Monarchical Suppression of the Legislature:

Morocco 1996-2007

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Chapter 1

Institutionalizing a Legislature within a Monarchical System

In both political and academic communities, Morocco has often been cited as one of the “Arab democracies.” Yet, a close examination of the political structure in Morocco exposes the window-dressing status of the legislature and the divine will of the king. To understand this discrepancy it is necessary to look at the methods of suppression that have been used by the monarchy to create an asymmetric power structure, while maintaining a democratic façade. In analyzing the role of the legislature, this study will survey the dynamic between the parliament and the monarchy since the inception of the gouvernement d’alternance in 1998, and the opposing nature of the two institutions. Ultimately, the questions that facilitate this study are how has the role of the legislature changed in Morocco and what, if any, political power does it have.

1.1 Historical Context

Morocco’s first king, Mohammed V, returned from exile in 1955 to lead a revolution against the French, who ruled the country via a protectorate. The success of the revolution won Morocco its independence and served as the starting point for a disproportionate relationship between the monarchy and the federal legislature by way of a constitution that favored the king. Shortly after the revolution, Mohammed V passed away. His son, Hassan II, assumed power via the system of institutionalized primogeniture. The political fervor that accompanied the
successful revolution slowly waned in the early years of Hassan II’s reign. He was young, inexperienced as a leader, and did not have the celebrity status of his father.\(^1\) The Moroccan people began to demand accountability, representation, and progress from the monarchy. As an emerging nation, it was difficult for the king to carry out many of the overly romanticized promises of the revolution, resulting in mounting tension between the monarchy and the people. Amidst the haggling between the king and the people there stood a compromised federal legislature that was ineffective in fulfilling its two fundamental roles: representing the people and holding the monarchy accountable.

Hassan II sought to quiet the political tension by strengthening his grip on control. Successful at maintaining control over the country and keeping Morocco removed from the problems that were plaguing much of the Middle East, his dictatorial rule nonetheless contributed to two assassination attempts in 1970 and 1971 by his own military. The failed attempts on his life intensified Hassan II’s imperious rule and led to the onset of a strict authoritarian state known as *les années de plomb*, the years of lead.\(^2\)

Hassan II’s hostile rule continued into the 1990’s. During *les années de plomb* there was widespread human rights abuses and political dissent was not tolerated. People often ‘disappeared’. It was not until the latter stage of Hassan II’s tenure that he finally began to loosen his control over the country. By the mid 1990’s he had increased the role of the legislature and set up the Royal Council for Human Rights. It was at this point that civil society reemerged in Morocco.

Then, in the fall of 1996, Hassan II pushed through referendums that amended the Moroccan Constitution to create a second chamber for the country’s parliament (*la Chambre des Représentants*, the Assembly of Representatives). Prior to this move, the parliament was a unicameral body that failed to achieve representation because it was dominated by indirectly elected officials who were aligned with the monarchy.\(^3\) By creating a second chamber, and by instilling direct universal suffrage for that chamber, Hassan II sought to give greater power to the parliamentary members, thereby defusing social unrest. This move by the king was met with a variety of opinions. Supporters heralded the referendums as another step in Morocco’s emerging democratic transition; others saw this as a move to appease and disenfranchise a mounting opposition\(^4\) that had become noticeably stronger and more organized since it had refused to take part in the government after the elections of 1993.\(^5\) Thus, in 1997 the changes went through and the opposition parties again decided to take part in the parliamentary elections. As a result, the *gouvernement d’alternance* (the government of change), took effect in what was deemed the first experiment of a direct election of an opposition party in the Arab world. Ten years later however, and in the wake of the September 2007 parliamentary elections, the *gouvernement d’alternance* has been unsuccessful in delivering on its

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\(^4\) By opposition I am referring to the Westminster-based parliamentary systems, where the elected majority party(ies) forms the government and the elected minority party(ies) forms the opposition. The role of the opposition in the legislature is to oppose the government by criticizing government policies, maintaining accountability, and by offering alternative positions. However, I am not saying that only the parties not in the governing bloc makeup the opposition in Morocco. There is a vibrant opposition movement in civil society. In hope of not confusing the two: “opposition” will refer to the political parties not in the governing bloc and all other forms of opposition will be qualified as such.

commitment to democracy and change. Instead, the role of the legislature within a polity that is dominated by the chief executive (king) has remained ill-defined.

1.2 What constitutes a legitimate legislature in the West?

Prior to a discussion about the specificities of the Moroccan Parliament, it is first imperative to explain, in general, what constitutes a legitimate legislature in the West; and second, why a legitimate legislature is integral to a functioning liberal democracy. While the western model may not seem germane to the Moroccan Parliament, it remains important to understand it through this lens because of the correlates that have drawn between the two institutions. The next section will be reserved for understanding Morocco as part of the greater Arab world.

To start, there are several fundamental attributes that constitute the Western legislature. Foremost, a legislature must be involved in the creation of law. It is difficult to envision a legislature that could perform any additional function effectively if it were not a law-affecting body. Furthermore, the legislature serves as an institution of accountability.6 The capacity to control the excess initiative of the executive has been a critical role for the legislature in modern theories of representative government. Another role for the legislature is to act as an arena for political conflict resolution. Liberal theories of democracy often encourage political conflict; the legislature has the burden to mend these cleavages.7

Legislative nuances differ from country to country, leaving no ultimate standard for defining a legislature. But there are overarching similarities between the successful legislatures of the West. The substantive commonalities are thus a starting point for discussing what makes

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a legitimate legislature. Adopted from Richard Sisson and Leo M. Snowiss, there are three necessary legislative characteristics. First, a legitimate legislature must have multimembership and act as a representative body. Indeed, members are selected by election so that they can be held accountable by their constituents. Second, a legitimate legislature is required to have autonomy and responsible leadership. Autonomy is thought of in conjunction with responsible leadership because autonomy alone is autocratic. Third, a legitimate legislature is obliged to incorporate a method to ratify decisions by majority assent. In other words, a legislature is a deliberative, collegial body that is designed to include a range of societal interests. The necessity of majority rule compels legislative assemblies to reconcile democratic consent between the competing interests. In addition, the legislature can only govern successfully if they have the power to “…compel executives to govern ‘through’ them by governing with them.”

The power of the legislature must function in a way that is consistent with the interests of minority groups and the private sphere. It is incumbent upon the legislature to decentralize power and promote pluralism. The legislature must act as an agent of social mobilization and as an instrument for the redistribution of benefits to society.

A legitimate legislature must be composed of a diversity of functioning political parties. Political parties can be defined broadly as the link between civil society and the government – an entity that organizes itself into a group that seeks to achieve authority in a governmental system. Political parties are responsible for being representative of the differing ideologies of

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8 Ibid, pg. 47-50.
the populace, which promotes competition and debate between alternative political platforms.\textsuperscript{10}
A modern democracy is dependent on political parties that present alternatives for electoral choice and that have the ability to systematize a government thereafter, so as to bring electorally preferred policies to fruition.\textsuperscript{11}

This section is not an attempt to develop a comprehensive list of the requirements for a legitimate legislature; instead, the purpose here is to establish the fundamental role and characteristics of a functioning legislature in the West. In turn, the role and characteristics can be applied to Morocco to assess the merit of the correlates between the Moroccan Parliament and its Western counterparts.

1.3 Situating the Moroccan political structure in the Arab context

More central to this study is the role of the parliament within a monarchical system of government. In the Arab world, the last 50 years has seen a dramatic bureaucratic expansion of family rule, thereby placing greater power in the hands of the ruling families. The expansion has been driven by oil surplus and foreign aid. Morocco, not being an oil-state, family rule has been constrained to a degree. But Morocco does receive foreign aid and has thus used this aid to bring together a clientilistic network of loyal patrons that have ruled in conjunction with the Alaouite family (the family of the current king). The Alaouite family, like ruling families in other Arab states such as Qatar, Egypt, Tunisia, Jordan, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia, has withheld power from the rising democratic institutions by concentrating power in the hands of

loyal family members, creating internal rivalries between political opponents, and resisting demands to share decision making powers with more than a tiny elite of loyal politicians.\textsuperscript{12}

In Morocco, like Jordan and other Arab states, family rule has been used to limit political dissent. Significant governmental positions have been reserved for uncles, cousins, and sons – loyalists to the regime. Family members have been appointed to numerous influential positions, including military posts, ministerial posts, and policy-making posts. And in states where a strong military has been essential, as in Jordan and Morocco, the king has acted as commander-in-chief, often wearing full military uniform and performing symbolic military gestures in public.\textsuperscript{13}

To illustrate how parliaments are forced to function within authoritarian-like regimes one can look to The Kuwaiti National Assembly. The Assembly includes 50 elected members, 2 from each of the 25 electoral districts. The ruling family, the Al Sabah, manages the assembly through a constitutional provision that gives all 16 cabinet members a seat in the unicameral legislature and allows them to cast votes. Only 1 of the cabinet members must be democratically elected; the other 15 are appointed by the Emir and are often members of the ruling family.\textsuperscript{14} This creates an assembly with 66 seats, with at minimum 15 of those seats being loyal to the ruling family. With a loyalist bloc of almost ¼ of the seats in the assembly, the ruling family can shape the direction of the legislature. Similarly, the Jordanian National

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid, pg. 49.
Assembly has undergone increases in institutional centrality, but it remains subordinate to and limited by the executive branch and ruling family.\textsuperscript{15}

Areas where the monarchy has had less success in mandating family rule, specifically the rising merchant class, there have been deals struck. In both Morocco and Kuwait, the merchant community has submitted to the ruling families, vowing to limit their demands for political participation in exchange for open access to markets.\textsuperscript{16}

Further, Arab ruling families have accented their authority with their close identification with religion. “The religious and traditional legitimacy is one of the bases on which the regime rests. It places the King above politics, outside the debate of ordinary political activity, but able to intervene in politics through the network of patronage over which he presides.”\textsuperscript{17} The ruling families have tried to maintain a balance between the gains made from their religious connections and the constraints that such a connection places on them. In so doing, there has been an emphasis on the management of tradition.\textsuperscript{18} “Tradition legitimizes King Hassan and he consciously emphasized his religious authority and responsibility.”\textsuperscript{19} An example of religion management for political gain has been the ‘Great Sacrifice’. The ‘Great Sacrifice’ in Morocco is a day that begins with prayers led by the king and then culminates with the king sacrificing a ram with all of the country viewing (either directly or via TV). The ritual is


completed when all of the governors from each province, followed by the head of each family, have likewise sacrificed a ram.20

Legislatures in the Arab world have thus been forced to adapt to authoritarian regimes. The bureaucratic expansion of family rule, the king’s ability to manage the parliament and Islam, and the withholding of decision making powers, has created an environment where there is little room for the legislature to function effectively. The legislatures in Kuwait, Jordan, Egypt, and Yemen provide a foundation for understanding the Moroccan legislature and the constraints that it faces.

1.4 Explanation of the alternance

Following the legislative elections of 1993, the opposition parties refused to take part in the government. The opposition’s refusal was sparked by elections that were plagued with corruption and the appointment of key ministers by the king, including the apolitical technocrat, Driss Jettou, and the retention of the Interior Minister, Driss Basri, who the opposition viewed as antithetical to the promotion of democracy. Coupled with an imbalance of power that strongly favored the monarchy over the parliament, the opposition parties chose to protest the government. A political standoff of this nature may have lasted indefinitely if it had not been for the unfolding of several domestic and international events that renewed the king’s commitment to incorporating the legislature, and which simultaneously triggered the opposition’s sense of urgency to take part in the government. The events included the escalating civil war in neighboring Algeria between the Islamists, who had fared well in the first-round of elections through democratic means, and the armed forces who staged a coup to

prevent the Islamists from taking power. Morocco, with a geographic and ideological proximity to Algeria, feared that local Islamist sympathizers had the potential to fill the politically stagnant power vacuum that resulted from the inability to form a legitimate government.

Moreover, the unrelenting droughts in Morocco throughout the 1980’s and early 90’s led to further social unrest and exposed the fragility of the agriculturally dependent economy. To help rectify the deteriorating economic, political, and social situation in Morocco, two important opposition leaders returned from exile to convince the opposition to forge ahead – unilaterally, if necessary – to negotiate a compromise with the government.\textsuperscript{21} The two men were Abderrahmane Youssoufi, the leader of the opposition party: \textit{Union Socialiste des Forces Populaires} (Socialist Union of People’s Forces—USFP), and Mohamed “Fqih” Basri, the founder of the \textit{Union Nationale des Forces Populaires} (Nationalist Union of People’s Forces—UNFP). Conjointly, the two men worked to find a mutual solution between the government and the opposition bloc.

As expected, the myriad of problems facing Morocco eventually proved to be too much for both the Monarchy’s tight grip on power and the opposition’s steadfast reluctance to participate in a government with unevenly distributed power. Thus, the two joined together in 1997 to create the \textit{gouvernement d’alternance} (the government of change), where the opposition was democratically elected into the parliament. However,

\textit{[t]he alternance did not modify the political dynamics in the country. In bringing the USFP and the Istiqlal [Independence party] closer to the fold, co-opting their leadership,}

and turning them from opposition parties into servants of the monarchy, it failed to generate a self-sustaining process of change.\textsuperscript{22}

In other words, by engineering the \textit{alternance}, the late King Hassan II was able to incorporate the two leading opposition parties, the \textit{Istiqlal} and the USFP, while at the same time not having to give up any real power or make any changes to his policies.\textsuperscript{23} In fact, in contrast to its stated goal, the \textit{alternance} strengthened the monarchy’s hold on power by legitimizing the regime. It was well understood by the king that the longer the left remained in the opposition, the stronger it became. The \textit{alternance} was used to incorporate the left into the government, so to demystify their independent appeal.\textsuperscript{24}

Furthermore, the \textit{alternance} synchronized the underlying logic of Morocco’s electoral process to match that which prevails in several other Arab nations, including Tunisia, Egypt, and Jordan. That is, the parliamentary elections are designed around quotas to make sure the opposition wins enough seats to remain part of the system, but never enough to change or challenge it.\textsuperscript{25} Also, much like the electoral system in Kuwait, the electoral districts have been designed to produce political moderates.\textsuperscript{26} Thus, the democratic changes that came about through the \textit{alternance} were above all cosmetic and not structural.


\textsuperscript{23} Ibid.


1.5 Change in rule: Hassan II to Mohammed VI

Morocco shouldered extensive political change in the late 1990’s. Shortly after the introduction of the *alternance*, in the summer of 1999, King Hassan II passed away. His eldest son and crown prince, Sidi Mohammed, assumed the throne. With King Mohammed VI came high hopes and aspirations for political and social liberalization. The hope was for the new king to open up the political system and allow for meaningful opposition parties to take part in a balanced system of government. Abdeslam Maghraoui, a prominent Moroccan political scientist, voiced the optimism of the nation at that time:

> [t]he young king's investiture seemed to be the final step in a series of political changes that would set Morocco on the road to democracy. Along with a new bicameral legislature and an opposition government led by the much-revered socialist Abderrahmane Youssoufi, the change in regime raised hopes that Morocco was at last moving away from authoritarianism.27

Enthusiasm for Mohammed VI's rule was with merit through the early stages. The new king loosened the quasi-fascist tactics of his father’s era, welcoming the return of political antagonists who were previously exiled or silenced. He also recognized and, through the Equity and Reconciliation Commission (IER), sought to compensate victims and their families who had been subjected to an array of human rights violations. In addition, the young king liberalized Moroccan family law (*Moudawana*), introducing women to previously unknown rights and freedoms, such as the right to divorce, the right to prevent marriage without consent, and freedom from patriarchal repudiation—establishing Morocco as a leader in the Arab world in terms of equality. And in 2005, the monarchy set up an independent organization to investigate and combat corruption. Most notable among the resulting reforms was the

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expeditious removal of Driss Basri, who, during his twenty years as Interior Minister, became the poster-child of anti-democracy and repression within the regime through his ruthless tactics of election rigging and regime-loyalist favoritism.\textsuperscript{28}

Unfortunately, the new tide of political reforms has not yet influenced the overly executive structure of the government. In 2002, the new king opted to appoint Driss Jettou to the post of prime minister, despite the fact that he was not a member of the majority party as established in the \textit{alternance}. Further, the king has recently picked up where his father left off in co-opting the opposition and in offering lucrative positions to opposition members who vow to keep their objectives non-political. And finally, the king has been unequivocal on his stance in regards to not reforming the constitution; as an alternative, the king has sought to make the government “more efficient rather than more democratic.”\textsuperscript{29} Thus, the nature of politics has not changed, and the monarchy still clings to power through a ‘divine will’.

In short, the regime of King Mohammed VI has used its royal authority to spearhead much advancement in the fields of human rights and societal openness. What is lacking is a reformation of the political structure that remains in a non-democratic state. As of 2007, there have only been marginal changes, and all democratization has been tightly managed and controlled. Mohammed VI has made it clear that a decentralization of power will not amount from his own volition. But as Abdeslam Maghraoui has observed, “neither the pro-democracy opposition parties, who have become completely alienated from the people, nor the Islamists, who have no credible modernization or democratization plans, have the capacity to challenge

the authoritarian system.”30 The prospects for democracy or institutional change are currently bleak.

Still though, the new king’s tenure is young and much remains to be seen. His tested commitment to opening up civil society has spawned the creation of many key organizations and associations, previously banned, that have yet to reach a point of maturity, so their potential to affect change has not been actualized. It has been the general disconnect between the people and the regime that has driven the creation of these non-affiliated associations – including Islamist organizations – which have been filling the political void.31 This creates a problem for the regime because unrecognized associations are unregulated and cannot be held liable for not attesting to the legitimacy of the monarch. In terms of civil society however, these organizations could prove to present the first real challenge to the king. Many of them are well organized and have no interest in co-opting with the regime.

Relateldy, the parliamentary elections of 2007 saw the Parti de la Justice et du Développement (Party of Justice and Development—PJD) win 46 seats or 11% of the popular vote, second only to the Istiqlal Parti. Of all the major parties, the PJD is the furthest removed from the influences of the monarchy and is the most committed to change. This commitment to change was illustrated by the PJD’s unwillingness to sign a coalition agreement for the sole sake of governing. The PJD demanded that the coalition government satisfy their ambitions prior to signing on.32 Thus, with the new king, the creation of politically-minded associations,

and the independent-minded PJD in parliament, the latter stages of the transitional period could prove fruitful for the opposition, civil society, and the legislature.
Chapter 2

Liberalization without Democratization

2.1 Democratic Promises Unfulfilled

There is a noticeable trend in the scholarship on Moroccan politics starting in the early 1990’s through the present. Journal articles had an optimistic tone during the latter stages of Hassan II’s rule and into the initial stages of the alternance. Following the constitutional referendum in 1996 and the throning of Mohammed VI, the political atmosphere was described as an ‘era of change’ by many scholars, politicians, and reporters alike. Indeed, for many scholars, confidence in the political liberalization that Morocco was experiencing continued into the new millennium. As time wore on, the social liberalization that was used to mask insubstantial political change was exposed. One observer noted, “Morocco has unquestionably seen improvements in civil liberties in the past several years, notably with regard to freedom of expression and association, but the expansion of political liberties has lagged far behind.”

This sentiment has been reflected in much of the scholarship produced since 2001. Those who have studied Morocco for the last 10 years have come to notice that the gouvernement d’alternance and the subsequent liberalization movement have been employed as a positioning instrument for the monarchy. Wrote Steven Heydemann, a reputed Middle East scholar:

“Even in Morocco, often cited as an exemplar of Arab reform, the political openings en-

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engineered by King Muhammad VI are now recognized as steps toward reconfiguring authoritarianism rather than a process of democratization that would constrain the power of the monarchy.”  

Starting in the mid 1990’s there was little but praise for the trend in Moroccan politics. It was in 1996 that Omar Bendourou, a constitutional law professor at Université Mohammed V-Souissi in Rabat, argued that Morocco was on the cusp of democracy. Bendourou cited Morocco’s commitment to multipartism in the development of democratic roots. Multipartism, he claimed, allowed political parties, including opposition parties, to develop social bases in Morocco. In turn, Bendourou contended, the social bases empowered the political parties to act as catalysts for change and for strengthening political pluralism.  

Journals such as *The Economist* and *Le Journal* were among many publications that were quick to praise Morocco’s democratic transformation in the 1990’s. Contributors to *The Economist* viewed the alternance and the new king’s respect for human rights as proof that Morocco had finally entered a democratic era.  

Hindsight is always clear, but it remains puzzling how so many people were duped into believing the sincerity of the monarchy in terms of substantive political reform. Why would a king, who holds supreme power over an entire nation, relinquish that power without contestation? Nevertheless, the prevailing attitude in academic circles was that “…the 1996 constitutional referendum not only satisfied essential demands of opposition parties and presaged the emergence of an electoral democracy, it also provided the occasion for more

debate and intellectual engagement over the fundamental make-up of Moroccan society and its government.”

Abdeslam Maghraoui, an expert on Middle Eastern politics, has closely followed the political evolution in Morocco. Although he shared in the optimism that engulfed Morocco in the mid 90’s, he has come to view the *alternance* as a method of managed liberalization, with the king retaining ultimate power. Maghraoui: “[l]egislative and municipal elections have become more regular, but they largely serve to co-opt elites by distributing opportunities for corruption and do not embody real political representation.” He has noted that Morocco, despite the social liberalization, is no closer to democracy than it was four decades ago – “[a]fter close to two years on the throne, the king has effected no systemic change.” For Maghraoui, the economic and social liberalization has obstructed the road to democracy because the reforms do just enough to pacify the frustration among the people, while concurrently creating a democratic façade.

Amr Hamzawy, an Egyptian political scientist who has extensive knowledge on the politics and reform process in the Middle East, contends that the hope for substantive reform has greatly diminished in Morocco. Like Maghraoui, he notes the liberalization that swept through the country.

However, improvements in the conditions of the political process have stopped short of addressing two central impediments to democratic transition in Morocco, the concentration of power in royal hands and the absence of credible checks and balances. Under King Muhammad VI, the monarchy has continued to be the key player in the

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Moroccan political system, depriving the legislature of any real oversight powers. In addition, the national electoral system, which is based on proportional representation, always produces a fragmented parliament that is easily checked by the monarchy. The concentration of power in the Moroccan system has also reduced the government to the role of executor of policies designed by the king, with no decision-making powers. Two major outcomes of these structural deficiencies have been diminished parliamentary credibility and weaker political parties.41

For Hamzawy, all democratization efforts will prove fruitless prior to a distribution of political power and a forceful system of checks and balances. Otherwise, he argues, Morocco will remain a strict monarchical state.

Under the auspices of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Marina Ottoway has contributed meaningful literature on the reform process in Morocco. Ottoway argues that steps taken by Hassan II at the end of his tenure got the ball rolling in a democratic direction. Not until Mohammed VI did the alternance begin to unravel. Ottoway argues that Mohammed VI is the main culprit behind the failure of the alternance and that his agenda for social liberalization was a measure to solidify the status quo in terms of political power. As Ottoway observed, “[n]otably absent from King Mohammed’s reform project are measures affecting the political system. Far from continuing and expanding upon his father’s reforms, as he has in other areas, the king has brought the process of reforming the political system to a halt.”42 Mohammed VI has repeatedly stated that no further reform is necessary. And instead of eradicating the informal system of personal networks that Hassan II made well-known, Ottoway argues, Mohammed VI simply replaced his father’s loyalists with his own.

Catherine Sweet, an officer of the U.S. State Department’s Bureau of Intelligence and Research, has focused her efforts on understanding the democratization process in Morocco. Sweet documents the soaring expectations that came about with the bicameral legislature and the ushering in of Mohammed VI. She argues that leaders in Morocco recognized the international importance of espousing democratic values, thus they worked to appear democratic without making institutional changes. Sweet: “Moroccan institutions are certainly more liberal than before. But none of the changes under the late King Hassan or King Mohammed has affected the king's prerogatives—the monarchy retains supra-institutional power.”

Like others who have researched the situation in Morocco, Sweet is keen to point out the liberalization has taken place, what is missing, she argues, is an overhaul of the authoritarian political structure.

2.2 **Arguments in support of a weak opposition**

It is important to note that monarchical rationalization for the suppression of the legislature is not entirely centered on unjustified supremacy. The Moroccan monarchy and Western observers have made several arguments for why a weak opposition is necessary in Morocco’s political evolution, two of which will be examined here.

The first is based on the fear that unregulated opposition parties may culminate in a situation resembling the ‘Algeria crisis’ of 1991, where the Islamic Salvation Front Party (FIS) won a democratic majority, capturing 188 of the 430 seats in the first round. Five days before the second round of elections were to take place, the army intervened, cancelled the elections.

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and set up a *de facto* government.\textsuperscript{44} This led to armed clashes between the FIS and the High State Committee. From the end of 1991 to 1993 thousands of lives were lost due to this fighting. Many officials in the Moroccan government fear that if they were to allow for an unregulated legislature, then a similar situation would rise.\textsuperscript{45}

With the threat of radical political Islam still prevalent in Morocco and the greater Muslim world (as further demonstrated by the recent rise of *Hezbollah* in Lebanon and *Hamas* in the Palestinian Territories), justification of this nature has continued to garner much attention. The threat is further weighted by the fear that fundamental Islamic movements employ democracy only as a means of achieving power. And then once in power, it is argued, the democratic institutions are systematically dissolved – which creates a political procedure that has been categorized as “…one man, one vote, once.”\textsuperscript{46} The 2002 and 2007 elections in Morocco lay to rest the claim that Arab democracies will inevitably vote Islamists into power if given the chance.\textsuperscript{47} The PJD, the only Islamic party running in the elections, did not win a majority in either 2002 or 2007. Algeria of 1991 and Morocco of 2007 are two entirely different states. The ruling family in Morocco is “…too deeply ensconced to be ousted by

\textsuperscript{44} Ironically, for as much as the situation in Algeria in 1991 between the Islamists and the armed forces lent to the formation of a more democratic structure in Morocco, it equally detracted from it. While the fear of political Islam quickly ended the standoff between the opposition and the palace after the stalemate following the 1993 elections; it conjointly reaffirmed the king’s belief that Morocco needed a strong executive to fend off threats that arise from a purely liberal democracy.

\textsuperscript{45} Azzedine Layachi, “Algerian Crisis, Western Choices,” *Middle East Quarterly* Vol. 1 No. 3 (1994).


Islamists. Appeals to the crisis in Algeria are thus not appropriate for assessing the situation in Morocco.

The second argument in support of a weak legislature is that emerging democracies cannot have an overbearing opposition because it could polarize the populace along socioeconomic lines. This is especially the case when the country needs unity, not competition, to strengthen its nascent democratic foundation. This argument holds that a multiplicity of parties politicizes existing social cleavages and thus breeds disunity. Supporting this argument are examples of single party systems that have responsibly and successfully governed their respective countries. Leaders such as Julius Kambarage Nyerere in Tanzania, Kenneth David Kaunda in Zambia and Felix Houphouet-Boigny in Cote d’Ivoire each maintained a single party system. Each man was the first leader in his respective country and set up a one-party system to raise his country from political turmoil. Although some form of effective government resulted in each case, more relevant is the fact that none of the three countries has yet developed into a functioning liberal democracy nor are they positioned to do so in the foreseeable future. Morocco is not a new nation emerging from chaos; political stability and a strong sense of national unity already exist. This argument is not only mistaken, as applied to Morocco, it is a disservice to the political developments of the last 50 years that have established Morocco as one of the freest states in the Arab World. Both the monarchy, and western observers alike, are thus not justified in making these arguments to defend the authoritarian rule of the king. Instead, what Morocco needs in furthering its democratic

50 Ibid, pg. 9-10.
evolution is the development of democratic institutions, like strong opposition parties and a legislature with real power.
Chapter 3

Monarchical depoliticization and suppression

3.1 A political structure designed to favor the monarchy

The Moroccan government is headed by a prime minister who is assisted by a cabinet of ministers, all of whom are appointed by the king independent of election results. The legislative branch is composed of a bicameral Parliament (Articles 36-38). The two chambers of the Parliament are la Chambre des Représentants (the body that was created as part of the gouvernement d’alternance), whose 325 members are elected through direct universal suffrage for five-year terms; and la Chambre des Conseillers, whose 270 members are indirectly elected through two electoral colleges for nine-year terms. Lastly, the independent judicial branch is composed of judges who are appointed by the king upon recommendation from the Higher Judiciary Council (Article 82).

The governmental structure has all of the fundamental elements of a democracy; however, ultimate power rests with the king alone. The little power the branches of government do have comes from him. The Constitution affords the king power to appoint and remove from office any minister (Article 24), dissolve the Parliament (Article 27), revise the Constitution (Article 103), and rule by royal decree (Article 29). Members of parliament can be detained, arrested, or prosecuted if they happen to express an opinion or cast a vote that is injurious to the monarchical system, the religion of Islam, or is derogatory to the respect owed the king (Article 39). The king, not the government, has control over the ministries of defense, foreign affairs, and the interior. He is the country's “…most important farmer, biggest banker
and most active venture capitalist.” He controls the distribution of resources and sets forth the political regulations. The king decides who can participate in politics and establishes the boundaries for which political actors can operate. In essence, the Moroccan Constitution establishes a government that acts as “…an instrument of the royal will.”

Article 3 of the Constitution is where a multi-party system is established: “[p]olitical parties, unions, district councils and trade chambers shall participate in the organization and representation of the citizens. There shall be no one-party system.” The wording here is largely symbolic and does not guarantee the political parties or the legislative branch any real power. In reality, the Moroccan legislature and the opposition political parties have been corralled into an adjunct position where they have been oppressed through various devices, including banning, imprisonment, threats, torture, and in rare cases, assassination of their leaders.

In 2002, the parliamentary election process incorporated a new system of proportional representation (scrutin du liste à la proportionnelle et aux plus fortes restes). The system was designed to include an electoral quotient: after winning one seat, the party with the most votes could win a second (or third) seat only if their remaining votes were still greater than the party with the second most votes, and so on. The quotient dictated the basis for the distribution of a single seat and tailored the elections so that it was virtually impossible for a single party to secure a majority. As a result, the most successful political party in the 2002 elections came

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away with only 15% of the vote and 16 out of the 22 political organizations elected to parliament obtained less than 5% of the seats.\textsuperscript{54}

In the 2007 elections, the most successful party won only 13% of the vote and 17 out of 23 parties elected obtained less than 5% of the seats.\textsuperscript{55} The official word from the palace was that this measure was introduced to combat corruption and vote-buying. Indeed, this measure did work to curtail the said ailments; however, it also furthered the unstated agenda of the palace which was to weaken the parties and to force them into forming non-congruent blocs that operated inefficiently. What is more, several months prior to the 2007 parliamentary elections, there were changes in electoral law that redistributed the districts so to prevent the ascension of the PJD.\textsuperscript{56} The redistribution did not ameliorate the high disparity of voters per representative between different electoral districts. In the urban district of Aïn Sebaa–Hay Mohammadi, there are 83,000 voters per seat; while in the rural district of Aousserd, there are only 3,700 voters per seat.\textsuperscript{57}

Another attribute of the Moroccan government that contributes to monarchical sovereignty is the \textit{makhzen}.\textsuperscript{58} For three centuries, the \textit{makhzen} provided the “administrative structure, legal framework and military manpower to extend Moroccan sultans' authority over self-governing tribes.”\textsuperscript{59} In theory, the \textit{makhzen} is an unofficial organization, though in

\textsuperscript{58} In Moroccan Arabic, \textit{makhzen} is roughly translated as “storehouse” because it previously represented the quarters where the sultans’ goods were stored. In French, the \textit{makhzen} power apparatus goes by the name \textit{le pouvoir}, meaning power.
practice it is a highly influential component of the government. Today, the *makhzen* is a clientilistic network of royal patrons – composed primarily of regional and provincial administrators, private business elite, and members of the military.\(^{60}\) Together, this network acts as a proxy arm for the palace – furthering the king’s agenda in exchange for either clandestine business contracts, or social positioning among the elites of Morocco.

Adding to the structural impediments that the legislature faces, there is no separation between mosque and state in Moroccan politics, and there is a very close interconnectedness between the throne and Islam. The king is deemed “Commander of the Faithful” by virtue of the Moroccan constitution, and the royal family’s lineage can be traced back to the Muslim Prophet, Mohammed. It is possible that the king’s religious authority and connection to Islam fosters a transcendental mentality, which in turn, contributes to the hegemonic role of the monarchy. This institutionalized political and religious authority adds to the flawed conflation of valid political dissent with radical dismissals of the king’s religious prerogative. The king can thus frame political dissent in terms of religious dissent, which is not tolerated by the king or the people.

Many of the difficulties that Morocco faces can be attributed to the disproportionate power structure. The Moroccan political structure is similar to other seeming democracies, products of the third-wave of democratization, a movement in the late 1980s inspired by the collapse of the Soviet Union and subsequent international praise for democratic ideas.\(^{61}\) Countries like Morocco started democratization backwards, introducing free elections before

\(^{60}\) Ibid, pg. 12.  
establishing such basic institutions as civil society and the rule of law. From the outside, therefore, Morocco appears democratic, when in reality it is not. In fact, much of the authoritarian structure developed by the late King Hassan II remains in place today. Despite the notable array of institutions that appear democratic—a bicameral legislature, a multiparty electoral competition, and a government composed primarily of opposition party members—"[n]o significant power has devolved outside the regime." For that reason, Morocco has been categorized as a ‘pseudo-democracy,’ a governmental system that combines moderate civil liberties with political authoritarianism.

To distract from the political authoritarianism, Morocco has set up, and been very successful in perpetuating a democratic façade that has allowed them to receive continued support from the West. To be sure, President George W. Bush has increased foreign aid to Morocco by 300% since 2004, signed a free-trade agreement that allows Moroccan farmers access to the coveted U.S. markets, and he has manipulated the Millennium Challenge account so that Morocco might qualify for additional aid in the future. The relationship is reciprocal: the Moroccan government receives financial support and President Bush can augment his foreign policy rhetoric with an example of where democracy and Islam have successfully worked in tandem.

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64 Ibid, pg. 23.
3.2 Means of depoliticization and suppression

The monarchy has employed a variety of means to depoliticize the issues that act as a catalyst for opposition momentum. Issues such as the stagnant economy, rampant unemployment, widespread poverty, political corruption, and human rights, to only name a few, have always fueled the opposition. Aware of the consequences of a strong opposition, the monarchy has relied on methods of political deflation since the 1960’s. Most notably, since the 1970’s, there has been an unwarranted focus on the Western Sahara dispute that has been referred to time and time again to both unite Moroccans and to distract from other political issues.67 The Western Sahara dispute has long been favored and exploited by the monarchy because the majority of Moroccans are vehemently supportive in what they deem a national priority. So not surprisingly, emblematic references to the dispute fueled the regime for much of King Hassan II’s reign, and simultaneously depreciated concerns raised by the opposition.68

In the post-alternance era, King Mohammed VI has continued to marginalize the politicization of domestic affairs by citing Morocco’s new commitment to the free trade alliance with Europe. Questions regarding political legitimacy and the distribution of power have been revamped in purely economic terms. It is as though the monarchy has the majority of the population convinced that all political problems can be solved with lucid economic solutions. Consequently, “[p]arties that might have spearheaded democratic reform have

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67 After the Madrid Accords of 1976, the disputed territory, which was previously a Spanish colony, was handed over to Morocco and Mauritania. Under pressure from the Polisario guerillas, Mauritania abandoned the territory in 1979, so Morocco made claim to the all of the disputed area. The Polisario forces of the Sahrawi People's Liberation Army has battled with Morocco ever since in their attempt to set up an independent state.

meanwhile diluted their demands and embraced the monarchy's claim that the country simply needs better economic management.”

The monarchy has sought to “swell and fragment” the opposition by creating rivalry and tension within the parties. This has resulted in the creation of many parties with similar ideological backgrounds vying for the same power. As of 2007, Morocco had more than forty political parties, twenty-six of which participated in the 2002 elections. Amid the fragmented parties, political discourse tends to focus on trivial issues rather than on demanding accountability from the monarchy and questioning the uneven power distribution. This fragmentation creates a political atmosphere that is not conducive to building opposition movements. Even more explicit though, is the palace’s role in the creation of new political parties that remain loyal to the king while at the same time undermining the support for existing parties that choose not to conform. Two examples are the Rassemblement National des Indépendents (National Rally of Independents—RNI) and the Union Constitutionnelle (Constitutional Union).

Morocco has also witnessed a series of passive and assertive forms of political suppression by the monarchy. The first form is designed to lure opposition members into positions supportive of the government by either offering them esteemed, though impotent, positions or handing out material benefits, both designed to moderate or convert outspoken individuals. In this way several senior members of opposition parties have joined forces with the palace. Passive measures also include monarchical encroachment on the base of support of

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71 Ibid, pg. 15-16.
a party or organization. For example, to counter the support of the Islamic community for the PJD, the regime has invested heavily in the religious sphere as a means of encroachment. The king, as both the religious and political leader of the country, is deeply concerned with maintaining religious as well as political authority. In 2006 fifteen new mosques were constructed by the palace, including the Mohammed VI mosque in the eastern city of Oujda.\textsuperscript{72}

Using the new mosques as instruments of community outreach, the monarchy has sought to ingratiate itself with the Islamic community and thereby undermine the PJD’s political foundation.

Assertive suppression by the palace comes in the form of punishments inflicted on parties, organizations or individuals who are “…perceived to be overly critical [of] or even insufficiently cooperative” with the government.\textsuperscript{73} One example is the monarchy’s exclusion from politics of the group \textit{Al-Adl wa Ihsan} (Justice and Charity). This group’s spiritual founder and leader, Abdeslam Yassine, has openly criticized the political and religious authority of the king. Retribution from the regime was a political ban on him personally and his organization in its entirety.

Another avenue of infiltration and suppression employed by the regime is the tight control and manipulation of elections at all levels. In the 2002 parliamentary elections, which were in general considered the most transparent to date, the process of tabulating votes and publishing results remained opaque and in many cases information was not shared with the election monitors.\textsuperscript{74} The neglect on part of the ministry of interior in regards to the lucidity of

\begin{footnotes}
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the results allows one to speculate that the results may have been tampered with – thus creating
the current parliament that hosts not a single party with more than 15% of the seats.

Moreover, Morocco still lacks an institution for overseeing the flow of money in
politics. There are only cursory and ineffective provisions that regulate campaign financing.
For that reason, the regime has been able to exploit its vast amount of resources in order to buy
or influence elections. Fortunately, participation in this type of activity has greatly declined in
recent years because of the independent organizations that have been set up to combat political
corruption.

The monarchy plays a pivotal role in both the suppression of political parties and the
depoliticization of domestic and international affairs – to the point where the king largely
shapes, or at least influences, the political landscape to suit his desires. The obstacles presented
by this form of executive rule have so far proved to be insurmountable by the notoriously weak
and unorganized legislature. This trend will persist if the monarchy is not sufficiently
challenged by a competent, resilient legislature and/or political organization.

3.3 Fragmentation of political parties in Morocco

To fully understand the position of the legislature, one must look to the major political parties.
The major political parties in Morocco are the Union Socialiste des Forces Populaires, the
Istiqlal Parti, the Parti de la Justice et du Développement, the Rassemblement National des
Indépendents, and the Union Constitutionnelle. Political parties in Morocco differ in many
ways from their American counterparts.\textsuperscript{75} Absent from Moroccan political parties is a concise,

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{75} I am not arguing here that American political parties are the model to emulate; instead, I offer the comparison to
illustrate how political parties operate in Morocco.}
promulgated platform. The parties are often centered on a specific individual – involving personalities rather than agendas. This makes for a messy political environment that is lavished with rhetorical promises – few of which ever come to fruition. Indeed, personality-politics creates a political environment where a change in the party figurehead ruptures the established position and ties credited to the previous leader. This lack of continuity creates a party-system that has to continuously start from scratch.\(^{76}\)

Compounding the problem is the fact that the political parties in Morocco are currently too weak to bring about democratic change. Their weakness can be attributed to three factors: first and most obvious is the constitutionally derived bias in favor of the king, which has kept the parties in a docile state from which they cannot emerge. Also, the constitutional bias makes it so the parliament is in essence ineffective. Many Moroccans fail to recognize this, so they unjustly blame the parties for the political dormancy, which has born a trend where the majority parties do not fare well at the subsequent elections. The second and third factors are of the parties’ own making – that is “…an ideological wavering between nationalism and democracy and a structural inability to fulfill their function as mechanisms of mass political integration and representation.”\(^{77}\) The latter two problems present a greater hurdle because both exist independent of the government. These problems cannot be remedied through legislation; instead, the problems require a shift in psyche by the Moroccan public. A paradigm shift of this nature would seemingly take years, if not generations, due to simple apathy and the complex level of entrenchment that ‘politics as usual’ has assumed in Morocco. Likewise,


many of the parties have for too long been linked with the government to “…contribute meaningfully to its transformation.” 78

As Michael J. Willis has observed of political parties across the Maghreb: “[r]ather than controlling the state, they themselves are controlled by the state.” 79  This statement epitomizes the historical and current position of political parties in Morocco. Furthermore, Willis notes:

It is apparent that the primary purpose of the political parties – and why their presence is not only tolerated but also frequently encouraged by those in power – is to provide the regimes in the region with a greater degree of perceived legitimacy. 80

As mentioned earlier, the presence of a multi-party system creates the aura of a western style democracy and thus promotes international support for Morocco. This democratic sentiment works on the national level as well. Citizens see the multiplicity of parties as an outlet to voice their opinions and effect change. This works to peacefully quell social unrest that would otherwise be present under a strict authoritarian regime.

Nonetheless, political parties do play a much larger role than they did just 25 years ago in Morocco. A promising sign came in March of 2007 when the Koutla bloc (the governing coalition), sent a letter to his majesty demanding a greater role in politics, particularly the ongoing conflict in the Western Sahara and the much needed reform of the constitution. 81

### 3.4 2007 parliamentary elections

On September 7, 2007 elections were held for the lower chamber of parliament. Thirty-three political parties were listed on the official ballots and there were 13 independent electoral lists

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78 Ibid, pg. 83.
80 Ibid, pg. 3.
for the 325 available seats. 82 Local and international monitoring groups reported a number of instances where vote-buying took place. But on the whole, observers confirmed that the elections were fair and transparent. 

Since 2002 voter turnout has been on steady decline. 2007 was no exception; voter turnout was registered at an all-time low: 37%. According to Amr Hamzawy, voter apathy resulted from the “…inability of the House of Representatives to play an active role in policy implementation.”83 Many Moroccans have come to view the House of Representatives as a failed institution that does little in way of representing them. This is due in part to the concentration of power that the king holds, and the absence of genuine checks and balances which limits the legislature in terms of real political control.84 Voter apathy has thus become a form of protest. 

But to place the blame for voter apathy squarely on the systemic failures would be unfair. Much of the apathy seen in the 2007 elections came from the inability of the governing parties to address the socioeconomic challenges that Moroccans are forced to deal with on a daily basis.85 Over the past two decades, Morocco has been host to one of the highest unemployment rates in all of Africa. Poverty and the lack of an adequate education are widespread throughout the country. In many respects, it has been the parliament, which has been unsuccessful in managing what little power they do posses in developing credible programs to combat these pressing issues – the main obstacle being the lack of a common

83 Ibid.
84 Ibid.
85 It is acknowledged that many of the issues the Parliament fails to address are due to the disproportionate power structure and the lack of voice the Parliament possesses. The point here is that the Parliament has not used what little power they do possess, effectively.
Parliamentary members all agree that they want a strong parliament, yet beyond that, there is little that unites the different parties. Moroccan voters have vented their frustration by casting blank ballots. Nineteen percent of the votes cast in the 2007 elections were invalid, a large number of them were blank, a gesture viewed by many Moroccans as a way to penalize the regime while simultaneously expressing their dissatisfaction.

Nevertheless, the results of the election were surprising to many observers. It was long expected that the PJD would fare extremely well. Polling done in the run up to the elections had them winning upwards of 70 seats in parliament. In the end they only won 46 seats, an increase of 4 from 2002 (see Table). Leaders of the PJD expressed concerns about corruption in the weeks following the election, but to no avail. The less-than-expected gain for the PJD was welcomed by the palace, which did not want an Islamic party in the majority. Another surprise was the poor showing of the USFP. The USFP had long been the majority party in the governing bloc; though in the 2007 elections they lost 12 seats. The dramatic loss in seats resulted from accusations of corruption and the splintering of the party into two different factions.

The biggest winners of the election were the Istiqlal Parti and the Mouvement Populaire (People’s Movement—MP). The IP won 4 additional seats from 48 to 52 and

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86 Ibid.
became the party with the most seats in parliament. The IP’s success stems from their commitment to conservatism, nationalism, and the fundamental values of Islam. The MP on the other hand, is a liberal party that finds most of its support among the Berber population in Morocco.\textsuperscript{91} Both the IP and the MP are rural-based parties: the IP because of their traditional values, the MP because the majority of self-identified Berbers live in rural districts. High voter turnout in the rural districts, which prompted the strong showing by the IP and MP, was the result of a strong get-out the vote effort on behalf of both parties.\textsuperscript{92}

The most interesting outcome of the 2007 elections was the reaffirmation of a mounting paradox in Moroccan politics. As civil liberalization has increased, civic engagement and voter turnout have simultaneously decreased. Intuition would have it that the freer and more transparent the process, the greater the participation. In stable democracies, it is often the case that voter turnout is low for one of two reasons, (1) because voters are more or less satisfied with the status quo, or (2) because there are only two major parties with similar platforms (as in the United States). But in Morocco, citizens are not satisfied with the current situation; yet voter turnout does not reflect this dissatisfaction. This goes to show the widening gap between the people and the state in Morocco.\textsuperscript{93} This also goes to show that citizens have lost faith in the political process and no longer believe they can arrive at change by working within the system. As Daniel Burton-Rose observed, very few Moroccans look towards the actual government to improve their lives today.\textsuperscript{94}

\textsuperscript{91} The Berbers are indigenous people of North Africa.
\textsuperscript{93} Ibid.
## Table—Results of the 2007 Morocco Legislative Elections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Number of Seats in Parliament</th>
<th>% of Seats in Parliament</th>
<th>Regional List</th>
<th>National List</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Number of Seats</td>
<td>% of Popular Vote</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PI</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PJD</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MP</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RNI</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USFP</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UC</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPS</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FFD</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MDS</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PND-ALAHID</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PADS-CNI-PSU</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PED</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PT</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRE</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>16.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Registered electors 15,510,503; valid votes 4,648,498; invalid votes 1,090,388 (19%); turnout 37%.
3.5 The Moroccan Parliament

Referring back to section 1.1 and the discussion about what constitutes a legitimate legislature, it is clear that the Moroccan Parliament fails to live up to the Western standard. One critical role for any successful legislature is the ability to temper the excessive initiative of the executive. As demonstrated throughout this paper, the Moroccan Parliament has not fared well on this front. The king wields unchecked power and the parliament remains a subordinate institution.

Political autonomy is another perquisite to legitimacy. The monarchy has found a variety of ways to infiltrate the Moroccan Legislature. For example, there is illicit co-optation among members of the opposition. Beyond that, the constitution permits the king to remove from office any member of parliament or dissolve the institution entirely—together these powers spoil any form of political autonomy.

In order to have a functioning legislature, the components of the legislature must operate effectively. That is, there must be effective political parties that present alternative choices. In Morocco, the political parties have been unsuccessful in acting as the link between the citizens and the government. Efforts made by political parties have been frustrated by internal corruption and external suppression by the monarchy.

More revealing however, is to refer back to section 1.2 and the discussion about situating the Moroccan parliament in the Arab context. Much like the Kuwaiti National Assembly, the Moroccan parliament has been bogged down by legislatures who are loyal to the king. Contrary to performing their constitutional duty, Parliament Members of this sort have undermined legislation that is not favorable to the king, irrespective of the position of their
constituents. For instance, efforts to reform the constitution, so to create a more balanced government, have been thwarted by members of the parliament who are loyal to the king.95

In spite of the numerous shortcomings of the Moroccan Parliament, there are several laudable features. The parliament is a law-affecting body; recent examples of major legislation include the reformation of family law and agricultural credit reform.96 In addition, the parliament has multimembership and it ratifies decisions by majority assent. It is important to not lose sight of the fact that the Moroccan Parliament is one of the most developed parliaments in the entire Arab world.

With that said, there remains overarching implications that result from the non-existence of a legitimate legislature (in the Western sense). That is, Morocco is unable to fully embark on a process of democratization without a legislature that is willing and able to lead this movement. Not to be mistaken, Morocco has come a long way in terms of civil liberties and individual freedom, but the theoretical democratic institutions possess neither the clout nor the ability to initiate a political transformation worthy of being labeled democratic. This will continue to be the case unless there is a real unification and push by the Moroccan people and political parties to pressure the king into transferring authority to subjects that exists outside of his peripheral control. Otherwise stated, devolution of power will not be ushered in by the monarchy.

95 This can begin to sound like the legislative process in the American Congress if the nature of the loyalty is not properly understood. The loyalty that I am referring to is not a loyalty along party lines or ideologies; it is an illicit form of loyalty where the monarchy has in some way coerced the Member of Parliament to vote a certain way, wther through financial compensation or cooptation.
3.6 Conclusion

The political situation in Morocco has continued, unchanged, because of the tactics of suppression and depoliticization used by the monarchy. From the Western Sahara dispute and the fragmentation of political parties, to the offering of economic solutions to political problems and the cooptation of outspoken opposition members – the monarchy finds itself in firm control of the direction of the country and has effectively subordinated all other political institutions. The existence and perpetuity of this unbalanced relationship, while partly explained by the stated methods of suppression, is also due to the mutually beneficial rapport between Morocco and the Western world. That is, so long as Morocco continues to receive financial support from Western Europe and the United States, the regime will continue to be equipped with the financial resources it needs to maintain the bureaucratic expansion of family rule and the clientilistic network of loyal patrons that it has set up.

On the other hand, by understanding the role of legislatures in the Arab context, under family-rule regimes, it becomes easier to recognize the difficulties that the Moroccan legislature is faced with. It also becomes apparent that political legitimacy for a legislature is not wholly dependent on the Western model. Indeed, legislatures, and democracy itself, can take many forms, and it is presumable that democracy in different parts of the world would reflect the norms and values of that region, rather than coalescing under one global standard.

It has been the purpose of this study to show that Mohammed VI, while retaining political power, has brought about significant liberalization. He has established Morocco as a leader in the Arab world in terms of gender equality and set up independent organizations to identify and combat corruption. There is now greater tolerance of dissent and more room for political associations to operate. Morocco, however, remains a monarchical state with much of
the authoritarian apparatus set up under King Hassan II still in place. With the inclusion of the democratic institutions, despite their incapacity, the monarchy has created a democratic façade that allows for the cordial relationship with the West.

To close, the original optimism surrounding the *gouvernement d’alternance* has largely dissipated, and many of its promises have gone unfulfilled. What remains is a compromised federal legislature that presents little opposition to the monarchy. Nevertheless, the civil reforms of the last ten years can potentially provide the basis for a legitimate democratic transformation. Despite the king’s commitment to a weak legislative body, he may be contested by the political associations and organizations that have arisen in the now more open civil society.
Bibliography


