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Party for Justice and Development in Morocco:

Participation and
Its Discontents

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Contents

Summary

At a time when mainstream Islamist movements across the Arab world have chosen to participate in politics, questions have arisen over the nature of their participation and its repercussions on the political environment as well as on the movements themselves. In this regard, the Moroccan Party for Justice and Development (PJD) represents an interesting case. Contesting legislative elections since 1997, the PJD has gradually gained members in Morocco's parliament, winning 9 out of 325 seats in the 1997 elections, 42 in 2002, and 46 in 2007. It has become well entrenched in the Moroccan political process, and its recent electoral gains are not just a temporary breakthrough.

However, the PJD is struggling to redefine a sustainable and practical balance between the pragmatic demands of participation and those dictated by its Islamist frame of reference. Given the restricted political environment in Morocco and various conditions imposed by the ruling establishment, the PJD has adopted moderate positions on various societal and political matters. At the same time, it has had to be careful not to alienate wide segments of its constituency drawn to it because of its religious frame of reference.

Introduction

Analyzing the political role of the Moroccan Party for Justice and Development (PJD) sheds light on the dynamics of Islamist participation in Arab politics. In sharp contrast to the dual-identity Islamists in Iraq, Lebanon, and Palestine, where they are both political actors and militarized resistance movements at the same time, the PJD stands for Islamists who have adopted peaceful participation in politics as their only strategic option. In the cases of Egypt and Jordan, the ongoing confrontations between the ruling establishments and the Muslim Brotherhood have undermined the stability of Islamist political participation, but in Morocco the PJD has been participating in a stable manner and trying to gradually inject more openness in Moroccan politics.

The PJD and other "participation-comes-first" Islamists are present in several Arab countries such as Algeria, Kuwait, and Bahrain. The major characteristic of their movements is their resolve to respect and play by the legal rules of the political game as well as to search for consensual agreements over the conduct

of public affairs. This characteristic is, in part, an outcome of the restraint of the ruling establishments in those countries in managing Islamist participation in politics without systematic recourse to repressive and exclusionary measures.

The PJD and like-minded Islamist movements have never questioned the legitimacy of the nation state in which they operate and have always recognized the state's political framework as the only legitimate space for their actions. Nor have they doubted the competitive nature of politics and its pluralist imperative. This attitude, then adopted as much in spirit as in form, has led to the decline of religious-based exclusionist rhetoric, whether directed toward ruling establishments or liberal and leftist opposition actors. It has also gradually shifted Islamists away from ideological diatribes and categorical judgments toward formulation of practical political platforms and constructive attempts to influence public policy.

Most significantly, some of these movements—notably the PJD—have succeeded in formulating a functional separation between Islamist *da'wa* (proselytizing) activities and politics, thereby transforming themselves into pure political organizations guided by an Islamist frame of reference and run by professional politicians, leaving da'wa to the broad social movements that gave birth to them.

But the PJD and other similar Islamist movements also face some serious challenges. For one, participation in politics so far has not met the Islamists' minimum expectations and in turn has failed to fulfill the hopes and aspirations of their constituencies. In essence, the participation-comes-first Islamists have opted, with only limited success, to transcend the restrained pluralism of the political systems in which they operate and achieve meaningful reform that redistributes power between the ruling establishments and the opposition. Pushing for constitutional and legal reforms that can expand the prerogatives and oversight powers of legislative and judicial institutions in the face of overly powerful executive organs has been a major demand on Islamist platforms. However, here too Islamists have not succeeded in getting closer to a healthy balance among the various branches of government. Most have failed in their attempts to overcome their historical rivalries with the ruling establishments and to create pragmatic alliances with nonreligious opposition forces. More troubling, still, is that the meager outcome of Islamist movements' participation has led their constituencies to question the validity of key choices. The separation between da'wa and political activities has come under attack as has the pragmatic focus on social and economic concerns rather than on issues of morality. Indeed, Islamists in these movements have been accused of watering down religious commitments to advance in the political process.

Such is the environment in which the PJD has been operating since its establishment in 1997. At a time when mainstream Islamist movements across the Arab world have chosen to participate in politics, questions have arisen over the nature of their participation and its repercussions on the wider political

environment as well as on the movements themselves. Because of the diversity of Islamists' approaches to political participation, any analysis of these questions must steer clear of generalities stemming from ideological prejudices or selective citations of past Islamist experiences, which are insufficient to grasp the complexities and constantly unfolding developments in this part of the world. Similarly, the reductionist view of Islamists as groups of ideological zealots whose rhetoric alone is a sufficient guide to their political actions is overly simplistic.

In this paper, I seek to answer four questions concerning the PJD's participation in Moroccan politics:

1. What are the institutional and political conditions that have shaped the participation of the PJD?

2. What are the issues that the PJD has prioritized in its participation, especially in legislative institutions?

3. What is the impact of the PJD's participation internally on the party and externally on the wider political environment?

4. Finally, how has the PJD responded and adapted to the challenges of its participation in the semiauthoritarian political system of Morocco?

The Institutional and Political Context

The PJD participates in politics under several distinct conditions. Some conditions are imposed by the powerful monarchy and its allies—known in Morocco as the *makhzan* (ruling establishment)—while others are shaped by the PJD's position within the Islamist spectrum and its need to preserve the loyalty of its popular constituencies. The conditions for which the monarchy is responsible are either institutional or arbitrary and are imposed by the ruling establishment to contain the political opposition including the Islamist PJD. In contrast, the conditions shaped by the preferences of the movement's constituencies are the result of the fragmentation in Morocco's Islamist spectrum and the dynamics of competition among different Islamist movements. Unlike the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Jordan, for example, the PJD in Morocco cannot take religiously motivated constituencies for granted. Rather, it has to compete with the more popular al-ᶜAdl wa'l-Ihsan (Justice and Charity) movement as well as other Islamist political parties. Therefore, the PJD has to abide by certain inviolable guidelines to keep and expand popular support.

Institutions

Unlike other countries in the Arab world, Morocco has had a long history of a multiparty legislature, which prompted many observers to speculate that Moroccan legislatures are in a better position to make considerable

contributions to the reform process. This characteristic facilitated the emergence of a culture of vigorous political debate in which the opposition is an active participant, but its overall impact is often overrated.

Prior to the 1996 constitutional revision, Morocco had a unicameral legislative branch. The parliament had 333 members serving six-year terms. Two-thirds of the deputies were elected directly (single-member district, winner-take-all system), and one-third (111) were elected indirectly through five electoral colleges (Morocco's 1,544 local councils indirectly elected 69 of the deputies, and the government chose the remaining 42). Those representatives elected indirectly were usually close to the ruling establishment and were therefore often used to impede reform initiatives.

The 1996 revised constitution allowed for the direct election of all the members of a lower legislative chamber (House of Representatives)—a longtime demand of opposition parties—that operates next to an upper house (House of Councilors)—elected indirectly by professional associations, labor unions, municipal councils, and various interest groups. The upper chamber was given extensive prerogatives to counterbalance the lower house. In addition, the constitution gives nonelected bodies such as the government, the royal court, and the constitutional council the power to promulgate or block laws that they find controversial. All of these institutional safeguards were meant to ensure that the king's reform enterprise does not cede too much power to the opposition.

The Moroccan institutional order has other serious problems that impede democratic progress. Article 19 of the Moroccan constitution proclaims the king to be the "supreme representative of the nation." The constitution grants the king extensive powers, unmatched by either the executive branch or parliament. The king appoints the prime minister following legislative elections; the ministers of justice, defense, foreign affairs, religious affairs, and interior; and the governors of Morocco's sixteen provinces. He can terminate the tenure of any minister, dismiss the prime minister, dissolve the parliament, call for new elections, rule by decree, declare a state of emergency without explanation, and revise the constitution. Moreover, the king is the military's supreme commander and the country's religious leader. The king also appoints all prefects of economic regions, secretaries of state in each ministry, directors of public agencies and enterprises, judges, and half of the members of High Constitutional Council, including its president. And none of these decisions is subject to review by any other entity.

Furthermore, the country has a weak judiciary. The Moroccan constitution endorses the principle of separation of powers, but the ministry of justice still plays a significant role in judicial affairs. The ministry of justice oversees administrative matters related to the courts' work, including their budgets.

The interior ministry runs most of the country's security services, is involved in the allocation of local and regional budgets, is responsible for supervising and licensing associations and political parties, and directs local and national

elections. It is no surprise that the minister of the interior wields great power in Morocco. For example, Idriss Basri headed the ministry of the interior from 1979 to 1999 and was viewed as the most powerful man in Morocco after the king.

There are also various laws in place that are seen as too restrictive and fundamentally antithetical to the reform process. One example is the current election law. The law keeps the proportional representation system in place but precludes any one party from gaining a meaningful majority of seats in the parliament. The interior ministry runs the election process, drawing the electoral districts, registering voters, and examining and announcing the results. The districting is also seen as unfair, giving more seats to rural areas and undermining the weight of urban votes, which in turn negatively affects the electoral performance of many of the opposition parties, especially the PJD.

A new political party law was passed in October 2005 after extensive rounds of deliberations that involved representatives from the executive and judicial branches as well as a number of political parties and civil society organizations. The interior ministry originally proposed the law in 2004 to replace the 1958 law for associations in the code for public liberties. The 1958 law prohibited civil society organizations from engaging in political activities and gave the interior ministry the authority to deny permits to organizations involved in activities deemed sensitive by the regime. The 2005 law aims at regulating the internal affairs of political parties and associations. It requires parties to submit mission statements, along with detailed briefs on their leaders and general membership, in addition to declaring all of their financial assets; prohibits the establishment of parties on religious, racial, or tribal bases; and stipulates that parties allocate quotas for women and young men in representation in the various bodies of their organizations.

Some parties registered their concern that the new law grants too much power to the interior ministry and that a party's disqualification procedures should be completely left to the judiciary. In the final draft of the law, the government responded to this concern by expanding the role of the judiciary and making it the last arbiter in matters related to penalizing political parties. The interior ministry, however, still has considerable privileges that enable it to hinder the certification of new political parties. Some leftist parties brought up the issue of the separation between state and religion and urged the government to completely prohibit any reference to religion in political party platforms. The final draft stated that religion cannot be the founding principle of a political party. This provision makes Islamist parties particularly vulnerable to broad interpretations of the law because they typically use religion as a frame of reference in their political programs.

There are other institutional barriers on the local level. Despite the fact that efforts to decentralize governance have shaped the Morocco regime's recent reform initiatives, the municipal councils' scope of authority remains very

restricted. The Law on Municipal Organization includes an extensive list of municipal council actions that need to be verified and approved by the interior ministry. This preapproval requirement covers every financial, budgetary, and investment decision and limits the governing capacity of parties that win the right to run these local governing organs through elections.

Arbitrary Decisions

Next to institutional conditions, there are arbitrary measures that also aim to contain, if not stifle, serious opposition. Rigging elections and buying votes, administrative interference, and extensive networks of patronage regularly ensure a favorable outcome to the ruling establishment's surrogates and allies in national and local elections. Although the 2002 and 2007 legislative elections were praised by international observers as relatively free and transparent compared with previous elections, the aforementioned problems, especially in rural areas, were common. In addition, opposition parties complain that access to national media is highly skewed in favor of parties and candidates close to the ruling establishment. Appealing election results on the grounds of violations is a difficult and chaotic process, which more often than not leads nowhere.

Perhaps more significantly, the state's security apparatus remains largely under the control of the ministry of the interior and is seldom held accountable for acting against political opponents of the regime. In February 2008, Moroccan authorities banned an opposition Islamist party known as al-Badil al-Hadari (Civilizational Alternative), a centrist Islamist party, whose leaders call for the introduction of elements of genuine and effective democracy, accountability, and openness in governance without compromising the country's legitimate national and religious foundations. The interior ministry claimed that leaders of al-Badil were involved in the activities of a "dangerous terrorist" network. Approximately 32 individuals were arrested, including al-Badil's Secretary General Mustapha al-Mutasim and his deputy Muhammad al-Amin, in addition to a journalist, a leftist politician, a PJD official, and others.[1]

The arrests and government claims triggered an extensive debate in the country. Some commentators and analysts interpreted the incident as signaling a more restrictive "change in the government's attitude towards moderate Islamists."[2] Regardless of whether it signaled a broader policy change or not, it did reveal that Moroccan authorities are willing and able to suppress opposition actors in the name of fighting terrorism.

The Moroccan regime is especially intolerant of any criticism of the royal court. Recently, al-Jazeera News Network referred to contacts between the late King Hassan II and the Israeli intelligence agency Mossad, and a few days later, the network's Morocco bureau was forced to stop broadcasting its Maghreb News Program from Rabat, and its chief was put on trial. Moreover, the government has arrested and prosecuted a number of Moroccan journalists over the past few years for similar offenses.

Internal Constraints

In addition to the restraints imposed by the political environment in which it operates, the PJD has to accommodate limitations that emanate from its own base. After all, the party caters to a traditional and devout constituency that highly values moral and ethical issues.

Historically, Islamism has had a relatively limited appeal in Morocco compared with its popularity in other Arab countries. Islamism as a political force has been constrained by the state's control of religious authorities and symbols and the king's claim to be the Commander of the Faithful and descendent of the prophet. Islamist movements have also been constrained by traditional kinship and village associations. Even so, Islamism has been on the rise in the last decade, in part because of the recent political openings and in part because of the pronounced lack of an effective secular political opposition. Islamists have a comparative political advantage because, unlike most other Moroccan political parties, they are strongly connected to their grassroots and have the ability to mobilize them during elections.

Islamist activism in Morocco started in the 1960s as a result of the perception of inadequate state implementation of basic Islamic doctrines regarding social reforms and economic development policies. Unlike other countries in the Arab world, Morocco's Islamist movement is quite fragmented. It includes two main groups—namely, at-Tawhid wa'l-Islah (Unity and Reform) and al-ᶜAdl wa'l-Ihsan—as well as scores of smaller organizations.

Morocco's two main Islamist groups have very different ideological and historical trajectories. At-Tawhid shares ideological commonalities with the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and elsewhere. Most of its senior leaders were former members of the active and militant organization—ash-Shabiba al-Islamiya (Islamic Youth), which acquired its weight and importance during the mid-1970s. In contrast, al-ᶜAdl is unique in that it has no organizational or ideological links with older Moroccan or Arab Islamist movements. In fact, it did not gain public attention until the 1980s, when, as an organization, it crystallized around the leadership and ideas of a former public school teacher and Sufi activist ᶜAbdul Salam Yassin.

At-Tawhid. With the goal of political participation in mind, at-Tawhid leaders sought to dissociate themselves from Islamist militant elements and to present their movement to the ruling establishment as a responsible and moderate actor that renounces violence and accepts the legitimacy of the existing system. At-Tawhid sprang out of ash-Shabiba al-Islamiya, which started out as a clandestine militant organization in the late 1960s and was implicated in the assassination of ᶜUmar Bin Jallun, a famous Moroccan leftist leader. The tensions and disagreements within ash-Shabiba led to the defection of many of its members, especially in Rabat. Some of the defecting members formed a group led by ᶜAbd al-Ilah Bin Kiran and called it Jamᶜiyat al-Jamaᶜat al-Islamiya (Association of the Islamic Group). The leaders of the Jamᶜiyat attempted to gain official recognition

through a number of letters—sent to the king and the interior ministry—and petitions for legal status throughout the 1980s. The group changed its name in 1992 to Harakat al-Islah wa't-Tajdid (Movement for Reform and Renewal). In 1996, the group formed a new movement and called it at-Tawhid wa'l-Islah.

Between 1992 and 1996, al-Islah wa't-Tajdid leaders were involved in extensive deliberations with ᶜAbdul Karim al-Khatib, leader of the Democratic Constitutional Movement—a political party established in 1967 that had been virtually absent from the political scene for many years—to negotiate a deal that would allow its members to participate in the political process by joining his party. Al-Khatib agreed in 1997. The Islamists gradually joined the party, and in 1998, the party changed its name to the Party for Justice and Development (PJD) and was since known as the political wing of at-Tawhid wa'l-Islah and as the largest Islamist party in the country.

Al-ᶜAdl. Al-ᶜAdl has a very different experience from at-Tawhid. It is a very popular movement in Morocco today. The movement's main goal is the establishment of an Islamic Caliphate. On this basis, it refuses to participate in the political process. Yassin, the movement's founder, was greatly influenced by the Islamic revolution in Iran and was highly impressed by the way the revolutionaries turned Islamic ideas into practice. Yassin was widely known for his activism and criticism of the monarchy in the 1970s; in 1974, he sent a letter to late King Hassan II in which he criticized him and called on him to repent his ways and return to true Islam.

In September 1981, Yassin announced the creation of his movement and attempted to acquire legal status in 1982. The government rejected Yassin's request on the basis that the movement mixes religion and politics. In September 1987, the movement adopted its current name—al-ᶜAdl wa'l-Ihsan—which coincided with an escalation in tensions between the movement and the regime. Authorities placed Yassin under house arrest in December 1989, banned the movement in January 1990, and detained three members of the guiding bureau shortly after. The three members spent two years in jail, but Yassin, the General Guide, remained under house arrest for almost a decade.

Al-ᶜAdl emphasizes spiritual education on the individual and collective levels. It seeks to present itself as a major actor in Moroccan society but at the same time refuses to acknowledge the legitimacy of the current political system. It regularly calls for boycotting parliamentary and local elections, for a radical overhaul of the current political environment, and for a new social contract between the government and the people based on Islamic precepts.

The PJD's Priorities in Parliament

The PJD has gradually gained members in Morocco's parliament, winning 9 out of 325 seats in the 1997 legislative elections, 42 in 2002, and 46 in 2007. PJD members of parliament have become particularly active in recent years,

focusing their legislative efforts on significant economic and social issues such as corruption, unemployment, and poverty. The unimpressive track record of the PJD's parliamentary representation, however, has caused the party a number of problems. Popular doubts have grown about the ability of the PJD to translate its opposition activism into meaningful policy measures through participation in the political process—a challenge that Islamist opposition movements have been struggling with across the Arab world. Moreover, in spite of its moderate platform, policy makers inside and outside Morocco still view the PJD with suspicion. Leftist political parties have occasionally suggested that the PJD's ultimate goal is the promotion of radicalism and extremism in the Moroccan polity. A 2006 report prepared by the U.S. Congressional Research Service questioned the PJD's ambiguity and asserted that

> like many Islamist groups across the globe, it is difficult to discern what the PJD's true goals and objectives are over the long term. Some believe that, although the party has agreed to work within the current system, it remains committed to establishing an Islamic state in Morocco with Islamic law, or Sharia, as the basis for legislation.[3]

Reform Program and Effectiveness

Certainly, the PJD's activism in parliament has not always been focused on substantive reforms. On occasion, party members put religious issues on the forefront of their legislative debates: For example, protesting the distribution of an unedited movie that included inappropriate (intimate) scenes in 2005, or occasionally bringing up the issue of alcohol distribution to Muslims.

Nevertheless, in fairness to the PJD, since 2002, the party has become less preoccupied with debates on ideological and religious issues than have Islamist political movements in such countries as Egypt and Jordan. Under the leadership of Secretary General Saᶜad al-Din al-ᶜUthmani and the generation of young activists who joined the party in the late 1990s, the PJD has revamped its image in significant ways. The party has evolved into a venue for serious debates on public policy measures needed to address Morocco's social and economic problems. The PJD contributed to a remarkable breakthrough in 2005 with the endorsement of a new, more liberal version of the mudawwana (the code regulating marriage and family life in the country). The revision of the mudawwana greatly improved women's social status and was opposed by more conservative Islamist elements. Indeed, the PJD participated in the negotiations for the new code and ultimately accepted its provisions, despite the fact that they do not bear a clearly Islamist stamp. The party's leadership defended its position by arguing that the code had been adopted through a democratic process and had to be respected. In an interview conducted in 2006, al-ᶜUthmani defended his party's decision to support the law, saying that it was approved by religious authorities, was comprehensive, helped families (and women in particular), and

was formulated only after extensive deliberations and consultations with many political, religious, and civil society representatives.[4]

Indeed, the PJD has emerged as a pragmatic player committed to political participation and keen on searching for real solutions to the persistent needs of the populace. Ideological assertions, including calls for application of shariʿa (Islamic law), have been gradually reduced to low-key objectives. It bears emphasis here that instead of referring to shariʿa—or to an Islamic frame of reference (marjiʿiya islamiya)—the 2007 electoral platform of the PJD mentioned the "protection of Morocco's Islamic identity" as its main religious-based priority.

Remarkably, the PJD has made tremendous efforts to present an exemplary block in parliament. The party regularly circulates attendance sheets to make sure that its deputies attend their parliamentary sessions and committee hearings. It also frequently demands that parliament deal seriously with the issue of member absenteeism. PJD members of parliament (MPs) are known for submitting the greatest number of written and oral questions. The party has also worked on training its MPs to draft and propose legislative initiatives. MPs have professional support units made up of experts who can provide specialized advice on technical matters pertaining to various public policy legislations. These efforts have been interpreted as part of the PJD's agenda to empower representative institutions in country.

What really defined the PJD's parliamentary experience was its MPs' emphasis on transparency in the House of Representatives and strong support of anticorruption initiatives, in addition to the constant demand for accountability and better accessibility to the executive. At least on one occasion, the PJD sent a letter complaining to the chair of the Constitutional Council about what its MPs considered unconstitutional behavior by the minister in charge of organizing the executive's affairs with the legislature. The complaint protested the delay tactics used by the minister to circumvent legislative efforts to question officials from the executive on a variety of issues.

The PJD was fierce in its opposition to the election law passed in late 2006 and later had some of its provisions revoked by the Constitutional Council. The PJD rejected the law mainly because it limits participation in the electoral process and opens the door to more corruption. ʿAbdullah Baha, the former party whip in parliament, said in an interview:

> The Justice and Development Party demands an independent commission to supervise the elections … and guaranteeing independent monitoring for the election processes by civil society institutions. Also, we renew our rejection of the exceptional reviews to the election regulations … we want to create healthy conditions for the national campaigning to maintain and defend democracy against the lobbies of personal interests, and political and financial corruption.[5]

Before that, the PJD initially supported the political party law because it encouraged transparency, democratic procedures, and accountability within political parties. In an interview, al-ᶜUthmani explained:

> It is a good law, as it stipulates that there be 200 prospective members to create a new party, instead of seven as it had been previously. It also includes provisions that all parties be internally democratic, include a certain percentage of young people and women in leadership structures, and practice transparency in management and finances.[6]

The PJD nonetheless had some reservations, particularly because the political party law was seen as an attempt to shift attention from the need to achieve comprehensive constitutional reforms in Morocco, and because it used broad language that could be open to many interpretations in the provisions pertaining to the ideological foundations of parties. Nonetheless, these reservations were expressed in a careful and nonconfrontational manner because the ruling establishment strongly supported the law. Eventually, the party abstained from voting on the matter.

There were other laws that the PJD was uncomfortable with but had no choice but to support. The 2003 antiterrorism bill is a case in point. In May 2003, five suicide bombings rocked Morocco and left 45 dead and nearly 100 injured. Thousands of Islamists were arrested, and 50 were sentenced to life in prison, and 16 to death. One of the individuals arrested, Yunis Ousalah, a local official in the PJD, was accused of having prior knowledge of the terrorist attacks. A major anti-Islamist backlash orchestrated by the monarchy and a few pro-establishment parties made no effort to discriminate between moderate and militant Islamists. In fact, many public figures were calling for officially dismantling the PJD and banning its members from the political process. The party was politically isolated and smeared in the media by political rivals and opponents. It was this pressure that ultimately forced the PJD to vote in favor of the 2003 antiterrorism bill, which is widely seen as a setback for civil liberties and freedoms in the country. The new bill restricts, among other things, freedom of expression and penalizes journalists with fines and prison sentences for writing anything that could be interpreted as supporting terrorism or defaming public officials or endangering public order.

PJD MPs have also been active participants in the discussions on a new organizational law for the Supreme Court, which, if passed, would allow for the investigation and punishment of government officials, in addition to a number of other reforms. Because of its importance and sensitivity, the law has been debated and postponed on and off since the 1997–2002 parliamentary cycle. The PJD is against the provisions that stipulate that two-thirds of the two chambers (that is, the House of Representatives and the House of Councilors) are needed before court procedures can be initiated against officials implicated in any offenses. This condition, the PJD argues, is impossible to achieve given the

fragmented makeup of the Moroccan parliament. Being able to hold government officials to account is critical for the PJD because it presents an opportunity to advance some of the constitutional reform elements that the party often emphasizes in its political programs. Indeed, there are three main pillars for the PJD's constitutional reform vision: (1) institute all necessary mechanisms to secure the independence of the judiciary; (2) expand the supervisory and legislative prerogatives of the House of Representatives and and review those of the House of Councilors; and (3) ensure that the executive branch is accountable to parliament.

The PJD also had a number of other proposals concerning the law: decrease the number of judges in the agencies of the Supreme Court to ensure efficiency, limit the role of the Ministry of Justice in these types of investigations, and make the employees of the Supreme Court subject to supervision by parliament and not the Ministry of Justice.

This type of parliamentary activism apparent in the 2002–2007 cycle stands in contrast to the PJD's emphasis on ethical and religious issues during the 1997–2002 cycle. Some of the issues raised by PJD MPs then included the issue of non-Islamic banking, alcohol consumption, Islamic education, immoral practices in the tourism industry, and reforming the cinema industry to ensure that it complied with Islamic teachings. In an interview, al-ᶜUthmani addressed this development:

> In the beginning we focused on articulating general principles. Over time we became more experienced and capable of evaluating government policy in a detailed way, as well as making political deals. This is progress, and we are looking to expand this expertise in the future.[7]

Muhammad Yatim, a prominent leader in both the PJD and at-Tawhid wa'l-Islah Movement, argues that the advantages of political participation are tremendous and indispensible to any political force striving to achieve positive change in society. First, it enables political actors to establish lively and active communication channels with their constituencies, which reinforces mutual understanding and solidarity between the two sides. Second, it offers various instruments with which the political process itself can be improved. Third, it allows political actors to preserve and protect the political gains they have already achieved.[8]

Moreover, in placing economic and social issues at the core of its 2007 electoral platform "Together to Build a Just Morocco," the party demonstrated that it was on a unique evolutionary trajectory relative to the rest of the Arab Islamist scene. To be sure, the first aspect that attracts attention in the program is its level of detail, particularly on economic and public policy measures. The program includes development index data comparing Morocco's performance with that of other Arab and developing countries to show how far Morocco lags behind other countries' performance indicators, especially in terms of literacy, youth employment, and healthcare.

New ideas for economic reform are explored in depth and evaluated critically in the platform. It begins by outlining the most urgent problems facing the Moroccan economy and follows by prescribing a very specific road map for economic recovery. There are no signs that the PJD intends to demolish the current system entirely or revolutionize the economic model by introducing laws and regulations that make it more Islamic. In fact, shariᶜa does not appear at all in the economic policy section. More than that, the platform explicitly states that the party's goal is to establish reliable pillars for a healthy, competitive, open economy that is able to provide job opportunities.

Interestingly enough, the prescriptions section in the platform starts by outlining concrete policies to lift the state of research and development in the education sector, making it integral to economic development. Among the proposals are increasing governmental investment in new and technologically advanced research centers, reforming universities, providing incentives for private investments in research, emphasizing science and social studies in school curricula, and improving communication networks among researchers and specialists in similar fields of study. In terms of regulation, the party proposes revamping the rules regulating doctoral degrees and rechanneling the focus of the National Center for Science from supervision to active participation in scientific research.

On the macro level, the PJD's economic plan intends to increase GDP growth from 4.5 to 7 percent between 2008 and 2012, maintain low inflation (below 2 percent), improve the balance of trade, reduce public debt, balance the budget, increase public investments (by 7 percent annually until it reaches 20 percent of the budget in 2012), and privatize government-owned businesses. The only reference to Islam is related to Islamic banking, which the platform mentions in the context of diversifying investment tools and facilitating the participation of Islamic banks in the national economy.

In terms of social welfare policies and taxes, the PJD favors a generous redistribution of wealth to combat poverty, deal with the negative consequences of unemployment, and cover the costs of a universal health care system. The PJD also supports minimum wage laws, subsidizing agricultural ventures, and making public and private loans more accessible. The PJD's program endorses a progressive tax code that encourages innovation, does not punish productivity, and is sensitive to international competitiveness needs. The party is in favor of gradually lowering corporate taxes, while raising taxes on profits made in the stock and real estate markets.

In terms of lowering unemployment, the PJD's proposed policies focus on investing in training, education, and institutional innovation. There are also sections in the PJD's platform that deal with improving specific economic sectors like fishing and agriculture, transportation, and energy conservation. The policies are very progressive in terms of mandating government intervention to protect and improve these sectors.

The PJD's most recent parliamentary work—in the new parliamentary cycle 2007–2012—includes opposition to the 2008 budget law. The party had many reservations about the law and ultimately voted against it. It argued that the law shows the government's lack of concrete strategic plans to resolve the collective exigencies at hand and suggested that the influence of big business over the parliament has pushed the legislation in the wrong direction. PJD MPs also raised a variety of different concerns on the environment, the industrial sector, and energy policy that the law does not adequately address. The PJD tried to insert amendments to the law but was denied that right. It protested and claimed that the government and its allies in parliament violated the constitution by denying the opposition the opportunity to discuss proposed amendments.

In the past few months, the PJD raised a number of issues in parliament including accountability issues with the main electricity provider, discrimination against veiled women in the workplace, inflation, and consumer protection. This kind of parliamentary activism is in sync with the nature of the PJD's work during the previous cycle.

But despite the spate of policy activity, the PJD has largely been unsuccessful in strongly shaping or influencing the legislative process. This lack of real progress is in part the result of the mistrust that exists between the PJD and other influential forces in parliament but is primarily the consequence of the virtual powerlessness of the parliament in Morocco's semiauthoritarian environment.

Relations with Other Opposition Parties

There is a great deal of antagonism between the PJD and the leftist and secular parties in parliament. In fact, these forces spearheaded the anti-PJD media campaign following the 2003 terrorist attacks. On August 6, 2007, major leftist and secular parties including the Union of Popular Socialist Forces (USFP), al-Istiqlal Party (Independence Party), the People's Movement Party, the National Rally of Independents, and the Party of Progress and Socialism signed an antiterrorism declaration condemning radicalism and all forms of religious bigotry. The PJD did not take part in the initiative, despite its role as a major political force in the country. This reflected the persistent unease between the PJD and other opposition forces. After all, leaders of these groups have frequently denounced the PJD over the past few years, accusing it of harboring radical sentiments.

This hostility may be explained by the sudden emergence of the PJD as a dominant force in the Moroccan political scene at the expense of many of these other parties. Regardless of the root causes, the reality is that collaborative legislative work is more difficult when there is a great deal of mistrust between major parliamentary actors.

The task is made even more difficult because the Moroccan ruling establishment looks with suspicion at the PJD. During the parliamentary session (2003–2004) in which the antiterrorism law was approved, then Prime Minister Idriss Jattau delivered an impassioned speech in which he attacked the "dark forces" in

Moroccan society, a term often used by leftists to attack Islamists. The PJD had well-founded reasons to feel targeted by the state. Al-ʿUthmani acknowledged this reality in an interview: "Following the events of May 2003, many in the political class showed their leftist inclinations by trying to exploit the opportunity to discredit the PJD, accusing it of having a hand in terrorism."[9]

Recently, Fuad ʿAali al-Himma—a former state minister in the interior ministry, MP, and a close ally of the king—has announced that he is forming a new political movement. Following the 2007 election, he put together a coalition of MPs who split from their parties. The new group is calling itself Movement for All Democrats (MTD). Reportedly, this new group is intended to provide another safeguard against the growing influence of the PJD in parliament. On March 3, 2008, the privately owned Moroccan daily al-Sabah reported that the founders of the MTD have pointed out that the Islamists will be out of this initiative because the latter is a "modern, civilized project."[10] The PJD has been upset by the move and sees it as an attempt to further isolate it and fragment the parliament.

Clearly, the poor legislative performance of the PJD is in part the product of its troubled relations with other political actors, but there is another, more fundamental predicament that even in the context of good relations with other political actors will invariably hinder the PJD's various legislative initiatives. A more objective view of the PJD's legislative record has to take into account the fact that these shortcomings are directly correlated with the domination of the ruling establishment over the legislative process. The Moroccan monarchy maintains a comfortable loyal majority in parliament, which in turn prevents the activation of legislative oversight instruments and a genuine separation and balance among the various branches of government.

Impacts of PJD Participation in the Political Process

In and of itself, the participation of the PJD in the political process has not led to the realization of a healthy democratic order in Morocco, nor has it brought Morocco closer to that order. An objective assessment reveals that the limited role of Islamists and the trifling consequences of their participation merely reflect the inherent weaknesses of democratic instruments such as electoral regimes and legislative institutions in the Moroccan political setting. So, while PJD's political participation has had only limited impact on Moroccan politics, its has had significant impact on the PJD internally.

Separation and Overlap With at-Tawhid

As mentioned earlier, at-Tawhid wa'l-Islah was formed in 1996, and the PJD emerged in 1998. The relationship between daʿwa and political activism was not a major issue at the time. The May 2003 terrorist attacks in Casablanca expedited the process of reviewing the relationship between the movement and party; especially as leftist and secular parties intensified their attacks on the movement

and accused it of being responsible for terrorism. Following the attacks, the movement brought about a rapid division of labor between itself and the party.

The close ties between at-Tawhid and its political wing—the PJD—have frequently come under harsh criticism from Moroccan officials. Critics charge that the party participates in politics according to the dictates of the constitution (which bars the use of religion for political purposes) and at the same time maintains links with at-Tawhid, a religious and proselytizing movement. Indeed, many PJD cadres still maintain their positions in at-Tawhid's highest decision-making body, the executive bureau, including Muhammad Yatim (a member of the PJD's General Secretariat), ʿAbdullah Baha (Deputy Secretary General of the PJD), and ʿAbd al-Ilah Bin Kiran. On July 20, 2008, the PJD elected Kiran as Secretary General.

Certainly, many at-Tawhid and PJD members see a need to address the question once and for all in order to silence critics and to preserve at-Tawhid's religious and social character, which they feel has been compromised by the party's political engagement. Muhammad Yatim has raised this concern in recent years. Considered one of the movement's most important theorists, Yatim argues that conceptually the movement starts from an assumption that Islam is an all-encompassing religion, but that does not mean that separation between some of the movement's specialized and general activities is not necessary. Muhammad al-Hamdawi, the current president of at-Tawhid's executive bureau, often describes the relationship between the movement and the party as one of sharaka (cooperation) between two independent institutions. He views both entities as having a common goal but functioning as independent organizations. Ahmad al-Raissuni, a former president of at-Tawhid's executive bureau and its current member, frequently contends that there is some overlap between the movement and the party's activities, but that overall the party responsibilities lie in reforming state institutions and policies, whereas the movement's responsibilities lie in education and daʿwa.[11]

Others members of the movement were more concerned about the distraction that political involvement produces. Farid al-Ansari, a former member of at-Tawhid, resigned from the movement in 2000 because of this very issue. In 2007, he authored a book titled *The Six Mistakes of the Islamist Movement in Morocco*, in which he argued that involvement in politics is one the biggest mistakes committed by the movement's leadership.[12] Even al-ʿUthmani, president of the PJD, recently argued that "the best relationship between religion and politics according to Islam is not complete severance but is also not perfect union. It is rather connection but with distinction and differentiation."[13]

There is indeed plenty of evidence that confirms that the movement and the party are institutionally independent. The conditions for membership in the movement rely on religious and moral considerations. Membership for the party, however, only requires that its members share the party's political orientation and general frame of reference. Moreover, the rules for advancement

within the movement are not based on political considerations. Punitive measures also differ from the movement to the party; a member expelled from the party for political reasons will not necessarily be expelled from the movement and vice versa. All in all, at-Tawhid's activities are tailored for daᶜwa purposes, whereas the political component of the movement's agenda is entirely handled by the PJD. It bears special notice that the manner with which the movement reaches out to other Islamist groups, such as al-ᶜAdl wa'l-Ihsan, is also different from the party's approach. For instance, at-Tawhid often voices public support of al-ᶜAdl when the government cracks down on it. The party, in contrast, is typically more careful in its response to such confrontations in order to avoid provoking tensions with the regime. So, when Nadia Yassin—ᶜAbdul Salam Yassin's daughter and the unofficial spokeswoman of al-ᶜAdl—said in a 2005 interview that the monarchical regime is inadequate for Morocco, the PJD's leadership hastened to condemn her remarks.[14]

Separation between the movement and the party on the level of membership remains a major issue. The movement's members constitute the vast majority of the party's overall membership and leadership. However, there are a number of regulations that prevent the movement's president of the executive bureau and his deputy from occupying any positions in the party. In fact, al-Hamdawi resigned from the PJD upon his election as president of the executive bureau. The substantial overlap in membership can be explained by the fact that the PJD is a relatively young political party; it is likely to grow more independent with time. The party's electoral successes and activities in parliament may ultimately help the party reach out to new constituencies that do not necessarily share at-Tawhid's religious predispositions.

Elections and the Postparticipation Debate

As mentioned earlier, despite much effort expended in engaging in parliamentary challenges, the PJD has remained an inconsequential force in terms of shaping government policy. It can credit no major pieces of legislation to its name and has continued to struggle to find common ground with other opposition groups in parliament. This, many analysts contend, has been one of the major causes of its underperformance in the 2007 legislative elections.

Thirty-three political parties and thirteen independent electoral lists contested the chamber's 325 seats in the 2007 elections. (Thirty seats are reserved for women, based on a quota system introduced prior to the previous parliamentary elections, which were held in 2002.) Eighteen parties ran candidates in at least 50 percent of the country's ninety-five electoral districts. Five parties were represented in almost every district: the two governing parties (the USFP and the Independence Party—al-Istiqlal), the main Islamist opposition party (PJD), the Popular Movement, and the National Rally of Independents.

Explaining the 2007 Election Results

The results of the 2007 parliamentary elections surprised many observers. The Independence Party finished the race in a leading position, with 52 seats (16 percent of the popular vote), followed by the PJD with 46 seats (14 percent of the popular vote). The Popular Movement and the National Rally of Independents finished third and fourth, with forty-one and thirty-nine seats, respectively. The party that formerly held the most seats, the USFP, was reduced to possession of just 38 seats. The fall of the USFP was widely expected because of a series of internal conflicts and splits within the party as well as the poor record of the governing coalition. However, the strong showing of the Independence Party, the USFP's longtime coalition partner, is puzzling. However, two factors likely play a part in explaining this outcome: (1) the strength of the Independence Party's appeal to traditionally religious constituencies in Morocco; and (2) the party's strong networks of support in some rural areas.

The PJD's results came as the biggest surprise. Prior to the elections, expectations were high regarding the Islamists' potential gains, especially against the background of Western and domestic polls predicting an unstoppable rise of the PJD. During the final phase of the election campaign, the party leadership expressed high optimism, stating publicly that seventy to eighty seats were within reach and that the party would be the strongest bloc in the parliament. The fact that the PJD added only four additional seats in 2007—going up from 42 in 2002 to 46—stunned PJD leadership and pundits alike. Initial statements by prominent party figures were characterized by an angry tone and harsh accusations of vote buying by other parties.[15]

Local and international monitoring groups confirmed that the elections were conducted in a fair and transparent manner. However, there were a number of reports of violations involving vote buying in both urban and rural areas. Remarkably, voter turnout plunged to a historical low of 37 percent, down from 51 percent in the 2002 elections and 58 percent in 1997. Poor participation marred the process despite significant get-out-the-vote efforts by the government as well as by political parties and civil society organizations. Government agencies and various nongovernmental organizations conducted voter-education programs, especially in impoverished urban areas, and leading political parties announced detailed electoral platforms several weeks before the elections and publicized them heavily. Most platforms tackled the economic and social needs of the population, and, at least in the case of the USFP, the Independence Party, and the PJD, concrete policy measures were included. Despite all of these efforts, Moroccans' waning level of interest in electoral politics persisted.

Postelectoral Dilemmas

It appears that the inability of the parliament to play an active role in policy implementation has resulted in a growing disenchantment with parliamentary politics that has dimmed prospects for broader participation in the political

process. Wide segments of the population have come to see the parliament as a failed institution that can do little to solve their pressing economic and social problems. It is worth noting that Morocco has sustained one of the highest unemployment rates in North Africa over the past two decades. Continuous efforts to alleviate poverty have had little real effect on the welfare of the country's poor. Major cities such as Casablanca, Rabat, and Marrakech have become encircled by dilapidated settlements, extending into the rural heartland, that breed social illnesses such as religious extremism, juvenile criminality, and illegal migration by young people to the developed countries of the West.

Since 1998, many formerly hopeful Moroccan citizens have become increasingly skeptical about the capacity of the various Moroccan political parties to carry out meaningful socioeconomic reforms. In a remarkable turn of events that year that ended decades of political upheaval, the late King Hassan II asked the former opposition parties (the USFP and the Independence Party) to form a coalition government. The two parties, operating in coalition with royalist and regional parties, have constituted the core of every Moroccan government since then. But little progress has come out of this transformation.

The popular hopes of substantive reforms set in motion in 1998 have diminished greatly. The USFP and the Independence Party did well enough in the 2002 elections to cling to leadership of their coalition regime: The USFP won 50 seats in the House of Representatives, and the runner-up Independence Party 46. The two parties' popular appeal was shrinking, however, as the decline in voter turnout (51 percent, down from 58 percent in 1997) and the rise of the Islamist PJD demonstrated.

Since Muhammad VI ascended to the throne in 1999, the process of political opening has continued. The political sphere has become more diverse, and safeguards for human rights have strengthened remarkably. However, improvements in the conditions of the political process have stopped short of addressing the two central impediments to democratic transition in Morocco—the concentration of power in royal hands and the absence of credible checks and balances. In addition, as noted earlier, the electoral system, which is based on proportional representation, consistently produces a fragmented parliament whose influence is easily checked by the monarchy. The major outcomes of these structural deficiencies have been diminished parliamentary credibility and weaker political parties.

The deficient performance of political parties, whether governing coalition or opposition, has greatly exacerbated the problem. Over the last ten years, the coalition governments led by the USFP and the Independence Party have failed to develop credible programs to resolve Morocco's severe socioeconomic predicaments. Worse, these governments have been marked by corrupt practices that have jeopardized the historical legacy of the USFP and the Independence Party as opponents of government corruption. The efforts of the parliamentary parties to reach a balanced distribution of power among the king, the cabinet,

and the legislature have yielded no tangible results. The monarchy has system-atically balked at introducing constitutional reforms in the areas pertaining to the decision-making powers of the cabinet—specifically those endowed in the office of the prime minister—and to the oversight powers of the parliament. The outcome has been a burgeoning mistrust of traditional political forces, which recent efforts by different parties at organizational and programmatic renewal have failed to contain.

But even the fresh and untainted PJD has suffered from popular mistrust. Although the party has managed in recent years to develop stable and increasing-ly well-organized constituencies in urban centers, especially among the younger segments of the Moroccan population, its popular appeal has remained limited. Instead, the followers of Yassin's al-ᶜAdl have advanced to the forefront of the movement toward Islamization in Morocco, focusing their activism on prosely-tization and the provision of social services. Because of its rejectionist attitude toward the monarchy and its leadership's claim that the whole political system is corrupt and therefore cannot be reformed gradually, al-ᶜAdl's leaders have sys-tematically criticized the PJD for its participation in parliamentary politics and have accused the party leadership of being submissive to the monarchy.

The popularity of the fundamentalist opposition rhetoric of al-ᶜAdl among Islamist constituencies has kept the PJD from mobilizing wide segments of the disenfranchised population. As a result, the PJD is increasingly finding itself in a new position in which it has to justify its continued commitment to politi-cal participation and to take into account the high cost and low return of this course. Islamist constituencies, it seems, need to be convinced of the validity and indispensability of participation as a strategic choice.

Based on the current discourse observed in the PJD, there appear to be two articulations in discussion. The first suggests that participation allows the PJD to use various institutional instruments and methods to protect itself from the ruling establishment's repression. In addition, participation allows the party to maintain a public presence, which, in and of itself, helps it maintain cohesion within its ranks and a lively rapport with the constituencies. The second articu-lation suggests that through participation, the PJD can maintain an active pub-lic role in the struggle for gradual and meaningful political reform in Morocco. Remarkably, it is evident that the first articulation has gained more traction in times of tension with the monarchy, especially after the arrests of al-Badil's lead-ers, whereas the second has become more relevant in times of relative stability in that relationship.

Moreover, the PJD is struggling to redefine a sustainable and practical bal-ance between the pragmatic demands of participation and those dictated by the Islamist frame of reference. Given the restricted political environment in Morocco, and various conditions imposed by the ruling establishment, the PJD has adopted moderate positions on various societal and political matters. At the same time, it has had to be careful not to alienate wide segments of its

constituencies drawn to it because of its religious frame of reference. Doubtless, the task of finding the balance between pragmatism and ideological commitment is becoming progressively more difficult, especially in light of growing popular disenchantment with the political process and the increased significance of strong rejectionist Islamist currents. As of now, the PJD has plunged into exhaustive debates about the movement's priorities with the costly consequence of losing its sense of strategic orientation.

Conclusion

Even though the PJD failed to meet expectations in the 2007 elections and is now grappling with the dilemmas of participation in semiauthoritarian environments, it has effectively moved from the status of an outsider to that of insider. The PJD has become well entrenched in the Moroccan political process, and its 2002 gains were not just a temporary breakthrough. In the 2007 elections, the PJD fielded candidates in 94 out of 95 districts (compared with only 56 districts in 2002), and the extent of their political organization and their progressive agenda has been acknowledged by both the media and political observers. Moreover, they remain in the opposition, which can be advantageous, given the considerable popular discontent with the former and current governments.

The threat of the popular al-ᶜAdl is unlikely to jeopardize the PJD's political weight, unless al-ᶜAdl enters into the political process. Yet, even if the PJD's popularity grows in the coming years, the challenges posed by the concentration of power in royal hands, the electoral system, and state-sponsored gerrymandering are likely to persist and result in containing the PJD's political role.

Notes

1   For more on arrests in Morocco plot, see al-Jazeera, February 23, 2008, <http://english.aljazeera.net>.

2   See Morocco arrests (in Arabic), February 23, 2008, <http://www.aljazeera.net>.

3   "U.S. Democracy Promotion Policy in the Middle East: The Islamist Dilemma," CRS Report for Congress (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, June 15, 2006), p. 11.

4   Interview with Saᶜad al-Din al-ᶜUthmani, *al-Khalij Newspaper*, February 13, 2004.

5   Interview with ᶜAbdullah Baha, November 23, 2006, <http://www.Ikhwanweb.com>.

6   Interview with Saᶜad al-Din al-ᶜUthmani, *Arab Reform Bulletin*, December 2005.

7   Interview with Saᶜad al-Din al-ᶜUthmani, *Arab Reform Bulletin*, December 2005.

8   Interview with Muhammad Yatim, November 14, 2005, <http://www.IslamOnline.com>.

9   Interview with Saᶜad al-Din al-ᶜUthmani, *Arab Reform Bulletin*, December 2005.

10 "The Islamists Left Out of the Movement for All Democrats," *al-Sabah*, March 3, 2008.

11 For more on this topic, see Hussam Tamam, "Separating Islam from Political Islam: The Case of Morocco," *Arab Insight*, vol. 1, no.1 (Spring 2007), p. 99.

12 For a book review (in Arabic), see Usama ᶜAdnan and ᶜAbdulawi Likhlafah, May 8, 2007, <http://www.IslamOnline.net>.

13 See Saᶜad al-Din al-ᶜUthmani, "Religion and Politics" (in Arabic), January 3, 2008, <http://www.IslamOnline.com>.

14 Interview with Nadia Yassin (in Arabic), June 5, 2006, <http://www.daralhayat.com>.

15 See, for example, news coverage of PJD MP Mustapha al-Ramid's statements in parliament following the elections, in *al-Maghribiyyah*, November 1, 2007.

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