In systems shaped by the logic of negative selection, the ethics of governance gradually erodes. Principles that should constitute the foundation of management, such as responsibility, transparency, sustainability, strategic orientation, and ethical conduct, are marginalised and reduced to empty rhetorical formulae. In such an environment, it becomes increasingly difficult to uphold the imperative that business be conducted honestly, in accordance with moral principles and socially accepted norms. Social tolerance for corruption, fraud, conflicts of interest, and other forms of unethical behaviour rises. Ethics does not disappear abruptly or violently; it is slowly displaced, not because it provokes moral discomfort, but because it is regarded as unnecessary surplus, an organisational risk, and a functional impediment.

When expertise is replaced by absolute allegiance and ethics subordinated to instrumental political convenience, organisations cease to function as mechanisms of value creation and become instruments for the preservation of the system – arenas of informal bargains, transient decisions, and managerial opportunism. They transform into spaces of interpretative uncertainty, where the most important skill is the ability to anticipate political will.

Such a transformation of the ethical horizon of governance has far-reaching consequences, as it destroys trust, the fundamental component of any sustainable socio-economic order. With the erosion of ethical standards, the very idea of a responsible institution is weakened – one that acts not only in accordance with the law but also in line with the principles of social prosperity and justice.

The rule of the incompetent creates an institutional climate in which the capacity to distinguish between first-class governance and opportunistic survival is lost. The ultimate out-

come of this process is a decline in managerial standards, which undermines not only organisational effectiveness but also general trust in corporate structures. Trust, once lost, is difficult to restore, and without it no system can sustain its legitimacy.

5. SOCIETAL RENEWAL AS A PREREQUISITE FOR OVERCOMING MOROCRACY

Morocracy generates social tension by eroding the fundamental belief that institutions exist to serve the public good and that their legitimacy derives from effectiveness in action. Once this belief loses validity, the moral compass for distinguishing between good and poor governance is lost. It becomes impossible to secure order, justice, and social progress without a firm foundation in competence and virtue.

What makes this phenomenon particularly destructive is its intrinsic character: it reflects a form of civilisational regression in which mediocrity, impersonality, subservience, and ignorance are elevated to social ideals. In such an inverted order, governance loses its normative essence. The boundaries between leadership and manipulation, between rational conduct and opportunistic fabrication, become blurred.

The way out of this condition cannot be achieved through technical adjustments, managerial reshuffles, or cosmetic reforms. What is required is a profound reorientation that restores to the centre of governance the very elements that have been displaced: knowledge as the foundation of judgement, reason as the condition of decision-making, and action guided by social values, moral norms, and the principles of excellence.

Morocracy is like an invasive weed – it spreads easily and resists suppression.

Combating morocracy requires a profound renewal of the systems of governance and values upon which society rests, particularly within the public sector. At the core of this process lies the comprehensive reinforcement of meritocracy across all areas of public administration,

encompassing institutions, state-owned enterprises, and regulatory bodies. Institutional credibility and public trust must be restored, ethical relativism eliminated, and the traps of entrenched ideology, indoctrination, and social conditioning—designed to normalise mediocrity—dismantled.

Morocracy cannot be eradicated through simple measures, for it is deeply embedded in language, culture, education, and public discourse. The distorted reality it produces can initially appear as a harmonious social fabric. Confronting it demands effort: it requires rejecting the illusion that all individuals are equal in knowledge and ability, and separating personal fulfilment from the intoxication of power.

The problem lies in the resilience and self-perpetuating nature of rule by the incompetent. It continuously regenerates networks of loyalty and dependence, suppresses criticism, lowers expectations, and delegitimises excellence.

One of the most powerful forms of resistance within a morocratic order is the cultivation of critical thinking. It is essential to learn how to ask questions, to distinguish clearly between truth and persuasive illusion, and not to shy away from confronting issues that expose the flaws of the system.

An ethical act performed by an individual who refuses to remain silent—without being driven by personal interest or ideological motive—becomes the highest expression of civic consciousness. When one speaks out from a sense of duty rather than a desire for recognition, the apparent calm of the morocratic order is disturbed.

The role of conscious and competent individuals who refuse to compromise with mediocrity, incompetence, and irresponsibility must be strengthened. Their strength lies not in numbers but in the integrity of the meritocratic values they embody and the courage to uphold them in everyday life, even when such actions run counter to the norms of an environment that elevates mediocrity to a governing principle. These are individuals who act not out of self-interest but out of the conviction that public engagement entails an ethical responsibility.

At the level of governance, the imperative is to promote professionalisation and depoliticisation.

The first step in this direction is the institutionalisation of objective, transparent and verifiable criteria for appointments and career advancement. These criteria should encompass measurable professional qualifications, relevant managerial experience, demonstrated performance results and clear indicators of personal responsibility. Yet these standards must not remain merely declarative; their effective implementation should be ensured through robust institutional mechanisms.

This requires the establishment of independent bodies responsible for overseeing appointment procedures, composed primarily of experts of unquestionable integrity. Public calls for executive positions must become the rule rather than the exception. Transparency should be strengthened through the involvement of the professional community in selection processes and by mandating the publication of candidates' biographies, evaluations and work plans. Clear criteria, open and competitive procedures and public access to essential information constitute the minimum threshold of integrity in the appointment process.

The introduction of regular external evaluations of managerial and organisational effectiveness would further reinforce a culture of accountability and help cultivate an environment conducive to professional and responsible governance.

The number of political appointments should be limited to positions where they are strictly necessary, with all others entrusted to competent professionals. Experience from countries that have successfully reformed their public administration, such as the Nordic states, demonstrates that strict rules preventing conflicts of interest and nepotism produce consistently positive outcomes. Once the practice of automatic partisan appointments is discontinued, behavioural norms begin to change gradually.[11]

In addition, mechanisms must be established to remove those who are incompetent, negligent or ethically compromised. Personal responsibility must become the rule rather than the exception. Only then can institutions begin to restore their lost integrity and citizens regain trust in the system.

Yet the struggle against morocracy cannot be confined to the institutional sphere; it is equally a cultural and societal challenge.

The transformation must extend to social behaviour, perceptions of power and attitudes towards knowledge. Within this process, academia, independent media and civil society play indispensable roles. The academic community must articulate a clear, analytical language for identifying morocratic patterns and develop evidence-based frameworks for reform. Independent media carry the responsibility of exposing and critically examining incompetent governance, highlighting its systemic rather than merely personal nature. Civil society, through oversight, advocacy and public campaigns, can serve as a corrective force that demands transparency, accountability and genuine participation in decision-making.

In the long term, the most effective safeguard against morocracy is education, understood as a space for nurturing intellectual autonomy, integrity and social responsibility. It is essential to design educational programmes and foster public dialogue that affirm knowledge, discernment and ethical reflection as central civic and

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[11] Changes in cultural patterns represent a fundamental precondition for any form of social progress, as they shape value orientations, behavioural norms, and the way in which communities interpret the world around them. As Nobel laureate Joel Mokyr (2017) emphasises, lasting technological and scientific advancement was not the result of chance, but rather the consequence of a profound cultural transformation in the perception of nature and knowledge. This change, initiated within a narrow yet intellectually influential stratum of European scholars, established a new relationship towards the process of cognition – one grounded in openness, rationality, and the sharing of knowledge. By encouraging the exchange of ideas and fostering the creation of a universal scientific discourse, this cultural shift laid the foundations of modern scientific and technological development and, in the long term, defined the trajectory of civilisational progress.

managerial virtues. Only a society that resolutely rejects mediocrity and the rule of the unqualified, while consistently promoting a culture of responsibility, can build a resilient, effective and just public sector.

This is a long and demanding process that requires sustained action through education, the media and the shaping of societal values. The education system must give stronger affirmation to the ethics of work, integrity and the importance of expertise, not only through curriculum content but, above all, through example. In the public sphere, it is essential to recognise and celebrate achievements grounded in knowledge, dedication and innovation, thereby countering the widespread cynicism that connections matter more than competence. Such change is not merely a normative imperative; it is a necessary condition for building a more just and functional society.

6. CONCLUSION

The phenomenon of morocracy represents a recognisable and structurally pervasive deviation within the institutional, political and social frameworks of modern governance, revealing itself most clearly in contexts where the ideological universe is presented as closed and self-evident, and where any deviation from prescribed meanings is treated as heresy. At its core lies the structural and cultural reproduction of incompetence, conformism and anti-meritocratic logic: a system in which the incapable ascend to positions of authority precisely because the mechanisms of selection and governance allow, encourage and legitimise it.

Morocracy functions as a mechanism that undermines institutional effectiveness, hollowing out structures of their rational purpose, ethical orientation and strategic intent. The rule of those who lack knowledge, capacity or the will to assume responsibility for the consequences of their actions leads to the erosion of professional standards, the devaluation of knowledge and a deepening public distrust in institutions, politics and administration. Within such a system, capable individuals become redundant, while excellence is perceived as a subversive threat.

Morocracy generates dysfunctionality as its primary mode of operation. It stands as an obstacle not only to effective governance, but also to the development of democratic order, market economies, professional ethics and social cohesion. Its most destructive feature is not merely poor decision-making or stagnation, but the silence of alienated experts, the withdrawal of responsible individuals and the normalisation of mediocrity as the highest attainable virtue.

Overcoming morocracy requires nothing less than a comprehensive social, institutional and cultural transformation. At the heart of this transformation must lie the restoration of meritocratic principles, the strengthening of institutions capable of autonomous and accountable personnel selection, and the establishment of frameworks that bind knowledge, responsibility and power into a coherent matrix of legitimate governance.

Such a shift also demands a reconfiguration of the educational paradigm. Education, if it is to serve as resistance to morocracy, must cultivate critical thinking, the courage to ask difficult questions and the readiness to challenge norms that reward obedience rather than discernment. The illusion that formal qualifications can substitute for genuine knowledge or sound judgement must be dispelled. Academia, the media, civil society and educational institutions must assume a more active role in recognising, exposing and countering morocratic patterns.

It is equally essential to strengthen transparency and accountability in public policy, and to institutionalise promotion criteria grounded in measurable results, ethical consistency and demonstrable capacity to act within complex social contexts. Every appointment, every allocation of public resources and every decision must be subject to reasoned evaluation, rather than ritualistic formalism or political bargaining behind closed doors.

Morocracy is a persistent symptom of a deeper crisis, a crisis of meaning, responsibility and truth in governance. It gives rise to stagnation, legitimises mediocrity and suppresses any genuine impetus for change. It exposes the limits of institutional facades and reveals that with-

out the renewal of moral, intellectual and operational foundations, there can be no lasting improvement in the quality of governance, let alone in leadership or public life more broadly.

These reflections are a call to build an order in which power rests on knowledge, authority on accountability and success on excellence. Without such a value-based reorientation, every reform effort will remain captive to self-perpetuating elites that continuously reproduce crisis. A future in which governance is entrusted to the capable, the ethical and the responsible is not merely a matter of political will; it is a condition of civilisational survival.

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Morokracija

Sažetak

U radu se analizira morokracija kao oblik vladavine utemeljene na sustavnom promoviranju nekompe-tentnih, intelektualno slabih i etički ravnodušnih pojedinaca na upravljačke pozicije. Naglašava se da morokracija nije prolazna anomalija, već trajni strukturni obrazac koji podriva meritokratske principe, potiče negativnu selekciju i paralizira donošenje odluka. Time se urušavaju profesionalni standardi, slabi institucionalni integritet i gubi povjerenje građana u vlast. Takav sustav afirmira prosječnost, dok se iz-vrsnost sustavno potiskuje, a napredovanje se temelji na lojalnosti, poslušnosti i konformizmu. Analiziraju se kulturni, institucionalni i epistemološki temelji morokracije te njezine posljedice za društvo. Posebna pozornost posvećena je javnom sektoru, gdje politička podobnost prevladava nad stručnošću, što dovo-di do stagnacije, loše alokacije resursa i demotivacije sposobnih pojedinaca. Rad povezuje morokraciju s fenomenima poput kakistokracije, partitokracije i nepotizma. Zaključno se ističe da njezino suzbijanje zahtijeva obnovu meritokratskih načela, jačanje institucija i sustavno promicanje kritičkog mišljenja kao temelja odgovornog upravljanja i društvenog razvoja

Ključne riječi: morokracija, upravljanje, javna uprava, javni sektor, institucionalna degradacija, mer-itokracija