

A Moroccan Exception?

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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David Pollock was the Bernstein Fellow at The Washington Institute from 2007 until his death in 2024, focusing on regional political dynamics and related issues.



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Morocco's exceptional stability following the Arab Spring and its penchant for close relations with the West make it worthy of significant U.S. attention and encouragement.

A lone among all Arab countries, Morocco has since early 2011 witnessed mass protests that resulted in the peaceful, democratic election of an Islamist party to head the government -- followed by two years of calm. Impressive though often overlooked, this rare success story from the Arab Spring is occasionally invoked as a possible source of emulation by other Arab or predominantly Muslim states. In reality, however, Morocco's situation is so unusual that it probably cannot serve as a model for any other country, even among the other remaining Arab monarchies.

Yet Morocco's very exceptionalism, especially in a region marked by either violent instability or severe repression, or both, makes it a special case worthy of significant attention and encouragement. Indeed Morocco, often neglected in the troubled aftermath of the Arab Spring, is actually among its most interesting countries -- precisely because it is now so quiet, after a few months of massive demonstrations more than two years ago. The case for this is all the more convincing because of the country's objectively important attributes: a strategic location between the western Mediterranean and the North African Sahel; a relatively large population, approaching 35 million within the next year or two; and an all-too-singular penchant for close economic, political, and security relations with both Europe and the United States. Two major factors largely explain this unique Moroccan phenomenon...

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