Beyond Islamists & Autocrats

MOROCCO: Prospects for Civil Society

■ Vish Sakthivel

This paper, the second in a series exploring reformist actors among non-Islamists throughout the region, examines prospects for political reform in Morocco. The paper defines democratic/reformist actors as individuals or groups supporting the familiar procedural mechanisms of power sharing, such as regular elections and open contestation for political office, and also possibly working to strengthen the attendant freedoms of expression, association, and press; legal protections for minorities; and social conditions, such as literacy, widely acknowledged to be necessary components of a democracy. Religious or Muslim democrats—or those seeing a role for religion in public life—are included in this definition. Islamists—who can be defined as holding the primary agenda of establishing a new Islamic order in the country, or as looking to implement religious mandates through political avenues—are not.[1] Given that Islamists have attracted a great deal of attention in academia and the policy world, this report seeks to shed light on other, often overlooked democratic and reformist actors.

Morocco's current political landscape presents something of a paradox. While political parties have been competing through more or less free and fair elections for parliamentary and governmental positions since 1956, when the country established independence from French rule, arguably the greatest prospects for democratic reform can be found not in traditional political institutions but in the country's civil society. As this paper demonstrates, civil society entities such as trade unions and organizations working on democratic development, women's empowerment, human rights, and the rights of the Berber (*Amazigh*) minority carry promise for Morocco's democratic prospects, even as the political system remains dominated by the monarchy. Indeed, since the constitutional reforms of 2011, many Moroccan political groups, including those counterdemocratic strains with strong links to the regime, portray themselves as reform-oriented, democratic actors and may, in certain ways, serve as facilitators for reform groups. But their primary role is to facilitate continued legitimacy for the regime, often taking up the ancillary role of patronage distributor. When considering prospects for deeper political reform in Morocco, therefore, observers would do well to look beyond the political realm.

Following an overview of the contemporary political system, the paper delves into Morocco's leading democratic and reformist groups, reviewing their constituencies and outlining their policy agendas. A concluding section discusses the prospects for greater reform efforts and persistent challenges to democratic development in Morocco.

MOROCCO'S POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

Morocco's prevailing political environment has its roots in King Hassan II's reign, which began in 1961, five years after independence, and was marked by repression in the face of relative instability. Under Hassan, the government was characterized by only nominal separation of powers and a climate of notable authoritarianism, particularly after two attempted coups in 1971 and 1972. The executive and legislative branches were consolidated under the king's control, and the country was under a state of emergency from 1965 to 1970. Dissent was met with severe repression. In spite of these serious challenges, the palace rebounded in the mid-1970s. The struggle over the disputed territories south of Morocco's internationally recognized borders, known as Western Sahara, along with Hassan's decision to send troops to support its fellow Arab states in the 1973 war against Israel, helped renew the Moroccan people's support for the king.

As for Morocco's expansion into Western Sahara, this was achieved through a highly visible settlement campaign known as the Green March. Thereafter, Hassan lifted the state of emergency and started allowing political participation from groups formerly viewed as threatening. His efforts intensified through the 1980s as economic and unemployment crises provoked popular unrest. In 1993, Hassan proposed a power-sharing system known as *Alternance*, whereby the king would appoint a prime minister from an opposition party if it won a majority of parliamentary seats.[2] In 1996, Moroccan voters elected a majority coalition led by socialist and secular opposition parties, with the leader of the Socialist Union of Popular Forces (USFP) taking the premiership.

After Hassan's death in 1999, Mohammed VI came to power and undertook several dramatic changes, including dismissing his father's harem, sacking various publicly despised members of his father's inner circle, and marrying just one wife, who would accompany him publicly—in contrast to Hassan's wives, who were hidden away in the harem. Mohammed VI's efforts toward modernization included introducing protections for women, ethnolinguistic minorities, and political opponents. The king continues to be seen by most Moroccan citizens as a unifying national symbol, while his designation as Amir al-Mouminin, or "commander of the faithful," gives him a powerful religious mandate domestically.

The following section briefly outlines the dominant institutions of Morocco's political landscape.

Makhzen

The term *makhzen*[3] is used to describe Morocco's ruling elite, consisting of the king, his advisors, religious scholars, and other members of government close to the palace. The notion is rather amorphous, however, with the king its lone certain element, while all other "members" are not agreed upon in the popular imagination and are subject to much speculation—an enigma likely preferred by the *makhzen* in order to preserve the requisite imagery surrounding the throne and the attendant workings of the deep state. Beyond its symbolic political-religious legitimacy and power, the *makhzen* controls the key economic sectors of agriculture, banking, telecommunications, real estate, and food processing.

Parliament

Morocco has a bicameral legislature consisting of a lower house, or House of Representatives (Majlis al-Nawab), to which 395 members are directly elected for five-year terms; and an upper house, or House of Councilors (Majlis al-Mustasharin), to which 270 representatives are indirectly elected for six-year terms. Members of parliament (MPs) represent the various regions of the country, including the disputed Western Sahara. The king has the authority to dissolve the parliament at any time, but unlike his father, Mohammed VI has never exercised this power. He retains the right to approve cabinet appointments, although since 2011 the prime minister must come from the party obtaining the most parliamentary seats. Such appointments typically reflect a coalition government of three political parties. The current cabinet consists of the Islamist, majority Justice and Development Party (PJD), the National Rally of Independents (RNI), the Party for Progress and Socialism (PPS), the Amazigh-associated Popular Movement

(MP), and various independent technocrats. Morocco has universal suffrage for citizens eighteen and older, although access to voting is sometimes challenged and apathy is high.

Parliamentary elections were last held in 2011, moved up from 2012 as a response to the popular uprisings earlier that year. However, observers cite persistent problems, including single-term limits for women and youth (representatives age thirty-nine or younger), no independent election commission, and a "districting system that skews representation."[4] In addition, the judiciary, while nominally independent according to the constitution, continues to fall under the king's purview, with provincial *walis* (governors) and local judges beholden to the king to secure reappointment and maintain their salaries.

In May 2014, the Moroccan government announced that municipal elections, last held in 2009, would occur in mid-2015. (The vote has since been postponed from June to September.) At the municipal level, problems include occasional bribery—whereby candidates pay voters—preferential treatment given by local officials or notables to certain candidates, and the intimidation of voters and candidates alike. Plans to devolve more power to state- and provincial-level authorities remain laggard.

Political parties

More than thirty political parties are represented in Morocco's parliament, with dozens more lacking parliamentary representation. A handful of banned parties also exist, including radical Marxist groups and Islamist groups opposed to the monarchical framework. At the national level, institutionalized parties in Morocco primarily battle for parliamentary clout and royal favor, disagreeing on details of policy implementation while agreeing on the king's centrality and the monarchical system. The quarreling and subsequent inertia characteristic of parlia¬ment since the early 1990s, when the political system was opened up, has strengthened the king's hand as a mediator, reinforced his veto power, staggered the parties' standing, and delayed democratic and economic reforms. At the same time, the king and the *makhzen* have continued Hassan's practice of co-opting political parties, targeting both Islamists and leftists. In today's scenario, the type of repres¬sion seen under Hassan II becomes unnecessary.[5]

Key non-Islamist parties, such as the Party of Authenticity and Modernity (PAM), Istiqlal (meaning "independence"), RNI, and USFP are also largely undemocratic in their decisionmaking apparatuses, and suffer from gerontocracy and limited mobility for rank-and-file members. They are widely seen as extensions of the palace with limited ideological independence.[6] Along these lines, what follows is a brief overview of those non-Islamist parties with a strong contemporary political presence—either in parliament, among the electorate, or in palace proximity.

In the current governing coalition, the non-Islamist parties are the RNI, PPS, and MP. The RNI, established in 1978 by King Hassan's brother-in-law, Ahmed Osman, who was then serving as prime minister, is historically close to the palace and was cofounded by independent ministers and politicians with entrenched political and business interests who were keen to maintain the status quo. Having refrained from introducing any significant legislation since its founding, the RNI is widely seen as a nonideological, platformless "placeholder" party, existing primarily to serve the palace's interests, countering socialist and Islamist trends and presenting a potential alternative to the wider electorate.

The PPS was founded in 1974 by Ali Yata, a communist leader formerly of the Moroccan Communist Party. Like many other parties represented in government, the PPS has more recently distanced itself from hardline views in the interests of political participation, self-identifying now as a socialist-nationalist party that respects religious principles and Morocco's Islamic history.

The MP, much like the PPS, has far fewer parliamentary seats and less popular support than the RNI, PJD, USFP, and other behemoths. In its 1958 founding by Mahjoubi Aherdane, an Amazigh notable, the party followed the trend whereby many such notables helped consolidate the Alaouite dynasty's power just after independence, thus entrenching their position as a counterweight to the Istiqlal. The MP has maintained its royalist stance, and despite having a strong Amazigh membership, its

policies and platforms are not necessarily pro-Amazigh. The party has abandoned any corresponding "Berberist" rhetoric and, similar to other royalist parties, it is thus no longer identifiably ideological.

The main non-Islamist parties outside the governing coalition at the time of writing included Istiqlal, the USFP, and the PAM. Istiqlal, founded in 1944 by Ahmed Balafrej, was a leader in Morocco's nationalist movement against the French in the 1950s. For decades, it was a significant political force and, thus, a threat to King Mohammed V's power at independence. To this day, the party continues to use nationalist rhetoric, and remains conservative in its political positioning while mostly nonideological on social issues. Through the 1970s, it was supported by the palace as a counterweight to labor and, during the Alternance opening, as a counterweight to the socialists and, later, to the Islamists. For instance, in 2013, Istiqlal's departure from the governing coalition with the PJD was widely perceived to be orchestrated by the *makhzen*.[7]

In 1975, the USFP was one of several breakaways from the Istiqlal Party—from which the National Union of Popular Forces (UNFP) itself had broken in the late 1950s. The former's history of staunch opposition has, much like Istiqlal's, been tempered by co-optation, with USFP figures accepting higher salaries and attractive ministerial portfolios over the past twenty years. In 1981, for example, the party backed mass riots in Casablanca against IMF reforms. Such a stance would be politically impossible for the party today. Thus, while it entered politics with the goal of pursuing democratization and redistributive economic policies, it is now little more than a tool for regime legitimization. In the late 2000s, members committed to democratic principles defected, leaving the party with only its pro-palace thrust and a dwindling popularity. Much like Istiqlal, the USFP's current "opposition" standing must be understood as occurring against the PJD coalition, not against the regime.[8]

Founded in 2008 by Fouad Ali el-Himma, Mohammed VI's confidant, the PAM claimed fifty-five House of Representatives members "practically overnight" upon its founding.[9] Effectively representing the palace in parliament, it initially won just a few seats in the vote, but soon became the largest parliamentary bloc when many pro-palace parliamentarians, affiliated and unaffiliated alike, joined the party.

Business community

In Morocco, large businesses and holding companies have some level of policy veto, while their financial success and access to markets depend largely on closed-door elite decisions. By and large, successful companies have business interests that complement, and do not compete with, those of the palace.[10] In turn, these businesses can exert some level of pressure on the regime to maintain their interests. For example, YNNA Holding, an independent, family-run company, has successfully stemmed U.S. investment in industries that represent competition, and the director of BMCE bank has also pressured the regime to limit U.S. companies' access to Morocco's insurance sector. Businesses also can work more officially, through business associations, to collectively influence regulation in trade practice, pricing, and production.[11] The most well-known such association is the Confederation Generale Economique du Maroc (CGEM).

Many business figures, who consolidated their economic clout during the Hassan years, have entrenched their position by entering politics and even serving as cabinet ministers. Thus, many use these connections to fund their party of membership and enhance its bargaining power and positions vis-à-vis the regime. Such business interests are uniformly present across monarchist, socialist, secularist, and even Islamist parties.[12] Moreover, certain business elites such as Mounir Majidi and Fouad Ali el-Himma are understood to be within the *makhzen*, directly advising the king, and his partners, in his own businesses. Ultimately, however, these companies and individuals exert only limited pressure, or attempts to halt reform, regarding social issues central to this paper.

Civil society

Despite the absence of full democracy, Morocco's civil society is strong and dynamic, and has managed to bring important issues to the government's attention.[13]

These groups—the most effectual being the single-issue organizations (SIOs)—include various women's movements, human rights organizations, Amazigh-related movements, democratic development groups, and trade unions, among others. In addition, given that the Moroccan regime is not ideological, it is typically amenable to interest groups as long as their goals do not challenge the regime's position. In this way, civil society organizations (CSOs), especially SIOs, can make progress on a given issue, appealing to a particular constituency, even to a palace aim, without necessarily challenging the palace. As such, even those who do not call for systemic reform can be part of these groups and effect change.

Given this background, the next section examines Morocco's CSOs and SIOs in greater detail, assessing their prospects as agents of democratic reform.

DEMOCRACY AND REFORM SINCE 2011

The 2011 uprisings took hold in Morocco following those in Egypt, Tunisia, and other parts of the Arab world. For most of 2011, the pro-democracy movement, known as the February 20 Movement or M20F—so named to mark the country's first protests—called for greater devolution of power from the king to parliament. In response, Mohammed VI quickly subdued protests and preempted further unrest by announcing a referendum to reform the constitution. Revisions that followed brought direct election of the parliament's lower chamber and required the king to appoint the prime minister from the political party garnering a plurality in parliament. The PJD, Morocco's leading Islamist party, won a majority and put forth the country's first Islamist prime minister, Abdelilah Benkirane.[14]

Still, reforms since the 2011 uprising have done little to loosen the king's control over many sectors of the economy, military, judiciary, and even parliament. The M20F, meanwhile, floundered due to internal fragmentation—largely over disagreements regarding the group's methods of resistance and choice of allies—general lack of leadership and mission, and the regime's aforementioned preemption of greater protests. In addition, some M20F members' call for the end of monarchy, mimicking "down with the regime" cries elsewhere in the region, would prove untimely and ill-suited to the Moroccan context.[15]

Since the 2011 uprisings, Mohammed VI has seen fewer serious challenges to his power than what his father and inner circle faced, in part due to an increased voice for CSOs and opposition groups, and to a semblance of democratization via parliament and the multiparty system. But even if full-blown democratization is not applicable to the current Moroccan context, the country's CSOs and SIOs are worth examining, given that they represent for many citizens the only viable way to authentically implement further reform on a given issue. Indeed, most of the groups to be highlighted are not necessarily established, organized, pro-democracy political parties ready and able to govern tomorrow; indeed, such readiness would require some level of abandonment of their mission, absent any systemic overhaul. Because they have greater political leeway than their counterparts in the political parties or formal government bodies, independent CSOs have, while proving to be key catalysts for issue-based reform, maintained symbolic benefits, including popular credibility and general protection from elite appropriation. Furthermore, CSOs and SIOs linked to, or born from, existing political parties are included in the sketch of democratic actors to follow because, as readers will see, they can typically exercise a degree of autonomy from, and often even oppose the policies of, their respective parties. Whereas tens of thousands of such SIOs and CSOs operate in the country, the following section outlines the most prominent of them and the broader categories into which they fall.

Democratic development organizations

Two prominent examples of such umbrella groups are the Espace Associatif (EA)[16] and the Forum des Alternatives Maroc.[17] Each has approximately five hundred professional members.

Instead of calling explicitly for democratization, these groups focus on offering expertise, support, and training to various CSOs and SIOs. They do so by helping groups refine their mission and strategies, use legal frameworks to achieve goals, and effectively communicate these

goals to the relevant local or national government entities; facilitating networking among various groups; and taking stock of related best practices. While on occasion these umbrella groups may cooperate with larger-scale human rights or women's rights organizations, they often offer assistance to small or fledgling local-level CSOs and SIOs. On occasion, they put pressure on local or provincial governments regarding reforms proposed by a group that has sought their counsel. However, as the Moroccan government remains highly centralized, these province-level appeals usually result in minimal steps.

As with any NGO culture, some level of competition will naturally exist between such organizations. However, they do not differ on any strategic or ideological level, and they do not actively compete with similar organizations for membership, although they must compete at some level for foreign funds. Because they do not charge a fee for services, they are mostly reliant on donations or grants. Such groups often partner with, and receive funding from, foreign sources such as Oxfam, La Fondation de France, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, and other such international NGOs (INGOs), as well as from the European Union.

Women's rights and reproductive health groups

Women's rights groups are a prime example of SIOs typically welcomed by the Moroccan regime—even if this has not always been the case. In carefully advocating reforms on certain women's issues, these groups pose little challenge to the state. In addition, meeting the demands of these groups helps bolster the regime's standing abroad and among certain domestic constituencies. Some examples of reforms to women's status during Mohammed VI's reign include the enhanced role of women in the public religious sphere, the 2004 revision of the *Moudawana* (personal status law),[18] and a road map for an enhanced women's role in the Moroccan economy. The mobilization of parts of the Moroccan citizenry and government elements behind the *Moudawana* reform pushed issues of women's rights, and thus the attendant rights groups, to the fore.[19] This campaign was first led by the Union for Feminine Action (UAF), then by the Democratic Association of Moroccan Women (ADFM), the former founded by Latifa Jbabdi in 1987 and the latter by Amina Lamrini out of the PPS in 1985. Over time, these groups and their originator parties have drawn closer to the authorities and have thus had legitimate access to state coffers. By some accounts, this has compromised their impartiality.[20]

The Democratic League for Women's Rights (LDDF), founded in 1993, is another group that, to a limited extent, works toward reform, focused primarily on community outreach through women's shelters, literacy classes, domestic violence hotlines, and traveling from town to town to give talks out of its van. The group is well known for these "caravans." While the UAF and ADFM are typically well funded owing to party links, the LDDF has followed a rockier path, having previously acquired grants from Spain's Oxfam chapter but typically enduring insecure funding. Because of its political and ideological independence, the LDDF has failed to gain access to state monies through the National Initiative for Human Development (INDH), which distributes patronage to the human rights and women's rights groups linked to palace-friendly parties. In aiming to speak the language of the citizen, the LDDF eschews the socialist-leftist or secular bent of other women's groups, making it more palatable for Moroccan women who do not wish to subordinate their faith. Many women within the group wear the hijab—less common in other women's groups—and this openness allows women from various social strata to feel welcome. Some religious Moroccan women who have opted not to use Islamist groups' social services owing to their focus on scripture have instead joined the LDDF.[21] At the same time, the LDDF leadership is pursuing the complete abolishment of polygamy, and has vigorously criticized Islamist parties' policies concerning women.

Working with the groups just mentioned is the Moroccan Association for the Fight against AIDS (ALCS). Because AIDS management is not generally a politically contentious issue, ALCS's independent work was eventually commissioned by the state. Like the LDDF, it focuses on community outreach and offering free testing, as well as free talks at schools, youth centers, and women's centers, and working closely and anonymously with sex workers and members of the LGBTQ community. As the next section will show, resistance to some of these meth-

ods by the *ulama* and Islamist actors has made it harder for the king to take a leadership role—in a sense allowing ALCS to maintain its independence and limiting the palace's ability to then co-opt it.

Human rights groups

Compared to women's groups, human rights groups tend to be slightly more challenging for the regime, given that some look to highlight transgressions committed by state authorities. The three largest more or less independent human rights groups, the Moroccan League for the Defense of Human Rights (LMDDH), the Moroccan Association for Human Rights (AMDH), and the Moroccan Organization for Human Rights (OMDH), have taken divergent paths in this regard.[22] In the early 1970s, while also countering related stirrings from the left, the monarchist Istiqlal Party formed the LMDDH (sometimes referred to as the LMDH) to address the demand for human rights monitoring. While the group, Morocco's first human rights organization, relies on Istiqlal for funds and headquarters, it has maintained some ideological and political distance from the party.[23] For instance, in November 2014 the LMDDH, despite Istiqlal's proximity to the palace, denounced the latter's hosting of an international human rights forum as a "farce" on the grounds that the country has yet to improve its own record. It has also worked intermittently with the more "radical" AMDH.

During the 1980s, most of the AMDH's membership came from the radical wing of the USFP. Gradually, as the party's more mainstream, regime-aligned wing ascended, links with the AMDH foundered and briefly weakened the group's voice. In the late 1980s, a committee formed the OMDH. Whereas the AMDH maintained a hardline stance regarding cooperation with the state, the OMDH, characterized by more elite members, established the palace's centrality in addressing human rights. Thus, while both are technically independent, the OMDH is widely viewed as close to the regime.

These three groups tend to compete with one another, despite periods of selective cooperation. During periods of particular hostility, the groups will often look to discredit one another, whether in terms of authenticity, proximity to the regime, or for other reasons. Because their constituencies overlap somewhat, they are often seen as competing for this reason as well.

The Adala Association is an example of a single-issue human rights organization, focusing primarily on judiciary reform. Established in 2005, its mission is to collaborate with INGOs to ensure Moroccan citizens' right to a fair trial and the judiciary's independence through constitutional and legal reforms, to recruit judges and lawyers in these processes, and to produce research and reports. The group does not take a position on working with the Moroccan government.

The Karama Forum, yet another SIO, was founded by the PJD but does not espouse a religious agenda. A justice-focused organization, it seeks to reopen the cases of imprisoned Islamists who might have been wrongly accused of violence or radicalism. The organization also works to rehabilitate the wrongfully accused, given their susceptibility to radicalization owing to injustices endured or their experience in prisons. Even as the Karama Forum receives some funding from the PJD, its relative autonomy from the party grants it a measure of latitude. Indeed, some hold skepticism about the PJD's motives in backing such services, which can be perceived as means of recruitment or simply polishing the party's image. Still, one could allege the same of the USFP's AMDH, Istiqlal's LMDDH, or the regime's National Human Rights Council (CNDH). Karama alleges that Islamists are often inadequately served by even the most progressive human rights groups and lawyers and that Karama must then fill this service gap.

Amazighist groups

Over the decades, Amazigh-linked movements have been seen by the palace and *makhzen*, alternatively, as unwelcome threats to domestic unity and favorable bulwarks against Islamism. With respect to Morocco's territorial integrity, Amazigh cultural activists and rights groups tend not to pose an overt threat, considering that secessionist strains are mostly limited, especially when compared to Amazigh movements in neighboring countries. Such activists usually remain focused on achiev-

ing greater recognition within the state and preserving Amazigh history and culture. This is especially true since the region's "Amazigh Spring" of 2001—notably that of the Kabylie in Algeria, who revolted violently against the ban on Berber languages and the marginalization of Kabyle intellectuals and activists—and the regional uprisings of 2011, both of which allowed Amazighist groups to successfully campaign for officially equal recognition of their native language, Tamazight, and its various dialects. The state has also recently adopted restorative policies in the realms of education, economic, and cultural-social policy. The broad Amazigh Cultural Movement (MCA), and its attendant campus organizations, political movements, and local cultural associations, played a central role in bringing about these reforms.[24] Hundreds of such Amazigh service organizations operate at the local level, most notably in the Souss-Massa-Draa region, tending to overshadow the larger national NGOs, Islamist groups, and other social service providers.

The most tangible results of last decade's reforms include the state's formation, in 2001, of the Royal Institute of the Amazigh Culture (IRCAM) and the corresponding institutionalization of the Amazigh language—to be taught in schools, with its Tifinagh alphabet included on state buildings and in signage. In effect a palace-funded think tank, the IRCAM is charged with promoting Amazigh literature, art, folklore, history, and culture in the areas of education and public media.

The province-level Rifi Association for Human Rights (ARDH) campaigns on behalf of African migrants through the Rif region, in Morocco's far north, and seeks the reversal of laws and policies that harm the Rifi Amazigh. For example, the organization has pressured the government to change a corrupt policy environment that allows authorities to sometimes benefit from the Rif's hashish trade while small-scale Rifi Amazigh peddlers are selectively arrested, as well as to provide reparations to African migrants abused by Moroccan and Spanish security officials.

Tamaynut, or the New Association for Amazigh Arts and Culture, founded in 1978, primarily has its support base in the Souss region, particularly with university students. In addition to resisting Arabization and Islamization, Tamaynut focuses on issues of land rights, water scarcity, and climate change that adversely affect Amazigh farmers, including mountain farmers. It receives funds from INGOs and works at the grassroots level.

The Moroccan Association for Research and Cultural Exchange (AMREC), founded in 1967, has worked to collect, archive, and spread Amazigh folklore. Widely seen as "moderate" given its focus on history and story collection—as opposed to the Tamaynut's perceived recasting of history or militant promotion of Amazigh identity—AMREC's members and supporters mainly consist of urban intellectual elites who take no explicit stance on royalism.[25] Its grassroots support can be found among the population of the Middle Atlas range.

For these Amazighist groups, political differences and differing approaches to the state have generated tension, but the groups' varying missions, constituents, and donors have prevented large-scale competition. More notable are the IRCAM's effects on the other groups. While IRCAM-initiated reforms have helped bring Amazigh culture and history to the fore, the group is also seen as having co-opted the Amazigh movements by dissolving and amalgamating their divergent tendencies. These include those of the royalist camp, including the Amazigh parties; the moderate, history-focused camps like the AMREC; and the leftist university groups of the Souss, such as Tamaynut. Various activists from all camps came to be employed at the IRCAM, but "many Amazigh militants view the [state's adoption of Tifinagh as the official Amazigh alphabet] as a thinly veiled ploy to separate Moroccan Amazighs from those in Kabylia or diaspora France, where Amazigh language (Tamazight) is written in the Latin alphabet."[26] These militants also see the IRCAM as having monopolized expression of Amazigh culture, to the detriment of smaller groups. Finally, the IRCAM's presence has damaged these smaller groups' ability to seek public funds, with many shutting down as a result. The subregional groups already discussed in this section have continued to operate despite such political dynamics.

Trade unions

In Morocco, trade unions usually get their funding from the political parties with which they are affiliated, and thus tend to be highly politicized, with some leaning toward greater cooperation with the state than others. Much like the other types of groups analyzed here, the unions' party affiliations reflect on their credibility. Labor unions in Morocco date back to the 1930s, during the protectorate period, when the first ones comprised both French and Moroccan members. The subsequent Moroccan-only labor movement was active in the 1950s liberation struggle, and still derives popular credibility and legitimacy from its association with this period.

While about seventeen nationally recognized unions are active in Morocco, the largest trade union federations, with the most associated unions, are the Union Marocaine du Travail (UMT), the Confederation Democratique du Travail (CDT), and the Union Generale des Travailleurs du Maroc (UGTM).

The UMT, a key player in Morocco's independence movement, is the country's oldest and largest labor federation, with more than 300,000 members.[27] Founded in 1955 by a railway employee, Mahjoub Ben Seddiq, the UMT was only permitted to operate openly a year later, after the country gained its independence. Ben Seddiq remained UMT secretary-general until his death in 2010, when Miloudi Moukhariq took over the secretariat. The federation, while still the largest, has been weakened by internal divisions and breakaway groups,[28] and over time has come to be seen as the union closest to the regime. Indeed, the regime funds its national headquarters, providing the incentive for a broader rhetorical focus on employment as opposed to implicating the regime in the country's labor issues. Its constituent unions, moreover, are more diverse than those of the other two major federations.

The UGTM was founded in 1960 following a split within the UMT. That year, UMT defector Abdel Razzaq Afilal founded the new federation with funds provided by the Istiqlal Party. While the UGTM is still linked to Istiqlal, the union's political platforms have diverged from those of the party. According to some accounts, UGTM rank-and-file members are typically either Istiqlal-associated nationalists who have joined the union or UMT malcontents.[29]

In 1978, the CDT was founded by the USFP as a breakaway from the UMT in response to internal USFP complaints that the UMT's Ben Seddiq was working too intimately with the regime.[30] The CDT's power base remains mainly employees of public-private enterprises and the public sector. Phosphate miners, schoolteachers, health workers, and railway employees have come to form the union's main support base, and the CDT maintains relations with the Socialist Party while to an extent relying on it for funding. Largely seen as one of the more radical unions thanks to its long history of protest and willingness to "stand up" to the *makhzen*—particularly after the austerity measures of the early 1980s—it enjoys substantial popular support and legitimacy. Its founder, Noubir Amaoui, still serves as secretary-general.

In addition to these national unions, syndicates and unions exist for various specific professions, the most well-known being the public-sector teachers' and health workers' unions. Such entities are occasionally affiliated with the national unions, and the unaffiliated have at the very least been able to ride on the coattails of mobilizations by the national unions.

Competition among unions and federations typically stems from an overlap in supporters, where fractiousness tends to be along lines of closeness to the institutional power brokers—that is, to the *makhzen*. Despite such tensions, the federations also tend to unite during times of strategic necessity. For instance, in 2011, the unions coalesced and profited from the momentum of the uprisings to advance their material and political aims with respect to the regime. For example, they used the uprisings by "joining street protests, exaggerating material demands, and threatening negotiation walkouts," and the regime largely acquiesced due to a heightened sense of vulnerability.[31]

While the unions may agitate for greater pluralism on the outside, they are generally lacking in internal democratic procedures. Leaders have not been elected in any of these federations and are typically chosen through elite vetting processes.

PROSPECTS FOR DEMOCRATIC REFORM

As an earlier section of this paper argued, near-term traditional democratization is unlikely in Morocco, placing the focus instead on civil society activism and the reform efforts of SIOs and unions. Barriers to a more dynamic civil society, however, can still be usefully addressed and areas of potential promise identified.

Three obstacles to deeper democratic reform bear mention. The first is the monarchy's continued reluctance to delegate greater political authority to elected bodies. The 2011 reforms, while significant in some respects, are criticized by pro-democracy institutions outside the country, and by certain internal democracy advocates,[32] as having been stalled or disingenuous. For instance, many argue that Article 19 of the constitution, which confers unchecked religious authority on the monarch, was only superficially relaxed in 2011, such that the king retains veto power and sole authority over the religious realm.

A second, related obstacle concerns the regime's approach to civil society. Despite the relative strength of the Moroccan civil society landscape, CSOs contend with regime co-optation and, in many cases, coercion. It is useful in this regard to note that many Moroccan CSOs have state-produced "clones." While these clone groups produce valuable research, they also promulgate a counternarrative to that of the grassroots CSOs, one that maintains the king as the ultimate guarantor of the given CSO's mission, whether that mission concerns women's rights, general human rights, Sahrawi rights, or Amazigh issues.

For instance, after the formation of the independent Moroccan Association for Human Rights (AMDH), the Moroccan government formed its own versions of the group, the Consultative Council on Human Rights (CCDH) and the National Human Rights Council (CNDH). Both have become government arms responsible for reporting on domestic human rights abuses. The manner in which staff and directors are hired and appointed presents clear conflicts of interest that undermine an intended democratic nature or purpose. The state's establishment of the IRCAM as a foil to grassroots Amazigh-rights groups is a mixed picture: while it has produced important literature and generated awareness on Amazigh politics, history, culture, oral tradition, and art, it is simultaneously seen as an attempt to co-opt the Amazigh opposition, and may have even had the ancillary effect of fragmenting Morocco's opposition groups (Islamists, Marxists, and Amazigh).[33]

Because an issue can be used to rally citizens behind a state-spearheaded project, the most autonomous SIOs are those whose issues are simultaneously of concern to the Moroccan regime, Moroccan public, and international bodies but are also *opposed* by an important domestic constituency. This prevents the palace from fully appropriating the interests and rhetoric of a given group and thereby co-opting it. The palace's inability to take a leading role on women's reforms and AIDS management, the latter noted earlier, is a prime example. Due to resistance from the *ulama* and Islamists[34] more broadly, groups such as ADFM, focusing on women's rights, and ALCS, focusing on AIDS, independently took the lead, with only the king's tacit backing.

A third obstacle to continued democratization concerns Morocco's Islamist-secularist divide. At the official level, leftist opposition parties have long seen Islamism's rise as a threat to the modernizing agenda. Because this perception aligns with palace interests, such leftist parties have long participated in the political process with few guarantees and little power. What is more, fear of an Islamist rise has dampened leftist-secularist enthusiasm for political openness and democratization. For their part, Islamist parties, while tending toward strategic cooperation with secular parties, see the leftists as anathema to Morocco's Islamic character. The tug-of-war has served the palace, which has remained above the fray. As the previous section showed, this divide has had implications for the ability of CSOs and SIOs, often linked to one party or another, to collaboratively make progress on a given issue. More gravely, the continuing violence between radical leftists and Islamists on university campuses—Dhar el-Mehraz in Fez is a key example—has led to intermittent bouts of militarization of these spaces.

Such obstacles notwithstanding, certain areas of potential promise are worth highlighting. From time to time, for instance, palace-aligned parties such as the USFP and Istiqlal have put forward platforms calling for a transition to "authentic democracy."[35] While these steps often do not exceed rhetoric and sloganeering during election seasons, the USFP, as early as the mid-2000s, attempted to present specific amendments to the constitution that would increase parliament's power while decreasing that of the king.[36] As the USFP's co-optation was further solidified in the late 2000s, the amendments were not passed and the effort lost momentum until 2011. Still, in spite of their low political capacity and low public legitimacy, the potential of reform-oriented groups within the political system may be harnessed should a real process of systemic reform get under way.

During moments of political opportunity, these groups, if astute and trained, can use the limited time and space available to negotiate for reform. Furthermore, at the local level, the groups discussed in the preceding sections may be able to circumvent national politics, palace-linked nepotism, and elite patronage networks to provide services and implement locally specific social policy, even if through informal means. Of course, while the issues of corruption and nepotism are indeed replicated at the micro level, groups may be similarly empowered to navigate these networks according to local dynamics.

Potential promise is also found in those democratic development umbrella NGOs positioned to facilitate cooperation among otherwise ideologically divergent groups on a given social issue, such that groups may collectively introduce progressive reforms on which they agree. Along these lines, the Democracy and Modernity Collective (CDM), founded in 2003, is a promising group that, while not serving as an advisory hub, is a pro-democracy organization. CDM works closely with U.S. and European democracy-promotion efforts, seeking to bridge the Islamist-secular divide, and promoting "democratic culture," which it asserts is a necessary antecedent to procedural democracy. Despite actively looking to include Moroccan Jews and other religious minorities in the political or civil society sphere, CDM retains an "Islamic reference" and works also with local religious groups so as not to isolate vast swaths of Moroccan society. CDM has tried to pressure political parties toward constitutional reform and also monitors parliamentary elections.

Finally, many CSO activists cite the march of time as their greatest ally. One activist, who asked to remain anonymous, explained as follows:

> We hope that, as the world modernizes, we can further democratic efforts and increase pressure on the elites. But as activists, we don't have any control of the rises and dips in political will for reform. One day, there are democratic protests in the region, the next, regimes, citing stability purposes, reverse the progress made originally. We are casualties in such processes, and must ride the waves as they come. In terms of our future, we can only continue our work, and reassess our strategies if there are turning points at the top. One thing is sure: absent some unforeseen violent occurrence, Morocco will move forward, and we will too.[37]

NOTES

1. Some Islamist groups, including the governing Justice and Development Party (PJD), have demonstrated a commitment to certain democratic procedures and principles. The debate continues over the "true" end goal of Islamists and over the authenticity of Islamist moderation–that is, whether Islamist groups use reform to reach Islamic ends or use Islamic principles to reach reformist ends. That debate lies beyond the scope of this paper, which remains focused on non-Islamist reformists in Morocco.
2. The king retained most powers. See Vish Sakthivel, *Al-Adl wal-Ihsan: Inside Morocco's Islamist Challenge*, Policy Focus 135 (Washington DC: Washington Institute, 2014), http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/al-adl-wal-ihsan-inside-moroccos-islamist-challenge.
3. Arabic for "storehouse."

4. "Morocco," National Democratic Institute, https://www.ndi.org/morocco.
5. Still, many forms of repression endure. Despite the closure of Morocco's infamous Tazmamart prison, black sites still exist around the country, journalism is heavily circumscribed, Sahrawi activists are at risk, and Islamist figures—typically preachers and other religious figures—face imprisonment, asset seizure, and at times violence.
6. As opposed to these non-Islamist parties, the Islamist PJD, arguably the only legal major party that allows open expressions of internal dissent, provides opportunities for upward mobility to rank-and-file members, youth, and women, and has transparent internal decisionmaking processes, many of which are made public.
7. Today, Istiqlal is seen by many as an arm of the *makhzen*, pursuing incentives toward royalism and garnering a reputation for corruption.
8. For more on the USFP's co-optation and its inability to push progressive legislation, see Marina Ottaway and Meredith Riley, *Morocco: From Top-Down Reform to Democratic Transition?* Carnegie Papers: Middle East Series 71 (Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment, 2006), http://carnegieendowment.org/files/cp71_ottaway_final.pdf; Maati Monjib, "The USFP and the Moroccan Monarchy: The Power of Patronage," Sada, May 4, 2010, http://carnegieendowment.org/2010/05/04/usfp-and-moroccan-monarchy-power-of-patronage/fmsf; Vish Sakthivel, Al-Adl wal-Ihsan: Inside Morocco's Islamist Challenge, Policy Focus 135 (Washington DC: Washington Institute, 2014), http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/al-adl-wal-ihsan-inside-moroccos-islamist-challenge.
9. Maati Monjib, "The USFP and the Moroccan Monarchy: The Power of Patronage," *Sada*, May 4, 2010, http://carnegieendowment.org/2010/05/04/usfp-and-moroccan-monarchy-power-of-patronage/fmsf.
10. For instance, YNNA must adjust for its potential competition with ONA, the royal holdings company, by doing most of its banking with a majority-ONA-owned bank, Attijariwafa.
11. See Azzedine Layachi, *State, Society, and Democracy in Morocco: The Limits of Associative Life* (Washington DC: Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, 1998), http://ccas.georgetown.edu/story/1242687316313.html.
12. The YNNA family business, for instance, is said to adhere to Islamic business practices (e.g., refusing to sell alcohol at the grocery stores it owns, refusing interest), and its patriarch is a PJD supporter.
13. This influence often manifests itself in bargaining power, whereby civil society organizations with high domestic support or strong international backing, or both, use their popularity to successfully lobby the regime to implement reforms.
14. For more, see Vish Sakthivel, *Al-Adl wal-Ihsan: Inside Morocco's Islamist Challenge*, Policy Focus 135 (Washington DC: Washington Institute, 2014), http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/al-adl-wal-ihsan-inside-moroccos-islamist-challenge.
15. Ibid.
16. "Espace Associatif: Nos Objectifs," accessed January 23, 2015, http://www.espace-associatif.ma/Nos-Objectifs?lang=fr.
17. "Forum des Alternatives Maroc," Anna Lindh Foundation, accessed January 22, 2015, http://www.annalindhfoundation.org/members/forum-des-alternatives-maroc.
18. Originally based on the Maliki *madhab* (doctrine) of Sunni jurisprudence, the *Moudawana*—which adjudicates on issues ranging from marriage rights to polygamy to child custody—was made law after Morocco's independence in 1956. Its most recent revision, in 2004, was praised by international onlookers for addressing women's rights and gender equality, but the changes stirred internal controversy.
19. Eve Sandberg and Kenza Aqertit, *Moroccan Women, Activists, and Gender Politics: An Institutional Analysis* (London: Lexington Books, 2014).
20. For more, see Oriana Wuerth (2005), "The Reform of the *Moudawana*: The Role of Women's Civil Society Organizations in Changing the Personal Status Code of Morocco," *Hawwa* 3, no. 3 (2005): 309–33. State-led bodies are not considered viable sources of democratic pressure on the government, and are therefore left out of the present study. For example, the National Union of Morocco Women (UNFM), founded in 1969 by King Hassan II, is not included in this discussion. The UNFM focuses mainly on vocational and professional training for women, rather than on legal reform.
21. For more on LDDF constituents, see Doris H. Gray, "Feminism, Islamism, and a Third Way," in *Contemporary Morocco: State, Politics and Society under Mohammed VI*, ed. Bruce Maddy-Weitzman and Daniel Zisenwine (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), 136–46.

22. James N. Sater, *Civil Society and Political Change in Morocco* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), 105.
23. Abdelaziz Nouaydi, "Morocco: The Imperative of Democratic Transition," in *Human Rights under African Constitutions*, ed. Abdullahi Ahmed an-Naim (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 173.
24. Paul Silverstein and David Crawford, "Amazigh Activism and the Moroccan State," *Middle East Review* 34, no. 233 (2004): 44–48, http://www.merip.org/mer/mer233/amazigh-activism-moroccan-state.
25. Bruce Maddy-Weitzman, *The Berber Identity Movement and the Challenge to North African States* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011).
26. Paul Silverstein and David Crawford, "Amazigh Activism and the Moroccan State," *Middle East Review* 34, no. 233 (2004): 44–48, http://www.merip.org/mer/mer233/amazigh-activism-moroccan-state.
27. It is difficult to quantify overall union membership because individuals within a given union may be personally affiliated with one or another or many at once. In addition, many claiming to be members do not pay dues.
28. Shortly after independence, pro-Istiqlal teachers and miners broke away from the UMT to form their own profession-based unions, and Istiqlal formed its own union, the UGTM.
29. International Labor Affairs Bureau, *Foreign Labor Trends: Morocco* (Washington DC, 1995), 1–11.
30. The UMT considered it best to deal directly with the regime to win concessions, especially among a few amenable Istiqlal ministers. For more, see J. F. Clement and J. Paul, "Trade Unions and Moroccan Politics," *Middle East Report*, no. 127 (1984), 19–24.
31. Matt Buehler, "Labour Demands, Regime Concessions: Moroccan Unions and the Arab Uprising," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 42, no. 1 (2015): 90, http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13530194.2015.973189#.Vdi3z_lVhBe. For a full discussion of the federations' demands and concessions gained, see the full Buehler text (88–103).
32. These include the February 20 Movement (M20F), the socialist democratic al-Nahj al-Dimocrati (Democratic Way Party), and Freedom Now, to name a few.
33. For more, see Paul Silverstein and David Crawford, "Amazigh Activism and the Moroccan State," *Middle East Review* 34, no. 233 (2004): 44–48, http://www.merip.org/mer/mer233/amazigh-activism-moroccan-state.
34. The *ulama* and the monarch have a mutually reinforcing relationship, wherein the latter is relatively dependent on the former for religious legitimacy, and neither typically finds it favorable to oppose the other on a given issue.
35. See Marina Ottaway and Meredith Riley, *Morocco: From Top-Down Reform to Democratic Transition?* Carnegie Papers: Middle East Series 71 (Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment, 2006), http://carnegieendowment.org/files/cp71_ottaway_final.pdf.
36. Ibid.
37. Anonymous activist, Skype interview with author, January 22, 2015.

Vish Sakthivel was a Next Generation Fellow at The Washington Institute in 2013-2014, with a focus on Islamist politics in Morocco. Fluent in Moroccan Arabic and Tamil, she lived in Morocco for three years, including time in the Peace Corps. She earned her master's degree at Georgetown University's Public Policy Institute with a concentration in Arab studies and is currently conducting fieldwork in Algiers as a doctoral candidate at the University of Oxford.