



Musings on Morocco

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Abstract

The November 25, 2011, parliamentary elections in Morocco constitute both a major milestone in the profound reform and modernization process initiated and implemented by King Mohammad VI and the beginning of a new era in Morocco's socio-political life made possible by the ratification of the New Constitution.

Morocco is doggedly pursuing its evolutionary yet dramatic governance reform process that ranges from giving more self-rule authority to the country's diverse population and regions to profound Constitutional reforms aimed to adapt the Kingdom's government and governance to the changing times. Morocco has been undergoing a process of democratization and governance modernization since the mid-1999 ascent to the throne of King Mohammed VI. The latest and most significant phase in Morocco's comprehensive reform process is the gradual evolution into a Western-style Constitutional Monarchy which was approved by an overwhelming majority via referendum. The November 25, 2011, parliamentary elections were the first conducted in accordance with the new Constitution and, thus, the forthcoming Moroccan government will usher in a new era of Moroccan democratization and regionalization.

The anticipated establishment of a PJD-led coalition – particularly in the context of the evolving voters' base - means that pragmatism, moderation and continuity will continue to dominate Moroccan policies. All Moroccan political parties and blocs have by now comprehended and internalized that the public expect them to focus on domestic social and economic issues – particularly resolve such lingering problems as providing for good governance, betterment of living, viable employment prospects particularly for the youth, further improvement of education, and fighting corruption at the street-level. The main differences between the leading parties and the PJD are on HOW to attain these goals.

After coalition negotiations and substantive meaningful compromises – Morocco will settle for stable coalition government focusing on providing good governance and resolving socio-economic challenges without rocking the country's unique and endearing social order characterized by diversity, pragmatism and moderation. There should be no doubt that Morocco is on the threshold of profound socio-political and economic transformation. The public at large has great expectations from the new government and the new Constitution, and will give the forthcoming coalition government a grace period to prove itself. Delivering discernible success expeditiously – that is, within a realistic time-frame – will be the only yardstick by which the Benkirane government will be judged by the public and future voters.



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ANALYSIS

The November 25, 2011, parliamentary elections in Morocco constitute both a major milestone in the profound reform and modernization process initiated and implemented by King Mohammad VI and the beginning of a new era in Morocco's socio-political life made possible by the ratification of the New Constitution.

Morocco is doggedly pursuing its evolutionary yet dramatic governance reform process that ranges from giving more self-rule authority to the country's diverse population and regions to profound Constitutional reforms aimed to adapt the Kingdom's government and governance to the changing times. Morocco has been undergoing a process of democratization and governance modernization since the mid-1999 ascent to the throne of King Mohammed VI. The latest and most significant phase in Morocco's comprehensive reform process – the gradual evolution into a Western-style Constitutional Monarchy – was announced by King Mohammed VI on March 9, 2011, in a major address to the nation. On July 1st, the Draft Constitution was submitted to the people's approval via referendum and approved by an overwhelming majority. The referendum thus in effect put Morocco on an irreversible course to Constitutional Monarchy. The November 25, 2011, parliamentary elections were the first conducted in accordance with the new Constitution and, thus, the forthcoming Moroccan government will usher in a new era of Moroccan democratization and regionalization.

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Morocco is a hereditary constitutional monarchy presently structured on the basis of the Constitution adopted in 1972. The country has been ruled by the immensely popular Alaouite Dynasty since 1666. The November 25 elections were advanced by about one year in order to expedite the adoption of the new Constitution, ratified on July 1, 2011, and the profound reform process associated with it. The previous parliamentary elections were held on September 7, 2007, for a five-year parliament.



Presently, the King serves as the head-of-state, with executive power exercised by the Prime Minister and the Cabinet, which is appointed by and responsible to the King. The King also has the power to dissolve the legislature and initiate revisions in the constitution. The elections and the implementation of the Constitutional reforms at the national level will give significantly more powers to the political parties, the parliament and the government. Significantly, the reforms abolish the King's nominated Prime Minister and power-ministers and replacing them with individuals selected by the winning party or coalition and confirmed by Parliament – thus reducing the King's hands-on involvement in governance. Moreover, the Constitution guarantees the full equality of women and the rights of minorities, criminalizes torture, and establishes the independence of the judiciary. The King would remain "the trustworthy guide and supreme arbiter." The new Constitution will "enshrine citizenship-based monarchy and the citizen king."

Presently, Morocco has a Bicameral Parliament. The *Majlis al-Nuwab/Assemblée des Représentants* (Assembly of Representatives) has 325 members, elected for a five-year term in multi-seat constituencies. The *Majlis al-Mustasharin* (Assembly of Councilors) has 270 members, elected for a nine-year term, two-fifths elected by the people and three-fifths elected by elected local councils. After the November 25, 2011, elections, the Assembly of Representatives will have 395 seats – 70 more than in 2007. These seats were set by special legislation passed by the Moroccan Council of Ministers on September 9, 2011, in order designed to guarantee proper representation to younger generations and women. The 70 additional new seats are thus reserved for women and younger deputies in order to ensure that parliament is more modern and reflective of the true face of society despite hold onto power by veteran party leaders.

The electoral law improvements were subjected to a thorough audit by a delegation of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) during a pre-electoral mission to Morocco on November 9 - 12. The recent improvement of the Moroccan electoral law "enables to organize free and fair elections," said the PACE delegation. The delegation "noted with satisfaction that the electoral law has been improved, enabling to hold free and fair elections, wishing that it would be applied in good faith by the major political actors." The PACE delegation stressed the importance of, and expectations from, the forthcoming parliamentary elections. "Transparent and neutral functioning of the electoral administration is a key element to ensure the democratic character of the whole electoral process and strengthen the confidence of politicians and citizens in the elections." On the basis of these legal improvements, Morocco was granted "Partner for Democracy" status to the PACE. Moreover, the PACE delegation noted that national and international bodies were invited to independently observe the parliamentary elections – thus strengthening public control of the elections.

Indicative of the importance of the elections to the Moroccan political establishment is the fact that 5,873 candidates from 31 parties were seeking the 395 seats of Parliament. The suffrage is universal for all over the age of 21. On the eve of the elections, the key issue at hand was not the technical conduct of the elections. The Moroccan Government made every effort to ensure free and fair elections in both 2007 and 2009 – and succeeded immensely in both cases. Hence, there was no reason to expect a change in 2011. The main challenge was the possible impact of various outside interferences on the voting process and results.



Prior to the elections, international media, and consequently also Moroccan media, were swamped by reports generated by Western liberal NGOs and Western governments that support them about the growing popularity of the self-anointed “February 20 Movement” in context of “Arab Spring”. The West effectively supported the Movement’s call to boycott the elections because they urge the transformation of the King into a symbolic titular head of state with less power than the Queen of England. These Western-origin reporting created the great anticipation for a low voters’ turnout that would also constitutes a protest against the constitutional reforms process in its entirety.

While, as discussed below, apprehension about a low turnout did exist – the identification of the “February 20 Movement” and its purported message as the cause was erroneous. The quintessence of the *Intifada*’s that spread throughout the Arab World – a process commonly known as “the Arab Spring” - has been grassroots rejection of their failed modern states and regimes in favor of restoring traditional Islamist-dominated alternate forms of governance. In this context, Morocco is the exception that proves the rule. Morocco has been ruled by the Alaouite Dynasty since 1666. Being a direct descendant of both Prophet Muhammad and Imam Ali, the King of Morocco has unassailable legitimacy under the most traditionalist and Islamic terms. As is the case in all Western democracies, free and fair parliamentary and local/regional elections give the public venues to express their political opinions and affect both national and local issues. Hence, the vast majority of Moroccans saw no reason to take to the streets. Moreover, the original organizing committee of the “February 20 Movement” withdrew their participation from the demonstrations once the extreme political character of some of the participating entities became clear. Simply put, Morocco has a combination of a traditionally-legitimate form of government with individual and political freedoms enabling all citizens to express their regional and localized traditions. Hence, there is no grassroots interest in launching an Intifada in Morocco. Indeed, the ongoing incitement of Al-Jazeera and other pan-Arab media could only bring minuscule crowds to the streets.

The ratification of the New Constitution in the July 1, 2011, referendum by an overwhelming majority of 98.49 % of the voters with a voters’ turnout of 72.65 % clearly demonstrated the extent of genuine grassroots support for the Monarchy and the constitutional reforms process.

Where there lingers a problem is the inherent mistrust of the economically weak segments of society in the ability, and according to some even willingness, of any elected government to resolve their plight, reverse the growing unemployment in their ranks, and overall improve their standard of living and prospects of advancement. The issue at hand, therefore, is not faith in the King and the reform process he has unleashed – but doubts whether an elected government be capable of implementing these policies and reforms. Indeed, in contrast, in the better educated and more affluent neighborhoods voters’ turnout was impressive and early – a reflection of the elite’s firm belief in, and support for, the King and the constitutional reforms.

In the final phases of the elections campaign the leading political parties and blocs focused on convincing the grassroots of their ability to implement these reforms – albeit in profoundly different ways. The public was urged to vote in order to demonstrate confidence in the constitutional reforms and then select who will implement them and how.



This campaign worked. As announced by Interior Minister Taieb Cherqaoui, by the closing of the polls voters' turnout stood at 45.4 % nationwide. This turnout thus exceeds the magic 37 % of the 2007 parliamentary elections. Data collected and analyzed by the Moroccan Interior Ministry pointed out to a building voters' momentum toward the closing of the elections. Voting started slow. By noontime, voter turnout stood at 11.5 %. However, by 3 pm (15:00 GMT), voter turnout stood at 22.4 %, and at 5 pm (17:00 GMT), voter turnout reached 34 %. By 7 pm (19:00 GMT) when the polling stations closed, the voters' turnout stood at 45.4 %. The voters' turnout, while still below the 50 % mark, does point to a growing confidence in the role of parliament and democracy in charting the nation's course. Hence, the voters' turnout of 45.4 % clearly demonstrates that significant segments of the most skeptical elements of society are somewhat inclined to give the political parties a chance – perhaps a benefit of the doubt – to implement the King's constitutional reforms which the public at large already overwhelmingly endorsed.

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To fully comprehend the significance of the November 25, 2011, parliamentary elections one needs to examine them in the context of the overall reform process enacted by King Mohammad VI. Morocco has been undergoing a process of democratization and governance modernization since the King's mid-1999 ascent to the throne. Morocco's reforms process has three key phases:

1. Restoration of individual rights including the reversal of constraints imposed during the reign of King Hassan II.
2. Implementing a comprehensive regionalization program. The improvement in economic posture, education and access to media focuses people's attention on localized issues. Given Morocco's diverse population, the key to addressing these concerns has been by providing added powers and authority to councils, municipalities and governorates.
3. Constitutional reforms at the national-level that are based on giving more powers to political parties, parliament and the government. Significantly, the reforms abolish the King's nominated prime minister and power-ministers and replacing them with individuals selected by the winning party or coalition and confirmed by parliament – thus reducing the King's hands-on involvement in governance.

In the last four years, the implementation of the key facets of the reforms process has been submitted to the public's approval in national and local elections. The overall new political system – based on personal freedoms and greater power for the political parties – was implemented via the 2007 parliamentary elections. The regionalization and empowerment of local-level governance were implemented via the 2009 local elections. The Draft Constitution was overwhelmingly adopted in a national referendum on July 1, 2011. These new constitutional reforms are being implemented via the 2011 parliamentary elections.

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In his conclusion of his March 9, 2011, speech, King Mohammed VI highlighted the historic significance of the evolutionary character of Morocco's governance reform process. "The launching, today, of this constitutional



reform is a milestone in the consolidation of our distinctive model which is based on democracy and the pursuit of development.” Indeed, these new reforms are an integral part of the long-term process of “thorough institutional reform” initiated by King Mohammed VI soon after his ascent to the Throne in July 1999.

The current phase of the process can be traced to the aftermath of the parliamentary elections of September 7, 2007. These elections were a major step in the modernization and democratization campaign initiated and led by King Mohammed VI. Rabat committed to domestic reforms – particularly democratic reforms and individual rights – as the cornerstones of the country’s ascent into the 21st century.

With a democratically-elected Parliament in place, it became imperative for Morocco to complete implementing the King’s profound domestic reforms process. On November 6, 2008, King Mohammed VI delivered a major speech commemorating the 33rd anniversary of the Green March. The King announced the next phase of reforms Morocco was embarking on in the near future. These would be most important domestic and governance reforms. The crux of the speech was articulating the King’s decision that Morocco resolved to unilaterally implement the “sophisticated process of regionalization” that would ultimately provide ALL Moroccans with a new system of local governance. Given the immense diversity of the population of Morocco, the new policy of regionalization would enable all Moroccan to better secure and express their distinction and traditions within the framework of a unified yet diverse Morocco. In practical terms, the King talked about granting more powers to the local governments – that is, municipalities and regional councils – so that they could adapt to the distinct character and traditions of each and every population group and region of the country. Essentially, the King announced the launch of a process of profound domestic reforms in Morocco – both structurally (redistricting) and governance-wise (regionalization).

The King stressed that Morocco could no longer postpone domestic reforms until there was commensurate progress in the international arena. “Whatever the developments concerning our national cause at regional or international level, Morocco will continue to rely on itself and uphold its legitimate rights. It will remain vigilant and mobilized and will preserve the cohesion and unity of the internal front, which is the source of our strength,” the King stated. Therefore, the King explained, “Morocco cannot afford to remain idle; nor can it allow the country’s development and democratic process to be subject to the tactics and maneuvers of others.”

Therefore, the King announced on November 6, 2008, that he decided “to open a new page in the ongoing reforms” he has been spearheading. Toward this end, Morocco “shall soon be launching a gradual, sophisticated process of regionalization which will cover all parts of the Kingdom, especially the Moroccan Sahara region.” Significantly, the reform program would apply equally to all Moroccans – from the shores of the Mediterranean to the Mauritanian border, and from the Atlantic coast to the Algerian border. The King stressed the profound significance of the reform process and outlined the roadmap for the nation. Taken together, the reform process the King announced constitutes a major stride toward further democratization and greater freedoms – both personal and communal – for all Moroccans. The King thus ushered in a profound, even historic, initiative. The King concluded that “whatever the circumstances, the Kingdom of Morocco will remain true to its cultural identity as an open nation, encouraged and inspired by the credibility enjoyed by the Moroccan model at regional and international levels.”



The clairvoyance of the King's preference for a gradual and measured implementation of the far-reaching reforms was soon proven correct. The structural reforms – that is, the redistricting of Morocco – were completed by summer of 2009. The success of the reforms and the veracity of the process were immediately put to the test and confirmed in the local elections of June 12, 2009. The elections were professionally conducted and clearly reflected the public's involvement in, and commitment to, the reform process. Hence, with the redistricting phase successfully completed and proven through the exceptionally successful elections of June 2009, it was high time for undertaking the more important and challenging component of the King's clairvoyant reform process – the governance-wise regionalization reforms.

And so, on January 3, 2010, the King announced the launching of the next phase in Morocco's progress toward modernization and democratization without losing its unique character as one of the world's oldest monarchies. The next challenge would be the implementation of the "sophisticated, national regionalization model" starting the summer of 2010. Toward this end, King Mohammed VI addressed the nation on January 3, 2010, and announced the establishment of an Advisory Committee on Regionalization in order to formulate the future structure of the Kingdom. "This is a watershed moment, the start of a structural project which, hopefully, will mark a turning point in territorial governance," the King stated. The King stressed that the establishment of the committee was "the beginning of a new dynamic towards a thorough institutional reform. Viewed from this angle, the extensive regionalization we want to achieve is not a mere technical or administrative procedure, but rather a major initiative for the overhaul and modernization of state structures and for the achievement of integrated development."

The committee's mandate was "to draw up a general plan for a sophisticated, national regionalization model, covering all of the Kingdom's regions," which would be submitted to the King. Morocco still continued to grapple with the quest for the right balance between the national unity represented by the historic monarchy and the diversity of the population – a tapestry of tribes, nations and religions cohabiting a geographically diverse country stretching from the densely populated urban north to the vast and empty Sahara in the south. Therefore, the King explained, the Committee's task would be "to develop a [Moroccan] typical national regionalization system and avoid mere imitation or replication of other countries' experiences." The King emphasized that Morocco "is one of the world's most longstanding monarchies. Throughout the ages, the Moroccan monarchy has remained the guarantor of national unity." The new regionalization initiative thus heralded Morocco's "taking bold, national stances or devising innovative responses to crucial issues facing the nation."

Hence, in his January 3, 2010, speech King Mohammed VI articulated that the forthcoming reform would be a major national challenge that would chart Morocco's future character. He urged all Moroccans "to be acutely aware of the stakes involved in the crucial area of broad-based regionalization." Ultimately, Morocco's "national ambition is to move from fledgling regionalization to advanced, democratic, development-oriented regionalization," the King explained. The King concluded by reiterating his "objective of making extensive regionalization the institutional pillar of the Moroccan state; an institution-based state that upholds the rule of law, fulfills the requirements of good governance and concomitantly defends not only the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the nation, but also the right of each and every Moroccan to dignity and responsible citizenship in a united, secure, advanced, solidarity-based country."



Now, as the King noted in his March 9, 2011, speech, the new phase of reforms was indeed based on the report of the Advisory Committee on Regionalization. "On 3 January 2010, I had asked the Committee to prepare a general conception for an advanced Moroccan regionalization model," the King reminded. The further formulation of "this general plan [in order] to bring it to maturity through a wide-ranging, constructive national debate" was consistent with the King's address on August 20, 2010. In this speech, the King explained that "building on the progress achieved with respect to decentralization, [he] launched the major project of advanced regionalization in order to promote good governance at local level and press ahead with integrated development." Toward this end, he instructed the Committee "to come up with the broadlines of a typically Moroccan system of advanced regionalization that takes into account the realities and specificities of our country."

The conclusions and recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Regionalization now serve as the basis for the next round of reforms. On February 21, 2011, the King ordered the organization of the Economic and Social Council. Chakib Benmoussa, who as Interior Minister oversaw the beginning of the implementation of the King's regionalization and democratization reforms, was nominated by the King Chairman of the Council. As is the case in all Western democracies, free and fair parliamentary and local/regional elections give the public venues to express their political opinions and affect both national and local issues. However, the emergence of fringe groups and interests as a result of the accelerated modernization and urbanization – some legitimate and some burning nonetheless – require additional attention and further study. And this is the mandate of the Economic and Social Council.

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On March 9, 2011, King Mohammed VI introduced the next phase of the reform process in a major speech to the nation. The King announced "the next phase of the advanced regionalization process" which is aimed to strengthen Morocco's "democratic development model" and bring about "the substantial revision of the Constitution" that will, in turn, serve as the foundations for "comprehensive reforms" the King intends to initiate. The King cited the immense progress and "accomplishments in the area of promoting democracy" as the reason for his decision "to start enshrining advanced regionalization in the Constitution."

Morocco already has a combination of a traditionally-legitimate form of government with individual and political freedoms enabling all citizens to express their distinct regional and localized traditions. To further improve and consolidate this diversity while further improving democracy and independent judiciary, Morocco has "decided to undertake a comprehensive constitutional reform," the King said. "Considering the accomplishments in the area of promoting democracy, Morocco is in a position today to start enshrining advanced regionalization in the Constitution in order to make sure that it will stem from the direct free will of the people."

The "constitutionalization of regionalization" will be based on several key guidelines:

- * Give the region its rightful place in the Constitution as a territorial entity, within the framework of the unity of the State, the nation and the territory, keeping in mind the requirements of balance



and national solidarity at inter- and intraregional levels;

- * Stipulate that regional councils shall be elected through direct universal suffrage, and that regional affairs shall be run in accordance with democratic principles;
- * Empower the presidents of regional councils – instead of governors and walis – to implement council decisions;
- * Promote the participation of women in the management of regional affairs in particular, and the exercise of political rights in general; in this respect, the law should favour equal access by women and men to elected office;
- * Review the composition and powers of the House of Councillors thoroughly and in such a way as to enhance the regions' representation in the House. As regards the representation of trade unions and professional organizations, it remains guaranteed by several institutions, particularly the Economic and Social Council, the aim being to rationalize the performance of institutional bodies.

Significantly, the key element of the process further empowers Morocco's diverse population base – a tapestry of tribes, nations and religions spreading between the shores of the Mediterranean in the north and the border with Mauritania in the south – to better express their unique heritage, culture and distinction with a wider self-rule within a single unified Morocco. "Our ultimate objective is to strengthen the foundations for a Moroccan regionalization system throughout the Kingdom, particularly in the Moroccan Sahara provinces. It should be based on good governance which guarantees a new, more equitable system for sharing not only powers, but also resources between the central authority and the regions," the King stressed. At the same time, however, there will be no special treatment to any part of the country. All Moroccans – from the Mediterranean to the Mauritanian border – will enjoy and benefit from the greater freedoms and self-determination accorded by the unfolding "constitutionalization of regionalization" reforms. "What I do not want is a 'two-speed' regionalization, with fortunate regions that have the resources required for their progress on the one hand, and underprivileged regions lacking the requisites for development, on the other," the King stressed.

To ensure the irreversibility of the regionalization process, the King resolved to enshrine it in the Moroccan Constitution. Toward this end, the King decided to make "the regionalization process" an integral and central component of "a comprehensive constitutional reform which is designed to upgrade and revamp state institutions." The King announced that he "decided to introduce a comprehensive package of constitutional amendments based on the seven key elements below:"

1. Enshrine in the Constitution the rich, variegated yet unified character of the Moroccan identity, including the Amazigh component as a core element and common asset belonging to all Moroccans;
2. Consolidate the rule of law and the institution-based State; expand the scope of collective and individual freedoms and guarantee their practice; promote all types of human rights - political, economic, social and cultural rights as well as those relating to development and the environment - especially by inscribing, in the Constitution, the Justice and Reconciliation Commission's well-founded recommendations as well as Morocco's international commitments in this domain.



3. Elevate the judiciary to the status of an independent power and reinforce the prerogatives of the Constitutional Council to enhance the primacy of the Constitution, of the rule of law and of equality before the law;
4. Strengthen the principle of separation of powers, with the relating checks and balances, and promote the democratization, revamping and rationalization of institutions through the following:
 - * A parliament emerging from free, fair elections, and in which the House of Representatives plays the prominent role; expand the scope of legislative action and provide parliament with new powers that enable it to discharge its representative, legislative and regulatory mission;
 - * An elected government which reflects the will of the people, through the ballot box, and which enjoys the confidence of the majority of the House of Representatives;
 - * Confirming the appointment of the Prime Minister from the political party which wins the most seats in parliamentary election, as attested by election results;
 - * Consolidating the status of the Prime Minister as the head of an effective executive branch, who is fully responsible for government, civil service and the implementation of the government's agenda;
 - * Enshrining, in the Constitution, the Governing Council as an institution and specifying its prerogatives;
5. Shore up constitutional mechanisms for providing guidance to citizens, by invigorating the role of political parties within the framework of an effective pluralistic system, and by bolstering the standing of parliamentary opposition as well as the role of civil society;
6. Reinforce mechanisms for boosting moral integrity in public life, and establish a link between the exercise of power and the holding of public office with oversight and accountability;
7. Enshrine in the Constitution the institutions concerned with good governance, human rights and protection of liberties.

In order to implement these far reaching and profound reforms, the King announced the formation of a special committee to write the new Draft constitution. This will be "an ad-hoc committee for the revision of the Constitution" that will be chaired by Mr. Abdeltif Mennouni – one of Morocco's leading legal and constitutional experts. The ad-hoc committee was instructed to report back to the King by June. Once the new Draft Constitution was completed, it would be submitted to the people's approval via referendum, and only then – assuming it is accepted – for adoption and implementation by the government and parliament.

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As stipulated by the King, the committee reported back on June 16, 2011. Abdeltif Mennouni presented the King with the new Draft Constitution. The text included all the democratic reforms articulated by the King and a few additional steps. The king also received Mohamed Moatassim, his advisor who is in charge of implementing the reforms, who briefed about the viewpoints, requests and suggestions of members and leaders of



Morocco's political parties and trade unions. The King instructed that all be provided with copies of the Draft Constitution pending a speedy move to a national referendum.

The next day, June 17, King Mohammed VI delivered a speech to the nation in which he outlined the key aspects of the new Draft Constitution and announced that the referendum would be held on July 1st. "We have managed ... to develop a new democratic constitutional charter," the King announced. The new constitution would "renew our joint commitment to achieving a significant transition in completing the construction of a state based on the rule of law and on democratic institutions, and ... good governance." The King emphasized that the key provisions in the constitution will provide for the strengthening of the authority of the prime minister – henceforth the "president of the government" – and the parliament at the expense of authority and roles previously held only by the king. "The constitution gives the president of government the power to propose and dismiss cabinet members, to steer and coordinate government action, and to supervise public service." Moreover, the constitution guarantees the full equality of women and the rights of minorities, criminalizes torture, and establishes the independence of the judiciary. The King would remain "the trustworthy guide and supreme arbiter." The new constitution, the King concluded, would "enshrine citizenship-based monarchy and the citizen king."

Bold as the King's engendered constitutional reform was, it was not enough for the "February 20 Movement" - Morocco's self-anointed "youth movement" tailored after other "Arab Spring" electronic social-media driven groups. "The plan as proposed by the king yesterday does not respond to our demands for a true separation of powers. We will protest peacefully on Sunday against this plan," the Movement's leaders announced. A few thousand demonstrators gathered in Rabat's Taqaddom neighborhood and quickly clashed with police. Movement leaders later insisted that they were attacked by "thugs" recruited by the interior ministry and that 40 demonstrators were injured. They also claimed large-scale protests in Casablanca, Fes, Asfi and Tangier – although each of these protests attracted only about a thousand youth.

On July 1, Morocco held a national referendum on the proposed constitutional reforms. The changes to the Constitution were approved by 98.49 % of the voters. Voters' turnout was 72.65 % despite calls by various protest movements to boycott of the referendum because it did not offer the option of complete abolishment of the monarchy. "The referendum went ahead in a normal atmosphere, and showed the degree of interaction between the people and the content of the constitutional project," said Interior Minister Taib Cherkaoui. He added that slightly over 30 % of the voters were under the age of 35 – a low turnout given Morocco's young population.

The "February 20 Movement" shrugged the results. "We knew right from the start that the referendum will be in favor of the reform, but not necessarily for good reasons," said a leading activist soon after the results were announced. "Widespread poverty, illiteracy and fear of the state played a key role in the vote's outcome." Another leader called the results "ridiculous" and insisted that the referendum was "marked by massive violations of democratic principles" although he would not elaborate. On July 18, a few thousand demonstrators held peaceful rallies in Rabat, Casablanca and Tangier. They demanded "a democratic constitution" and "greater social justice". Hundreds of pro-government protesters gathered and demanded support and fidelity to the king. The security forces showed up in force and were able to keep the two groups apart.



The real opinions and hopes of Morocco's large population of electronic social-media users – nearly 10.2 million Internet users out of a general population of 32 million – were described in a study by the Thomas More Institute and the Trend Institute published in Paris on October 24. The study stressed the diversity and vibrancy of the socio-political discourse in the country's blogosphere. The study found that Morocco's youth are more interested in politics than the older generations. Significantly, the dynamism of the Moroccan blogosphere predates, and is much older than, the "Arab Spring". The youth enthusiasm reflects a strong modernization of their relationship to politics and a widening fragmentation of opinion driven by growing knowledge. There is genuine interest in all political parties and frank articulation of expectations from the respective party programs on the basis of their merits. The Moroccan blogosphere reflects a critical though supportive interest in the pending reforms in governance. Most youth are primarily concerned about economic issues and the government's ability to provide job opportunities for them. In principle, the constitutional reforms are praised but some users feel there is still much to do. Most Moroccans would like to see more stringent regulations on corruption, more transparency and greater social justice. The most striking finding is that while there is a strong fragmentation of political opinion among the youth – there is a distinct lack of radicalization, neither leftist-liberal nor Islamist. Moroccan youth measure political progress in terms of individual freedoms and economic empowerment. Hence, there is widespread mistrust in the radicals' ability to deliver on their promises. The radical movements and parties – such as both the PJD and the "February 20 Movement" – are perceived as archaic and out of step with the vibrant modern Moroccan society.

On November 6, 2011, the 36th anniversary of the Green March, King Mohammed VI delivered another major speech focusing on the forthcoming parliamentary elections. He urged the nation to participate in the elections in order to begin the implementation of the new Constitution. "The various stakeholders concerned by the forthcoming election – political parties that provide guidance to the citizens, state supervisory authorities, efficient civil society organizations, professional media and responsible voters – are expected to rise to the occasion and to live up to the spirit of the new Constitution. They have to be guided by a keen sense of patriotism and responsible citizenship so that we may have efficient, credible legislative and executive institutions that serve as the engine of development, promote democracy, are worthy of the citizens' trust and contribute to achieving reconciliation between the citizens and elected institutions," the King said.

The King stressed that the forthcoming election "is particularly important not only because it is the first such election under the new Constitution, but also it is a litmus test of the democratic implementation of the Constitution." He urged the entire population to participate in the election. "National, across-the-board mobilization is the key to meeting the great challenge of ensuring free and fair elections, in which parties compete on the basis of clear social programs that fulfill the citizens' legitimate aspirations," the King explained. The King expects the elections to enshrine vibrant political and parliamentary dynamics. "Elections should produce a close-knit, harmonious government majority which can run public affairs efficiently, and be held to account by a constructive opposition that can itself make useful proposals. Being enshrined in the Constitution, parliamentary opposition should be in a position to play an active part, rather than being marginalized, confined to a minor role without any real impact, or simply having to wait for the next general election to submit an alternative program."



Ultimately, the King considers the adoption and implementation of the Constitution the first step in the political and institutional modernization of the Kingdom of Morocco. "Our ultimate goal is to build a State based on efficient institutions, in which all stakeholders comply with the rule of law and with the provisions of the Constitution. They should commit to helping achieve the nation's development and the well-being of citizens, and refrain from using institutions to serve personal or narrow interests," the King stated.

On the eve of the elections, the "February 20 Movement" was the only political entity actively trying to derail the elections. On November 13, the Movement organized a rally in Casablanca calling for a boycott of the upcoming parliamentary elections. Movement leaders claimed the elections would be no more than the same "facade democracy" that had existed in Morocco for decades. However, the very low turnout reflected the public skepticism of these arguments. Therefore, the Movement announced the launch of a "virtual revolution" in Morocco through the use of electronic social media. Several front groups popped up on Facebook claiming to represent Morocco's discontent youth. "Changing the political face of our parties and making way for new generations" is the declared objective of the new Political Revolution Movement. "For years, we have been observing the performance of those parties and we saw how they disgraced Moroccans with their actions and their squabbles. That is why we refused to be involved in politics." Another initiative promoted by individuals identified with the "February 20 Movement" called for "punitive voting" – that is, communicating the voters' objection to all the parties standing for elections by casting a blank vote and encouraging other voters to do the same.

In contrast, the just established "Revolution of the Boxes" Movement urged Moroccan youth to go voting in order to effect change by "voting the corrupt out of the political scene." The Movement's manifesto was vague on how to achieve their objective. "We want our people to put their faith in those who serve them not those who use them to serve themselves," said the statement. "We want the poll boxes to have the final say and to transform themselves into a weapon that fights corruption and tyranny. We want to show that even boxes can stage revolutions."

Thus, in the days leading to the November 25, 2011, parliamentary elections the main challenge was the voters' turnout. It was 37 % in the previous parliamentary elections in 2007. In fall 2011, voters' enthusiasm was varying from region to region, and kept changing overtime. Hence, polling and predictions were nearly impossible. At the root are the complex circumstances under which Morocco's evolution is taking place.

Moroccan society is undergoing profound changes as a result of domestic developments – mainly improvement in economic posture, better education and access to electronic media – and external inputs – mainly the regional upheaval and blowback from the radicalization of the expatriate community in Western Europe. The transformation and modernization of the Moroccan economy from labor-intensive agriculture-based to industrialization resulted in unprecedented population mobility. This process was physically expedited by the new national infrastructure which makes travel easy and cheap. Consequently, Morocco has experienced rapid urbanization in response to the growing needs for labor. Given Morocco's conservative tribal-based social structure – the population movements and accelerated urbanization bred social instability and security challenges. The main reason was the sudden vanishing of the inherent security of tribal society and the emergence of Islamist and other radical lures as substitute and panacea. Meanwhile, the above domestic developments



also led to the emergence of a generation of westernized computer-skilled youth. During the last year, the leftist radicals among them have been greatly influenced by the impact of electronic social media as ostensibly manifested in the “Arab Spring”. All of these issues and trends manifested themselves in the parliamentary elections.

Herein is the great significance of a 45.4% voters’ turnout in the November 25, 2011, elections.

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The final results of Morocco’s parliamentary elections were released on November 27, 2011. Together with assessments based on the parties’ own political analyses – these results constitute a sound base for analysis of what to expect next on the Moroccan political scene.

The two key factors in the results concern the relative powers of the leading parties.

1. With 107 seats (out of a total of 395) – the Islamist Justice and Development Party (PJD) has a clear plurality in the future parliament. Abdelillah Benkirane, the PJD’s secretary-general, is thus the leading candidate for prime minister. However, the PJD has 27 % of the seats – or about half of what is necessary for a slim majority.
2. Although eighteen parties are represented in the next parliament – only four (beyond the PJD) have large enough a representation to make viable political standing. The venerable Independence Party – *Istiklal* – won 60 seats (15 %), the National Rally for Independents won 52 seats (13 %), the Authenticity and Modernity Party won 47 seats (12 %), and the Socialist Union of Popular Forces won 39 seats (10 %). All other parties hover between single-digit figures and two or single MPs.

This means that the PJD will have to form a coalition with more than two parties – an extremely complicated political challenge under the best of circumstances. The PJD is cognizant of this. “We are open to all political parties in order to form the government, to the exception of one party [the Authenticity and Modernity Party],” Benkirane said shortly after the final results were announced. In order to ensure the kind of high-quality governance it had promised during the campaign and in its platform – the PJD leaders would prefer to establish a relatively small cabinet. Toward this end, the PJD is willing to compromise deeply with key coalition allies. “It is not [even] necessary to allocate the majority of portfolios to the PJD,” Benkirane said.

Ultimately, however, the anticipated establishment of a PJD-led coalition – particularly in the context of the evolving voters’ base – means that pragmatism, moderation and continuity will continue to dominate Moroccan policies.

The main reason for the rise of the PJD in the last few years is that wider elements of society – not Islamists – shifted support because of a growing belief in the PJD’s legal and social platform. These new supporters are convinced that the PJD is the most likely to deliver good governance, social justice, fight corruption, and put the country on the right path to economic betterment for the downtrodden (This basic trend of voters’ shift to Islamist parties for social reasons was also noted in other Arab countries such as Egypt, Tunisia and Jordan.) .



However, many of these new supporters are largely secular and do not practice Islam to the degree favored by the PJD's original leaders. Moreover, such early PJD policies as banning alcohol are immensely unpopular with them. To sustain the support of, and empowerment by, these wider segments of the population the PJD will have to moderate and compromise – thus retaining Morocco's diverse and liberal life-style.

Similarly, all Moroccan political parties and blocs have by now comprehended and internalized that the public expect them to focus on domestic social and economic issues – particularly resolve such lingering problems as providing for good governance, betterment of living, viable employment prospects particularly for the youth, further improvement of education, and fighting corruption at the street-level. The main differences between the leading parties and the PJD are on HOW to attain these goals. Hence, it should be possible for most main parties to attain a compromise on commonly accepted modalities for enacting the profound socio-economic reforms sought after by virtually the entire population. And such substantive agreement on mutually accepted compromises is the most important facet in reaching a viable coalition agreement.

Indeed the leading candidate for the PJD's primary strategic partner is the *Koutla* alliance. The *Koutla* is a loose alliance of the Independence Party (60 seats – 15 %), the Socialist Union of Popular Forces (39 seats – 10 %) and the Progress and Socialism Party (18 seats – 5 %) that are focused on social issues and the establishment of a Westernized welfare state. As a unified body, the *Koutla* has impressive political presence – a total of 117 seats (30 %) – that exceeds the PJD's.

Indeed, Benkirane stressed that the PJD has “an affinity” with the parties of the *Koutla* because they “showed a political maturity”. He added that the *Koutla* alliance has already expressed willingness to take part in the upcoming coalition government. In order to ensure the widest possible coalition, Benkirane indicated the PJD was also open to include the Popular Movement (32 seats – 8 %) that is predominantly Amazigh/Berber in the coalition in addition to the *Koutla*. Such a coalition would master a respectable total of 256 seats (65 %). This will be a narrow-issue government focusing on domestic socio-economic reforms and improvements.

On November 30, King Mohammed VI formally appointed Abdelilah Benkirane, the leader of the winning his Justice and Development Party, as Morocco's next Prime Minister in accordance with the provisions of the new Constitution. The King noted that he was following the new constitutional guidelines requiring the Monarch to choose a Prime Minister from the party which won the largest number of seats in the Parliament. Benkirane reiterated his fealty to the throne and stressed his commitment to follow the Constitution and keep Morocco online with the King's reforms process. On December 1, after meeting with the current Prime Minister Abbas Fassi, Benkirane sought to reassure Morocco's international allies that the country will stay the course. He stated that “it is unthinkable to dismantle Morocco's historic alliances with the West, which remain based on many mutual interests.” Benkirane further specified that “Morocco's relationships with France, Spain, Britain and the United States will not change.”

In early December, Benkirane and the PJD leadership focused their coalition negotiations on establishing an even more centrist-mainstream a government that would better represent the Moroccan grassroots. With the *Koutla* alliance faltering over internal disagreements, senior negotiators for the Justice and Development Party and other would-be coalition partner parties considered reducing the future coalition's dependence on leftist



elements and instead focus on the mainstream bulwarks of Morocco's society and political establishment as the PJD's primary coalition partners. Hence, the Justice and Development Party leaders reached out to the mainstream-royalist National Rally for Independents with its 52 seats (13 %) as the bulwark of centrist policies.

Consequently, the radical-leftist Progress and Socialism Party opted to rethink a role in the coalition despite the *Koutla* alliance agreement. On December 4, the Socialist Union of Popular Forces also decided not to participate in a coalition. "The USFP is now part of the opposition, following a decision made Sunday by its national council," announced Driss Lachgar of the party's political bureau. Ultimately, with the Independence Party, the National Rally for Independents, and the Popular Movement as the primary coalition partners of the Justice and Development Party – Benkirane will be in position to consolidate an extremely solid centrist-mainstream coalition of 251 seats (63 %) that will enshrine confidence in the continuance of Morocco's unique character, way of life and policies.

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Alas, the political reforms process of the last five years – that culminated in the ratification and adoption of the new Constitution – find the entire parliamentary-political establishment unprepared for some of the inevitable challenges.

- * The King's relinquishing of hold over the selection and control over the prime minister and key power ministries means that for the first time party candidates will have to be appointed and the coalition parties be held responsible for their success or failures. Although all major parties have recently been engaged in luring leading experts and technocrats into their ranks, the inevitable tension between veteran party activists and the rising technocrats hovers over inner-party politics.
- * The immense success of the King's regionalization policy and the 2009 regional and local elections resulted in the emergence of localized foci and centers of power – albeit affiliated with the major national parties. This trend has in turn weakened the national party establishment and created situation that all major parties have specific regional bastions of support – that is, no party has a countrywide steady support level and parties' interests and priorities are affected by the location of the their key bastions of support.
- * Because of the above mentioned hold by the King over the most important elements of government and governance until the recent constitutional reforms – in the past, Moroccan parties and the political establishment had no real need to conduct comprehensive coalition negotiations and compromises over the most crucial elements of national politics. Such negotiations are extremely complex and challenging in both political and legal terms.

Thus, as the leaders of Morocco's main parties sit down to begin the inevitable coalition negotiations – there will be bumps merely because of inexperience that might, in turn, prolong and complicate the negotiations process. However, given the unity of the mind about the nation's most burning challenges and differences mainly on the modalities for their resolution – a viable coalition will ultimately emerge.

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Hence, after some rancorous coalition negotiations and substantive meaningful compromises – Morocco will settle for stable coalition government focusing on providing good governance and resolving socio-economic challenges without rocking the country’s unique and endearing social order characterized by diversity, pragmatism and moderation. There should be no doubt that Morocco is on the threshold of profound socio-political and economic transformation. The public at large has great expectations from the new government and the new Constitution, and will give the forthcoming coalition government a grace period to prove itself. Delivering discernible success expeditiously – that is, within a realistic time-frame – will be the only yardstick by which the Benkirane government will be judged by the public and future voters.

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ANNEX

OFFICIAL RESULTS OF THE NOVEMBER 25, 2011, PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

The final results of the November 25, 2011, parliamentary elections for the 395-seat parliament as announced by the Interior Minister:

The Justice and Development Party (PJD):	107 seats
Independence Party (PI):	60 seats
National Rally for Independents (RNI):	52 seats
Authenticity and Modernity Party (PAM):	47 seats
Socialist Union of Popular Forces (USFP):	39 seats
Popular Movement (MP):	32 seats
Constitutional Union (UC):	23 seats
Progress and Socialism Party (PPS):	18 seats
Labor Party (PT):	04 seats
Democratic and Social Movement (MDS):	02 seats
Renewal and Equity Party (PRE):	02 seats
Environment and Sustainable Development Party (PEDD):	02 seats
Al Ahd Addimocrati Party:	02 seats
Green left party (PGV):	01 seat
Freedom and Social Justice Party (PLJS):	01 seat
The Front of Democratic Forces (FFD):	01 seat
Party of Action (PA):	01 seat
Unity and democracy Party:	01 seat



These final results include the election returns provided by the national counting commission for the 90 seat national list, which include 60 seats for women and 30 for young men under 40 years old. Here follows the national list's results:

The Justice and Development Party (PJD):	24 seats, 16 for women and 08 for young men
Independence Party (PI):	13 seats, 09 for women and 04 for young men
National Rally for Independents (RNI):	12 seats, 08 for women and 04 for young men
Authenticity and Modernity Party (PAM):	12 seats, 08 for women, and 04 for young men
Socialist Union of Popular Forces (USFP):	09 seats, 06 for women and 03 for young men
Popular Movement (MP):	08 seats, 05 for women and 03 for young men
Constitutional Union (UC):	06 seats, 04 for women and 02 to young men
Progress and Socialism Party (PPS):	06 seats, 04 for women and 02 to young men

The results for the 305 local constituencies' seats are as follows:

The Justice and Development Party (PJD):	83 seats
Independence Party (PI):	47 seats
National Rally for Independents (RNI):	40 seats
Authenticity and Modernity Party (PAM):	35 seats
Socialist Union of Popular Forces (USFP):	30 seats
Popular Movement (MP):	24 seats
Constitutional Union (UC):	17 seats
Progress and Socialism Party (PPS):	12 seats
Labor Party (PT):	04 seats
Democratic and Social Movement (MDS):	02 seats
Renewal and Equity Party (PRE):	02 seats
Environment and Sustainable Development Party (PEDD):	02 seats
Al Ahd Addimocrati Party:	02 seats
Green left party (PGV):	01 seat
Freedom and Social Justice Party (PLJS):	01 seat
The Front of Democratic Forces (FFD):	01 seat
Party of Action (PA):	01 seat
Unity and democracy Party:	01 seat

Voter turnout in Morocco's first legislative election since the adoption of the new constitution stood at 45.4 % nationwide.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EUROPEAN POLICY MAKERS

The November 25, 2011, parliamentary elections in Morocco constitute both a major milestone in the profound reform and modernization process initiated and implemented by King Mohammad VI and the beginning of a new era in Morocco's socio-political life made possible by the ratification of the New Constitution. At the same time, Morocco will remain a hereditary constitutional monarchy ruled by the immensely popular Alaouite Dynasty since 1666.

Morocco will soon have a stable coalition government focusing on providing good governance and resolving socio-economic challenges without rocking the country's unique and endearing life-style characterized by diversity, pragmatism and moderation. Morocco is on the threshold of profound socio-political and economic transformation. The public at large has great expectations from a PJD-led government and will give the forthcoming coalition government the benefit of the doubt for a while.

Morocco has always been a close ally of the West. On October 13, 2008, Morocco was granted "advanced status" with the EU – comparable to that of Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland – that includes the setting up of a "common economic space" based on the rules of the European Economic Area. The forthcoming PJD-led government is committed to staying the course. On December 1, 2011, Abdelilah Benkirane, Morocco's next Prime Minister, stated that "it is unthinkable to dismantle Morocco's historic alliances with the West, which remain based on many mutual interests." He further specified that "Morocco's relationships with France, Spain, Britain and the United States will not change."

Morocco is a rare success story in a region set aflame by Islamist-Jihadist Intifada's and facing widespread socio-economic collapse. King Mohammad VI has embarked on the reforms and democratization process because this is the best course for Morocco itself. However, the west has a lot to benefit from Morocco's success and a lot to dread from a failure. Hence, while Morocco is doing its utmost to persevere and prevail in the current tumultuous times and turbulent area – it is imperative for the West to help ease Morocco's burden and expedite its success.

The West should help and encourage Morocco and the reforms process through political support and encouragement, as well as long-term economic cooperation projects that are mutually beneficial. Most notably, both Morocco and the West have a lot to benefit from renewable energy projects such solar energy and wind-turbines farms. Given its unique geographic location and heritage, Morocco can, and should, serve as a gateway to both Africa and Islamdom for the West. Ultimately, Morocco is an integral part of the West – especially Europe. Hence, Western policies should be based on meaningful cooperation and genuine partnership rather than benevolence.

Remarks: *Opinions expressed in this contribution are those of the author.*



About the Author of this Issue

Yossef Bodansky has been the Director of Research at the International Strategic Studies Association [ISSA], as well as a Senior Editor for the *Defense & Foreign Affairs* group of publications, since 1983. He was the Director of the Congressional Task Force on Terrorism and Unconventional Warfare at the U.S. House of Representatives between 1988 and 2004, and stayed on as a special adviser to Congress till January 2009. In the mid-1980s, he acted as a senior consultant for the U.S. Department of Defense and the Department of State. He is the author of eleven books – including *Bin Laden: The Man Who Declared War on America* (*New York Times* No.1 Bestseller & *Washington Post* No.1 Bestseller), *The Secret History of the Iraq War* (*New York Times* Bestseller & *Foreign Affairs Magazine* Bestseller), and *Chechen Jihad: Al Qaeda's Training Ground and the Next Wave of Terror* – and hundreds of articles, book chapters and Congressional reports. Mr Bodansky is a Director at the Prague Society for International Cooperation, and serves on the Board of the Global Panel Foundation and several other institutions worldwide.

The author led international teams of expert monitors and political analysts in the Moroccan elections of 2007, 2009 and 2011.



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