



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 106th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

KING HASSAN II OF MOROCCO – AN APPRECIATION BY DR. JOHN DUKE ANTHONY

HON. TOM LANTOS
of California

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Tuesday, August 3, 1999

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, on July 23, His Majesty King Hassan II of Morocco passed away and his son, Sidi Mohammad ben Al Hassan assumed the throne of Morocco.

I would like to call the attention of my colleagues to a particularly thoughtful and insightful essay on the role of King Hassan and his positive impact upon Morocco. The essay – *The Passing of Morocco's King Hassan II* – was written by Dr. John Duke Anthony, the President of the National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations, Secretary-Treasurer of the U.S.-Gulf Cooperation Council Corporate Cooperation Committee, and a distinguished American scholar of Middle Eastern affairs.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that Dr. Anthony's essay be placed in THE RECORD, and I urge my colleagues to reflect upon his discerning appreciation of the role and significance of the reign of King Hassan II.

THE PASSING OF MOROCCO'S KING HASSAN II

by Dr. John Duke Anthony

In the history of America's foreign affairs, a long-running chapter with Morocco, one of our country's oldest and most important allies, closed and a new one opened this past week.

The King of Morocco, the first country to recognize the fledgling U.S. republic during the Administration of President George Washington, was laid to rest.

As anticipated, accession to the kingship of King Hassan II's eldest son and Heir Apparent, the 36-year old Moulay, now King, Mohammad VI, proceeded smoothly and effectively. Also as expected, no significant changes in Morocco's domestic and foreign policies are envisioned at this time.

What, if anything, are the implications for American and other international interests in the passing of Africa's and one of the Arab and Islamic world's longest-serving heads of state?

At first glance, the most important certainty is the certainty that key Moroccan policies are likely to continue as before.

In this, for the many who have applauded some of the routes less traveled that Morocco chose to traverse for the past decade – in the areas of constitutional reform, economic liberalization, political pluralism, advancement of human rights, the pursuit of a just and durable peace between Arabs and Israelis – there is comfort.

For those who pray and plot for the quicker rather than later passing of hereditary systems of governance – for the demise of the Arab and Islamic world's emirs, shaikhs, sultans, and monarchs – their day, certainly with regard to Morocco, appears to be no nearer to hand than before.

Indeed, a case can be made that, in large measure because of the timeliness, relevance, and overall popularity of the

late King's reforms, the imminence of the Moroccan monarchy's political demise is even more distant than it was when Hassan II succeeded his father as King of Morocco in 1960.

To say this is but to underscore the extent to which the Middle East has become so topsy-turvy within the adult lifetime of a single person: the late King of Morocco.

Had Hassan II lived and chosen to speak his mind on the subject, it's likely that he would have agreed with Diogenes, who is alleged to have requested that he be "buried with my face to the ground, for in no time at all the world will likely be upside down."

There are ironies here. For one, search any library on the Middle East from the mid-1950s onward, and the work of one political science author to the next will be shown as having predicted with a certainty bordering on arrogance that, in short order, all the Arab world's dynasts would be overthrown, blown away as so many will-o'-the-wisp dandelions into the dust.

Conventional wisdom of the day postulated that the wave of the future belonged to the Nasirists and their camp followers from Morocco to Muscat, from Baghdad to Berbera, from Aden to Algiers and Aleppo in between.

Pundits prognosticated that the coming generation, nowadays' nineteen nineties -- yesterday's tomorrow -- would be led not by Hassan II and his

dynastic counterparts, or anyone else whose lot was hereditary, but, rather, by the proverbial middle class military officer, the khaki-clad knight on horseback.

But, in Morocco, as elsewhere in the Arab world, this was not to be. That it proved not to be the case was in large measure because Hassan II was not bereft of equestrian political skills of his own.

That those who sought to precipitate the late King's political demise failed in the end was not, however, for lack of trying. Twice, in 1970 and again in 1971, they came close to succeeding. Nor, for that matter, can it be said that they truly failed.

Indeed, the King's opponents can claim credit for having quickened his conscience and common sense to realize Morocco's national interests dictated that he institute sweeping constitutional, political, economic, and human rights reforms.

Few developing countries have traveled as far and as fast in reforming the underpinnings and trappings of its economy and socio-political system as Morocco in the last decade of the late King's reign.

In the past few years, a steady stream of American leaders have become eyewitnesses to the ongoing implementation of a range of economic and political reforms launched during the era of Hassan II.

Together with Tunisia, Morocco has been a pacesetter in embracing the economic precepts of globalization and in forging a multi-faceted trade and investment relationship with the member-states of the European Union.

In heightening their awareness of the opportunities for American businesses in the "new Morocco," U.S. Congressional Representatives and staff have not been far behind. In March 1999, 110 Members of Congress signed a "Congressional Friends of Morocco" letter to President Bill Clinton. Shortly afterwards, First Lady Hillary Clinton visited Morocco, Egypt, and Tunisia.

In keeping with this momentum, Under-Secretary of State for Economic Affairs Stuart Eizenstadt visited the region and articulated a vision of enhanced foreign investment, liberalized trade arrangements, and regional economic cooperation between the U.S. and three Maghreb nations - Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia.

It is too soon to gauge the full measure of the legacy that Hassan II bequeathed to his son and the Moroccan people. However, beyond the fact that the baton of national leadership has been passed to the new king, Mohammad VI, and with it the task of governing one of the developing world's most fascinating and important countries, there is much else of interest and value for Americans and others to ponder.

Consider for a moment the following. Morocco is a country that is at once African, Arab, Maghrebian, Mediterranean, Middle Eastern, and Islamic. Its international strategic importance is underscored by its coastal frontage and twenty ports on two of the world's largest and most fabled seas.

Moreover, Morocco's geography and natural resource base - with its mountains, valleys, rivers, trees, and verdant fields - are as variegated as any in the developing world. Its people are the heirs of an extraordinarily rich culture and heritage that, long before we became an independent nation, had links to our own.

Within Morocco's archives, and continuing to this day in the country's international relations, is abundant and ongoing evidence of a record of friendship with the United States and the American people that, among the world's polities, is second to none.

The implications of the change in Morocco's leadership for American national interests are that the U.S. needn't change any of its policies toward this oldest among contemporary Arab kingdoms.

They are to underscore the value of Morocco's having stood by the U.S. - and the U.S. having stood by Morocco -

- throughout the Cold War and after, and our joint commitment to remain each other's ally in the future.

They are to take heart in the realization that, if anything, the new King, who is no stranger to the United States and American values, is likely to work even harder at strengthening the U.S.-Morocco relationship.

The implications of the smooth and effective passing of the mantle of leadership from father to son, as had been envisioned all along, were encapsulated in the act of Presidents Clinton and Bush walking with other heads of state behind the King's coffin on the day of his funeral.

They lie in the predictability of continued American national benefit from the leadership of a ruling family that, from the time of Eisenhower's visit to Morocco in the midst of World War Two, straight through until the present, has never buckled when the going got rough.

They lie in the agreement of American and Moroccan foreign affairs practitioners on the ongoing relevance of a leader with the courage to act upon her or his convictions. In Hassan II, the world was blessed with a visionary and dedicated leader who never shied from tackling the controversial issue of Middle East peace.

Longer than any other living Muslim leader, the late king, always far from the limelight, generated an immense amount of trust and confidence among Arab and Jew alike.

In the end, Hassan II will be remembered for many things. Among them, not least will be the fact that, for more than a quarter of a century, he worked tirelessly at nudging, but never shoving, the protagonists much nearer to an enduring peaceful settlement than would have been likely had he, and now his son, upon whom the burden falls to continue the effort, not passed our way.