

Policy Roundtable - Moroccan Elections

GLD recently held a policy roundtable to discuss the elections. The panelists included Saloua Zerhouni, Professor of Political Science at Mohammed V University; Romain Ferrali, Assistant Professor at Aix-Marseille School of Economics and scientific advisor to Tadra; and Francesco Colin, a researcher at the International Institute of Social Studies at Erasmus University in Rotterdam. Marwa Shalaby, Assistant Professor of Political Science and Gender and Women's Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a GLD associate, chaired the event. This brief highlights the key conclusions from the roundtable.

Hegemony between ruling parties

The September 2021 elections were Morocco's first tripartite elections, ushering in a major parliamentary shift. The Justice and Development Party (PJD), an Islamist party that had ruled since 2011, lost power to royalist parties. The National Rally of Independents (RNI) won the largest majority of votes in the parliamentary, municipal, and regional elections, marking the first instance of party hegemony across the national and local levels.

The new cabinet dominance

The new cabinet is dominated by technocrats-experts in their fields, but disconnected from the Moroccan people. The dominant parties are royalists, led by those with direct connections to the palace. Four members of the new government were part of the Special Commission for the New Development Model, while the Ministries considered a royal prerogative have not changed between governments.

Conclusion

Moroccans and others in the international community should not be sanguine about Morocco's stability. Morocco appears to be one of the most stable regimes in the region, but there are internal pressures that may undermine it.

Main Takeaways:

1. The election results reflect the Moroccan population's discontent with politicians. This was in large part the result of a campaign aimed at discrediting the PJD.
2. The participation rate, widely celebrated in Morocco and abroad as a manifestation of wide popular engagement, is in fact quite average in comparison to results of past local elections.
3. There is very little available data from the election on which to base systematic, independent analyses. This lack of data, in combination with election debate restrictions and unfair campaign rules, provides some parties an advantage over others. Consequently, although the international community declared it a free and fair election, there is reason to question the quality of elections.
4. The dominance of parties with close connections to the palace may have destabilizing effects. This removes the clear distance between the parties and the palace, which has allowed the parliament to act as a buffer for the king. Ultimately, this may weaken Morocco's regime.
5. Compared to the 2015 local elections, local politicians are becoming more diverse, further fragmenting local councils and potentially decreasing their efficacy.

To access more information on the roundtable, contact:

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About GLD

The Program on Governance and Local Development (GLD) is a research program based at the University of Gothenburg, originally founded in 2013 at Yale University by Program Director, Professor Ellen Lust. GLD focuses on the local factors driving governance and development. The program is dedicated to international collaboration and scientifically rigorous, policy-relevant research in an effort to promote human welfare globally. Program findings are made available to the international and domestic communities through academic publications, policy briefs, public presentations, and social media, as well as on-the-ground workshops in cooperation with local partners.



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