

# Moroccan political system

---

## LITERATURE REVIEW

By  
**Lalla Amina Drhimeur**

**Prime Youth Researcher,  
PhD candidate in political science,  
Hassan II School of Law, Mohammedia,  
Casablanca, Morocco**

**March 3, 2020**

**DOI: [10.5281/zenodo.3697407](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3697407)**

**ERC AdG Prime YOUTH  
ISLAM-OPHOB-ISM  
785934**



**Istanbul  
Bilgi University**

---

# Preface

This literature review, prepared by Lalla Amina Drhimeur, covers momentous events such as uprisings and protests which have taken place since 2011. These are complemented by an analysis of the constitutional reforms and the characteristics of the Moroccan regime which have been debated in the recent decade. Importantly, this work provides insight into the rise of Morocco’s Justice and Development Party (PJD), an Islamist conservative democrat party, which was first known as a proponent of political reform, which later became an avid supporter of the Moroccan monarchy.

This literature review was prepared in the scope of the ongoing EU-funded research for the “Prime YOUTH” project conducted under the supervision of the Principle Investigator, Prof. Dr. Ayhan Kaya, and funded by the European Research Council with the Agreement Number 785934.

**AYHAN KAYA**

Jean Monnet Chair of European Politics of Interculturalism  
Director, European Institute  
Istanbul Bilgi University

---

## *An overview of the political system in Morocco*

Since December 2010 the Arab world has been turned upside down by young people who decided to carry their grievances onto the streets and shake the old political structures. These popular revolts, which are referred to as the Arab Uprisings<sup>1</sup>, were directed against power holders and expressed political, economic and social demands. A new kind of political consciousness rose, a sense of empowerment, of being able to affect change replaced the old feeling of being at the margin of politics (Muasher, 2020). The toppling of Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali in Tunisia and Hosni Mubarak in Egypt pushed Arab leaders to initiate reforms in response to political and socio-economic demands. In Morocco king Mohammed VI announced a new constitution that sought to grant the parliament more power and the judiciary more independence. 2011 saw Morocco's probably first transparent legislative elections, which put a pro-Islamic party at the head of the government for the first time.

Morocco had previously initiated political reforms that led to more freedoms. Indeed, in the 1990s, the country began a period of political opening that substituted the unicameral legislature with a bicameral one and saw the formation of the *Gouvernement d'Alternance* (the Government of Change) (Sweet, 2001). For the first time an opposition party rose to power and had the ability to implement reforms (Monjib, 2011). When Mohammed VI ascended to the throne in 1999, he inherited a political system that exploited and fragmented political parties, helping the king to preserve his control over power (Fakir, 2017). The political system in Morocco is a multi-party system that encourages the formal participation of different ideological political forces. In reality, the system is used to divide the political system and to preserve and sustain an authoritarian rule (Sater, 2009). Morocco counts more than 36 parties<sup>2</sup>. Some of these parties were created by figures close to the palace and serves to contain other parties that are gaining more power (Maghraoui, 2018). The PAM (The Authenticity and Modernity Party) for example was rapidly established to curb the rising popularity of the PJD (Justice and Development Party) (Maghraoui, 2018). Thus, the monarchy uses elections as part of its long-term strategy of “segmentary politics” to prevent the emergence of a strong party by creating a balance among political parties and consequently ensures its hegemony (Maghraoui, 2018). Polarizing the political arena

---

<sup>1</sup> Other terms are also used to describe the popular revolts that started in late 2010 in Tunisia. These terms include the Arab Spring and Arab Revolutions

<sup>2</sup> As of 2020 according to the National Portal of Kingdom of Morocco : <http://www.maroc.ma/en/content/political-parties>

---

also means for the monarchy eliminating any political threat that would challenge its claim of being the sole representative of the nation (Sater, 2009).

Within this context, political parties understood the necessity of being close to the palace to survive (Fakir, 2017). Ideology or political programs were marginalized thus making it difficult to distinguish between loyalist and opposition parties (Fakir, 2017). In this context it became increasingly difficult for political parties to connect with voters or to gain their trust (Fakir, 2017).

### ***2011 social uprisings and constitutional reforms in Morocco***

The disillusionment with the political elite along with corruption, lack of political will and harsh economic conditions pushed the youth to take to the streets. They organized under the February 20 Youth Movement and called for a sweeping democratization of the country, which would not only limit the king's power but also increase freedoms and equality (Monjib, 2011). When organizing demonstrations in various parts of the country, the movement asked to end corruption and limit police oppression (Alsaden, 2012). It also raised pragmatic concerns dealing with the improvement of education and health systems (Alsaden, 2012). At the political level, the movement demanded the establishment of a "parliamentary monarchy" whereby the king reigns but does not rule (Hashas, 2013). At the social level, the movement asked for freedom, dignity, social justice and the resolution of the problem of high unemployment (Hashas, 2013). The February 20 Youth Movement had also cultural and economic demands. Culturally, the movement demanded the recognition of the Amazigh language and in the area of economics; it raised the issue of corruption and high commodity prices among others (Hashas, 2013).

Being under pressure and taking into consideration the international context that saw the toppling of Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali and Hosni Mubarak, the King delivered a speech on March 9, 2011. He acknowledged the demonstrators' demands and promised a far-reaching revision of the 1996 constitution. He designated a commission to draft the new constitution and a referendum was held on July 1, 2011. One important innovation was that the king would no longer to be considered "sacred" but that the "integrity of his person" is "inviolable", which restricts his power even though symbolically (Bank, 2012). The King would no longer appoint the Prime Minister but the latter is an elected public servant who is in charge of forming the government and nominating members to key positions (Alsaden, 2012). The powers of the parliament have been broadened allowing it to pass laws on most issues (Zerhouni, 2014). The judiciary has been granted more independence and a Higher Judicial Council was created to conduct missions of investigation (Zerhouni, 2014).

---

In addition, the new constitution expands freedom of expression and demonstration and promises a decent life to its citizens (Alsaden, 2012). Amazigh, the language of the country's Berber-speaking population, has been recognized as an official language (Bank, 2012). The constitution also commits to universal human rights, transparent elections, accountable governance and gender equality (Alsaden, 2012). Existing regulatory bodies in charge of implementing principles of transparency, good governance and equality were constitutionalized, to mention as an example the Competition Council (Zerhouni, 2014). New ones were also established, such as the Authority in Charge of Parity and Fighting All Forms of Discrimination (Zerhouni, 2014). While the constitution was approved by 98.5 percent on a turn-out of about 73 percent of the population, the February 20 Movement criticized it as being imposed "from above" and called for a boycott (Bank, 2012).

Following the constitutional reforms, early parliamentary elections were held. A moderate Islamist political party, the Justice and Development Party (PJD), rose to power and became the strongest party in parliament. Its general secretary was allowed to head a new government according to the reforms of the new constitution.

### ***Monarchical powers and the deep state***

If the Arab Uprisings put pressure on the monarchy to make concessions and deliver constitutional reforms allowing political parties to come out of the shadow and the organization of the country's probably first transparent elections that put an Islamic party at the head of the government for the first time, the reforms could never diminish the role of the king or undermine his prerogatives. Indeed, he appointed a commission of experts to draft the new constitution, which as a consequence falls in the category of constitutions granted by the king to the nation and fails to represent popular sovereignty (Ottaway, 2012). The constitution also fails to reduce the power of the king and to regulate the interactions between political institutions and the monarchy, interactions that remain extra-constitutional (Boukhars, 2014). The king continues to have a veto power when the new constitution maintained his executive powers over strategic issues and preserved his religious and political prerogatives. He is the head of the ministerial council, and has the right to dissolve the parliament (Zerhouni, 2014). He can exercise by *dahir* or royal decree that are considered sacred texts and are above the political system (Daadaoui, 2012). He remains the Commander of the faithful and has the last word in religious matters (Alsaden, 2012). He also presides over the Supreme Judicial Authority, and chairs the newly established Supreme Security Council guaranteeing his control over the military and the country's security apparatus (Alsaden, 2012). Not to mention that he controls "ministries of sovereignty", which are the Ministry of



---

Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Education and the Interior Ministry (Maghraoui, 2018). The ministers appointed are known for being part of the palace's circles (Maghraoui, 2018).

Thus, Morocco is often referred to as an executive monarchy where the king has the last word in politics. Another characteristic of the Moroccan regime is what is commonly referred to as the *makhzen* or the deep state. While the term originally meant the 'storehouse', it now designates the palace and its network who together influence on decision-making and "dictate the main lines of policy" (Kausch, 2009). The *makhzen* is therefore "the place where power is concentrated and the resources used to exercise it are concentrated" (Hamblin, 2015). This ruling elite has created a powerful system of social relations that share economic, political interests and thrive on a culture of obedience stigmatizing any form of political dissent (Zerhouni, 2014). The existence of royal committees in charge of important issues has also allowed the monarchy to preserve his predominance in politics (Zerhouni, 2014). This regime system coexists with formal democratic institutions and explains the contradictions inherent to the political system in Morocco (Boukhars, 2014). It is this duality that makes it difficult to establish accountability when constitutional norms are subverted (Boukhars, 2014).

Furthermore, the constitution ensures that the king is unaccountable and so his acts enjoy complete immunity and he remains above the law (Maghraoui, 2018). Soon after 2011 constitutional reforms and the election of the first government, the king ignored a constitutional decree and directly appointed ambassadors instead of choosing them from a list of proposals that the Head of Government submits (Hashas, 2013), thus refusing to accept the boundaries that the new constitutional framework has imposed on its powers.

The regime has a long tradition of divide and rule that does not make it possible for a strong party to rise or allow the formation of strong coalitions based on ideological affinities. Even after the Arab Spring the regime continued to exploit divergences between different political parties as one of its tactics to retain power. The October 2013 government reshuffle was an example of how it nurtures disagreements between the Islamists and the seculars to weaken political parties. The government reshuffle came after a government coalition crisis that lasted for nearly six months (Hashas, 2013). The coalition government had been formed after the 2011 elections by the PJD along with three other parties including the PI (the *Istiqlal* Party) known for its proximity with the palace. However, the PI's decision to withdraw from the coalition, which is thought to have been orchestrated by circles close to the palace (Masbah, 2014), obliged the leading coalition party, the PJD, to make painful concessions and negotiate with the RNI (The National Rally of Independents), another party close to the palace (Masbah, 2014). Most importantly, the government reshuffle meant loss of important ministerial positions, including the

---

foreign ministry that went to the RNI, and the nomination of pro-palace technocrats into the cabinet (Masbah, 2014). This old tradition of divide and rule and the return of technocratic elite does not only weaken formal political institutions but also the power of elected parties (Boukhars, 2014). On the other hand, technocrats nominated to strategic cabinets serve to execute the king's instructions and to produce policy incoherencies (Boukhars, 2014). The monarchy thus preserves its role as head of state and an engineer of reforms (Hashas, 2011). What the new constitution portrayed as a palace's withdrawal from executive powers was only temporary in the face of street protests. With the 2013 government reshuffle, the palace returns center stage and the regime seemed to have managed to withdraw some of the concessions made in response to the protests.

Divide and rule strategy has also fueled a media war between Islamists and leftists who engaged in a verbal fight to get public's attention. The regime has used this struggle to prevent these political forces from forming an anti-palace coalition that could change the balance of power in favor of political parties (Monjib, 2019) but most importantly the palace needed to position itself as the sole arbiter between political actors (Masbah, 2015).

Historically, the monarchy has taken all the major decisions in Morocco and has been seen as the 'prime mover' (Maghraoui, 2011). What first seemed as a reaction to popular demands might, in fact, be a willingness to appropriate reforms (Maghraoui, 2011). The fragmentation of other political actors has helped the palace to position itself as the only actor capable of initiating change and so the king held a meeting on August 9<sup>th</sup>, 2012 with the ministers of interior and finance, along with security officials, and high-ranking military officers, all without informing the prime minister, to request investigations against police and customs officials suspected of bribery and of mistreating migrants (Monjib, 2012). What followed was the arrest of a hundred of government employees (Monjib, 2012). Technically the new constitution stipulates that the prime minister is the only authority that has the right to give orders to other ministers (Monjib, 2012).

The regime thus positions itself as the 'prime mover' and places obstacles in the path of its strongest adversaries in an attempt to preserve its political interests but above all to curb their popularity (Fakir, 2017). In fact, the PJD failed to form a second coalition government after its second electoral win in 2016 in what is believed to be a scheme by the regime (Drhimeur, 2018). As a consequence, the king dismissed the former prime minister and PJD leader, Abdelilah Benkirane, and nominated PJD's former foreign minister Saadeddine El Othmani as head of the new government in charge of forming the new government. The regime has also appointed several pro-palace technocrats and conservative royalist

---

parties' members to different ministries signaling its plan to control decision-making from inside the governing coalition while appearing to respect the constitutional provisions and the rules of politics (Monjib, 2017). Thus, maintaining the PJD in power while nominating technocrats to strategic cabinet posts serves to maintain a certain democratic façade and the legitimacy of Moroccan institutions at the national and international level (Werenfels & Saliba, 2017).

The monarchy's super-activism and visibility does not only make the government appear inefficient in implementing reforms but also that political life without the monarchy would be paralyzed (Hashas, 2013). To control the government from inside, the regime nominates its own network of officials to strategic positions. It continues to draw on the same old tactic of divide and rule thus, not allowing strong parties to emerge or to retain power. On the other hand, political actors and most importantly political parties lack the political will and strength to confront the regime and take advantage of the margin of maneuver the new constitution has granted. As a result, the regime seems stronger while the political elite appears to be fragmented.

### ***Limits of the political parties and the government***

Given these constitutional provisions and the inherent contradictions in the Moroccan political system the power of political parties remains significantly limited. They have long understood that their survival could only depend on their proximity to the palace and so they have aligned themselves with its politics. Their independence or freedom of action are then constrained.

And to obey the logic of surviving the political elite resolves to reassurance. When the new constitution was drafted, most parties addressed "vague and politically limited propositions" to the *Commission Consultative pour la Révision Constitutionnelle* (the commission in charge of its drafting (CCRC)), at a time when the king himself solicited their propositions (Maghraoui, 2011). This could imply that political parties wanted to reassure the monarchy that they would not challenge its leadership.

The PJD, which is the leading political party since 2011, also resolved to reassuring the regime. The party had refused to take part in the Arab spring (Hashas, 2013) and even after it rose to power, it continued to favor a logic of reassurance. It made a pragmatic choice of building trust with the palace, believing that reforms cannot be made against a regime that does not trust the Islamists (Boukhars, 2014). In other words, the PJD prioritized negotiations, compromises and reassuring the monarchy that the party would not try to threaten its interests (Boukhars, 2014). In order to show the party's good will, the PJD's former leader, Benkirane, could never miss a chance of praising the king's political insight and his



---

endeavor to put the country on the path of development, meaning that Benkirane chose to build personal relations with the king instead of confronting him.

The PJD's pragmatic desire to reassure the monarchy made it careful not to challenge the king's political power to remain in power (Masbah, 2015). During the 2013 governmental reshuffle, the PJD adopted a remarkable pragmatic position by allowing loyalist parties and technocrats to head strategic ministries (Masbah, 2015). The party wanted to avoid any rigid positions, which could lead to their marginalization or put an end to their time in power taking into account the Egyptian military coup that took place a few months earlier and which ended up removing the Islamists from power (Masbah, 2015).

In its logic to survive by remaining at the regime's good graces, the PJD, which had once called for a "democratic struggle," began calling for "an effective partnership" to build democracy (Masbah, 2012). While the party adopted the slogan of "Democratic Struggle is our Gateway to Reform" during its sixth conference in 2008, once at the head of the government, the party replaced the word *struggle* with the word *partnership* in its slogan "Effective Partnership for Democracy Building". By doing so, the party intended to win and maintain the king's support, and to survive. According to the party, the country has embarked on a genuine partnership process between the king and the party that would lead to far-reaching reforms, reforms more substantial than what the monarchy alone could grant (Ottaway, 2012).

Surviving meant giving up some of the government's executive powers. The new constitutional provisions stipulate that the cabinet can meet under the leadership of the prime minister and formulate decisions on issues that do not fall under "strategic" matters, which are the king's prerogatives. However, the PJD preferred to consult with the palace even for the appointments the prime minister is entitled to make (Ottaway, 2012). The PJD constantly showed willingness to accommodate the king when the latter nominated ambassadors, arrested high government employees or appointed technocrats to strategic positions. The party has even declared that "The king is the head of state and no important decision can be taken in the Ministerial Council without the will of the king", that the government is his majesty's government and that the party is here to serve the king (Le Point, 2011). Because the party has chosen not to confront the palace, its government seems to be playing around the margins of reforms (Ottaway, 2012). Since it has refused to confront the palace, tacking corruption in high places remains beyond its reach and moralizing public life cannot be accomplished without challenging vested interests (Ottaway, 2012). Instead of aspiring for democratic reforms, political actors aspired for political survival and avoided repression. Hence, "whenever promotion of social and political change conflicted with the desire

---

to avoid repression, programmatic issues were dropped and anxiety for the party's legal status always gained the upper hand" (Wegner, 2007).

The PJD's experience within the government, when they rose to power after the popular revolts of 2011, convinced its leaders that progress could not be made without the support of the monarch. They have since avoided conflicts to remain in the king's good graces. This meant giving up on some of the government's executive authority and on an aggressive pursuit of significant reforms (Masbah, 2013). Party leaders thought it was more necessary to gain the monarch's trust and to improve relations with the palace. Reforms could come later. The 2011 popular revolts have created a political context in which more Moroccans started to get interested in politics and to ask for accountability from those who rule. The 2011 constitution has granted the government a margin of maneuver and the possibility to engage in politics. However, Morocco's particular political realities made the PJD principally concerned with its own political survival. Whether this is lack of audacity and political will, the consequence of the constraints the regime put on parties, or pragmatic calculations on the part of PJD leaders by allying themselves to the monarchy, the PJD's freedom of action remained limited (Maghraoui, 2011).

### ***The democratization process***

Given Morocco's political constraints, parties remain concerned with their survival. The PJD is a survivalist party at heart and any reforms that would have faced resistance from the palace or its coterie were not pushed forward. Two years after the adoption of the new constitution and the legislative elections, only four organic laws out of twenty were adopted (Zerhouni, 2014). Organic laws usually define the procedures by which institutions and regulatory bodies are formed. The slow pace in their adoption reflects the lack of political will from political parties as well as the regime to establish accountability and transparency that the constitution provide for.

Because the party decided not to challenge the monarchy's powers, it constrained itself in its pursuit of reforms. Some reforms were primarily symbolic and remained at the level of speech, for instance fighting corruption and reforming the judiciary system. These reforms would have required political audacity on the part of the PJD to put pressure on the monarchical institutions to be implemented. Instead the party opted for endorsing most of the palace's moves and which impeded its capacity to tackle issues directly.

Corruption in Morocco affects all sectors. Analysts have described it as being endemic, which means "different forms of material benefits that are granted to both the political and the military elites"

---

(Zerhouni, 2014). The palace's business interests reach different sectors including food production and services sector (Zerhouni, 2014). Tackling corruption means challenging the monarchy's interests. The PJD however showed little signs of its willingness to challenge the monarchy and reforms were more a symbolic act than a measure. Indeed, former Minister Khliad Alioua was sent to prison for misappropriation of public funds after the Supreme Court of Accounts accused him of mismanagement of capital and unfair exploitation and monopoly of several governmental units. However, Alioua was released few months after without being sentenced (Zerhouni, 2014). The government seems to have little power to address corruption in Morocco and even corruption investigations of figures close to the monarchy are quickly dismissed. When, the former minister of justice, Mustafa Ramid, opened a corruption investigation against a former minister of finance, Salaheddine Mezouar, and the current treasurer, Nouredine Bensouda, the case was soon dismissed. Benkirane, the former prime minister, rushed to reassure the palace that "God has pardoned what is past" (Monjib, 2012).

Corruption was at the very heart of the 2011 protests in Morocco. Some slogans were directed at the palace for its control of the economy and at its network, which has used its proximity with the king to amass wealth. However, the reform of the National Body for Integrity, Prevention, and the Fight Against Corruption (INPPLC) in 2014 did not manage to grant the institution independence from the government or the right to pursue investigations (Fakir, 2017). While on paper the plan for reform sought to strengthen the INPPLC's independence by removing it from the oversight of the government and to strengthen its powers by granting it a role in investigating corruption, once the law was passed the body was not allowed to create branches or to pursue investigation independently (Fakir, 2017). Members are either appointed by the government or the palace, which does not grant it independence but most likely a consultative role (Fakir, 2017).

When it comes to judicial independence, and though Morocco transferred the office of the public prosecution from the Ministry of Justice to the Court of Cassation (Chentouf, 2017), the judiciary is still linked to the interests of the palace and its coterie (Chentouf, 2017). For instance back in September 2013, Ali Anouzla, a popular independent journalist, was arrested for "inciting terrorism" when he posted on his website an indirect link to a video released by al-Qaeda entitled "Morocco: Kingdom of Corruption and Despotism". Anouzla was known for his articles that criticized the regime and his detention might have signaled a political will to renew suppression of freedom of expression and the press (Zerhouni, 2014). On a more recent note protesters from the northern region of Morocco, the Rif, have been arrested and received heavy sentences in an attempt to deter further demonstrations and to

---

silence dissident voices (Fakir, 2018). The trial of the Rif protesters cast doubts on the independence of the judiciary as well.

In general, the reform of the judiciary led to relatively minor changes related to the judges' salaries and the modernization of courtrooms. Transparency and accountability were not on the agenda (Fakir, 2017). The reform process has been in slow motion and any reform that could be detrimental to the palace's interests was dismissed. It is important to win the trust of the monarchy to advance reforms but it can also lead to over caution in taking political initiatives or exercising power and thus impede the party in its attempt to "shape public policy and legislation" (Boukhars, 2014). Reforms remained at the level of discourse more than reality, which contradicts what the regime claims is committed to when it comes to democratization and its actual practices.

It seems that reforms have failed to rupture the old political structure, to balance power between the monarchy and the government, to create mechanism of accountability or to rationalize policy-making. The government seems to have developed an inconsistent governing style, which made it ill equipped to handle the country's political, social and economic issues or to overcome the regime's structural flaws.

### ***Morocco new political and social landscape***

As mentioned earlier, the regime continued to follow a long tradition of delegitimizing political parties, and which results not only in the marginalization of these parties but also in a general disenchantment with the election process. By taking part in the political system, the PJD, similar to previous opposition parties, risked losing its credibility and its image as a party concerned with truth, democracy and social justice without really taking advantage of what power has to offer when it comes to exerting and exercising it (Fakir & Yerkes, 2018). Political parties seem to be inefficient and incompetent and popular confidence in elected institutions is weakening (Werenfels & Saliba, 2017).

The slow pace of reforms to address corruption and ineffective governance added to the lack of trust in institutions pushed citizens to look for alternative informal mechanism to express their demands in the form of protests and boycotts. In Morocco protests have become more frequent spreading to different regions of the country. Citizens usually demanded better economic and social conditions and more development opportunities (Fakir & Yerkes, 2018). They resort to protests and boycott to put pressure on their government to deliver solutions and thus seem to circumvent traditional processes of representation (Fakir & Yerkes, 2018). Protests reflect Moroccans' deep distrust in the government,

---

political parties and formal political process as well (Masbah, 2018). They “are merely symptoms of the absence of internal and external accountability of the government” and uncertainties about whether the latter is effective in solving the country’s socio and economic problems (Masbah, 2018). Formal politics and traditional participatory mechanisms, for instance voting and running for office, are increasingly perceived as “lacking credibility”, which might help to understand low voter turnout in the 2016 elections, especially among the youth (Fakir & Yerkes, 2018). The fact that political elites have lost their popular credibility pushed protests to reject mediation with government representatives and to ask to meet with a delegation designated by the king directly (Masbah, 2018). To express their disillusionment with traditional mediators, citizens resolved to boycott major national companies involved in distributing gas, producing dairy products or even bottled water. It means that the public is searching for alternative ways to participate in politics away from the ballot. The boycott movement targeted market leader companies known for their proximity to power and signaled public disenchantment with cronyism and how a small business elite, close to the monarchy, has monopoly of the economy. It reflects how much the public believes inadequate governance, economic and social inequalities and deep structural problems are still rampant (Fakir, 2018). Citizens have decided to choose protests and boycotts to draw attention to their grievances when the government seems to be unresponsive and to have failed to answer many of the country’s problems (Fakir, 2018).

When it comes to the old regime, the monarchy has managed to be the main political actor and to isolate political parties. Similar to democratic countries, Morocco possesses formal institutions that allow for a constitutional practice but the executive branch and the parliament remain under the control of the governing monarchy. The king maintained his right to give instructions and issue directives remaining thus the source from which institutions derive their power. He defines the frameworks for political actions and positions himself as the sole actor capable of reforms. In some of his speeches, he lashes on the government and political parties for failing to meet the country’s social and economic challenges and blames them for the slow pace of reforms. He expresses his disapproval of governmental actions when it comes to educational reforms. In a speech to the nation he declared: “The current government should have capitalized on the positive experience gained in the field of education and training” instead of implementing unsuccessful educational programs (MAP News, 2013). During the 2017 opening session of the parliament he gave instructions to expedite the process for administrative decentralization to accompany the country’s advanced regionalization reform (Fakir, 2017). He even promised a “political earthquake” which came few days later. Many ministers, bureaucrats and high-ranking government officials were dismissed on the ground they mismanaged socio-economic projects



---

(Fakir, 2017). The isolation of political parties has pushed the monarchy to look for alternatives in the form of High Commissions (Monjib, 2019). He then called for the creation of the New Development Model Commission in charge of elaborating a new strategy to develop the country at the economic and social level. This time, however; he calls on “the government to make this issue a priority, tackle administrative shortcomings and make sure highly qualified human resources are made available at the regional and local levels to address the challenges of the new phase [...]” he announced during a royal speech to the nation on the occasion of the 66th Anniversary of the Revolution of the King and the People (MAP News, 2019). He urged political parties to propose their visions of reforms to tackle the country’s socio-economic problems. Analysts; however, perceives this as a new strategy to absorb social discontent (Monjib, 2019).

The king’s speeches are reminders that the monarchy is the main political actor who is genuinely interested in fixing the country’s ills. His moves reaffirm the monarchy’s hegemony and consolidate his image as the arbiter of politics.

Reforms have been symbolic and protests continue to be part of the Moroccan’s daily scene. 2011 protests made citizens highly interested in their political future. But the slow pace of reform and what seems to be an unresponsive government pushed people to look for alternative ways to express their demands. They turn to the streets, to social media and boycott movement to express their grievances and demand reforms. A culture of protest is emerging throughout the country. Protests indicate that there is a growing desire for accountability. In short, reforms can only be pursued if political actors enjoy a high degree of strength and independence.

---

## References

- Alsaden, A. (2012). “Averting a Moroccan Revolution,”. *SWP Comments*, (30).
- Bank, A. (2012). “*Jordan and Morocco: Pacification through Constitutional Reform?*”, [online] Swp-berlin.org. Available at: [https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/research\\_papers/2012\\_RP06\\_ass.pdf](https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/research_papers/2012_RP06_ass.pdf)
- Boukhars, A. (2014). Morocco’s Islamists: Bucking the Trend?. *carnegieendowment.org*.
- Chentouf, A. (2017) Morocco’s Pursuit of Judicial Independence, *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*.
- Daadaoui, M. (2012). A Symbol Kind of Monarch. <https://carnegie-mec.org/>.
- Drhimeur, A. (2018). The Party of Justice and Development’s Pragmatic Politics. *Rice University’s Baker Institute for Public Policy, Houston, Texas.*, Issue brief no. 05.31.18.
- Fakir, I. (2017). *Morocco’s Islamist Party: Redefining Politics Under Pressure*. [online] Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Available at: <https://carnegieendowment.org/2017/12/28/morocco-s-islamist-party-redefining-politics-under-pressure-pub-75121>
- Fakir, I. (2018) Intissar, All Shook Up, *Carnegie Middle East Center*,
- Fakir, I. and Yerkes, S. (2018) Governance and the Future of the Arab World, *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*,
- Hamblin A. (2015) Morocco: The Struggle for Political Legitimacy in *Arab Spring: Negotiating in the Shadow of the Intifadat*, Athens, Georgia and London: University of Georgia Press, (2015), pp.182–208, at 184. <sup>[1]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>
- Hashas, M. (2013). Moroccan Exceptionalism Examined: Constitutional Insights pre- and post-2011. *Institute of International Affairs*, (13 | 34).
- Kausch, K. (2009). The European Union and Political Reform in Morocco. *Mediterranean Politics*, 14(2), pp.165-179.
- Le Point (2011) « Maroc : les islamistes de Sa Majesté », (« Morocco, the Islamists of His Majesty », [https://www.lepoint.fr/monde/maroc-les-islamistes-de-sa-majeste-28-11-2011-1401535\\_24.php](https://www.lepoint.fr/monde/maroc-les-islamistes-de-sa-majeste-28-11-2011-1401535_24.php)
- Maghraoui, D. (2011). Constitutional reforms in Morocco: between consensus and subaltern politics. *The Journal of North African Studies*, 16(4), pp.679-699.
- Maghraoui, D. (2018). *Working Under Constraints: The PJD in the Aftermath of the 2016 Elections*. [online] Bakerinstitute.org. Available at: <https://www.bakerinstitute.org/political->
- MAP News (2013) « HM the King delivers speech to nation on occasion of 60th anniversary of revolution of king and people », <http://www.mapnews.ma/en/activites-royales/hm-king-delivers-speech-nation-occasion-60th-anniversary-revolution-king-and-people>.

- MAP news (2019), « HM the King delivers speech to nation on occasion of 60th anniversary of revolution of king and people », <https://www.mapnews.ma/en/discours-messages-sm-le-roi/full-text-royal-speech-66th-anniversary-revolution-king-and-people>
- Masbah, M. (2012). *The Party Just In (and Developing)*. *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*,.
- Masbah, M. (2013). *The PJD's Balancing act*. *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*.
- Masbah, M. (2014). "Morocco's Slow Motion Reform Process,". *SWP Comments*, 6.
- Masbah, M. (2015). "His Majesty's Islamists: The Moroccan Experience. *Masbah Mohammed*, "His Majesty's Islamists: The Moroccan Experience," *Carnegie Middle East Center*.
- Masbah, M. (2018) Mohammed, What Protest in Morocco Reveals about Public Trust in Political Parties, *Moroccan Institute of Public Policy*,
- Monjib, M. (2011). *The "Democratization" Process in Morocco: Progress, Obstacles and the Impact of the Islamist-Secularist Divide*. [online] Brookings. Available at: <https://www.brookings.edu/research/the-democratization-process-in-morocco-progress-obstacles-and-the-impact-of-the-islamist-secularist-divide/>
- Monjib, M. (2012). *All the King's Islamists*. *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*.
- Monjib, M. (2017). *Lopsided Struggle for Power in Morocco*. *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*,.
- Monjib, M. (2019), *The Speech of the King, Committees and Parties (خطاب الملك واللجان والأحزاب)*, [https://www.alquds.co.uk/خطاب-الملك-واللجان-والأحزاب/?fbclid=IwAR3rF8ZnMQHvXBdICr\\_gX7J-XoJuB0BhRfrqrTTeRw7F8y4aaWeeOUa5RWE](https://www.alquds.co.uk/خطاب-الملك-واللجان-والأحزاب/?fbclid=IwAR3rF8ZnMQHvXBdICr_gX7J-XoJuB0BhRfrqrTTeRw7F8y4aaWeeOUa5RWE)
- Monjib, M. (2019). *Dividing Morocco's Islamists and Leftists*. *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*.
- Muasher, M. (2020). *Arab Spring: Eternal Season of Flux*. [online] Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Available at: <https://carnegieendowment.org/2011/06/28/arab-spring-eternal-season-of-flux-pub-44858>
- Ottaway, M. (2012). *Morocco: Can the Third Way Succeed?*. *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*.
- Ottaway, M. (2012). *The New Moroccan Constitution: Real Change or More of the Same?*. [online] Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Available at: <https://carnegieendowment.org/2011/06/20/new-moroccan-constitution-real-change-or-more-of-same-pub-44731>
- Sater, J. (2009). *Parliamentary Elections and Authoritarian Rule in Morocco*. *The Middle East Journal*, 63(3), pp.381-400.

- 
- Sweet, C. (2001). Democratization without Democracy: Political Openings and Closures in Modern Morocco. *Middle East Report*, (218), p.22.
- Wegner , E. (2007). “Islamist Inclusion and Regime Persistence: The Moroccan Win-Win Situation”. In: Schlumberger, O ed. *Debating Arab Authoritarianism Dynamics and Durability in Nondemocratic regimes*. Stanford : Stanford University Press, pp. 87-88
- Werenfels, I. and Saliba, I. (2017). No Rivals to the King. *SWP Comments*, SWP Comment 2017/C 17.
- Zerhouni, S. (2014). Smartness’ Without Vision: The Moroccan Regime in the Face of Acquiescent Elites and Weak Social Mobilization. *SWP Comments*, 11.

# FOLLOW US

on Social Media:



[@BilgiERC](https://twitter.com/BilgiERC)



[@BilgiERC](https://www.instagram.com/BilgiERC)



<https://bpy.bilgi.edu.tr/en/>

