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In the Name of His Majesty: Morocco's Parliamentary Elections of 2011

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On 25 November 2011, Morocco held early parliamentary elections. Originally, the elections were to be held in 2012 and were then scheduled for 7 October 2011. The change of dates occurred as a consequence of the constitutional amendments that were approved in a referendum in July and ratified in September. Early legislative elections had already been held in 2011, as King Mohammed VI hoped that these would defuse the social protests that erupted on 20 February in the context of what is widely called the Arab Spring, provide the Moroccan polity with greater legitimacy and, most of all, secure a victory for non-religious parties.

In the highly charged atmosphere in the region, the results of the polls could hardly surprise anyone who is familiar with Moroccan and, in fact, North African politics: the Justice and Development Party (PJD), a moderate Islamist party which had already obtained 46 seats in the parliamentary elections of 2007, managed to secure 27.1% of the votes, obtain 107 seats and become the largest single parliamentary group. Prime Minister Abbas El-Fassi's Istiqlal Party came second with a share of 15.2% (60 seats), followed by the National Rally of Independents (RNI), which won 13.2% (52 seats), and the monarchist Authenticity and Modernity Party (PAM), which gained 11.9% (47 seats). With a share of 9.9% of the vote, the Socialist Union of Popular Forces (USFP), led by the Speaker of the lower chamber, Abdelwahed Radi, obtained 39 seats whereas the conservative-liberal Popular Movement secured only 8.1% of the vote. This translates into 32 seats and, compared to the 41 seats the party gained in the last elections, in 2007, this represents the biggest loss of seats of all the parties. The remaining six parties, which belong to the G-8, the Coalition for Democracy, or the *Koutla*, gained a total of 11.7%; it is noteworthy, moreover, that the Socialist Party and the Party of Renaissance and Virtue (PRV) lost all their seats and are no longer represented in parliament.

What do these results mean for the political development of Morocco? To what extent are they representative of the demands of the majority of the Moroccan people, and what are the implications for regime-opposition relations?

In contrast to the rationale of M6, as the King is widely known in Morocco, the elections did not provide him with the much sought-after breathing space that he was hoping to generate in the light of widespread societal and, above all, publicly expressed dissatisfaction. Although the turnout was 8% higher than in 2007 and the EU welcomed the elections as "an important step in the on-going process of democratic reform" in the country, the fact that only 45.4% of the registered electorate participated in a poll that was boycotted by the 20 February Movement and the *Al Adl Wal Ihsan* – the Justice and Charity Party (JCP) – reveals that the *Makhzen*, the Royal Palace, failed once more to mobilize a truly representative cross-section of the voters. The turnout must also be seen critically, given that numerous reports indicate that up to 20% of all votes may have been spoiled and that a considerable number of voters were not even registered and thus ineligible to vote. Hence, although Moroccans are overwhelmingly in favor of the constitutional changes that M6 initiated, mainly in response to the impression made by the Tunisian revolution and to the growing protests in the first half of 2011, the elections do not reflect greater trust in the do-

mestic political institutions but, rather, leave much space for speculation about the true political preferences of the large number of non-voters.

The PJD's overwhelming victory – as much as En-Nahda's recent electoral victory in Tunisia – does not necessarily indicate a sudden trend towards greater Islamization of Moroccan and thus North African politics. Apart from the fact that the party's leaders have repeatedly pointed to its moderate ideology and its allegiance to the King and the constitution, its electoral success is first and foremost the result of voters' widespread dissatisfaction with the country's dire socio-economic situation, the enormous and worsening welfare gaps, the political elite, and the dynamic corruption that has become a trademark of most political institutions in the country since M6 assumed power. In this climate, in spite of its socially conservative foundations, the PJD is widely perceived as an agent of change, not least due to its hitherto successful resistance to the regime's cooptation efforts and its rather untainted balance sheet. In 2007 the party won the largest share of the votes and it was only due to gerrymandering and its inability to field candidates in all constituencies that it failed to obtain more parliamentary seats. This time, however, in spite of the worries repeatedly expressed by high-ranking party members that early elections would harm the party's chances, it was able to field candidates in 91 out of 92 constituencies and mobilize its electorate in both urban and rural areas. Due to the constitutional changes, according to which the prime minister is now the leader of the party with the most seats in parliament, the PJD's electoral success resulted in the King's appointment of Abdelillah Benkirane as prime minister on 29 November.

The electoral victory of the PJD and thus the appointment of an Islamist party leader is certainly a novelty in modern Moroccan politics as it has ended the monopoly on power of discredited hegemonic parties. The constitutional changes which enabled Benkirane to become the first Islamist prime minister would most likely not have occurred without the emergence of the 20 February Movement and the pressure it exerted on the Royal Palace. In conjunction with its rather effective boycott of the elections, this shows the de facto veto power that the secular non-parliamentary opposition managed to accumulate within a very short time span in the wider framework of the Arab Spring. Although it remains to be seen to what extent and for how long this rather heterogeneous movement can preserve its quite fragile cohesion, it has already set a precedent for other potentially emerging and existing opposition forces, such as the JCP, whose recruitment reservoir may even go beyond the *diplômés chômeurs*, Morocco's educated but unemployed youth. Whether the non-parliamentary Islamists will exploit the potential room for manoeuver that this development seems to imply and mobilize the ever growing segment of poor and excluded people does not merely depend on the regime's future response to non-parliamentary dissent. It is not only a function of the JCP's ability to learn from the success of the PJD and gradually overcome its year-long stigmatization, but also of the PJD's performance as a ruling party, in particular in the field of labor market policies and in the extent to which it maintains its critical equidistance from the regime. At the same time, while the PJD is expected by the *Makhzen* to respect the latter's political prerogatives and economic privileges in exchange for political leeway, it is precisely the conclusion of such tacit pacts with the regime that may backfire and harm the consolidation of moderate Islam as a democratically legitimate and sustainable political force.

Nevertheless, the elections are another important step towards the gradual break-up of a hybrid authoritarian political order that is still based on repression, paternalism, patronage and the institutionalization of corruption. Undoubtedly, processes of political transition do not evolve in a linear fashion as they are prone to setbacks and exposed to unforeseen challenges of both internal and external origin. Yet, in view of a dramatically changing regional environment and the greater assertiveness of the Moroccan and, in fact, Maghrebian public, further steps forward in the process of pushing back the influence of unaccountable leaders are likely to be taken. The game has just begun.

Power Devolution in Mauritania: The *Chasse Gardée* of a Rent-Seeking Elite

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The various regimes that have governed Mauritania since its independence have consistently affirmed their wish to use natural resource rents for economic and social development.[1] However, after more than 50 years of independence, the country continues to experience poor development outcomes. In addressing this paradox elsewhere, a wealth of literature has posited that commodity endowment leads decision-makers and state bureaucrats to engage in rent-seeking behavior. According to a prevailing definition, rent-seeking is defined as "the socially costly pursuit of [the redistribution of] wealth transfers".[2] This article contends that rent-seeking is not a pattern that can be uniquely associated with the state in Mauritania. Through a chronological overview of the transition from pre-state to post-state, it shows that rent-seeking is an embedded behavior of the groups that have dominated Mauritania ever since the pre-state period. The article argues, moreover, that rent-seeking has been the root cause of intra-elite struggles that have led to instable rule and to social exclusion of lower status groups.

A brief overview of the pre-state era unveils that rent-seeking is not uniquely a 'statal' pattern in Mauritania. Since pre-colonial times, the warrior Arab tribes of Banû Hassan and the Berber Zawaya, i.e. Sufi brotherhoods, have been the actual holders of power in Mauritania.[3] Their hegemony rests upon a complex system of social stratification. They are labeled White Moors (*Beydân* or *Moors*) whereas the rest of the population is referred to as Black Mauritanians (*Saoudân*). The latter comprises two distinct communities. The first includes four sedentary black ethnic groups (Bambara, Halpulaar, Wolof and Soninke) that have settled in the east and south and in urban zones. The second community is made up of freed slaves (*harâtîn*) or still-enslaved descendants of Black Africans (*'abîd*), who identify with the white 'masters'.

What made the warriors similar to the Zawaya is the rentier habitus of their class; both have had an attitude of disdain towards manual work and material production and subjected lower status groups to servitude. The Arab warriors had a way of life similar in style to that of the tribes of the Arabian Peninsula. They perceived themselves as nobles to whom manual labour is humiliating and imposed their hegemony by the sword. They highly esteemed their skills in the art of war and forced other tribes to pay them royalties in return for protection, launched raids on trading caravans and conducted flourishing slave traffic. As for the Zawaya, they had the final say over religious pronouncements and subsisted thanks to land tenure and the donations that were bestowed upon them by students, followers and sympathizers. The Zawaya had also an allocative function, as they worked as wealth redistributors for the needy.

Along the path of pre-colonization, two interrelated patterns have been manifest in Mauritania. First, rent-seeking was entrenched in the main economic activities of the Arab-Berber elite. Second, rent-seeking was of a social nature. Hegemonic relations were embedded in the processes of rent-generation and distribution. The division of labor was based on social hierarchy and imposed by physical force or justified under reverential authority. Accordingly, pre-state Mauritanian society can be divided into two categories: rent-seekers, who collected material gains without being involved in production activities, and rent-producers, who performed productive labor, either under direct or indirect coercion. In contrast to other French colonies in West Africa, Mauri-

1 Mauritania has extensive deposits of iron ore, gold and copper, and its coastal waters are among the richest fishing zones in the globe.

2 Robert D. Tollison, "Rent Seeking", in Dennis C. Mueller (ed.), *Perspectives on Public Choice: A Handbook* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 506.

3 Arabic names are written according to the transliteration style of the Middle East Studies Association of North America. Names of presidents and political figures are written the same way as they appear on the website of the Mauritanian official news agency *(Agence Mauritanienne d'Information)*.

tania experienced few changes regarding this traditional organization. From the late 19th century to independence in 1960, French rule provided an additional ground for the Arab-Berber elite to preserve its status and generate material gains. These dominant groups were instrumental in implementing the French colonial agenda and conserved the upper hand in controlling men and resources. From 1957 to 1966, out of 101 command positions or influence holders, 55% were chiefs or sons of chiefs and 37% were notables. Only 7% did not originate from noble traditional lineages. What is more, 87% were educated in colonial schools, including 47% in the *écoles de fils de notables* or the *madrassas* (traditional schools), where admission was highly selective.[4] As a matter of fact, the path towards independence was marked by the preservation of the status quo.

One consequence of the conservation of core aspects of socio-economic organization was the maintenance of rent-seeking as a mode of economic action. Since the onset of independence, the rentier managerial culture of the ruling elite has been conducive to public dependence on unproductive sources of revenue. In addition to French financial assistance, the state relied almost exclusively on iron ore exports by the *Mines de Fer de la Mauritanie* (MIFERMA), a mining consortium set up by French, British, Italian and German steel capital in 1952. Under the presidency of Mokhtar Ould Daddah, the first President of the country, economic planning was not on the agenda. Paradoxically, the totality of public financial resources was injected into the operational budget. As an IMF report pointed out in 1968, "[the Mauritanian] administrative apparatus lacks experience in running the day-to-day affairs of a modern government to say nothing of the problems of formulating economic policy".[5]

Another consequence of the maintenance of the pre-state order is the close connection between rent-seeking and power in post-independence Mauritania. In 1978, the military deposed Mokhtar Ould Daddah in a coup in which the increasing rent of iron ore was significantly involved. The shift to a praetorian government has been generally portrayed as a direct consequence of popular dissatisfaction with the Tripartite Agreement signed by Mokhtar Ould Daddah in 1975. According to this treaty, Spain ceded its former Saharan colony to Morocco and Mauritania. This may be a partial explanation for the motivation behind the 1978 coup, whereas a more plausible one relates to the nationalization of the mining enclave in 1974. This process transformed the MIFERMA into a national company labeled *Société Nationale Industrielle et Minière* (SNIM) and led to a sizeable expansion of the financial resources of the Mauritanian state. A concomitant process of professionalization of the army took place due to the need for protection against the recurrent attacks of the Polisario Front, which proved able to inflict serious damage on the SNIM. Arguably, the growing Mauritanian army used the pretext of external threat to adopt a more assertive role in politics and to seize control of the most important rentier asset of Mauritania, the SNIM. This was the starting point of a series of military coups. On 12 December 1984, following skirmishes among senior military officers

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4 Francis de Chassey, "L'évolution des structures sociales en Mauritanie: de la colonisation à nos jours", in *Introduction à la Mauritanie,* Centre de Recherches et d'Etudes sur les Sociétés Méditerranéennes and Centre d'Etudes d'Afrique Noire (eds.), *Introduction à la Mauritanie* (Paris: Éditions du CNRS, 1979), p. 261.

5 *Mauritania: Guidelines for a Four-year Development Program* (World Bank, 1968).

that led to three successions from 1978 to 1984, Colonel Mouaouia Ould Sidi Ahmed Taya, the then Chief of Military Staff and Minister of Defense, seized power in a coup orchestrated by the *Comité Militaire de Salut National* (CMSN). The transition from civilian to military rule was insignificant as far as the institutional arrangements are concerned. As his predecessors and successors, Mouaouia Ould Sidi Ahmed Taya belongs to a powerful tribe, the Smassid. During his 21 years reign, Mouaouia Ould Sidi Ahmed Taya tightened his grip on power and facilitated the monopolization of the main segments of fisheries and iron ore exports by his tribe. According to opposition reports,[6] three of Ould Taya's close relatives controlled 80% of the agriculture sector, fisheries and imports. They owned or were major shareholders of five of the six banks of the country (BNM, BAMIS, GBM, BHM and BMCI). They maintained total control over the insurance sector and monopolized transportation and road haulage through the National Transport Federation (FNT), which had no market competitor.

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In a real sense, the socio-economic crisis in Mauritania during the 1980s showed how dependent the state was on unproductive sources of currency generation. Substantial erosion in rentier revenues, coupled with massive looting and mismanagement, contributed to the fact that the Mauritanian economy reached a critical point. On the one hand, Ould Taya's support for Saddam Hussein during the First Gulf War led major donors to withdraw vital international assistance from Mauritania. On the other hand, a downturn in fish harvesting, the deterioration of iron ore exports, and the persistence of drought further exacerbated the situation. In the first half of the 1980s, negative economic growth, combined with demographic pressure, led to a decrease in living standards per capita of nearly 10% annually. However, between 1985 and 1989, average economic growth – 3.1% annually – slightly counterbalanced demographic changes and allowed per capita income to grow by a 0.2% average per year.[7] Throughout the 1990s, Mauritania was compelled to sign a comprehensive structural adjustment program with the International Monetary Fund, which had serious socio-economic consequences.

Negative socio-economic outcomes were linked to another important factor. After independence, the close association between systems of hegemony and systems of wealth redistribution followed the pre-state pattern. One consequence of the continuing domination of the elite was social and geographic exclusion of Black Mauritanians. To preserve the status quo, various maneuvers of power groups reflected a rejection of the participation of other communities in the public space. Decision-making as a determinant of resource allocation has become, *de facto*, a space of segregation. As a result, the persistence of slavery, maldistribution of resources and an ongoing Arabization of administration and schools politicized ethnic sentiments.

In 1983, the Mauritanian state adopted a new land law. On the surface, the text aimed at consolidating state sovereignty on land as the sector was regulated by customary law. In reality however, it was a legal make-up designed to conceal the colonization of southern lands by powerful businessmen. Mauritanian land reform raised the problem of farmers across borders and put an end to Senegalese land ownership on its soil while Senegal left Mauritanians in possession of their land in its territory. In 1989, the ethnic problem culminated in the deterioration of diplomatic relations with Senegal. The clash over grazing rights led Mauritanian guards to kill two Senegalese peasants. In turn, people on the Senegalese bank rioted and Mauritanians were expatriated. In Mauritania, southerners were subjected to forced exile although they had no links to Senegal. A subsequent Mauritanian campaign against Black Africans intensified in late 1990 and early 1991 and led to a massacre of more than 500 Black Africans who worked in the army and the administration. Among the victims were some 3000 blacks arbitrarily arrested, held incommunicado and subjected to brutal physical abuse for allegedly plotting a coup.

State formation has therefore materialized through a process of double institutionalization. The first, which is informal, prescribed Arab-Berber elite's supremacy. On the one hand, it defined politics as a space of exclusion against lower status groups. On the other hand, it

6 Conscience et Résistance (accessed 29 April 2011).

7 Jean-Pierre Lachaud, *"La pauvreté en Mauritanie: une approche multidimensionnelle"* (Centre d'économie du développement, Université Montesquieu-Bordeaux IV, 1997).

embedded rent-seeking behavior in economic public action. The second form of institutionalization refers to the transposition of modern administration and procedural rules on the emerging state. Under such regulated arrangements, the precise delegation of power comes to the fore because it affects the distribution of public goods. As a consequence, intra-elite struggles over access to rentier resources have become an integral part of the political landscape. In this vein, military takeovers have come to be the norm for regime change.

In obvious similarity to the coup of 1978, the *Conseil Militaire pour la Justice et la Democracie* (CMJD) overthrew Mouaouia Ould Sidi Ahmed Taya in 2005, shortly after the discovery of commercially exploitable oil in Mauritania. The timing of the coup confirmed once more the fact that rent-seeking fuels cyclical attempts at military takeovers. Colonel Ely Ould Mohamed Vall, the Commander-in-Chief of the CMJD and former head of the national police, is the cousin of Colonel Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, the latter of whom used to be the Commander of the *Batallion de la Sécurité Prédidentielle* (BASEP) – a unit that had been exclusively devoted to protecting the ousted President. Both men belong to the powerful Awlad Bu Sbaâ tribe. The CMJD claimed that its role was to lead the country to free and fair elections after which it would transfer power to an elected civilian government within two years. The CMJD organized elections in time and the polls of 2007 resulted in the election of Sidi Ould Cheikh Abdallahi as the second civilian president of independent Mauritania.

Sidi Ould Sheikh Abdellahi's ascendance to the presidency ostensibly raised hopes about a possible democratic turn. The transition had been recognized worldwide as a positive example in the Middle East and North Africa. In contrast to these hopes, it did however reproduce the same pattern that had characterized the political landscape for years. Mohamed Ould Sheikh Abdellahi's election exemplifies nothing more than a perpetuation of the upper hierarchy's long established grip over power devolution processes, as he originates from the notable lineage of the powerful Zawiyya, i.e. singular of Zawaya, Tijânniya in the Brakna region. In addition, the electoral machine was still under the control of the military and behind the scenes the old guard supported Sidi Ould Sheikh Abdellahi during the poll through the *al mîtâq* alliance – a coalition that included the same political forces that had backed former President Ould Taya. What is more, Mohamed Mahmoud Ould Weddadi, the director of the electoral campaign of Ahmed Ould Daddah, then the main opponent of Sidi Ould Cheikh Abdallahi, denounced a propaganda operation that was conducted by the military against their candidate in support of Sidi Ould Cheikh Abdallahi.

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Although the putschists initially welcomed Sidi Ould Cheikh Abdallahi's coming to power, they overthrew him once he threatened their interests. On 6 August 2008, Sidi Ould Cheikh Abdallahi orchestrated changes with respect to the head of the army, the gendarmerie and the National Guard. According to a decree broadcasted on national radio on the same day, Colonel Abderrahmane Ould Boubakar was appointed army chief of staff while Colonel Mohamed Ould Ahmed Ismail was named President's chief of staff. They replaced two leading figures of the military junta that led the transition from 2005 to 2007, among which were General Ould Cheikh Mohamed Ahmed Ghazouani and Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz. In response, the two generals staged another coup under the banner of the *Haut Conseil d'Etat* (HCE) and ended Sidi Ould Cheikh Abdellahi's rule. As Mohamed Fall Ould Oumeire, the editor-in-chief of the daily *La Tribune,* rightly pointed out "the President faced the consequences of his desire to free himself too quickly from the sponsors who had led him to power".[8]

In its quest for international recognition, the HCE promised to hold free and fair presidential elections almost immediately. On 12 April 2009, General Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz resigned from the army in order to become eligible to run for the presidency. On 15 April, and in line with the

8 Tanguy Berthemet, "Coup d'Etat Militaire en Mauritanie" (*Le Figaro,* 7 August 2008).

constitution, the interim presidency went to Ba Mamadou Mbaré, the president of the senate, who was the first Black African to occupy such a high position in Mauritania's post-independence period. Following an agreement signed in Dakar on 2 June 2009 between Aziz and his political opponents, consensual elections were scheduled for 18 July of the same year and Mohamed Ould Abdelaziz finally became president following a poll that was strongly contested by the Mauritanian opposition. International monitoring bodies, however, agreed that the elections were in conformity with international standards.

Since Mohamed Ould Abdelaziz came to power, the opposition continues to deplore ongoing practices of large-scale looting and the systematic exploitation of natural resources. On the occasion of the country's Independence Day on 28 November 2011, Ba Mamadou Alassane, the Chairman of the Coordination of Democratic Opposition (COD), a collective of ten parties, denounced the "looting [of] the country's economic resources by a predator family clan". Businessmen from the Awlad Bu Sbaâ tribe nowadays dominate the more profitable sectors of the economy (agriculture, roads, trade, the media and the fishing industry) and relatives have been placed in all vital positions. In 2011, the debt of three public companies totaled 55 billion Mauritanian Ouguiyas and the interest rate for this loan is 13 billion 750 million each year (or the equivalent of two times the budget of Health, 2.5 times that of Rural Development or seven times that of Social Welfare of Children and Families).[9]

As for the persistence of exclusionary practices, a national census launched by the Mauritanian authorities on October 12, 2011 raised questions and protests from Black Mauritanians (Bambara, Halpulaar, Wolof and Soninke). The movement *Touche pas à ma Nationalité*, whose founders belong to these ethnic groups, strongly disputes the conditions under which the census was enacted. The movement affirmed that the actual goal of the operation was to strip black Mauritanians of their nationality. Among other requirements, black Mauritanians have to be in possession of birth certificates of their father and mother and of extracts or birth certificates of the great-grandfather.

Conclusion

In Mauritania, the underlying problem of rent-driven underdevelopment lies in core aspects of the traditional socio-economic organization which work as barriers to constructive change. Rent-seeking is a pattern of public action structurally linked to informal institutional arrangements. It pre-dates state formation, impacts on regime change, resource management and re-distribution. Power and wealth have consistently been in the hands of a rentier elite with both economic and political aspirations. Given the threat of military coups, governments are not given sufficient time to implement development plans, provided they are willing to do so in the first place. In fact, their primary concern is to consolidate the regime and to balance the multitude of rent-seekers in order to avoid being overthrown. This has important policy implications, as it raises questions as to how appropriate development plans are in engaging participatory development and revitalizing non-resource sectors. It means the existence of a theoretical limit associated with addressing socio-economic ineffectiveness through a mere economic rationale. In light of this, it is certain that the effectiveness of any efforts destined to address the situation will depend first and foremost on taking elite interests into consideration and balancing the interests of all relevant stakeholders. It will also depend on improvements of state-society relations, especially with regard to excluded social groups.

9 Union des Forces du Progrès (accessed 11 April 2011).

Tunisia's Elections: Islamist-Leftist Alliance to Solidify the Revolution

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"After the revolution of January 14, when Zinedine Ben Ali fled, we didn't celebrate. We were afraid. We didn't want the old regime – the Constitutional Democratic Rally (RCD) – to come back and steal the revolution", as Abdelhamid Lamine, of the Tunisian independent election commission, explained. "Now after election day, we can celebrate. The people are dedicated to the revolution".

The 23 October 2011 election in Tunisia established a 217-seat constituent assembly tasked with creating a constitution and a one-year transitional government. Events surrounding the election suggest that challenges persist, as Tunisia proceeds toward becoming the Arab Spring's first democratized state.

With turnout at 54% nationally and above 80% in some of the 27 electoral districts, over 4 million voters cast their ballots for over 117 different political parties. Rachid Ghannouchi's al-Nahda, the formerly banned Islamist opposition party, received 89 seats amounting to 41%. Moncef Marzouki's Congress for the Republic Party (CPR) and Mustapha Ben Jaafar's Democratic Front for Labor and Liberties (the socialist Ettakatol Party) came in second and fourth places with 29 and 20 seats, respectively. Those opposition parties that voters perceived to be farthest away from the *ancien régime* were the election's biggest victors.

In contrast to these parties, the Progressive Democratic Party (PDP) did not realize its pre-electoral expectations, winning only 16 seats. Nejib Chebbi, the party's founder, undertook a nearly two-month hunger strike in 2007 to protest Ben Ali's regime, which enhanced his credibility as a regime opponent. The party's underperformance seemed linked to its efforts to demonize and isolate Nahda in the media during the election's waning days. In a Moroccan newspaper a few months before the election, for example, Chebbi alleged that Nahda represented less than 20% of the Tunisian populace, and, moreover, that the party had "injected religion into the political arena by using mosques and money in poor neighborhoods to create a hegemonic force" that would threaten gains made during previous periods of economic modernization. Voters negatively reacted to Chebbi's willingness to redeploy anti-Islamist rhetoric commonly used throughout the Ben Ali era.

The Islamists asserted their organizational effectiveness during the campaign for the constituent assembly, recruiting more than 7,000 volunteer party representatives for polling stations. When a voter's intent is clear on the ballot but marked invalid for a technical reason, these representatives advocate for the vote to be counted in their party's favor.

Secular opposition parties had less success than Islamists in recruiting party representatives. In Nabul II, a rural-urban electoral district with 238 polling stations in the greater Tunis area, Nahda had a surplus, putting forward 379 representatives. CPR and Ettakatol had only 45 and 96. The secular parties remain elite-based organizations with lower capacity to mobilize grassroots supporters than their Islamist counterpart.

Concerns emerged related to unregulated campaign expenditures, especially among the major parties. Given their use of elaborate rallies and professional media in political communication prior to election day, the parties appeared to have spent far more than the 25 dinar maximum (approximately US$1) per 1,000 registered voters that the Tunisian election commission supplies as public financing.

Campaign expenditures of previously exiled opposition parties with overseas supporters appeared particularly difficult to track. Rumors circulated that Qatari benefactors had played a role in underwriting Nahda's electoral victory. Rachid Ghannouchi seemingly substantiated these criticisms when he made Doha the location of his first post-election international visit just eight days after the election.

These developments particularly disenfranchised candidates who competed on one of the election's 655 different independent lists. Adnan Ben Hanachia, an independent

candidate, gave voice to these frustrations at a political party forum sponsored by the Carter Center's international observer mission in Tunisia. "Political parties in Tunisia cannot self-finance but some parties seem to have a lot more money than the others. More transparency is needed in that process".

Ghosts of the Constitutional Democratic Rally (RCD)

Opposition parties were not the only ones to have competed and experienced success in the constituent assembly elections. Article 15 of the new Tunisian electoral code bans former RCD officials, beginning at local party branch president and extending to the top of the RCD hierarchy, from participating in elections. It does not, however, forbid them from obtaining high posts within political parties. Unlike de-baathification laws that purged Saddam Hussein's allies from Iraqi politics, officials from the Ben Ali era reengaged in politics after the revolution and founded approximately 30-40 new parties.

Kamal Morjane, Ben Ali's Foreign Minister, for example, formed the Initiative Party in April 2011. The Initiative Party had considerable popular support during the election, recruiting 600 party representatives nationally and 87 in the electoral district of Nabul II. This latter figure surpasses several major opposition parties, such as Ettakatol.

One election official estimated that more than 50% of Morjane's party is comprised of former RCD officials, whereas internal party sources said 25%. Rym Mourali, the Initiative Party's co-founder, described the party's purpose: "The state has a need for all its competencies and all its people. If you agree with de-baathification, then you will create many problems by bringing in all new people without wisdom, familiarity, and knowledge of the successful practices". After past revolutions, she continued, "other countries did not forget the past in order to move forward".

Mourali and other Initiative Party leaders have spoken out against Article 15, seeing it not only as undemocratic but also as a thinly veiled tactic to weaken their party. "The law was created to go against Kamal Morjane, personally. Many people saw that he was succeeding in forming a bulwark to block Nahda and the other parties from achieving their goals".

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Like Morjane, Hashmi Hamdi, an affiliate of Ben Ali and owner of the popular *Independent* television station in London, founded the Petition Party shortly before the election. To create this party, he united independent candidate lists in several electoral districts including his home district and birthplace of the Arab Spring, Sidi Bouzaid. The election commission struck down the Petition Party's candidate list for Tunisian immigrant voters residing in France, citing its nomination of former RCD officials.

Among the 18 parties positively identified as having former RCD leaders, they collectively won 31 seats. This number exceeds that of second-place CPR's representation in the new constituent assembly. The Petition Party in particular had unexpected electoral success, receiving 26 seats.

Human rights activists, such as journalist Sihem Bensedrine, alleged that former RCD chairman Mohammed Ghariani had mobilized Ben Ali's networks of patronage in the Sahel, Sidi Bouzaid, and rural areas of Tunisia's interior to promote candidates affiliated with the Petition, Initiative, and other RCD leftover parties during the election. "The Petition Party's candidate lists success", she stated, "was a result of support from former RCD cadres in the 27 electoral districts".

More troublingly, some of these parties do not respect rules of democratic competition. After the election commission invalidated nine of its candidate lists for violating campaign finance laws, the Petition Party's activists in Sidi Bouzaid rioted and burnt down the Islamist party's regional office. It took nearly three days for the unrest to subside as security forces hesitated to intervene for fear of exacerbating the situation. The Petition Party subsequently withdrew its representatives from the new constituent assembly in protest, escalating the political showdown. Although the Petition Party eventually relented and rejoined the constituent assembly, its surprising success at the ballot box suggests a significant portion of Tunisians supports these parties rising from the collapsed RCD.

Cross-ideological coalition between Islamists and leftists

Reacting to the threat posed by resurgent RCD parties in the post-revolution period, Nahda has proposed a coali-

tion government with the CPR and Ettakatol. Together, this coalition would make up approximately 60% of the constituent assembly's seats. Through this alliance of ideologically unlikely bedfellows, uniting Islamists and leftists, the parties intend to shepherd Tunisia through its instability. "We don't have many common ideological denominators, but we have one objective: that's the national interest," Mohammed Bennour, of Ettakatol Party, said. "The country needs all sections of society to escape this situation".

Before Ben Ali's ouster, Islamist and leftist parties had little success forming a meaningful coalition to unite their opposition activities. Although beginning in 2005 they had cooperated in the 18 of October Front, which included nearly all opposition parties in Tunisia, it remained only an informal agreement of cooperation rather than an operative alliance.

As Habib Ziedi of the Tunisian Communist Workers' Party, a participant party in the 18 of October Front, explained: "It was never a 'front' but only a national agreement. It was a meeting point between everyone – Islamists, leftists, liberals, centrists, and nationalists – around the importance of three points: opposing authoritarianism, ending corruption, and restoring civil liberties". When the political circumstances changed, however, the opposition agreement between the parties stalled and deteriorated.

Makdad Arbawi, a Nahda leader who spent 15 years in prison under Ben Ali, expanded on this point. "We have had a good historic relationship with the CPR, Ettakatol, and other opposition parties. We were all thrown in one melting pot in opposition to authoritarianism; and we all suffered". "The relationship", he continued, "never approached an alliance but we were travel companions in a struggle".

Civil society organizations have protested in fear of new, restrictive social policies since Nahda's victory in the constituent assembly election. Despite meeting both Jewish and women's groups to soothe these concerns, the Islamists want an alliance with CPR and Ettakatol to signal their moderate intentions in governance. Any conservative turn in social policy would necessitate compromise with these leftist parties, thereby mitigating its effects.

Within this vein, it also seems that the Islamists desire the alliance to demonstrate and reinforce their commitment to Tunisia's democratization process to the other political parties. Nahda candidate Ahmed Jalloul, a Ghannouchi follower who had lived in exile in Britain between the ages of 23 and 46, explained: "Even if we win a clear majority over 50 percent, we want to form an alliance to create consensus. Nahda doesn't want to be the next RCD".

By working with the leftist parties, Nahda hopes to undercut any accusations that its sweeping victory will fulfill former US Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Edward Djerejian's adage "one man, one vote, one time", harkening back to Algerian Islamists' participation in the 1992 parliamentary elections. Djerejian implied that the Algerian Islamists would use the elections to overturn the regime, impose an Islamic theocracy, and never again permit elections to allow contestation of their rule. Tunisia will not become Algeria so long as Nahda, unlike the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), needs the cooperation of the other parties in an alliance to rule and reform the post-revolution state.

> Opposition parties were not the only ones to have competed and experienced success in the constituent assembly elections. Article 15 of the new Tunisian electoral code bans former RCD officials, beginning at local party branch president and extending to the top of the RCD hierarchy, from participating in elections. It does not, however, forbid them from obtaining high posts within political parties.

This Islamist-leftist coalition, however, has come about through a "strenuous childbirth", as one Tunisian journalist described. At the outset, the two sides disagreed about the distribution of institutional powers after the revolution. The Islamists advocated for a weak, figurehead presidency with a five-year term renewable once. The presidency would perform executive responsibilities, while a one-chamber overseer parliament would create laws and verify their full implementation. CPR and Ettakatol, in contrast, pushed for a presidential parliamentary system wherein the potential majoritarian powers of parliament were more constrained.

Conflict also appeared over control over the ministries. Marzouki's CPR asked for control of the Presidency, Justice Ministry, and Interior Ministry, which comprise nearly 50% of the government's budget. CPR also demanded the ouster of the transitional president, Beji Caid Sebsi. The two other sides feared concentration of both legal and police powers within one party's hands.

The Islamists and leftists coalesced around the government's policy agenda for the new constitution, though differences did emerge concerning Islamic identity issues. The parties agreed on the need to increase redistribution in the economic system, to make the judiciary

more independent, and to overhaul the administrative and security agencies to expel former regime officials from these bureaucracies.
All three parties, moreover, wished to preserve the 1959 Tunisian constitution's first article, which establishes Islam as the republic's official religion and Arabic as its language. Yet Ettakatol proposed a revision, adding that in the Tunisian state: "there is separation between the political and religious spheres and the country remains open to universal human values".
Controversy emerged during the negotiations in mid-November when Hamadi Jebeli, Nahda's nomination for Prime Minister, made a gaffe in a speech to supporters at a public theater in the city of Sousse. Celebrating the Islamists' electoral victory, he exclaimed that the Arab world was entering the sixth caliphate where both oppressed Arab populations and occupied Palestinians would be liberated. In response, Ettakatol temporarily threatened to withdraw from negotiations and enter the opposition with Chebbi's PDP and the Communist Workers' Party.
In dealing with the Islamists, Jaafar and Marzouki – the two leading presidential candidates – sought to present themselves as spokesmen and protectors of secular interests. "Nahda isn't Satan" and "we shouldn't consider it the Tunisian Taliban", as Marzouki asserted, but "the red lines are civil liberties and women's rights, which cannot be subject to bargaining". Jaafar, likewise, maintained that "Ettakatol wouldn't sell its soul" in allying with the Islamists and they "shouldn't forget the 60 percent of voters that didn't vote for them and the half of potential voters that weren't at the polls". In the end, Marzouki ascended to the Tunisian presidency whereas Jaafar became speaker of the constituent assembly.
Hope remains that this cross-ideological alliance between Islamists and leftists can do away with the leftovers of the RCD regime that monopolized Tunisian politics for the last 55 years. "On today's political scene, parties are not divided by ideology", Samir Ben Amor, of the CPR, explained. "The real division is between parties of the revolution and those that opposed it. Between parties that struggled for the revolution, and those that did not take honorable positions towards it".

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