THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

ELECTIONS AND REFORM IN MOROCCO AND TUNISIA

Washington, D.C.
Wednesday, November 9, 2011

PARTICIPANTS:

Introduction and Moderator:

DANIEL L. BYMAN
Director of Research, Saban Center for Middle East Policy

Panelists:

NÉJIB AYACHI
President
The Maghreb Center

ANOUAR BOUKHARS
Assistant Professor of International Relations
McDaniel College

SARAH YERKES
Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Government
Georgetown University

* * * * *

P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. BYMAN: Good afternoon and welcome. If I may ask people to grab their last refill of coffee and take their seats. My name is Daniel Byman. I am the Director of Research here at the Saban Center at Brookings. I'd like to welcome you all this morning for our topic on elections and reform in Morocco and Tunisia.

A year ago, I at least and I think many other observers of the region, did not believe that the democratic reform, or the hope of it, was going to sweep the region. A year later it's still very much a question mark. For those of us who are following Syria, for those of us who are following Yemen, even for those of us who are following Egypt, much of the news is bad as well as some glimmers of hope. If there is hope for the region, right now the first place to look is in North Africa. And what's most interesting about North Africa is we have two different examples of hope. In Tunisia we've just had elections, and in Morocco we have a case of top-down reform where the king has initiated serious reforms -- and we'll hear how serious -- that may give hope that even the countries of the Arab world that have not experienced a revolution may be in line for the possibility of more peaceful reform and change.

Needless to say, the events in North Africa of are overwhelming importance for the region and for U.S. policy there, and I'm delighted today that we have three excellent speakers to guide us. Our first speaker today is going to be Néjib Ayachi. Néjib is the Founder and President of the Maghreb Center and editor of the Maghreb Center Journal. He also serves as a development consultant for a wide variety of agencies.

Our second speaker today is Anouar Boukhars. He is an Assistant Professor at McDaniel College. I think most importantly he was a Visiting Fellow here at Brookings in the Doha Center, and we're delighted to welcome him back.

Our third speaker who will be a discussant on the first set of remarks is Sarah Yerkes. She is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Government at Georgetown University. Again, I think most important to her résumé is to point out that several years ago she was a researcher here at Brookings. So we are delighted to welcome and welcome back several of our panelists, and I'm now going to turn things over to Néjib who will kick things off on Tunisia. Thank you very much.

MR. AYACHI: Thank you, Dan. It's a pleasure being here. Thank you for inviting us, inviting me. I will be talking about Tunisia, and I would like first of all to briefly present a few facts about that country as an introduction and to set the background before discussing the recent elections that took place there. They were constituent assembly elections as a result and significance.

Tunisia is a little-known country mostly in the United States. It's not very well known. So it's a small country of 10.5 million inhabitants, ethnically and religiously homogeneous. Tunisians are Sunni Muslims of the Maliki Tribe, which is a Koranic ex-Jesuit school considered one of the most open and flexible in adapting to the various local settings as well as to time and changing circumstances. There is also a small Jewish community in Tunisia.

Tunisia is not a tribal society to compare it to Yemen, for example, or Libya. And the type of kin-based solidarity that existed in rural areas that can be the cause of social tensions and division elsewhere have been weakened early on in Tunisia by local reformers and nation-state builders. As a matter of fact, we can say that Tunisia, unlike some other countries in the Arab region, is a nation-state and a rather centralized one. So national unity, I should stress, is not questioned in Tunisia.

The state building process -- and this is a little bit of history about that -- was initiated in the mid 19th century while the country was ruled by a monarch called the

Bey of Tunis, formerly under Ottoman certainty, but independent in practice. This process is relatively similar to the one that took place in Turkey and in Egypt where the rulers and local elites undertook to centralize and modernize their respective countries while creating an educational system inspired by the French model, reforming the military forces, and introducing European technology. Adding to the peculiarities of Tunisia, I should mention that it was the first Arab country to abolish slavery in 1846 and adopt a Constitution in 1861 with a secular Supreme Court empowered to review decisions of the Sharia courts.

Following the adoption of the 1861 Constitution, Tunisia had for a short period of time a constitutional government, and that was the first one ever. But this experiment didn't last mostly because it was initiated and supported by urban elites and lacked popular backing, and also because Tunisia fell under French dominance and that happened in 1881. However, the movement of ideas that led to the adoption of the short-lived 1861 Constitution had sufficient impact on the population for the nationalist movement that emerged after France established its protectorate on Tunisia from 1881 to 1956 to consider the demand for a Constitution as central in its struggle against the French Colonial power. After independence from France in 1956, Tunisia became a republic. This was declared by a constituent assembly almost exclusively comprised at that time of the members of the party that led the struggle for independence and led by Habib Bourguiba who became the first president of the Republic of Tunisia.

Bourguiba is considered the "father of modern Tunisia." He was fiercely secular, and he adopted the French version of secularism called laïcité in the same way they did in Turkey. Bourguiba's excessive secularism -- was considered and is considered excessive -- is also considered as having favored the emergence of the Islamist movement in Tunisia initially as a reaction by people who remain rather religious,

although not fanatically religious. Bourguiba was an enlightened autocrat who remained a close ally of the West and the U.S. in particular. He instituted practically a one-party political system in Tunisia in charge of pursuing state building efforts and modernizing the country. He invested heavily in education and promoted women's rights. Women, thanks to Bourguiba, currently enjoy practically equal rights with men in Tunisia. And he endeavored to modernize and develop the country's economy in an effort that was continued by Ben Ali who succeeded him in 1986 after a bloodless coup. Under Ben Ali, Tunisia enjoyed a growth rate of about 5 percent in the past 10 to 15 years.

Tunisia is not a major oil producing country -- there is a little bit of oil, but almost nothing -- and for that reason has a well-diversified economy despite limited resources. It's a market economy, although with a significant public sector rather open to the outside world. The economy is based on tourism, phosphates, agro food products, and light manufacturing. However, the relative wealth that was produced by Tunisia's economy left behind large segments of the society, especially in the hinterland of the country while coastal areas benefited much more from public and private investments, especially in the tourism industry.

So the combination of economic development and widespread education since the independence of Tunisia contributed to the creation of a relatively large middle class and produced so to speak many college graduates that the economy was unable to absorb, in particular those in the hinterland. Ben Ali, who ruled Tunisia for 23 years until recently, instituted a police state, one of the most repressive in the region with a horrendous human rights record. I'm pretty sure you've heard about him now. Ben Ali suppressed all forms of political position, Islamist and secular, but particularly Islamist. They are the ones who have suffered the most from his rule, his crackdown on any form of opposition.

The establishment of political parties based on region was banned under his rule. Only a few secular parties were allowed to exist, but their activities were heavily restricted. However, human rights and women's rights in spite of the heavy crackdown by Ben Ali's security managed to consistently challenge his grip on power. And they did play a role in this revolution as well as the revolution that happened this year as well as the union. Tunisia has one of the oldest, the oldest union in the region. It's a grassroots movement, and it's the oldest and most important in the whole African region, continent rather.

With time the Ben Ali regime became increasingly corrupt and authoritarian and unable to meet the demands for human rights, political participation, social and economic justice on the part of the young and educated segments of the population, especially those in the neglected and impoverished regions of the interior of the country but also the middle class. This situation within the context of the ongoing global economic crisis triggered the social uprising and then the revolution that we all heard about. In fact, Tunisia's economic growth was very vulnerable, and such growth was accompanied by a significant rise in inequality and by unemployment afflicting the majority of the country's youth. This was an explosive situation, and it did explode.

After Ben Ali fled the country under revolutionary pressure, a new government was put in place under the leadership of the speaker of the parliament, following the requirements of the Tunisian Constitution. And in order to initiate a transition towards a democratic system, this government included many members of the Ben Ali regime, too many in fact for those Tunisians who started the revolution. This transition from above, as some specialists of democratic transition would call it, was not accepted by those who are determined to bring about genuine political change in the country. And eventually, under popular pressure, the government had to resign. A new

one was designated by the same speaker of the parliament -- this is the Constitution requirements -- but included many independent personalities and members of opposition parties, and this one was accepted by the Tunisian people.

This second transition government has successfully organized elections for constituent assembly, which took place on Sunday, October 23, just a few days ago. The purpose was to choose a 217-seat assembly, which will also choose a new interim government and set dates for parliamentary and presidential elections, most likely in a year or so. And, of course, the purpose of this assembly is to write a new Constitution.

More than 11,000 candidates ran in the election, representing 18 political parties, so you had a profusion of political parties all of a sudden popping up in Tunisia. And there were also several thousand candidates who ran as independent. There was a huge turnout as voters exercised their rights. The system adopted was a proportional list voting system with parity between men and women. This is quite extraordinary, meaning everybody would present the list and on that list 50 percent of the people who would run were women. So this means that men and women must feature an equal number basically on each list.

Now the outcome of the election, I'm pretty sure you all heard that the Islamic party Ennahda, which means the Renaissance in Arabic, won a majority of the votes with 41 percent of the seats. There were two secular centrist left parties led by respected human rights activists that came second and third. Another won 90 seats, the Congress for the Republic, a centrist left party -- CPR according to its French acronym -- came in second with 30 seats. And the FD, also called Ettakatol in Arabic, got 21 seats. And the largely unknown Al Aridha Chaabia came in a surprise fourth with 19 seats. These are former RCD members. The RCD is Ben Ali's ruling party's name. So here we have some of the members of the former regime who tried to run again for elections,

although they were forbidden to do so.

The centrist party, the PDP, long considered the main legal opposition party to the Ben Ali regime, came fourth. This can be explained by his excessive attacks on Ennahda, and this didn't pay off. While the CPR and FD avoided doing so while calling for secular political system, they avoided talking about Islam and its relation to politics. And this apparently paid in a country where apparently people remained rather conservative and attached to their religion and who would equate criticism of religion of Islam as secularism rather than being in a time of -- Islam's appeal to folk piety and populist politics as they do everywhere. In Tunisia they developed informal family networks during the years of heavy repression against them. These networks have been reactivated after the revolution and like other political parties which were marked by an elite recruitment except the union that I mentioned earlier.

Moreover, Ennahda developed a conservative discourse that attempted to reassure large segments of the Tunisian population worried about their future. They also benefited from people's sympathy towards a party that paid a heavy price during the Ben Ali years, with thousands of their members jailed or exiled.

Islamists also have evolved, as they did practically everywhere. It's especially the case in Tunisia. They did choose a strategy based on compromise, as was the case in Turkey with the AKP and the Tunisian Islamist leader. Rached Ghannouchi, although a former radical, has evolved and changed over the last 15 to 20 years. And he keeps mentioning the Turkish model as the model to follow where an Islamist party got into power and respected the rules of the game, the democratic rules of the game, and so on and so forth. Ghannouchi, the leader of the Islamist party, has stated on several occasions that his party wants to roll back all women's rights. They will respect the democratic rules of alternatives, political alternatives -- the freedom of the

press, the rule of law, the establishment of an independent judiciary, and so on. They also are in favor of a market economy, and they are also in favor of lowering taxes as the conservatives do in this country. He intends to create a real model, a democratic model, for the Arab Muslim world. That's also another of his statements.

And in addition, I think the Islamist party has to adapt its discourse to Tunisia and the specifics of Tunisia. Tunisians are used to living in a secular country. Women have equal rights, as I mentioned, particularly with regards to men. And they are mobilized. They are vigilant with the Islamists. And I think most of the other secular forces are also vigilant and mobilized, and they are keeping really an eye on Islamists. They don't want them to -- they will keep an eye, as I said, and control their work.

I would like to mention -- to end here, and then we'll take a few -- maybe leave the rest for the discussion. Just an anecdote here -- Tunisia very early distinguished itself. In 1803 a Tunisian religious cleric refused to adopt Wahhabis, which prevails in Saudi Arabia, when Saudi Arabia had asked them to do so in a letter sent to the Bey of Tunis. That tells you that each society has its own specifics and I think each one of them will move towards democracy in its own way. Thank you and we'll listen to more on this.

MR. BOUKHARS: Thanks, Dan, for inviting me today. So after Tunisia's landmark election, it's now Morocco's turn to go to the polls and to try to replicate that historic achievement in democracy. Such a feat will naturally be hard to replicate in Morocco where the population is not as motivated to vote as we have seen in Tunisia. Pluralities in Morocco are still skeptical that elections will make a clean break from the past. Like in Tunisia, the kingdom's own Islamists are expected to do pretty well. The Party of the Justice and Development, the PJD or the PGD, is widely expected to gain in the polls and build on its current 47 seats in parliament.

So predictably parallels are being drawn with Tunisia, riding the Islamist wave across North Africa, the PJD is viewed as an election favorite on the 25th. Such a scenario obviously elicits some unease within the corridors of power, with feminist movements, and secular forces. Under the reforms approved in the July 1 referendum, King Mohammed VI will hand over significant powers to elected officials though he will still retain a decisive say on strategic decisions. The new Constitution that was voted overwhelmingly by Moroccans -- about 74 percent turnout, 98 percent voted in favor. That Constitution provides for an elected Prime Minister drawn from the ranks of the largest party in parliament. With the king's consent, he or she would have the authority to appoint and fire Ministers as well as dissolve parliament. Parliament, which had been relatively weak, now has the potential to play a more assertive role. The exercise of parliamentary oversight of the Executive Branch, for example, is strengthened by lowering the threshold for launching investigations. Now you just need one-fifth of the members; one-third of members can introduce a censure motion against Cabinet Ministers. Obviously you still have to have an absolute majority, but nevertheless to launch a censure you only need one-third.

The new Constitution also sets in motion a promise in the decentralization process whereby more power is devolved to elected regional councils. But most importantly for this election is that this post-election government will draft the many laws -- what we call organic laws -- that are enshrined in the Constitution. This is what makes this legislature so strategic and so important, right? And this is what triggers fear. What if the PJD sweeps and takes control of this process of translating or developing those laws? So it's the reaction to such eventuality that a liberal-led coalition of eight political parties -- that's what in Morocco today they call a (Moroccan) -- the G-8 was formed. Its aim is to staunch a PJD's win or to counter any possible alliances the

PJD may seek to forge after the election. The biggest players in this alliance of eight are really four. One is the famous PAM or Authenticity and Modernity Party. Why it's famous is because it's founded by a former delegate in the Interior Ministry and a close associate of the monarch. Then there is the National Rally of Independents, Constitutional Union, and then National Popular Movement. The Popular Movement -- it's base is in Berber areas.

Then there are four smaller opposition parties within this G-8. One is an Islamist party. It's split up from the PJD, led by a very controversial person, has really one seat in parliament. Then there is the Labor Party Left, and then there is an Ecologists Party. The National Rally of Independents has traditionally led the liberals which are close to the regime, liberals in terms of the economic sense really. The PAM agenda is mainly aimed at countering the Islamists.

So the G-8, mainly the four parties in it, currently they make up 48 percent of seats in parliament, and they do have a formidable electoral machine as we have seen in 2009 in the municipal election. So there is a chance that they might come first. To appeal to voters they have promised -- one of the few groups really to roll out their platform -- the PJD also rolled out its platform -- is they wanted to raise economic grade to 6 percent from currently 4.7. They want to create 200,000 jobs. They want to keep the budget deficit below 3 percent and current account deficit below 2 percent. But the G-8's main concern is a PJD win, Islamist win, the legal Islamists. Informed observers of the country believe that this fear is overblown. The Islamists in Rabat are probably slated to gain in representation, but they're by no means the favorite. I mean, the PJD will certainly not win an absolute majority. To do so you need 200 or 198 really. So that's not going to happen. The best the PJD can hope for is 80 seats, and if it wins 80 to 100, that will be a stunning feat.

So even if parallel with Ennahda, the Islamists in Tunisia that Néjib spoke eloquently about, is interesting, but the context is quite different. Unlike votes in Tunisia, the November 25th election is likely to see not as high a turnout naturally as we have seen in Tunisia. The enthusiasm of the electorate is just not there. Very simply, there are huge differences between voting on the Constitution and voting in this election. The vote on July 1st was really a vote for the monarchy. It was an endorsement of the monarchy pure and simple. There are those that voted because there are substantial changes in there, there is the potential really, if you have strong political parties. So that was a vote for the monarchy. The 25th they are voting for political parties, completely different. Political parties in Morocco are held in low esteem for now for the simple reason we are seeing the same faces running again. Why? Because the elections are coming so quickly, they didn't have time obviously to organize a convention and renew their leadership, so just a lot of skepticism out there about the elections. Again, July 1st why the turnout was extraordinarily high, that was for the monarchy. This one is they're voting for political parties, two different things.

So number two why the PJD probably would not win -- they might come first, but they won't win a huge majority -- the Islamist spectrum unlike in Tunisia is divided. In Tunisia we have Ennahda. They are small Islamists, but Ennahda really is the Islamic spectrum. In Morocco we have two. The largest, or at least the one that is believed the largest -- we won't know because it's illegal and tolerated, so we just don't know, nobody knows what its following looks like. It's called the Justice and Charity Group. It's illegal, tolerated. It has called for boycott of the elections. So if this group had put its support behind the PJD, probably the Islamists would win the election. Again, not a huge majority, but they would probably come first. The militants are extremely disciplined, and it's highly unlikely that they will defy their leadership and go and vote for

the PJD. That's number two.

Number three is district, redistricting laws, also disadvantage the Islamists. Apportionment favors rural areas. For example, we have districts. There a lot of small districts. Districts say of 80,000 people would have two representatives, and then a district of 600,000 people would have four representatives. So for the PJD, the PJD is completely absent from rural areas. It is also absent from the southern provinces, the Sahara, Western Sahara, completely absent from there. It's often said that "where illiteracy prevails, religion can be especially appealing." It was a quote not in Morocco, not in the rural areas in Morocco. The PJD has not been able to leverage its image. It is still seen -- it has that image of probity because they have not been tested in government, so they're seen as clean, not corrupt, but it has not been able to leverage that image. It has also not been able to use Islam to lure the disaffected electorate in the rural and tribal areas. So despite the PJD's skill at reaching across economic and social classes in urban areas, in rural areas it has failed to do so. Meanwhile, the PAM, the National Rally of Independents, is the declared party. They are predicted to harvest the vast majority of rural votes.

So we have three scenarios as we move forward to the elections on the 25th. Scenario one, PJD wins the elections. Again, not a huge majority, but wins, and the king tasks the current secretary general or his number two too many to form a government. Remember, nothing in the Constitution says that the monarch must pick the leader of the party. The monarch can pick any member of the party, so not necessarily the leadership. But the PJD, it's not going to have the 200 seats in parliament, so it needs to find partners. It might partner with the only parties that can partner with. So all three parties have not ruled out -- they haven't said they will join with, but they haven't ruled it out. The G-8 they have ruled that out. We don't work with the Islamists and there

is visceral hostility between the two camps, especially between the parliament and the PJD. They can't stand each other. They have been at a tug of war for years now, so that scenario is not going to happen. (French) should be a natural ally as both PJD, illegal Islamists and (French); they both share the same conservative leanings. Both of them are conservative.

We have also seen both parties' syndicates and unions. They have been coordinating their actions for some time. So there is that scenario. (French) again has not been ruled out. It didn't say we will, but it didn't say we won't. Those who want to bar the Islamists from governance, they will try to seek to pressure the parties not to ally with the PJD, to prevent it from forming a coalition government. That scenario can happen. If the PJD comes first, but the Constitution is silent on that. What happens is the PJD cannot form a government. We might see that scenario. (French) said we're not playing that game. We don't want to partner with you. So we have heard in the media that the PJD has been sending some threats, that if that happens it will be stealing the elections from us. The rhetoric has been cooled down a few days ago said look, if we can't find -- if we win and we can't find partners, we're going to give the keys back to the monarch, and the monarch then goes to party number two.

So if you try to bar -- if the PJD comes first and you try to bar it by either influencing parties not to ally with it, that would be dangerous, and it would be counterproductive as well. I mean, danger is the last thing you want is for the PJD to cry foul, for people to say that they want and somebody somewhere prevents it then from governing. That's very dangerous, especially given the economic situation of the country. The regime has weathered the storm, but there is still potential for turmoil because of the economy.

The PJD -- why counterproductive? The PJD has always said that it will

respect personal rights, always said that at least since it was in incorporated parliament. The PJD understands that it can't ignore the cyclical part of the electorate. That's why when you look at the platform there are five priorities really. The first one they're focusing on institutions, building strong institutions. Number two, economics. They're not stupid like Ennahda. They're not stupid. They know what people's concerns are like here in this country -- jobs, jobs, jobs. It's across the board. Then there is social justice. The inequalities are significant in the country. Islam comes number four in priority and even then we don't hear them talk about Sharia. Then again, what's Sharia? I mean, it's one of the most undefined terms. What does that mean? Sharia for PJD means something different to some other Islamist movements, but nevertheless, there is no mention of Sharia. When they talk about Islamist as a reference, meaning the essence of Islam, in their view that essence is transparency, accountability, and social justice. That's what they mean. They say that's what religion does, but that's when they talk about Islam but it's number four. And again, when you look at their platform, very few sentences. Most of it is institutions, economics, social, and the number five they talk about foreign policy. And again, that's moderates' number five. Now that's scenario one.

There is another scenario, second and third scenario, the second and third scenario would simply underline the trends we have seen in the past where voting fails to change the political landscape of the country. The votes will follow the same pattern, especially in the rural areas influenced by and in the Sahara, Southern provinces, Western Sahara, tribal considerations we will see block voting by illiterate peasants. In the Southern Saharan provinces, the vote most probably will be based on tribal ties and influenced by influential tribes. In this scenario, (French), PAM, and the RNI, and the Popular Movement, they will compete between each other for a pole position. So in one scenario we call scenario two, (French) comes first. There's that

possibility. It comes first and dependent on voter turnout; its share would be from 11 percent to 13 percent probably of the vote. And then it forms a coalition government with its natural ally, the Socialists, two of them. In this scenario, there's a likelihood that the PJD might join, especially if the three allies fail to gain a majority of seats, that 200, the key number. So the PJD might join this government.

In the third scenario, the National Rally of Independents comes first and the current finance minister is tasked with forming a government with his coalition partners in the G-8. So in the second and third scenario, the election process as I said will not fundamentally alter the political landscape. We'll see the same parties dominating government as it has been the case. The king will end up choosing the same actors from this coalition government. Probably we see new faces.

So if we have the second and third scenario, the skeptics of top-down reforms of regime, the transition will cry foul obviously. And as they predicted, the limited scope of political concessions that the monarchy offered did little to promote democratic practice. In this perspective the new Moroccan political package, the Constitution, however liberal and however progressive, and it is both. It is both liberal and progressive. All it does is provide me a liberalization that effectively perpetuates the same structural constraints. Supporters of political reforms introduced by the monarchy will urge patience. Why? Because there are a lot of good things in the new political pact. It's desirable. Why? Because its constituency realizes the principles of individual rights, freedom of expression, freedom of association, criminalization of torture, and arbitrary detention.

It also constitutionalizes citizens' equality. It convincingly enhances legitimacy capacity and access to the policy realm. So transitional periods as we see in Morocco, its advocates argue, are naturally characterized by limited levels of democracy,

but as civic consciousness rises and political competition becomes routinized, then political actors, strong political actors, are bound to emerge strengthening in the process the institutions of government and driving levels of democracy up.

So despite its failure to limit the king's powers, the new Constitution provides a strong margin of political maneuverability that did not previously exist, and that's a fact. The key question that you are looking at is whether Morocco's established political parties will use it because the success of the reforms enacted by the monarch and endorsed by the majority of the people will depend on the ability or more likely the willingness of political parties to push the envelope further towards democracy. Constitutions matter as we all know, but what matters more is what people do with democracy.

So there is an opportunity for political parties. The new Constitution empowers the parliament, and it empowers political parties to play a more assertive role. The threat of instability and revolt obviously give them bargaining power to push as I said for more reform. So market leaders have made the gamble to gamble with early elections because these are early elections to absorb anger and the constant pressure obviously from the street. The challenges are enormous and any serious missteps obviously can be dangerous to the country's stability, especially in terms of economics because the air of austerity is coming. The budget deficit is running at 6 percent, something we haven't seen since the monarch ascended to the throne for simple reasons. Because when you triple subsidies, you raise obviously civil servants' wages, I mean all that has compounded the deficit. They look at what's happening in Europe. That's obviously going to affect investments. It's going to affect tourism. More importantly, it's going to affect remittances, that money that those Moroccans in Europe and elsewhere send abroad. And that's really how you manage to close that gap of trade

deficit or the budget deficit. That's going to be very, very hard to do so how do you implement austerity measures when unemployment is still high? I mean, there is stability, and the monarch has managed to weather the storm. I mean as the Constitution, the vote for it, he still enjoys enormous popularity, enormous legitimacy, and that's why Morocco is where it is today. It hasn't gone the route of Tunisia and Egypt first because of the legitimacy and popularity of the monarch. There are other reasons obviously why it hasn't gone that route, but most importantly is the legitimacy of the monarch. And I'll just, I guess stop here and open it up. Thank you.

MS. YERKES: I'm going to try to bring together these two wonderful presentations on Tunisia and Morocco and also expand a little bit on what is the outlook for the rest of the region coming out of what's happened in Tunisia and what may happen in Morocco.

So first of all, overall as we've heard the results in Tunisia were very positive, and I think we have a lot of positive things to look forward to. But there are a couple of problems that I wanted to bring up. The first is the issue of women. And we have already seen -- this is a concern in Tunisia and elsewhere in the region that as Islamist parties win big, the question is how's this going to impact the women of the region? And one of the issues that we've seen already in Tunisia is that secular women have been protesting the results, have been protesting Ennahda, and are just a little bit concerned legitimately about losing some of their rights. Now Ennahda has said that they are not going to infringe on women's rights. We've heard about this already. But this is something where the U.S. does need to pay careful attention, other international observers, to make sure Ennahda keeps its word. Tunisia now has one of the best environments for women's rights. We need to make sure that that stays the way it is.

Also, another issue that we need to watch out for is economic issues.

And we've about this in Morocco and in Tunisia as well. The protests that started the revolution, that started the Arab Spring, the same economic issues still exist today. We see this in our own country as well. And so in order to avoid instability, the international community needs to both protect the political transition and work on economic development issues. And one thing that has come out recently is this new U.S. Government Office of Transitions, which is a very positive step forward in dealing with this. It's only focusing right now on Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt, so this is not addressing Morocco. And one piece of advice I would give is to expand this to actually address the other countries that are undergoing transitions. But the Office of Transitions is dealing with these economic issues in combination with the political issues, which is a very good sign.

Now turning to Morocco a little bit, so one thing that has come out of the two speakers so far that we need to really pay attention to is that the big difference between Tunisia and Morocco is the top-down versus bottoms-up reform. We are not going to see the same kind of changes take place in Morocco that we've seen in Tunisia because the transitions have begun in very different ways.

Right now, again, this fight that may or may not happen between the PJD and this new coalition for democracy, the G-8, this is something that we should be concerned about in the case of Morocco. You can talk about the PJD a little bit more in discussion, but I want to focus on the Party for Authenticity and Modernity. And this is something where I do think that we need to be a little bit concerned. This party was founded by regime elites. It was founded in 2008 in order to give the regime just another sort of hold on parliament, and it's something that if we have a victory where the Authenticity and Modernity Party wins big within their coalition, this is not a good sign for democratic reform in Morocco.

Now one positive thing that Morocco has done that we didn't see in Tunisia is the inclusion of a quota for youth in the elections, and this is something that I think will need to be touched on throughout the region. The youth played a major role in the Arab Spring throughout -- and particularly in Morocco the February 20th movement is made up largely of youth -- and so acknowledging that youth are an important political force, reserving a quota for youth is a very positive sign in Morocco.

And then just finally, again, I mean I think we heard about this already, but we need to just remember that King Mohammed is not likely to allow for major concessions. He is fared far better than any other Arab leader across the region, and it's not likely that the new parliamentary elections are going to see this major change. He knows how to hold onto power, and he's weathered this tumultuous period better than any other Arab leader.

So what can we learn about Morocco from Tunisia? First of all, one very positive thing is that elections can be carried out in a short timeframe. They can be carried out freely, fairly, and with few logistical problems, few instances of fraud. This is something that Tunisia did very well and hopefully Morocco will repeat this, and then maybe this can be carried over to other countries.

Also, again, this has slightly been touched on but I want to highlight this, the idea of voter and political participation. In Morocco there's no question that political participation has fallen steadily over the past several election cycles with the obvious exception of the constitutional referendum. Tunisia was an amazing example of high political participation. We saw over 70 percent voter participation overall, and in some areas up to 90 percent. And this is compared to in the past 10 to 15 percent. So this is a marked change. Now I don't think those numbers are going to carry over to Morocco, but hopefully the Moroccan people will be able to see that this played out well in Tunisia and

that hopefully this enthusiasm, the patience that the Tunisian people showed for the election process, will be something that the Moroccan people can copy and then again can be carried elsewhere in the region.

We also saw the importance of election observers, which is something that hopefully other countries in the region and Egypt in particular will take notice of. In Tunisia we had over 10,000 domestic and international election observers, and this enabled the Tunisian elections to gain instant international credibility. It also showed that the world was watching. It makes a big difference whether or not you have someone paying attention to your elections.

And also we have in both cases of Morocco and Tunisia a strong and vibrant civil society that should be utilized in order to carry both countries through the rocky transition process. While civil society doesn't bring about the initial transition, it's essential to keeping that transition on track. So hopefully the civil society in Tunisia is rebuilding itself. I mean, it hasn't been able to operate nearly as openly as civil society in Morocco, but in both of these cases and again elsewhere in the region, we can see that there is a role for civil society to play and continuing the process on.

And then finally just a couple of things on how these two countries can give us some lessons for the whole region. One thing also to pay attention to is the role of the military. This is particularly going to be important in the case of Egypt where we're seeing all sorts of problems with the SCAF, new laws that have been announced that would give SCAF more power. Then those laws were rescinded, and we're not entirely sure what's going on. But the Tunisian case has shown us how the military can play a role as a guardian of the process and then return to the barracks. And I think from the U.S. policy perspective, this is something we should be applauding, that we should show that it's the norm that the military returns to the barracks. The military doesn't govern,

and that's something that we can use -- the positive case of Tunisia -- to show elsewhere in the region.

Our support for the Tunisian elections and so far for Moroccan elections has been very well coordinated with the Europeans and with other international organizations. This is also a very good step forward and something that we should copy and use in other contexts.

We also need to work on much more than elections. As I mentioned already, economic issues are hugely important. Development issues, things that are going to be very important to keeping stability in all of these countries that are undergoing transitions and in keeping the transition process on track.

We also need to think about the political culture change. In states that have had the same leader for 20, 30 years, you can't simply have an election and then turn your back. There needs to be a long-term political culture change that goes along with this. And this is where you can also bring in civil society, bring in support, a lot of the U.S. Government programs that are already in the region.

Finally, and I think most importantly, the way that we've been dealing with Ennahda, the way we've been dealing with the Islamists in Tunisia, is a very good sign for the rest of the region. It shows the moderate Islamist parties who are willing to play by the rules that they are welcome in a democratic system. This is something if we see a PJD victory in Morocco or even not a majority, but even a large role for the PJD, we can show the world, we can show all these different parties, that the U.S. is willing to work with them as long as they are moderate Islamist parties playing by the democratic rules. This is something that Tunisia has shown that we're probably going to see this result elsewhere -- maybe in Morocco, maybe not, but in other contexts. Maybe in Egypt, we don't know. The Islamist parties are without a doubt the best prepared to run in these

short timeframe elections. And it's not likely that new, dynamic liberal parties will form, develop, and campaign well enough to make great gains in these first elections. And I'll leave it there.

MR. BYMAN: Thank you, Sarah, for bringing this together. I'm going to open it up for questions. I suspect we'll have a fair number of questions so please try to limit your questions ideally to one, and I'll ask the panelists to if you do more than one to pick the easiest one for them to answer rather than the one you care about most. So, please, I'd welcome any questions you might have. Yes, please, sir?

SPEAKER: I know in the case of Egypt there's quite a bit of discussion among the Islamists about how much autonomy they're going to regain in terms of just making their own religious decisions. That was mentioned here earlier in the case of Tunisia, that the secular court has the final decision over any religious matters. Or if you go to other countries like Malaysia, you have the National Fatwa Council and so forth and so on. So from the standpoint of the person who mentioned staying within the democratic guidelines, if the Islamist parties want autonomy of their own religious decisions, Fatwas in particular, and not to have that veto power in the government over such decisions, is that playing by the democratic rules or going outside of them?

MR. BYMAN: If I could ask each of the panelists to comment on Tunisia, of course, but also elsewhere in the region. Néjib?

MR. AYACHI: Sure, so the question is about religious decisions autonomy. Well, they say on many occasions that they deal with political matters. They don't want to be in -- they even refuse to be labeled Islamist now. They want to be called conservative, a conservative party that takes its inspirations from Islamic values basically. So I don't think they would -- they don't intend to rule through Fatwas, let's say. They will be in a secular parliament, if you will, and parliament will be functioning the way it does

everywhere else. So I don't think they will have to -- there is a religious -- under Ben Ali they had the Religious Ministry for Religious Affairs that we used to run on the religious rim so to speak. They might try to influence this or put their own people certainly in that, but they don't do much there. Under Ben Ali every sermon, every Friday's prayer sermon had to be looked at and approved by the Ministry of the Interior. I don't think they would do that. They will certainly be asked to get a hold of the fringe of the right -- I mean the fringe, the fundamentalist radical fringes that do exist in Tunisia. They're not with Ennahda precisely, but the more Ennahda moves to the center, the more it lifts this space on its right to these fringe groups. And that will be a challenge for them, including in religious matters.

MR. BOUKHARS: Sure, in Morocco that's not -- that question doesn't pose itself because the Constitution is clear. I mean, the monarch is the supreme religious leader in the country. He's the supreme army commander as well. So that issue is not even being discussed. And the PJD, as I said, has stayed away from for the most part any religious matters. It has never claimed that there should be a Fatwa body in which it has control or in which it has a seat at the table. That's the domain of the monarch. There are obviously parties that are outside the fold, and they can test the religious legitimacy of the monarch. There are also some radical Islamist factions in Morocco which use the net obviously to propagate Fatwas, and that's why the monarch has created obviously a Fatwa Department. So in Morocco it's not really a matter of debate, at least within the political parties within the public for the most part.

Tunisia is the same thing. I mean, Ennahda as I said, they're not stupid, and they have to prepare for elections in about a year or so. So they are staying away from anything religious. And, in fact, they refuse to be labeled Islamist. Same thing with the PJD. They say Islam is a reference, but that's the extent of it. The PJD compares

themselves to the Christian democrats in Germany and Europe. That's exactly what they say. It's similar. They use Christianity as a reference; same thing for them. It's just in terms of, as I said, those values which are not very well explained but what they mean by reference as I said earlier is social justice and fighting corruption, et cetera. So no, that's not posed in Morocco and not in Tunisia or Algeria. Libya is a different matter; obviously it's a different context.

MS. YERKES: I think in both of these cases in Morocco and Tunisia we see the parties are much more concerned with social issues than making religious decisions. So I just echo what the other panelists have said.

MR. BYMAN: Thank you. Yes, in front.

SPEAKER: I was going to ask a question about the February 20th movement. Yesterday I read an announcement that they're going to organize another meeting in Rabat five days before the elections. And as far as I know, they are composed of like Islamists and leftists and they are going to boycott the elections. That's for sure. But what about the leftists in the group? Are they going to boycott it or is there a general decision comes from the group that they're against the party in the elections or is that an official announcement?

MR. BOUKHARS: There is an official announcement by the movement. They are boycotting the election leftist or Islamists. In fact, even the organized parties that have been back in the movement, they have announced that they will boycott the elections. They don't have a huge following obviously. But that's the official decision, that they are not -- and they're campaigning for the boycott.

SPEAKER: Do you think it's going to affect the turnout in the elections? Do they have that leverage over the people?

MR. BOUKHARS: No, some yes because it depresses the Islamist vote

so to speak, but as you see the February 20th movement has failed to mobilize people for several reasons because it is a fractured movement. It has not been able, at least for now, to articulate clearly what they want and what they propose. All they do is stand against the Constitution, for example, and that was a strategic error in my view. I mean that said the Constitution passed. The majority voted for it. So their message does not appeal to the streets at least for now. All they're waiting for is they're waiting for the regime to falter. For example, if there is an extraordinarily low turnout; 37 percent was the turnout in 2007. If that dips below 37 percent, obviously that's an issue. If the economy deteriorates, for example, but for now the February 20th movement has not been able to mobilize, and you can see it in the streets. I mean, they can't have more than a thousand at best in Rabat and Casablanca. It doesn't mean that they may not be able to come back as they did on February 20th when it was about 100,000 throughout the country. But for now their message does not resonate.

SPEAKER: Is there any political party --

MR. BYMAN: I'm going to move on to other questions for right now, and maybe we can come back as we've gone to others. Yes, please, over there.

SPEAKER: Thank you. Hi, I was wondering if you might comment a little bit on the evolution of political parties in Tunisia. I've heard in large part the win of Ennahda is due to the fact that they were the only political party that really existed beforehand and because that had a following. And these 18 political parties that you mentioned earlier presumably most of them registered themselves in March and have since then developed a public outreach campaign with their political platform. And so with that it's not surprising that Ennahda had such a strong following in the recent election, but looking forward could you comment a little bit about I guess the anticipated success of these parties as they continue to develop and what they're doing to gain that

public outreach?

MR. AYACHI: Yes, Ennahda was also a banned party under the Ben Ali regime, but they were quite popular. It's a grassroots movement where the other, the secular, parties are more elite parties. Ennahda -- the elite party -- I'm sorry, what's the second part of your question?

MR. BYMAN: Just the political parties --

MR. AYACHI: Oh, the political party, I'm sorry. The other ones were there, but -- they did exist under Ben Ali, but their activities were restricted. It was not much they could do, but legally they did exist. Ennahda was much better implemented throughout the country. As I mentioned earlier, they had those networks that existed during the times of heavy repression they went through, as you know the underground networks that they did reactivate after the revolution to win elections. They also used other means that are not quite disingenuous I would have to say. They went on distributing money sometimes to poor people, et cetera.

The other -- the secular political parties have done relatively well, in fact. Not a dozen have the absolute majority -- keep that in mind -- so then they will have to govern with forming a coalition with the secular parties, and they intend to do so. And they better deliver because the people are waiting; it was mentioned early on, waiting for them to do something. As a matter of fact there was some confusion in the beginning. People didn't know why they didn't vote for a new president or a new parliament; why the Constitution, why not voting for a new government that would deal with the issues at hand -- economic issues mostly and human rights, but mostly economic and human rights issues?

So Ennahda will have to deliver on that front and quickly, and given the global crisis as I mentioned, given the fact that the U.S. and the European Union won't be

able to help much economically. We were talking about a plan for the region and it's not going to happen because there is not particularly much money to give away on this.

So the political parties -- back to your question -- are going to now that they can work openly, I'm pretty sure they will be able to challenge Ennahda effectively on the ground and win to a certain extent.

MR. BYMAN: And in the way back, yes.

SPEAKER: Just commenting on the fact that Ennahda is not really stupid. In one of their election proposals, they suggested that the new members like judge members of the Supreme Court will be appointed by the parliament. And this will allow basically Ennahda members to choose judges that in the future will interpret laws regarding the constitutionality of the laws before the Constitution. They don't need to mention Islam, but they could interpret a lot of laws related to freedom of expression and rule of law in their own ways, especially knowing the judges in these courts are not for life. They tend to change so they can -- need to follow the stands of their party. So what do you think about that?

MR. BOUKHARS: Well sure, what you just said, obviously that you just laid out a democratic process, is that parliament would be able to appoint the justices. But again, we're just following what Ennahda says, what its leadership has written, and then we will decide right now that because at first we were just theorizing and philosophizing about what Islamists might do and what they might not do. And this is the time for us. Finally we have a case study to examine and see how a party that claims it's moderate governs. But sure, there is that potential for it, but as Néjib said, is that Ennahda doesn't have an absolute majority. And probably in a year it won't even carry the 40 percent because probably this is the worst time any party can govern. It's not going to be able to deliver the goods that people want in one year so probably in one

year you're not going to see 41 percent as the other parties prepare.

MR. AYACHI: And I would quickly add something that the young people who did the revolution are still mobilized, and they don't want to fall from a secular dictatorship to a religious one, and I've said that several times. So Ennahda knows that, and they will be careful treading with these issues.

MS. YERKES: Right, I mean there is a big difference between what Ennahda says and what they actually do. And that's where there is room for international pressure or domestic pressure to make sure what they say is what they do.

MR. AYACHI: Absolutely.

MR. BYMAN: Yes.

SPEAKER: With all these remarkable changes across North Africa in Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt, I was wondering if any of the panelists would care to comment on why Algeria is the odd man out.

MR. AYACHI: I can say a few words and then you, too. As a matter of fact, there is an excellent item on our Website, Maghreb Center blog, about that by Janice Calder. Algeria went through major political turmoil. They went through a civil war not long ago when they had free and relatively fair elections. When the Islamists won the elections, the elections were cancelled by the military and that triggered a quasi civil war. There were approximately 200,000 people who died, killed, during the civil war. This is one reason. They're careful about triggering or starting a new revolution in their own country. And then Algeria has a -- the government has the means to buy political -- there's oil money, a lot of it, in Algeria now. And as a matter of fact the government has just raised wages for the civil service. If you want to start a business nowadays in Algeria and you are a young man or woman, you have access to a series of loans and credits, and that also was put forward by the government. So this is another reason. Yes, this

would be the main reasons I think for now, for now.

MR. BOUKHARS: Well that's an excellent question because a lot of people predicted obviously that something might happen in Algeria because the state has been flush with oil money. I mean if you look at its reserves, it's at $167 billion, et cetera, but that hasn't trickled down so to speak to the people. So there is a lot of anxiety. Protests and riots have been just a common sport. I mean, in the last six years there's not a week that goes by without somebody somewhere, some group somewhere, protesting, taking to the streets. But one of it is Algerians already had the revolution and the whole society is still traumatized by what might happen because the regime has demonstrated in 1991 by their military is that they will take the country down, a blood bath, to stay in power. That was proven. That's number one. Number two is who are you going to overthrow? I mean, we had in Tunisia Ben Ali. We had Mubarak, but in Algeria who? President Bouteflika, I mean, a lot of people don't believe that he has the power. I mean obviously he has outmaneuvered the military, but the security services in the last few years obviously have made a comeback. So the Algerian in the common street, they say even if we take to the streets and we manage to overthrow Algeria, there is the military behind and the security services. So Bouteflika, you might overthrow him and then replace him by somebody else, but it doesn't do much. So that's how I see the trauma of the civil war and then there is no one to rally around -- Mubarak and Ben Ali, but Bouteflika is just at least for now because he's just an ailing figurehead I think.

MR. AYACHI: And maybe I would add something -- maybe you would agree with me when I say that there are maybe more freedoms in Algeria than they had in Tunisia -- freedom of the press, for example. Again, the media are relatively free. And there are quite a few political parties, relatively free, political parties also that are functioning more or less normally unlike Tunisia.

MR. BYMAN: Yes.

SPEAKER: I'm interested in what any of you think about the effect of this more secular trend in Islamist parties on the NTC in Libya because I know that Tunisia obviously was influential in sparking other regional uprisings, but it seems that Libya is turning towards a more traditional interpretation of Sharia. I don't really know, obviously that's a vague and ambiguous term, but in terms of Islamic banking laws. So I wonder if any of you had a comment on that.

MS. YERKES: Sure, I mean I don't know how much -- how easy it is to compare honestly what's happening in Libya versus what's happening in Tunisia and Morocco. And a big thing is one of the things that was first brought up, which is the homogeneous issue, that this is a very different situation in a tribal society like Libya. And so I don't think that we're necessarily going to see the same sort of things play out there.

MR. BOUKHARS: You're absolutely right. I mean, even the Islamists, I mean, what the NTC president when he said we'll apply Sharia, obviously he was addressing certain constituencies because there is a tug of war right now as you now within Libya between many Islamists. There are pragmatists and then there is the one we don't know, the one that some of them fought in Afghanistan, and they claim that they have had their transformation. So they have to tread very, very carefully because there is diversity of constituencies, and nobody knows. I don't think we're going towards an extreme version of Islam, but I think that's what the NTC President Shalit when he said the Sharia and the Islamic banking -- and Islamic banking it's even in Morocco and elsewhere. But I think they're just navigating or positioning themselves right now in that spoil for power. But it's anybody's guess. Libya is very conservative, obviously, and the Islamists differ from Ennahda or from the PJD.

MR. AYACHI: And Ghannouchi, the leader of Ennahda, has stated several times that he would like to advise his Libyan counterparts on adopting the Tunisian way. And the Tunisians are rather popular nowadays in Libya because they hosted almost a million refugees from there without any problem. So hopefully they will listen to Ghannouchi's advice.

MR. BYMAN: Yes.

SPEAKER: Thanks all of you for that. I appreciated that. There has been some discussion of Tunisia as a bit of a trendsetter in the region, and what would international assistance programs look like that would really support the positive democratic trends in that regard? And Sarah mentioned civil society, and I wonder if you could just go into that a little more specifically. What would successful assistance of Tunisian civil society look like?

MR. BYMAN: Sarah, can I ask you again?

MS. YERKES: Sure. That's a tough question, and I wish I could spell out exactly, and then I'd get an awesome job. I think part of the issue is something that I very much believe in is the marrying of economic and political development, that you need to -- I mean, when I talk about civil society, I mean both the kinds of organizations that promote elections, that promote democratic process, voting, and all that, and the development side of this. And I think in the case of Tunisia and a lot of these countries where you're having massive economic problems, you need to support human development. So I think a successful program would include both the traditional political party training-type programs as well as the sort of programs that aid local grassroots organizations that deal with issues of human development, that deal with poverty alleviation, that deal with some of the economic issues that you're not directly addressing through political reform.

MR. AYACHI: But the trade part of it, I would -- Tunisia has a relatively well-trained labor force. It is close to Western Europe. It enjoys trade agreements with Europe that allow Tunisian products to be exported and sold free of custom duties. So what can be done is the U.S. could promote U.S. investments, actual U.S. firms, companies, to move their manufacturing facilities, for example, some of them to assemble U.S. products to be able to sell them to Europe benefiting from this trade agreement, which Morocco enjoys as well. And then Tunisia's location is also very interesting because you can also reach out to Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, and the rest of the Arab world from there. So I think that's what the Tunisians have been trying to sell to the U.S. -- come here, invest here, we're very close to everybody and we enjoy good relations including trade relations with everyone. And we have this labor force that is available and relatively well trained. But I would also stress what you just said, human development is key. Most of the young people are trained. They have credit degrees sometimes, but their training is not adapted to the requirements of the economy. So I think some assistance would be needed there, too, to train them to be able to find jobs effectively.

MR. BYMAN: Yes, sir?

SPEAKER: Anouar, when I listen to your analysis of the scenarios, I may have wrongly drawn the conclusion that you were suggesting that popular perceptions of the legitimacy of the new government and the reform process in general were going to be contingent upon PJD participation in that government. Did I get that wrong from you? Do you think that's essential for people in Morocco to believe that this process is legitimate, with or without the PJD?

MR. BOUKHARS: No, the process obviously -- it depends on the turnout. I mean, that's extremely significant. I mean, if the turnout is low, again below 37

percent whether you have a PJD in or outside the government, it doesn't help much. But there is that perception out there because the PJD was the main opposition to the government. The PAM was, but the PAM is viewed as close to the regime, and it has sustained several attacks as you know since February 20th. I mean, the February 20th movement has singled out -- but PJD has never taken part in government. And if it delivers, if it comes first or second or third and if it is included and integrated in the government, I think we are back to the 1990s when the USFP came into power because there is a belief that the PJD might do something different, unlike all the other parties that have contributed with the exception of the banned government. And the verdict is mixed obviously. I mean, the economy is been going at 4.7 percent, but there is still as you know huge challenges out there in terms of the gap between the rich and the poor and the regional gaps. So I think there is -- that's my reading of it. I'm not suggesting that the PJD should win for the government to have legitimacy. I mean, if they can't win, they can't win. But what we're looking at is turnout in free and fair elections, no or at least no vote buy-in like what happened in 2009 or 2007 because if we have that problem, which I think we won't, I mean that damages the credibility of the whole process. But if other parties obviously manage to come first and the G-8 wins, then it wins. But no, it depends on how the government operates once they come to power because there are significant challenges, and they will have just a short span. And if they come to power and manage to deliver, then so be it. But just my sense from -- no, it doesn't damage the credibility of the PJD if it's not in power, absolutely not.

MR. BYMAN: We're getting close, but not quite at, the end of our time. I wanted to actually ask a question of my own as we start to wrap things up really to each of the panelists. It's all in the same theme, which is the role of the United States. As Néjib said in his remarks -- he was politer than this, but I'll use my own words -- which is

that there's often remarkable ignorance of North Africa, and I would say also in policy circles. There are a number of people who are quite informed, but this area has not been a priority for American policy for quite some time. And as a result, the United States I think is more at a loss in North Africa than elsewhere. So to ask to make elections and democracy succeed in Tunisia, I'll ask Néjib; to make reform succeed in Morocco, I'll ask Anouar; and to make democratization succeed more broadly in the region, I'll ask Sarah. First of all, can the United States play an important role or is really America just a bystander on this and so be it? And then if the United States can play an important role, what single thing would you change that would make the United States more effective in success in this? Néjib?

MR. AYACHI: My recommendation would be, don't leave it to the Europeans only and to the French. North Africa has been neglected for a long time by the United States and considered a French preserve. I do know for a fact that many North Africans are a little tired with this tête-à-tête with the French. They would be very happy to balance it with more, a stronger, more effective U.S. presence on the economic front, but also the cultural one and the education one. We could bring more students here. There are very few students from North Africa because I think we could find ways to bring them here. I remember that in the case of Tunisia, Algeria as well, Morocco, there were several scholarships available some 10, 15, 20 years ago. They're not available anymore. I think we should find ways to revitalize that. Maybe the private sector can be involved and foundations, et cetera. The language, the English, is becoming -- the study of English should be encouraged and the U.S. can help on that front.

We were talking about the economy early on, and we should mention that the economies of these countries would fare much better if they were integrated, if

they had a regional economic integration. And there is (French) a regional organization, but its activity has been dormant for a reason we all know, the antagonism that does exist between Algeria and Morocco over the Western Sahara question. And that's really a pity. That's really too bad because there's a study by the World Bank that didn't even assess the loss. I think it's 3, sometimes even 4 percent of GDP that is lost because of this, the lack of inter-economic integration. Libya can play a major role. There's a lot of potential wealth in resources, oil, et cetera, that Tunisia and Morocco have in human resources. So if you match that together -- and Algeria, Algeria has both, although it's more oil than human resources but they can catch up -- so the potential is great. So the U.S. can use its influence in the region to try to solve the issue for us in Sahara, which is rather difficult because of Algeria's reluctance to do so. One has to be frank about it. So, that's it for now.

MR. BOUKHARS: Good list. That's right, regional integration is significant. It is really a pity when you look at trade it's the lowest trade in the world. And though they complement each other, but the problem is obviously the Western Sahara and it's true in the Algerian position. The United States has tried in the last few months to bring the Algerians and the Moroccans to talk and open their borders, but Algeria has refused to budge so far. But sure, that's very significant because when you're looking at 2-3 points' growth in GDP desperately needed. So the U.S. can play more of a role in that conflict. It has leverage over the parties.

As far as Morocco is concerned, the United States can play a role because it has influence in the country. It has leverage over the country. And there is really potential for -- because now we can start talking about Morocco for the first time in transition towards democracy. I mean, if you look at the Constitution -- the Constitution provides really some tantalizing possibilities, right? So the United States can pressure in

this case if the regime balks or interferes with how the new government operates, that's where the United States can -- this is provided the regime would do so, right?. So, yes, political pressure. And then in terms of economics is what the European Union's last policy stated is more for more. The more you deepen democratization, the more obviously assistance you get because you have to have some benchmarks. It's not just enough that there is a document that is promising, but now we will just hold you to that document in case it needs, the country needs, to be nudged to move forward and to trigger those mechanisms that are in the Constitution because really there is room for maneuver in there. It's just whether, as I said, the parties use it, what the king chooses to do or not to do, we will see. This is all speculation for now, but we shall know very soon. But yes, the United States can in my view play that, to watch how the process enfolds, and as a friend of Morocco to nudge the country forward and then that will be terrific for the whole region obviously.

MR. BYMAN: Sarah.

MS. YERKES: I do think the U.S. can play a role, and I'll sort of reiterate something I said earlier, which is again the importance of economic development coupled with political development. That the idea of raising up levels of human development impacts stability. It impacts the ability of people to participate. You're not going to participate politically when you can't feed your family. It impacts vote buying. It impacts a lot of the Islamist parties that utilize social services to help gain more votes. And I think this is where this new Office of Transitions in the State Department can play a role. And I think they just need to expand their portfolio to other countries and to deal more with the issue of human development.

MR. BYMAN: Great. Before we go, this is the first public event that Brookings has done with the Maghreb Center, and we've been very pleased with this

collaboration, and we hope it's going to continue in the months and years to come. And we've had excellent support and participation from them, and we're thrilled about that.

We've had excellent talks, serious talks this morning. And before you go, please join me in thanking all three speakers for their remarks.

CERTIFICATE OF NOTARY PUBLIC

I, Carleton J. Anderson, III do hereby certify that the forgoing electronic file when originally transmitted was reduced to text at my direction; that said transcript is a true record of the proceedings therein referenced; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which these proceedings were taken; and, furthermore, that I am neither a relative or employee of any attorney or counsel employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

Carleton J. Anderson, III

(Signature and Seal on File)

Notary Public in and for the Commonwealth of Virginia

Commission No. 351998

Expires: November 30, 2012