TEIM Election Watch Analysis

ELECTORAL REPORT:

MOROCCO / Local elections
12 June 2009

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Background to the elections:

In Morocco's local elections held on 12 June 2009, the control of the country's 1,503 municipal councils (1,282 rural and 221 urban municipalities) was decided, as was the distribution of some 27,795 council seats between 30 political parties, one alliance of three left-wing parties and a few independent candidates. But much more was at stake. The political climate continued to be marked by the *lessons* of the September 2007 parliamentary elections, especially by the fear of once again registering abstention rates similar to or higher than the 63% reached in those elections.[1] Participation in the parliamentary elections was the lowest in Morocco's electoral history and dealt a psychological blow that revolutionised the party situation in Morocco during the almost two years that separated the two elections.

Attempts to counteract the general lack of interest among Moroccans towards election politicking and reduce the number of parties included the creation, in 2008, of the new Authenticity and Modernity Party (PAM),[2] founded by the former deputy minister of the interior and personal friend of the king, Fouad Ali al-Himma,[3] from the fusion of five pre-existing parties – the National Democratic Party (PND), Al-Ahd (The Covenant), the Environment and Development Party (PED), the Alliance of Liberties (AL) and the Civic Initiative for Development (ICD), all of which, with the exception the PND, were of little importance and had little representation – with The Movement for All Democrats (MTD) association.

The goal of the new party was to become a magnet that could bring together the largest number of political parties, especially the smallest ones, although from the beginning, it was burdened by internecine power struggles between the leaders of the different merged parties. The final coup de theatre, when the run-up to the 2009 local elections was already well underway, was its withdrawal of parliamentary support from the El Fassi government. This was a response to a much talked-about confrontation with the Interior Ministry, which had tried in vain to curb the defection of deputies and councillors from other parties to the PAM by applying the Party Law. This move into the opposition marked the pre-election debate and created a level of uncertainty about the continuity of the government.

Other preparations for these elections included the revision of the municipal code (*Charte Communale*) and the Electoral Code (Law No. 9-97), approved by the parliament in 2008.[4] At the beginning of 2009, an extraordinary review of the electoral roll was also carried out that resulted in the elimination of more than 3.6 million registered voters for different reasons (duplicate registrations, inadequate identification, etc.), at the same time that 1.6 million new names were included on the lists. The resulting balance was 2.1 million fewer voters than in the 2007

[1] Participation followed a downward trend in the last four local elections, although it never breached the psychological barrier of 50%: 1983 (71.94%); 1992 (62.75%); 1997 (75.14%) and 2003 (54.16%).

[2] The inaugural party congress called for by the new 2006 Party Law took place in February 2009.

[3] Al-Himma had resigned from his post to run as an independent candidate for the parliamentary elections in 2007 and later formed the largest parliamentary group in the House of Representatives (78 deputies) based on defections from other political parties. This group provided fundamental support for Abbas El Fassi's new coalition government (PI, USFP, PPS and RNI).

[4] The intention of the first reform was to reinforce the powers of local communities in all aspects relating to economic development and good government. The second introduced innovations like the specification of documents needed to vote, the right of parties to request copies of the electoral roll and the determination of municipalities located in nomadic areas.

elections (13,360,219 vs. 15,462,362). This statistical readjustment automatically improved the participation rate, which is calculated using the number of registered voters and not the total number of people with the right to vote. The voters included now make up less than 70% of a potential electoral body estimated at some 20 million.

Quantitative indices of democracy:

Morocco was classified in the following democratic performance rankings just before these elections:

Measurement	Name and year of report or database	Institution	Index	Points, ranking and classification
Political rights and freedom	Freedom House Report 2008	Freedom House (FH)	PR: political rights CL: civil liberties	PR: 5, CL: 4 (Scale of 1, free to 7, not free) Classification: Partly free
Degree of democracy in earlier elections	Polyarchy 2.0 2003 (referring to the 2002 elections)	Peace Research Institute of Oslo and Tatu Vanhanen	ID: Synthetic democracy index, Part: participation, Comp: competition	ID: 4.24, max. 49 Part: 12.1, max. 70 Comp: 35, max. 70 (Democracy minimum: ID: 5, Part: 10, Comp: 30) Classification: non-democratic
Consolidation of authoritarian and democratic institutions	Polity IV 2007	Center for International Development and Conflict Management, Univ. of Maryland	Democracy: consolidation of democratic institutions Autocracy: authoritarian consolidation Polity: synthesis of both	Democracy: 0 Autocracy: 6 Polity: -6 (Scale of +10, very democratic to -10, very authoritarian) Classification: Authoritarian
Perception of corruption	Transparency International Corruption Perception Index 2008	Transparency International (TI)	TICPI: corruption perceptions index	TCPI: 3.5 points out of 10, (Scale of 1, very corrupt to 10, not at all corrupt) Rank: 80 out of 180 countries
Management of political and economic change	Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI) 2008	Bertelsmann Foundation	MI: Management Index, quality of transformation management	MI: 4.60 points out of 10, Rank: 80 out of 125 countries Classification: Management with moderate success
Democracy, including press status and corruption	World Democracy Audit Oct. 2008	World Audit	World Democracy Rank: political freedom (FH) + press and corruption (TI)	World Democracy Ranking: 95 out of 150 countries, division 4 out of 4

The elections analysed in this profile produced the following electoral democracy quantitative results:

Degree of democracy in these elections	Measurement of democracy in these elections according to the Polyarchy 2.0 index, calculated by TEIM Election Watch	ID: 17.5, max. 49 Part: 22.4[5] max. 70 Comp: 78.3 [6]max. 70 (Democracy minimum: ID: 5, Part: 10, Comp: 30)	Classification of the elections: Democratic

Definition of the political system and parties:

The electoral system used for local elections in Morocco is a mixed one that varies according to a demographic criterion, which, in practice, means that urban and rural areas are dealt with differently. In the 92 municipalities with more than 35,000 inhabitants, a one-round largest remainder proportional list system is applied. Each municipality forms a single constituency, except for the six cities in the country with more than 500,000 inhabitants (Casablanca, Rabat, Salé, Fez, Marrakech and Tangier), which are divided into 41 electoral districts (*arrondissements électoraux*). In the 1,411 municipalities that do not reach the first population threshold (1,269 rural and 142 urban municipalities), a one-round single-member first-past-the-post system is applied: the number of electoral constituencies equals the number of corresponding councillors, varying in each case according to the number of inhabitants. The vote threshold needed to obtain representation was set at 6% (3% in 2003) in order to reduce the proliferation of political parties. Another innovation was the creation of supplementary electoral constituencies in all of the municipalities and districts which, due to a political pact between all of the parties, are set aside *de facto* for women, thus establishing a quota for women's representation of 12%.

Impact of the electoral process and size of the constituency on the elections:

In theory, since individual candidacies have been abolished, the electoral list system applied in those municipalities with more than 35,000 inhabitants should contribute to reducing vote buying and other fraudulent practices related to clientelism. What is less clear is how proportional representation would help to rationalise the political landscape, curbing the tendency towards fragmentation and an increasing number of parties, when Duverger's law predicts exactly the opposite. Among other things, this formula has the perverse effect of discouraging the formation of alliances before elections, since those lists with the highest number of votes are not rewarded in terms of representation beyond the strict application of proportionality. With the exception of the time when the local government team, the mayor or the Council President are chosen, the rapprochements between parties are thus meaningless.

On the other hand, the single-member voting system used in the smaller municipalities tends to favour parties that include more notable locals in their ranks. When the population threshold that divides the municipalities with a proportional list or first-past-the-post system was raised from 25,000 to 35,000

[5] Participation was calculated out of a participation of 7,005,050 voters and a population of 31,491,578 inhabitants, according to the numbers from Morocco's *Haut Commissariat au Plan* for 7 June 2009.

[6] Competition was calculated by subtracting the seats won by the winning party, PAM, from the total seats.

inhabitants between 2003 and 2009, it affected a total of 43 towns. Most observers believed that extending this voting system would benefit local political bosses and notables.

Judging by the results of these elections, the increase in the minimum percentage of votes needed to obtain representation in the local councils from 3% to 6% did contribute to reducing fragmentation of the representation of the political parties. At national level, eight parties together obtained 89.3% of the seats and 84.4% of the votes, while another 16 parties obtained a total of fewer than 100 seats, i.e., 1%. This should help the governability of the local councils, since most of them are now led by coalitions of between 2 and 5 parties, instead of between 4 and 8, as in the last parliamentary term. It would also prevent the formation of minority oppositions.

Results:

Participation: 52.4%; 7,005,050 votes out of 13,360,219 registered voters. Spoilt votes (including blank votes): 11%.

Party initials	Seats won	% of seats	Votes won	% of votes
PAM	6,015	21.7	1,155,247	18.7
PI	5,292	19.1	1,022,662	16.6
RNI	4,112	14.8	802,631	13
USFP	3,226	11.6	667,986	10.8
MP	2,213	8	488,814	7.9
PJD	1,513	5.5	460,774	7.5
UC	1,307	4.7	317,509	5.1
PPS	1,102	4	261,778	4.2
FFD	678	2.4	177,020	2.9
AID[7]	475	1.7	133,956	2.2
MDS	319	1.2	87,645	1.4
Ahd Demo	294	1.1	77,875	1.3
PL	288	1	102,457	1.7
PRE	181	0.7	69,694	1.1
PMR	106	0.4	40,665	0.7
PML	90	0.3	33,960	0.6
PUD	84	0.3	32,044	0.5
PRD	82	0.3	34,886	0.6
PS	81	0.3	32,979	0.5
PFC	47	0.2	26,760	0.4
PCS	47	0.2	20,416	0.3
PRV	30	0.1	22,982	0.4
PAN	23	0.1	12,814	0.2
PA	21	0.1	12,965	0.2
PE	14	0.1	14,318	0.2
PSD	12	0.0	4,273	0.1
PLJS	7	0.0	11,166	0.2
PUMD	7	0.0	5,745	0.1
SAP	72	0.3	39,909	0.6
Total	**27,738**	**100**	**6,171,930**	**100**

These are the results published by the Interior Ministry the day after the election. In the results published later on their webpage (http://www.elections2009.gov.ma/res/Default.aspx) there are slight differences, but they scarcely modify the initial situation. In the distribution of the seats, the

[7] Left Democratic Alliance (PSU-CNI-PADS).

PAM managed to win in all of the single-member constituencies, i.e., in the rural areas, while the PJD was the winner in all of the constituencies with list candidates. In the 25 cities with more than 100,000 inhabitants, the PJD won 364 seats of the 1,784 at stake (20.4%), ahead of the RNI (268: 15.1%), PAM (250: 14%) and Istiqlal (241: 13.5%). These 25 cities, according to the 2004 census, contain a total of 10,837,038 inhabitants, i.e., more than a third of the 29 million for that year. Their seats, on the other hand, only make up 6.4% of the total of the 27,738 in the country.

Qualitative analysis of the elections:

Participation:

The national results announced the day after the elections included the lowest participation rate in the history of local elections in Morocco: 52.4% (7,005,050 voters out of 13,360,219 registered voters). This meant a decrease of more than two points with respect to the 2003 data (54.6%). However, the precedent set by the 2007 parliamentary elections (37%) was so negative that the Interior Minister described the 2009 participation as 'very encouraging'. Despite the fact that participation in the municipal elections in Morocco is usually higher than in the parliamentary elections, during the campaign, the Ministry hardly even dared to predict 50%.

When it comes to analysing these data, it is essential to bear in mind, firstly, that the participation percentage is calculated with respect to the number of registered voters, less than 70% of the total estimated number of people with the right to vote. Using a hypothetical figure of 20 million voters, participation would drop to 35%. Secondly, the official 2009 rate increased as a consequence of the recent purge of the electoral rolls, which reduced the number of registered voters by 2.1 million with respect to 2007 (-13.6%). Some observers perceived the undeclared objective behind the revision of the rolls was to mask the abstention rate. Finally, the spoilt vote rate, put at 11.89%, was quite a bit lower than that of the 2007 parliamentary elections (20%), although it was two points higher than the 2003 municipal election rate (9.74%). The Interior Ministry highlighted this point as positive, considering the confusion that could result from recent changes in the voting method and ballot papers (especially because of the introduction of supplementary electoral constituencies).

From a geographical point of view – and as is the norm in Moroccan elections – the highest participation rates were recorded in the provinces of the Western Sahara (Boujdour, 69%; Smara, 68%; Oued Eddahab, 61% and Laayoune, 58%), which was officially interpreted as a sign of 'these citizens' attachment to their *Moroccan-ness* and the territorial integrity of the Kingdom'. The lowest rates corresponded to the urban centres of the big cities.

Competition:

In addition to independents, 30 political parties and one alliance of three parties (PSU, CNI and PADS) participated in these elections, with a total of 130,223 candidacies. On a national level, the party with the highest number of candidates was the PAM (12.95%) followed by the PI (12.09%), the RNI (9.63%), the USFP (9.4%) and the PJD (6.82%). Half of the candidacies were held by these five large political forces. The PAM candidates largely corresponded to the rural world, where they represented 19.03% (in the cities they represented only 7.71%). This was also true for the PI (17.24% of the rural candidates and 7.65% of the urban), and to a lesser extent, the USFP, RNI and MP. On the other hand,

the PJD ran more candidates in the cities (7.22%) than in the towns (6.35%), as did the PPS and the UC.

Because of the new quota system, 20,458 women candidates ran, representing 15.8% of the total. Out of this group, 3,406 were elected, a number that, when compared with the 127 female councillors elected in 2003 when no women's quota existed, means an increase of more than 2,500%.

Among the more representative political forces that stayed out of the competition was, most notably, the Justice and Spirituality Movement (*Al Adl wal Ihsan*), an officially banned, but tolerated Islamist organisation that prefers to stay on the margin of the political system and promotes abstention from electoral politics, without, however, openly advocating their boycott. The Marxist party, Democratic Way (*Annahj Addimocrati*), on the other hand, which did call for a boycott was prevented from speaking on public radio and television during these elections. Their rallies in favour of the boycott were also forbidden and suppressed in different cities, which did not happen in the 2007 parliamentary elections.

Two other parties that were also not allowed to participate in the elections were Civilised Alternative (*Al Badil Al Hadari*) and the Amazigh Democratic Party. The former, which is Islamist in nature, was dissolved in January 2008 because of the presumed involvement of some of its leaders in a terrorist network that was dismantled by the police. The latter did not receive the official authorisation required by the new Party Law because it was considered fundamentally ethnic-based.

Transparency:

The Interior Ministry created a central cell responsible for supervising the entire election process and adopted preventative and disciplinary measures against 500 public authorities in order to guarantee the neutrality of the Administration. Complaints from some parties had more to do with the Administration's 'passive neutrality' or its permissiveness in the face of private fraud. Indeed, greater involvement by the authorities in the fight against vote buying and other reported fraudulent practices was lacking from the run-up to the election right through until the establishment of the local councils.[8] According to the Interior Ministry, a total of 1,767 irregularities were reported.

On voting day, the TEIM Electoral Watch team observed the absence of party-observers in many polling places (especially in rural areas) and the lack of voter registration cards for some people who were registered on the lists. Some party militants reported the use of money and coercion to influence voters, the intervention of public authorities to encourage votes for some candidates just before the polls closed and a power cut during the vote-counting in Casablanca. The observers from the *Forum Civil Démocratique du Maroc* (FCDM) registered some isolated acts of violence in Casablanca, Fez and Sefru. The Secretary-General of the PJD, Abdelilah Benkirane, spoke of vote buying cases and assaults against party-observers during voting in a press communiqué. There were officially more than 1,000 national and international observers of the elections, all coordinated by the Human Rights Advisory Council. The general diagnosis was that the elections took place under good circumstances and without any irregularities.

[8] The most often reported infractions were the start-up of public works shortly before and during the campaign, the distribution of vouchers in the name of national promotion to the most underprivileged social strata, the use of public transport for propaganda purposes, the recruitment of people with criminal records, the use of children during the campaign, vote buying, and the kidnap and bribery of councillors during the establishment of the local councils.

Party representation and debate during the election:

It has been a long time since the political parties were able to attract and mobilise the citizenry and, specifically, young people. Less than 2% of the population is a member of a political party. This has led to the need to recruit outside candidates, who some consider to be 'mercenaries', to be able to cover all of the national territory. The parties with the most financial resources, therefore, had greater territorial representation. It is also important to remember that only those political parties that pass the 5% vote threshold at national level have the right to financial assistance from the state to help with campaign expenses. This threshold excluded one of the government coalition parties, the PPS. Furthermore, despite the disillusionment – or virtual rift – between the youth in some parties and the parties' leading organs, the lists of candidates included a higher proportion of young people due to the need to fill them, but they were always in low positions.

During the campaign, the media debate was dominated by the exchange of statements between the leaders of the different parties brought about by the PAM's move into the opposition and the strong presence of the representatives of this party. In addition to conventional media, SMS telephone messages, advertisement spots on the Internet and personalised webpages were also used for propaganda purposes.

Openness:

These elections did not hold any big surprises, since the PAM's victory was among the results predicted by most observers. However, the coalitions that emerged in the phase of creating the local councils could be described as unprecedented. The rivalry to obtain the positions of mayor in the big cities resulted in ideologically incoherent alliances, such as the one that joined the PJD and USFP in Rabat. This local coexistence may entail a greater understanding between some groups and more clarity in the positions of others.

Significance:

The consequences of this type of election can be evaluated at both local and national levels. From the local perspective, their importance depends on the real powers that the local communities have. The new municipal code includes the important innovation of reinforcing the prerogatives of the presidents of the local councils, but this does not put an end to the tutelage of the Interior Ministry: the authority of the elected position of mayor is still subject to the administrative authority of the *wali* or governor. Moreover, in cities with more than 500,000 inhabitants, the replacement of the constitutive councils of the large old urban communities with new districts was paired with a reduction in the powers of their presidents to the benefit of the so-called 'super-mayors' of the big cities. At national level, the PAM's victory and its role in alliances at local level confirm it as a key player that will mark the Moroccan political scene from now until 2012.

Finally, the advance towards greater representation of women in the administration of local affairs could give rise to some level of renovation among the elites within the political parties.

Consequences and impact on the political system:

These elections did not change much, despite the fact, they were won by a theoretically new party. The *status quo* that characterises the Moroccan political system was maintained, i.e., the tendency towards fragmentation of the parties

and the regime's authoritarian consolidation, with a super-party present in all the important municipalities that can be expected to apply the model of society proposed by the king and may serve as a wild card in many of the alliances needed to form the local councils (whose ideological incoherence, in all other respects, has left many observers feeling confused). Furthermore, the weakness of the El Fassi government brought about by the PAM's move into the opposition, which has left it in the parliamentary minority, may make it possible for the monarchy to more freely wield its 'executive dimension'.

International political reaction:

These elections did not have much reverberation in the international media, since they coincided with other more interesting elections, like the parliamentary elections in Lebanon and the presidential elections in Iran. The only international television channel that followed the elections closely was Al Jazeera. Some newspapers in countries like Spain, France and Algeria published the results, stressing the victory of the new party, the PAM, and the PJD's fall to sixth place.

Conclusions

These local elections took place with the regularity and normality of all the elections in the era of Mohammed VI. In addition to the neutrality – at times passive – of the state authorities, it is important to note the dynamic of growing democratic control, not only by the political class, but also by the civil society. The negative aspect is that once more, the importance of the candidates' stature and ethnic and family membership was confirmed, not only in rural areas, but also in the cities (this phenomenon is especially marked in the Western Sahara), as well as the use of money. Many of the pacts between the political parties and candidates were negotiated to obtain seats at any price, more than in relation to ideology or programmes. This especially encourages political *nomadism* or a tendency to defect by the so-called 'lords of the elections'. Additionally, the results of these elections met the main expectations of the international community regarding Morocco's political evolution – participation higher than 50%, 12% women's representation, moderation of the Islamist advance – and make it possible for the regime to present an image of institutional modernity and 'democratic' stability.

Reference to another Internet analysis of this election:

Forum civil démocratique marocain [FCDM]: "Rapport synthétique de l'observation du FCDM des élections communales du 12 juin 2009, en partenariat avec le CERSS", disponible en
http://arab-reform.net/IMG/pdf/Rapport_des_elections_communales_ar-2.pdf (versión en árabe)
http://cerss.ma/Rapport%20des%20%C3%A9lections%20communales%20fr.pdf (versión en francés).

Reports from the Moroccan Organisation for Human Rights OMDH]: "Informe de la observación de las elecciones comunales del 12 de junio de 2009 en Rabat y Laayun, (versión árabe) disponible en:
http://www.omdh.org/def.asp?codelangue=29&id_info=1225