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Implications of the 2007 Elections on Moroccan Political Development

Overview of Political Development in Morocco

Morocco is a constitutional monarchy with a strong executive. The King, whose office is constitutionally hereditary by male primogeniture, acts as the Chief Executive. The King appoints the Prime Minister who appoints members of the cabinet in consultation with the King, but the cabinet must enjoy the support of the majority in parliament's lower house – the chamber of deputies. Four members of the cabinet, the ministers of the treasury, religious affairs, foreign policy, and interior, answer directly to the King. In these four areas, as well as in national defence, the King has broader powers than parliament. Parliamentary powers include the right to question ministers, approve or negate the national budget, ratify or reject treaties, and make law. One of the main sources of the King's political legitimacy, with Morocco being a Muslim nation, is his title of *Amir al-Moumineen* (the Commander of the Faithful) – a title normally used by Muslim leaders in Islamic states and empires of the past. Article 19 of the Moroccan constitution makes the person of the King sacred. While there is some power in Parliament, the King remains the centre of power in Morocco,[2] and it is in this light that the population's approach to the recent elections must be understood. It is important, however, to avoid some established clichés about Arab governments and societies in the case of Morocco. The population, including opposition movements, enjoys significant freedoms not found elsewhere in North Africa.

There are many political parties, espousing Islamist, Liberal, Socialist, Traditional, Nationalist and Amazighist (Berber) discourses. The press, despite the occasional imprisonment of journalists opposed to the press regulations concerned with the sacredness of the King's person, is largely free to criticize government policy, including decisions taken by the King. Compared to most Arab countries, the situation in Morocco can be safely described as relatively free. In no small measure, the current King, Mohammed VI, deserves credit for continuing his late father's (Hassan II) liberalization program, itself a result of his decision to negotiate and share power with his opponents including the Socialists (the Socialist Union of Popular Forces – USFP in the French acronym), whose leader became Prime Minister under an arrangement called "alternation."[3] Hassan II's rule softened towards the end of his reign and he attempted to reverse his earlier harsher approaches. Towards the end of his reign, Hassan II began a dramatic, and for many, an unexpected, policy of liberalization. Under Mohammed VI, the reforms continued and included an open acknowledgement of the human rights violations and excesses committed during the 1960s and 1970s. An independent human rights body, the Equity and Reconciliation Committee, publicized the

state's excesses and gave a forum to the victims. Compensation is currently under consideration, and while many of the victims are not totally satisfied with their compensation, the state is clearly reforming and limiting its own powers.[4] While the alternation experiment is largely over and with mixed results, it helped normalize the relationship between the government and the forces interested in social and political change. The alternation government can take credit for improvements in infrastructure, health care, in the status of women, housing and education, but change in these areas came slowly and sometimes in spurts.[5]

While the era of alternation has passed, the reforms it brought are largely ongoing, despite the lack of a resolution of the Sahara dispute with Algeria and Polisario and the continued threat of terrorist attacks by a tiny minority within the Islamist movement. The reforms are a testament to the state's will to change the way it has done business during the "years of lead" – a period of repression following two coup attempts in the 1970s. The elections of 2002 and 2007 came under the overall framework of reform and gradual expansion of parliamentary importance. Unfortunately, the forces of reform could not use the 2007 elections to cement the connection between the parliament and the population – which would be an essential aspect of any additional power-sharing arrangement with the Moroccan monarchy. The elections of 7 September 2007 failed to legitimise the parliament, because only 37 percent of eligible voters participated, of which a fifth were spoilt votes.[6] At first glance, it appeared as if the electorate was rejecting its own empowerment, but such an analysis misses several important underlying currents in Morocco. This conclusion is hasty for five important reasons. First, there is a consensus in the country on the priorities that need to be pursued by the incoming government. Second, the elections reflected the weakness of the political parties rather than the weakness of the central institution of the monarchy. Third, the promising moderate and democratic wings of the Islamist movement, as exemplified by the Party of Justice and Development (PJD) were harmed by the larger Islamist movement's loss of bearings and by the problem of terrorism. Fourth, the monarchy may retain large support, often at the expense of the political parties. Fifth, there is a history of electoral fraud in Morocco whose image must be overcome to encourage people to vote.

These five factors, combined with an electoral system that tends to reward factionalism, eroded the legitimacy of the elections and rendered them incapable of providing legitimacy to a more powerful parliament. The Istiqlal (Independence) Party, a conservative nationalist force that combines traditional Islam with liberalism, came through the elections largely unscathed. This may be due to its relatively deep roots in Moroccan society and its historical role, but it can hardly celebrate in the wake of the protests expressed by low turnout and spoiled ballots. After the massive expression of protest, the dust settled into a parliament that resembled the previous one to a great extent. The Islamist PJD remained the second largest party but fell well short of its expected total of about 70 to 80 seats out of 325. The protest vote did not lead to any change, because there were no perceived real alternatives for the people to vote for. The coalition between Istiqlal, the USFP, National Union of Independents, the Party of Progress and Socialism, and the Popular Movement, which dominated the government of Prime Minister Idriss Jetou (an independent technocrat), is the one that constitutes the majority faction in the Chamber of Deputies. Under the current results, change will take place with regard to the pecking order within the coalition government. Istiqlal replaced the USFP as the lead party within the coalition, and its leader, Abbas Al-Fassi was appointed Prime Minister. But, the current coalition faces two problems. The first problem lies in its deep ideological diversity. It combines ex-communists with committed traditionalists, and this is the lesser of its problems. The bigger problem lies in the vast protest vote along with the low voter turnout.[7] The results also undermined the credibility of a survey conducted by the International Republican Institute and its Moroccan partner Daba 2007 (Now 2007), an NGO led by an advertising executive, Nour Al-Din Ayouch. The survey predicted a clear victory for the PJD, but the actual results suggest that its sample may have been unintentionally biased due to location and timing issues.[8]

Table: The Moroccan 2002 and 2007 Parliaments Compared.

Party	Seats 2002	Seats 2007	−/+	Percentage of the 2007 Vote/Notes
Istiqlal	48	52	+4	15.59%/Nationalist, traditionalist, and monarchist. Described as the "Lords' Party," by its skeptics. Its leader Abbas Al-Fassi, a younger brother of its late founder, was appointed Prime Minister.
PJD	42	46	+4	13.56%/Islamist, planning to remain in opposition. It represents the second largest Islamist movement.
Popular Movement	(56)	41	−14	12.20%/The current party formed out of the merger of three 2002 parties; Centre-Right and Amazighist. While it earned less than the combined total for the three parties, its performance is seen as a success.
National Union of Independents	41	39	−2	11.35%/Center-Right. Described to the author by one of its parliamentary members as "an entity of the administration."
USFP	50	38	−12	11.91%/ Socialist and National Democratic, it was the leading party in 2002 and held the office of Prime Minister during alternation.
Constitutional Union	16	27	+11	9.5%/Monarchist Right. It is also regarded as an "administrative party."
Progress and Socialism Party	11	17	+6	4.57%/Ex-Communist, now Social-Democratic and Liberal and a member in the ruling coalition.
Covenant Party	17	14	−3	4.57%/Centrist.
Democratic Forces Front	12	9	−3	3.5%/Leftist party with redistributionist discourse.
Democratic Alliance	4	6	+2	2.3%/Centrist.
Leftist Alliance	−	5	+5	1.96%/Extreme Left.
Labour Party	−	5	+5	1.96%/Left.
Environment and Development	2	5	+3	1.96%/Centrist with a discourse that concentrates on the environment.
Renewal and Equality	−	4	+4	1.63%/Centrist.
Socialist Party	−	2	+2	0.86%/Leftist.
Moroccan Democratic Union	−	2	+2	0.86%/Centrist.
Development and Citizenship Initiative	−	1	+1	0.43%/Centrist.
Liberties Alliance	4	1	−3	0.43%/Centrist.
Renaissance and Virtue	−	1	+1	0.43%/Islamist outside the PJD. It is the second Islamist party to enter parliament.
Civic Forces	−	1	+1	0.43%/Centrist.

Source: Asharq Al-Awsat, "Final Election Result," Moroccan edition, 11 September 2007, p. 3. Also available from the Moroccan Ministry of Communication's official website.

There may have been some fears before the elections about low voter turnout. Daba 2007 tried to increase voter turnout through advertising and by passing out free materials that contained accurate descriptions of the various parties as well as encouraging the electorate to vote. Some of the creative and interesting adverts targeted Moroccan youth using rap and hip-hop as well as other musical formats. These efforts were however not effective. The materials produced by the NGO were, nevertheless, of high quality and could safely be construed as non-partisan and neutral in terms of not soliciting votes for any particular party. The materials were available in Arabic and French, and the videos were in urban Moroccan Arabic. This may have been the reason for the campaign's limited success. About half the population, including many people in the cities is not literate. Many people speak Amazigh dialects, as well as many forms of Moroccan Arabic. Therefore, Daba 2007 faced some serious challenges in projecting its message. Overall, the effort was remarkable, because it marked one of the earliest attempts by a civil society group to improve the democratic process in an Arab state. In addition, the effort is bound to be a learning experience and may have future dividends for the first-time voters in 2012.[9]

Despite low voter turnout and spoiled ballots, the elections were conducted in an atmosphere that was described by international observers as transparent and professional. While there have been charges, particularly by the PJD, that the electorate was swayed and corrupted by power and money, it is very clear even the winning Istiqlal Party was not happy with the results. The 2007 elections marked, for the first time, the presence of international observers in Moroccan politics. The international observers worked with the United States' National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, which has a Moroccan branch. Their report pointed to a remarkable degree of honesty in the elections, and Moroccan elections authorities were clearly praised for their overall performance. However, the report pointed out some of the limits imposed on the freedom of speech concerning Islam, the Monarchy and territorial integrity.[10] The Moroccan opposition press, including *Nichane* whose journalists frequently clash with the government seconded that viewpoint. *Nichane* reported United States Department of State's and European's praise for the elections and did so without attacking the Western governments' assessments.[11]

The Rules of the Game

The most pertinent issue for the politicians in the elections was the structure of the game itself. The Moroccan parliament uses an unusual combination of districts and proportional representation that makes it difficult for a single party or even an alliance of parties to win a clear majority in the parliament. There are thirty parliamentary seats reserved for women. These thirty seats are competed for on a national basis, with the whole country as a single district, and no party can earn a seat among these with less than 3 percent of the vote. The number of parliamentary districts is 95, reflecting a controversial increase of four districts. Each parliamentary district contains between two and five seats, and parties submit lists to compete for the multiple seats. The seats are then apportioned to each of the competing parties in a manner matching their percentage of the votes. While this method of elections is highly representative and respects the interests of political minorities with significant support within districts, it also weakens the parties and provides little incentive for alliances that lead to combined national lists. The directly-elected Chamber of Deputies is supplemented by a second house – the Chamber of Councillors. This second chamber is composed of 260 indirectly elected councillors, 3/5ths are selected by local and municipal officials, and 2/5ths are elected by regional bodies representing labour, business and professional interests.[12] While the cabinet must have the support of the majority in the Chamber of Deputies, it cannot engage in lawmaking without the support of a majority among the councillors. Being a major party in the Chamber of Deputies does not automatically translate into seats the Chamber of Councillors. While the election process is liberal and to a large extent representative and free, the structure of the system creates what Transparency Maroc and Democracy Reporting Institute call "a democracy under guardianship."[13]

A National Consensus

Despite the overall weakness of the parliament, the discourse used by all political parties during the election was remarkably similar; addressing poverty and the myriad economic problems. The 2007 elections were not about defining these problems. In fact, political differences were expressed only in terms of solutions to poverty and general condition of the economy. A survey conducted by Drs. Audra Grant and Abd Al-Karim Marzouk of Al Akhawayn University showed that Moroccans hold economic problems as the leading priority for the government:

> With unemployment hovering around 20 percent in urban areas, the public will likely expect a new government to target the economy, as half (50%) in an open-ended question cite "economic problems" as the single biggest problem confronting Morocco today, and believe that the economy and development (48%) should be the top priority of a new government. The economy's impact on the situation of Morocco's young population, however, may also be of concern. The next largest percentage points to lack of opportunities for youth (11%) and the major problem, followed by housing (7%).[14]

In other words, two-thirds of the Moroccan electorate is clear on the expectations from the next government, regardless of who is elected. The economic conditions in the country are not good, largely due to mal-distribution, rather than the absence of wealth. Other countries like Egypt have had almost wholly negative experience with the redistribution of wealth in the absence of a liberal economic environment. The radical left throughout the Arab world, including Morocco, is saddled with the failure of the redistributive policies of Arab Socialism in Egypt, Syria and most spectacularly Iraq. Consequently, redistributionist discourse is not sufficient to earn any party political power; discourses aimed at improving the economy show more promise, but these attempts, particularly by the PJD ran into a wall of cynicism not only about the promises made, but also towards the whole electoral process. It is fortunate that there were no parties placing complete blame on outsiders for Morocco's economic problems, although the EU's Common Agricultural Policy has hurt Morocco immensely.

The Weaknesses of the Political Parties

Moroccan political parties are basically patron-client networks designed to help office-seekers approach the central power of the king in an organized way. They do have some ideological commitments and stances, but these are largely discursive. Moroccan parties suffer from three main problems: gerontocracy in the leadership, factionalism, and the lack of constituent services. Taken together, these three factors impede the development of parties that can actually reflect the population's desires and preferences. Each party tends to be led by its founder or members of his family in the succeeding generations. These leaders tend to refuse to retire and view the party as "theirs," which leads to ossification and inflexibility. Voters do not identify with parties due to ideology or manifesto, but rather on the basis of personal history, tribal belonging, family ties, or serendipity. The closed nature of the party hierarchies drives most voters away from identifying with the parties, and even regular party voters tend to identify with their parties as part of an occasional event, and the election becomes a festival. The nature of the parties also drives politically ambitious people to try and form their own parties in order to compete. The more Machiavellian aspiring politicians tend to try to take over parties by forming factions within them, but this often leads to the eventual break-up of the parties, once the lines between reforming "Young Turks" and the "Old Guard" becomes unbridgeable.[15] This pattern repeated itself several times within Istiqlal, the USFP, the Popular Movement, and many other parties. It is now beginning to take place in the PJD as well as extra-parliamentary parties and social movements like the Movement for Justice and Charity (MJC) – which is probably the largest Islamist force in Morocco. More seriously and directly, the parties do not the capability to provide constituency services. In fact, the concept is not present in Morocco, and it is hard to characterize the system as a true patronage system in the US sense of the word, because ordinary people cannot access services in return for votes. It is possible to

cynically state that the Moroccan electoral system lacks the correct kind of corruption and enjoys a surplus of the wrong form of the malady. The consequence of these problems was the total widespread lack of legitimacy for the political parties. Only 24 percent of the persons sampled in the June–July Al Akhawayn survey indicated that they have a great deal or a fair amount of trust in political parties.[16]

The Disappointment of the PJD

The PJD attempted to avoid some of these pitfalls through some innovative campaign techniques. It mounted a national "Lantern Caravan" where its leaders visited towns, cities and villages all over Morocco, presented their program, and listened to constituent concerns. It was buoyed by public opinion polls showing it in the lead, and the mood in the Arab world as well as some other parts of the Islamic world seemed to suggest that its time has come to lead the country. The party's Turkish Islamist namesake cruised to a crushing victory in the Turkish elections, and the Muslim Brotherhood elected 80 members of the Egyptian parliament. Anecdotally, the PJD also appeared to have consolidated its perspective concerning a large number of issues, and it was generally regarded by many people as genuinely more honest and more reliable. The election results transformed it into the second largest party in Morocco, and it gained four seats, but it fell dramatically short of its expectations and the forecasts of the opinion polls. Yet, the party was plagued with several problems that escaped the observation of many analysts. The party represents only one tendency within the larger Islamist movement. It has been at odds with other Islamists, especially with the larger MJC, over its decision to participate in the normal affairs of the state. Led by aged Sheikh Abdessalam Yassine, the MJC has refused to incorporate as a political party and rejects parliamentary politics. Within it, a succession struggle is brewing between Yassine's middle-aged UC Berkeley-educated daughter, Nadia, and his lieutenants. The PJD also has had immense internal disagreements over leadership as well as ideology. There are at least four Moroccan tendencies of Political Islam outside the PJD, excluding the apolitical *Al-Dawa wa Al-Tabligh.* While the PJD represents a significant trend, second only to the MJC in size, it does not enjoy the cooperation of other Islamists.[17] One could argue that these difficulties haunt any political movement or party in Morocco, but the Islamists have been facing an additional set of problems unique to their movement – alienation from Moroccan religious traditions.

The problem is so serious and profound, it took an Islamist scholar from within the movement, Farid Al-Ansari, document it. Al-Ansari argues that the Moroccan Islamists suffer from alienation from their own heritage. First, he argues that the Islamists, in general, have attacked the official Maliki Sunni tradition of the country, alienating its devotees. Second, he argues that the Islamists have exaggerated doctrinal inquiries, i.e. they conducted inquisitions within their own movement. Third, they opposed Sufism nearly absolutely, thereby alienating many Moroccan Sufis. Although the MJC does not attack Sufism, all the other strains have been critical of it. Fourth, the Islamists have emphasized outward appearances of piety at the expense of the internalization of Islamic values. Fifth, they have aligned themselves to certain Middle Eastern states and are seen by many Moroccans as less than fully indigenous. Al-Ansari argues that by emphasizing Hanbalism (the form of Islam practiced in Saudi Arabia), the Moroccan Islamists have lost the potential support of practicing Muslims who would have otherwise been more open to being on their side.[18] To its credit, the PJD focused on economic issues rather than on ideology during the campaign, but it may have also been defined by its friends more than by its enemies.

The coverage of Al-Jazeera satellite TV channel of the Moroccan elections was skewed in favour of the PJD, but the unofficial endorsement of the channel seems not to have mattered with most Moroccans. The channel is facing criticism from Istiqlal and the USFP for intervening in the internal affairs of Morocco and supporting the PJD. Abbas Al-Fassi told a representative of the satellite channel that he expects an apology from the channel, presumably before interacting with its reporters ever again.[19] Moroccans may watch Al-Jazeera, but they will not necessarily vote the way

it wants them to, particularly because it does not understand the nature of their own forms of Islamic commitment.

In contrast, Istiqlal has never hid it Moroccan particularistic Islamic commitments, and can safely be described as half-Islamist. The party's founder, Allal Al-Fassi, wanted Islamic traditional Morocco to be informed by liberal values; naturally, Istiqlal promotes the centrality of Maliki Sunnism and Sufism in Moroccan life. Finally, the Islamist movement has seen its support decline due to terrorist incidents by a tiny, unrepresentative and extremist minority. Since the terrorist attacks of 16 May 2003, "*boulahya*" (beardie) has become an insult. Despite the opinion polls, the PJD faced an uphill battle for support and votes. Sadly, the party found itself empathizing with the low turnout and the spoiled ballots as indications of voter anger, while at the same time blaming its unexpectedly lower performance on the corruption of its opponents.[20] In hindsight, the party's ability to add seats is an indication of its strength and the relative success of its electoral campaign. While the party is being portrayed as the real loser of the election, the truth is somewhat more complicated. The PJD can recover and rebuild itself as a strong force, should it make peace with Maliki Sunnism and Sufism. Al-Ansari's arguments point to some intriguing ways it could do so by emphasizing Maliki Salafism and the sobriety and practicality of some Sufi traditions, for example.

The Strength of the Monarchy

Unfortunately, there is no data that can compare the credibility of parties on an individual basis aside from the Daba 2007 surveys that have been discredited in the elections. There is material that suggests that the Moroccan monarchy is in strong health. The Al Akhawyn survey showed overwhelming support for the four institutions closest to the Monarchy: the military (72%), the official religious establishment (67%), the police (60%) and the government (52%).[21] It can be argued that the closer the institution came to the throne, the higher the level of support. The military is directly controlled by the King, and the religious establishment not only legitimates his rule, but it can be considered as the entity that helps the King in constructing a sense of nationhood in the country. The reform process and the liberalization program have not weakened the monarchy; they have helped entrench it. Unfortunately, there is a tendency to view the relationship between the monarchy and the political establishment in terms of a zero-sum game. There is no warrant for this perspective, because reducing the support basis for the monarchy will not necessarily lead to stronger parties or a deeper sense of democracy – it could be the first step towards chaos. Strengthening the parties and political institutions is a matter that is best viewed as being in the long-term interest of the monarchy as well as the population.

The Shadow of the Past

The population does not trust elections, because they were rigged in the past. Only the 1997, 2002, and 2007 elections can be described as competitive. In addition, only the 2007 election has seen the presence of international observers. There are also indications that the 2002 and 1997 elections were also clean and fair, relative to previous contests. Yet, these three elections cannot by themselves erase decades of electoral manipulation and fraud, especially in terms of the legacy in the population's worldview. Many people simply feel that their votes do not matter, and take the time off for elections without voting. To that extent, the efforts of Daba 2007 may bear fruit in the future, because they project another image of the elections and that image, in time, may replace the current negative image of parties and elections.

Future Scenarios of Moroccan Politics

The first scenario would be a stable parliamentary government that is centred on the alliance that currently dominates parliamentary politics in Morocco. Under this first scenario, the alliance internalizes the lessons of the 2007 election – namely, the need to legitimate the political process and the political parties. Conservative reforms would take place under this scenario, wherein the members of parliament, particularly in the directly elected Chamber of Deputies, would receive the funds

needed to open and maintain constituency services organizations in their home precincts or in their area of residence. This would be easier than other reform proposals, because it would be an addition to existing structures and would enable the population to access the state in an easier way. Should the economic situation improve under this scenario, the system would continue its slow transition towards democracy and be on a slow path towards a more complete expression of liberal democracy. Should economic circumstances worsen, these limited reforms can amplify corruption and have it trickle down the economic ladder.

The second scenario would be more radical, and would entail the coalition government beginning a series of reforms that would not only enhance the population's access to the government but would also force the democratization of the political parties themselves. Under this scenario, innovations like party primary elections, local nominating conventions, and funding through party dues would replace the current model of party funding, membership and nomination. At present, parties have little or no incentive to recruit new members, and access to the party structures is not clear. Membership in specialized party organs dedicated to the youth and to women does not lead to positions of power and influence – it often leads to the formation of new parties. Democratizing the parties themselves will also lead to a reduction of the number of parties, which will help reduce the confusion that voters inevitably face. This scenario is less vulnerable to whims of the gods of economics, because the population would be able to alter economic policies both within the parties and within parliament more rapidly.

The third scenario involves doing nothing to address the legitimacy crisis borne out of the elections. The parties and the democratic process would continue to lose legitimacy and support. The King's prestige and power would increase under this series of events, but in a manner that the current King may not find acceptable in light of his plans for reform. The army and the religious establishment would also gain more political support and power under this scenario. Economic hardship may be blamed on economic and political liberalization, and the overall picture may be gloomier than under any other scenario. While a return to the "years of lead" can be discounted, this scenario represents a darker future than any other. Should the economy improve under this "do-nothing" scenario, the un-reconstructed system may even gain legitimacy and the political parties could become a rubber stamp.

Given my interactions and knowledge of the country, I believe that some form of the first scenario is the most likely outcome of these elections. As one colleague once explained, "Morocco believes in evolution, not revolution." To that extent, it is likely that some improvement will be made in the manner with which members of parliament interact with the public. It remains to be seen whether such a change will be enough to reverse the poor standing of political parties among the Moroccan population. The role of the Member of Parliament as ombudsman may make an appearance in Morocco, but when it does, it will do so under a profoundly Moroccan colouring that may make it indiscernible to scholars and social scientists, especially those expecting a copy of what takes place in industrial liberal democracies.

Policy Recommendations

There are several recommendations that have been made by the National Democratic Institute and other outfits like DRI and Transparency Maroc. Rather than rehash them, there are several ideas that have not been part of the discourse thus far. Some of these recommendations are not given to immediate policy implementation; they are aspirations that have to be placed at the level of the value compass guiding policy. The parties need to democratize, a privy council needs to be established to induce party leaders to retire, some serious consideration must be given to mandatory voting, the structure of the parliament must be reconsidered, and the economy must be the main concern of the incoming administration.

First, the basic problem of Morocco is not one of the "monarchy-versus-whoever-wants to-oppose-it." This image has been promoted by leftist scholarly opponents of the regime who have gone as far as describing the whole of Moroccan history as a struggle with the *Makhzen* – the monarchy and its associated networks, but

the basic problem with Moroccan politics is not the *Makhzen* around the King (that one is safely liberal), it is the "*Makhzen*-in-the-head." Leaders of every conceivable social, economic, and political structure duplicate the same top-down model of authority that exists in the royal establishment, especially the leaders of political parties. The absence of internal party democracy cannot be explained with a reference to the monarchy and the King, it is a direct function of the "*Makhzen*-in-the-head." The parties have to begin a program of internal democratization to the extent that they can. Introducing local party nominating conferences and primary elections may help. Getting political parties away from public funding by encouraging them to enroll members and collect dues in return for primary election participation and eligibility for party nominations may be steps that the parties can take to begin the process of internal democratization.

Second, Morocco needs to develop an institution where long-serving politicians and great social, economic and cultural figures can be removed from politics. This would allow senior party leaders to achieve the prestige, importance and salaries they covet while allowing their parties to move on and replace them. Such an institution can serve the King in an advisory capability, and can be essentially a life-peerage that cannot be passed to descendents. It can be outside parliament without lawmaking capability. Membership in such an institution can also be used to reward achievement in Moroccan life, thereby, infusing incentives for upward mobility into a society that is still dominated by lineage. Associated with such a privy council, a law can be made to impose an upper age limit on parliamentarians and party leaders with a mandatory retirement from representative politics at age 70, with exceptions being granted by the King for five year periods. Membership in the Royal Privy Council can be used as an incentive for party leaders to leave politics in a manner that addresses the ambitions of their younger followers.

Third, Morocco needs to consider making a mild form of mandatory voting the law. This approach is advocated by Daba 2007's founder and leader, Mr. Nour Al-Din Ayouch. In an interview given to *Nichane*, Ayouch argues that the high rate of illiteracy and the closed nature of Morocco's political parties make it difficult to conduct participatory politics.[22] This idea did help Australia, Belgium and Greece cement their democratic systems, but its application in Morocco must necessarily take another form. It would be hard, for example, to expect people to vote for a party if they have not been able to follow the political campaign or if they do not know the parties. Mandatory voting in Morocco needs to account for persons who do not want to be coerced into voting for some perfectly legitimate reasons such as not knowing which parties and candidates are competing in their parliamentary district. Given that there are towns that still lack written business place signs, relying instead on symbols, this is a serious concern. Illiterate voters should be able to vote "present" or "none of the above" in addition of having the choice of selecting a party list. The key is to provide them with the opportunity to vote, and there needs to be some mandatory aspect of the process such as attendance at the polling station.

Fourth, the structure of the parliament needs reconsideration. While the upper chamber may be useful in providing an emergency break on democracy, such a function is clearly redundant under the rules governing the Chamber of Deputies. If the upper chamber is to be kept, the lower chamber may need to be modified to operate on single member districts for the 295 regular seats. Such a change in the rules will greatly reduce the number of parties or force them into stronger, more committed pre-election coalitions. Should the upper chamber be abolished, the current structure of the Chamber of Deputies can be kept with minimal alterations. The current system frustrates politics, because there are too many veto points within parliament, let alone in its relationship with the King.

Fifth, the new government needs to focus on one issue only during the next five years: economic development. The population clearly desires improvements in this field, and the major opposition party, the PJD, focused on this issue during the campaign. Improving economic circumstances for the poorer classes of Moroccan life will help the process of democratization and will address the basic problem

of legitimacy faced by the incoming government. The previous two governments have been able to improve the overall lot of the country to some extent, but it is the improvements themselves that are the source of discontent. Those who are not taking part in the growth of the economy have been feeling more relatively deprived, and they have been getting alienated from the political process, especially the parties.

Conclusion

Morocco's elections reflect the growing pains of a nascent democracy. Morocco faces some significant challenges in creating a Moroccan form of democracy, because the country has some very specific historical particularities that cannot be discounted. A common mistake has been to associate the present state with the French and Spanish colonial protectorate, and this is at most a partial picture of the country. The bureaucracy was certainly inherited from the French, but the state itself was not. Morocco has more in common with Ethiopia, in terms of its colonial history and structure than it does with nearby Senegal. In both cases, the colonial interlude was basically a takeover of an established state and infusing it with a modern bureaucracy; in neither Morocco nor Ethiopia did the colonial powers have to generate a state out of tribal or clan-based communities. In both cases, the colonial powers worked with existing states rather than suppressing them and melting them into new entities like the Egyptians creating Sudan by abolishing Sennar, Dongola, and Metemma.

The monarchy represents the particularly of Morocco more tangibly than any other institution. Given its historic role and its intimate links with the religious establishment, it has given Morocco a degree of stability that its republican neighbours can only aspire to. Since the later stages of Hassan II's reign, the monarchy has embarked on a program of liberalization – the 2007 elections were an episode in that overall reform program. This reforming aspect of the monarchy is discounted by its opponents, often without any reasonable justification aside from grievances left from the "years of lead." Yet, in an interview with one the victims, the current reforms were praised and the need to proceed constantly but slowly was highlighted.

There are occasional lapses and setbacks in any democratic project. The United States was far from a developed democracy until the civil rights movement, and the recent Moroccan elections were not the disaster that the regime's opponents and the disappointed political parties have portrayed. They are a setback but they are not a disaster. They have to be understood in the light of the factors described earlier, particularly the consensus around the economy, the weakness of the political parties, the relative strength of the monarchy, the trouble within the Islamist movement, the structure of the political system, and the historic record of rigged elections. The 2007 election was a setback primarily due to the lack strong political parties and an electoral system that is over-engineered to secure representation at the expense of simplicity. The good news is that the new government should have a very clear picture about its priorities, and the elections have not reduced the intensity of the ongoing liberalization program. The protest vote and the lower turnout are also an expression that the population has learned that it can express anger at the politicians and have its protest heard worldwide, and this is also good news. Put another way, reforming political parties is an easier task to accomplish than making the decision to democratize, but it does take time.

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