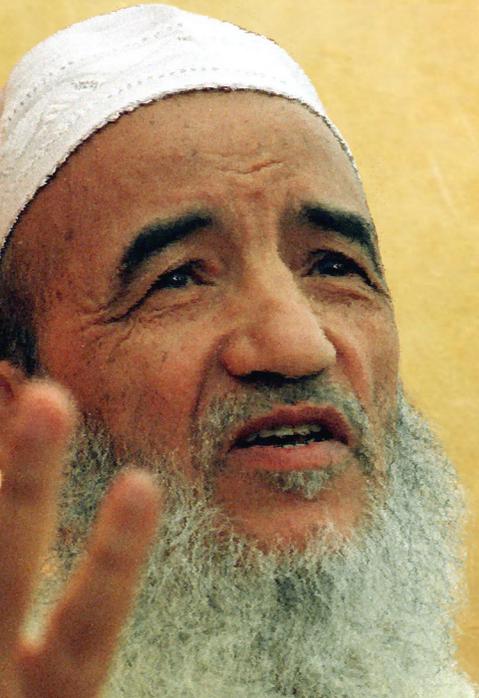




V I S H   S A K T H I V E L

*al-Adl wal-Ihsan*  
*Inside Morocco's Islamist Challenge*





# *al-Adl wal-Ihsan*

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## *Inside Morocco's Islamist Challenge*

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*Vish Sakthivel*  
*August 2014*

## *Acronyms*

<b>AWI</b>	al-Adl wal-Ihsan
<b>CLTD</b>	Coordination for Liberties and Democratic Transition
<b>FEERI</b>	Spanish Federation of Islamic Religious Entities
<b>FIS</b>	Islamic Salvation Front (Algeria)
<b>INDH</b>	National Initiative for Human Development
<b>IMF</b>	International Monetary Fund
<b>M20F</b>	February 20 Movement
<b>MCC</b>	Millennium Challenge Corporation
<b>MPDC</b>	Constitutional Democratic Popular Movement
<b>PJD</b>	Justice and Development Party
<b>TI</b>	Tawhid wal Islah
<b>USAID</b>	U.S. Agency for International Development
<b>USFP</b>	Socialist Union of Popular Forces

## Executive Summary

In December 2012, tens of thousands of Moroccans marked the death of Sheikh Abdessalam Yassine, an inveterate adversary of Morocco's political establishment. As the founder of al-Adl wal-Ihsan (AWI), Yassine led an officially banned but tolerated Islamist movement that has long eschewed political participation in favor of social outreach. Although AWI professes an anti-Western, antimaterialist, and antiglobalization worldview—shared by many of the region's well-known Islamist groups—it rejects the Salafi and nationalist currents that propelled Tunisia's Ennahda Party and Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood to power. Yassine instead cultivated a movement steeped in the Sufi mysticism that pervades Moroccan culture, linking political and social activism to personal spirituality. With Yassine's passing, however, and the rise of AWI leaders who appear more politically and ideologically flexible, the group's internal consensus keeping it from the ballot box may be eroding.

This report assesses changes in the organization nearly two years after Sheikh Yassine's death, including possible courses for the organization's political and religious-spiritual wings. The piece also explores the group's evolving relationship to the *makhzen*, as Morocco's "deep state," including the king, his circle, the military, and security apparatuses, is known. It begins by examining AWI's structure, support base, and beliefs, highlighting the foundational influence of Sufi *zawiyahs* within Yassine's writings and, correspondingly, their influence on his movement's ideology. Among the issues discussed in chapters 1 and 2 are the significant differences between AWI and other prominent Islamist groups in the region, including Morocco's governing Justice and Development Party (PJD). AWI adopts a peaceful and incremental approach to its activism, rejecting clandestine operations, foreign financing, and fundamentalist interpretations of the Quran. Much like fellow Islamist groups, however, AWI has provided social services and religious instruction to the public in the absence of

state efforts. AWI's political platform, meanwhile, rests upon the weakening or abolition of Morocco's monarchy. Though AWI professes a desire for a democracy dictated by Islamic law and an end to the king's crony capitalism, some observers have labeled the group a Yassine-centered cult, citing his rigid intolerance of internal dissent as evidence that AWI would simply seek to establish a new authoritarian system in Morocco. The Arab Spring's limited manifestations in Morocco provided a small opening for AWI to embrace political activity, but its short-lived cooperation with other antiregime elements such as the February 20 Movement for Change (M20F) fizzled as AWI determined that the time was not yet ripe for participation. Since the sheikh's death, AWI has experienced greater internal democracy at the expense of organizational unity. With two new leaders atop the political and religious wings, which were once unified under Yassine, AWI may see one or both of its branches abandoning the group's longstanding refusal to accommodate the king's interests.

Chapter 3 of this report closely examines the *makhzen's* historical accommodation of opposition parties, tracing the monarchy's systematic consolidation of control over the leftist Socialist Union of Popular Forces (USFP), the conservative Istiqlal, and eventually the Islamist PJD. The text proceeds to outline three possibilities for AWI's future as a popular movement: reconciliation with the government and, thus, recognition by the king, adherence to its nonparticipatory status quo, or collaboration with other marginalized political groups. For the *makhzen*, the process of wooing once-virulent opposition parties into parliamentary politics began amid the internal unrest of the 1980s and was redoubled after civil war broke out in neighboring Algeria in the 1990s. The co-opted parties have been universally weakened as they have moved toward the political center, and they are increasingly viewed by the Moroccan public as complicit in the government's failures. By comparison, the king has become stronger, bolstering his image as a mediator and gaining cover for stalled political and economic reforms. Whether AWI will follow this path of co-optation remains to be seen, but those within the group resisting participation have seen their influence wane. Like the PJD before it, AWI may ultimately subordinate its more hardline members and pursue politics. On the other hand, AWI remains fully aware of the downsides of entering politics under the current regime, and the organization may conclude that the time is not right to join the fray.

The perils of the political route were demonstrated in recent years when superficial democratic reforms enacted by the king preempted the 2011 popular uprising that AWI believed would mark its entrée to power. The fall of

Islamist governments in Egypt and Tunisia also weigh heavily on AWI leaders. As a third option, AWI could quietly band with secular movements to gradually build a more potent threat to the *makhzen*. Chapters 3 thus highlight persistent uncertainties as AWI considers a move toward participation, including the consequences of its policy inexperience, the prospects for a parliamentary coalition united in opposition to the monarch, and the future of Morocco's remaining Islamist groups, from the PJD to the radical fringe.

Chapter 4 discusses recommendations for U.S. policy toward the Moroccan government's treatment of AWI, given the uncertainties regarding the organization's future. Morocco's relative stability amid regional turmoil makes the kingdom a likely ally for the United States; and the *makhzen*'s record of keeping opposition parties in check should allay fears that the participation of opposition parties—Islamist or otherwise—in Moroccan politics will end in destabilizing failure, as with Tunisia's Ennahda or Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood.

Washington should thus encourage the palace to welcome a possible bid for political participation by the popular AWI, strengthen the parliament, and improve on the social services that lead many Moroccan citizens to support opposition groups. As Morocco's government considers increasing austerity measures, it should remember that Islamist groups such as AWI gain substantial support and legitimacy by providing social services in the absence of sufficient state programs. In considering AWI's future, U.S. policymakers should study the behavior of former Moroccan opposition parties that have come under the *makhzen*'s wing, and assess developments in AWI as they occur. A U.S. position that is any more aggressive could be misconstrued as supporting Islamists like AWI or as engineering a dynamic between the opposition and the regime, especially since the regime has the wherewithal to do so itself.



## *Introduction*

In the early 1990s, Western academic and political commentators sought to understand the crisis facing Islamists in the Middle East. The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and Algerian Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) had been effectively quashed by secular powers, and Iran's Islamic regime was revealed to be a repressive theocracy. The Islamist "solution" had been discredited, and many scholars posited that a post-Islamist epoch had arrived.<sup>1</sup>

But predictions of Islamism's demise proved premature. The 2011 Arab uprisings provided openings and gave renewed purpose to Islamists across the region. Yet, in mid-2013, Islamists' fortunes across the region receded once again. Morocco's governing Islamist party—the Justice and Development Party (PJD)—has been weakened by co-optation; Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood was removed in a military coup, harshly repressed, and subsequently banned; and Tunisia's Ennahda ceded power to an interim government of technocrats.

While the theory of post-Islamism has been discredited in many circles, this theory simply does not apply in the Moroccan context. Moroccan Islamist parties have a more complex and fluid relationship with the state than do some of their regional peers, a dynamic that, at least for now, serves both the regime and these parties. Although it remains illegal, the most important of these opposition groups is al-Adl wal-Ihsan (AWI), or the Justice and Benevolence Movement,<sup>2</sup> an organization with deep roots in Morocco and wide popular appeal.

### **Moroccan Politics**

Morocco's current political environment can be traced to the reign of King Hassan II, which began in 1961 and was marked by acts of severe repression in the face of continual upheaval. During this period, the government's structure vacillated between nominal separation of powers and consolidation of the executive and legislative branches under the king's control.

The king of Morocco is not only exalted by Moroccan citizens as a unifying political leader and symbol, he is also recognized as the Amir al-Mouminin, or “commander of the faithful,” giving him a powerful religious mandate domestically. In July 1970, Hassan temporarily lifted the state of emergency he had declared in 1965 in response to student protests and a growing socialist movement and initiated Morocco’s involvement in the Western Sahara conflict. This struggle over the disputed territories south of Morocco’s internationally recognized borders, along with Hassan’s decision to send troops to support Palestinians in the 1973 Arab-Israeli war, helped unite the Moroccan people behind the monarch.

Beginning in the late 1970s, Hassan also sought to defang political threats to the *makhzen*—Morocco’s “deep state,” including the king, his close friends, the military, and security apparatuses—by co-opting opposition parties. These efforts intensified through the 1980s, as economic and unemployment crises provoked popular unrest. In 1993, Hassan went so far as to propose a system of power sharing called *Alternance*, whereby the king agreed to appoint a prime minister from an opposition party, provided opposition parties won a majority of seats in parliament. The king, of course, retained previous powers. Though initially resistant over perceived risks to their principles and influence, the *makhzen*’s main rivals eventually relented, and 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, Muhammad VI came to power and took steps to appear more democratic and progressive than his father. He has since made substantial modernization efforts, introducing protections for women, ethno-linguistic minorities, and political opponents. Yet Muhammad VI has also continued the practice of political co-optation, begun by Hassan, of primarily the Islamist parties. Fearing that religion-fueled violence in Algeria might spill over to Morocco, Hassan had taken a conciliatory approach to his country’s Salafists and vetted the Islamist PJD for participation in the 1997 elections. As Moroccan politics liberalized under Muhammad VI and the PJD cut ties with its more ideological branches, Islamist participation in government was seen as increasingly likely and less of a threat to the status quo.

However, after the jihadist-perpetrated Casablanca bombing of 2003, many found the PJD to be morally accountable for a climate that could produce such attacks. With mounting anger at the party, even calls for its dissolution, parliament passed a law banning religious or ethno-linguistic parties.

The acquiescent PJD then made adjustments to its label and its platforms. This led to a clear change in the ways in which Islamist parties could engage followers both in discourse and in action. The following chapter elaborates on the Casablanca attacks.

In 2011, popular protests associated with the Arab Spring began rippling in Morocco, although they took on a significantly different character. While reacting to the fall of autocratic leaders in Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya, Moroccan movements used the phenomenon as a springboard in their platforms of reform and gradual democratic transition. Far from calling for *isqat al-nidam* (the fall of the regime), Moroccan movements instead called for a better separation of powers and greater empowerment of parliament, while not directly challenging elements of the king's authority, religious or otherwise.

Muhammad VI acted quickly—announcing a constitutional reform referendum—before the protests could grow into uprisings such as those witnessed in Tunisia and Egypt. Constitutional changes proposed by the king and approved by voters brought direct election of the parliament's lower chamber and entrusted selection of the country's prime minister—once the prerogative of the king—to the majority coalition. Later that same year, the PJD won a plurality of seats in parliament and Morocco's first Islamist prime minister, Abdelilah Benkirane, took office. The next chapter outlines the “Moroccan Spring” in greater detail.

Practically speaking, Muhammad's constitutional reforms have done little to loosen the king's grip on Morocco's military, most sectors of the economy, the judiciary, or even the political party landscape. The *makhzen's* outsized influence over the economy and the monarchy's troubling pattern of silencing outspoken critics have gone mostly unresolved. The events of 2011 have, by some accounts, consolidated the king's power and even provided him with scapegoats for the laggard economy and absence of meaningful political reforms.

In late 2013, democratically elected Islamists lost clout in countries like Tunisia and Egypt, and Morocco's Islamists also suffered. As in 2011, Moroccans looked east—but this time, they saw the aftermath as a cautionary tale. Near state failure in Libya, a violent crackdown on Islamists in Egypt, and the political impasse in Tunisia jolted the already revolution-averse Moroccan public. Many Moroccans have long believed that the costs of rebellion—a weakened economy and compromised security—outweigh the benefits. In this regard, the possibility of damaged tourism (an economic mainstay for Morocco), high death tolls, and other negative economic indicators compelled Moroccan reformists to

rethink their vision. Support for the king resurged; both the Moroccan people and the king railed against the PJD leadership, with popular dissatisfaction culminating in the withdrawal of Istiqlal, a monarchist opposition party, from the PJD's ruling coalition and a dramatic cabinet reshuffling that allowed the much-weakened Prime Minister Benkirane to remain in office. This slow consolidation of royal power, coupled with the downward trend for Islamists regionwide, provides a context for AWI's current state of retreat and calculation.

### Ideological Underpinnings of AWI

On December 14, 2012, tens of thousands of Moroccans gathered in Rabat to mourn the death of one of the country's most powerful opposition figures and thinkers of his time.<sup>3</sup> Attendees spanned the ideological spectrum, ranging from secular politicians to the PJD's well-known minister Mustafa Ramid, who reportedly attended despite an unwritten ban on government members' participation in the funeral. The figure being mourned was Sheikh Abdessalam Yassine, the founder of al-Adl wal-Ihsan.

The funeral was held at the prominent, state-run Assuna Mosque under the pretext of reconciliation initiated by the monarch. The choice of location, however, was seen as tactical, with the aim of co-opting the longtime royal adversary's legacy. A central, officially sanctioned locale ensured Yassine's burial site would not become a shrine for AWI followers, a development that could potentially render him more dangerous in death than in life.<sup>4</sup> It also gave the government a rationale for policing the burial site.

While nominally illegal, AWI has eschewed popular politics since its inception, and the group's membership—while increasing—has been difficult to quantify since its formal establishment in the mid-1980s. AWI rejects three types of practices, based on associated core principles of Yassine's teachings: *violent methods, secrecy and clandestine activity, and foreign intervention or reliance on foreign forces, including foreign funding of its own operation*. As such, AWI is a mostly local organization, which distinguishes it from other Islamist entities in Morocco.

Since AWI refuses to recognize the monarch as Amir al-Mouminin, the group remains technically banned. In practice, however, it has been increasingly tolerated as an aging Yassine reduced his public criticism of the king and other more politically savvy forces inside the organization came to the fore.

Other factors have driven officials to mostly tolerate the group's activities—namely, its espousal of nonviolence and its provision of services to constituents, with the latter helping fill state gaps. In some urban pockets, for example, one

might find underfunded state clinics with “Ministère de la Santé” stamps that are, in fact, administered by al-Adl wal-Ihsan members. Most such services, however, are provided unofficially and informally, as discussed at greater length in the next chapter. Personal connections also play some limited role in the official leniency regarding AWI activities—an old friendship, say, between a ranking AWI member and a state official may help ease scrutiny of certain group endeavors.

**SHEIKH ABDESSALAM YASSINE.** Born in Marrakesh in 1928, the young Yassine showed great promise as an Islamic scholar, including memorization of the *Qur'an* at a young age. He also wrote poetry and later learned French, English, and Russian; his dozens of subsequent publications would be penned in both Arabic and French.<sup>5</sup>

Yassine was an idiosyncratic thinker and an eclectic reader well versed in Western political thought and history, from the Enlightenment works of Voltaire and Montesquieu to writings of the Marxist-Leninists. He himself wrote in a style that often lacked structure or organization but was nonetheless intellectually rich and innovative—even for secular readers. He derived little influence from—and in fact critiqued—preeminent Islamists such as Egypt’s Sayyed Qutb, Iran’s Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, and Pakistan’s Abul Ala Maududi, each of whom, he argued, focused too heavily on politics and Islamic subversion and not enough on the spiritual aspects of societal improvement. Like Qutb and Khomeini, Morocco’s now-defunct *Shabiba Islamiyah* (Islamic Youth) also discounted inner spirituality and adhered to a nationalist Salafi epistemology that disparaged mysticism.<sup>6</sup> Gaining popularity around the same time as AWI, *Shabiba Islamiyah* later evolved into today’s PJD, Morocco’s “moderate” Islamist group, which lately has proven fiercely loyal to the king.<sup>7</sup>

### AWI and Islam in Morocco

Here, some context regarding Moroccan Islam comes in useful. As Amir al-Mouminin, the king occupies an important space in the religious sphere and is, in many respects, linked to the Moroccan religious identity.<sup>8</sup> Morocco’s own religious infrastructure is heavily controlled by the palace, which dictates mosque hours, requires ministry certification of all imams, chooses which sermons are used in Friday prayer, and filters out fatwas from foreign sources. The king maintains a monopoly on religious authority, and as such, Islamist groups are not permitted to have their own mosques or conduct their own public sermons. AWI members typically meet in the privacy of a leading member’s home, lacking a formal office or physical headquarters.

In the last decade or so, the Moroccan regime has tried to reform the official religious sphere, especially the Ministry of Islamic Affairs, which has taken a prominent role in state-led efforts to counter extremism, and even Islamism—including AWI—more broadly. The ministry was long led by Abdelkebir Alaoui Mdaghri, a famously conservative holdover from Hassan II's reign, until he was replaced by the Sufi Ahmed Toufiq a few years after Muhammad VI ascended.

Toufiq is himself part of the Boutchichiyah order—the indigenous Moroccan *tariqa* (method or path) of the broader transnational Qadiri Sufi *tariqa*. The recent branding of Moroccan Islam as “moderate” and “tolerant” hinges, in part, on the embrace of Sufi history as a bulwark against the tendency toward Salafism. This is at once an attempt to maintain control over the religious message, including potentially divergent voices, as well as a conciliatory gesture toward more amenable Sufi populations. It has also created a religious role for women, drawing praise from Western onlookers.<sup>9</sup> Primarily, however, this branding of Sufism serves as a counterweight to Salafism-Wahhabism.

While these efforts<sup>10</sup> aim to counter religious extremism by guaranteeing access to standardized, moderate Islamic teaching, they also mark an attempt by the palace to extend its reach into spiritual lives and over the religious sphere. The effort to “standardize” Islam and encourage religious homogeneity is thought to reinforce stability and deepen the regime's religious authority and legitimacy.

The extent to which Moroccans are satisfied with this religious arrangement remains ambiguous. While the female guides known as *mourchidat* and the state-appointed male imams deliver a standardized message, some Moroccans feel that this arrangement does not address the population's more existential needs, serving more to prop up the country's tradition than to foster spiritual self-investigation. Yassine's genius was his response to the very population that felt left out by the palace's reforms: the religiously unfulfilled, politically apathetic, and of course disenfranchised populations.

Many accept the king as commander of the faithful as well as the authority of the state-generated message. In particular, those whose religiosity issues from a sense of identity rather than spirituality may be less inclined to question the king's religious position. However, many Moroccans question the credibility of the Ulama, or Morocco's religious leaders, who have seen their elbow room limited by changes implemented under Muhammad VI. Such limitations could ultimately cycle back to hinder the king, who relies on the Ulama for his legiti-

macy. A separate challenge is posed by the global media, through which messages from other regional clerics sometimes enter Morocco unfiltered. Preachers such as the fiery Yusuf al-Qaradawi and Amr Khaled come to mind.

During his own spiritual crisis, Sheikh Yassine joined the aforementioned Zawiyah al-Boutchichya, the Qadiri Sufi branch in northeastern Morocco where much of the religious wing of AWI is now based. But several years after joining, feeling constrained by the order's limited political participation and outreach, he formed an organization that in 1987 became known as al-Adl wal-Ihsan.<sup>11</sup> Propelling Yassine was his discomfort with the Sufi focus on the self and the *subha*, or the personal relationship with God, to the exclusion of public outreach, social justice, and politics.<sup>12</sup>

Sheikh Yassine's philosophical divergence from other Islamist movements, however, did not prevent him or AWI from finding common ground with other Islamist movements regarding criticism of Moroccan relations with the United States and Israel, and the condemnation of economic neoliberalism more broadly. This condemnation of neoliberalism, according to a religious reading of Yassine's teachings, seems not to stem solely from the usual tagging of the United States and Israel as imperialists but also from Yassine's Sufi-inspired emphasis on the personal relationship with God. In this reading, the materialism that presumably impels neoliberalism and globalization distracts from this unmediated relationship.

The special appeal of AWI thus becomes more evident in Yassine's focus on the necessity of mysticism for Islamist success both domestically and abroad. Indeed, Yassine drew upon Qutb's exegesis while acknowledging its severe shortcomings. Although many Moroccans dispute the influence of Sufism on their practice of Islam, Sufi religious thought and practice pervade Morocco. Many who have little affinity for political Islam—and find Salafism extreme or foreign—express some appreciation for al-Adl wal-Ihsan.

### AWI and the Makhzen

In the mid-1970s, Yassine gained wide attention after publishing an open letter, "Islam or the Deluge," that accused King Hassan II of sacrificing Moroccan citizens' well-being in favor of Western interests, of inadequacy as a Muslim ruler, of corruption, and of accumulation of wealth at the population's expense.<sup>13</sup> The letter resulted in Yassine's incarceration in a mental asylum; he was thereafter moved in and out of house arrest and ultimately imprisoned 1989. In 2000, Hassan's son and successor, Muhammad VI, freed Yassine as one of a series

of gestures undertaken to indicate a general new beginning, a break from his father's repressive and outmoded rule.

Yassine did not hold back from his criticisms even after his release. He soon wrote another treatise, this time blaming the monarchy for political stalemate, stalled economic development, social ills, and the persistence of high-level corruption. The national debt, he charged, was the direct responsibility of the king, who he believed could swiftly pay it off using his personal wealth.

In 2002, AWI adopted an open-door policy that significantly eased membership and access to AWI literature.<sup>14</sup> As Yassine grew older, his organization's support base also grew: AWI was operating soup kitchens, hosting feasts, delivering meat to the poor on Eid, and offering medical services and literacy and religion classes.<sup>15</sup> Under Yassine, AWI had become the country's largest Islamist group, surpassing the PJD.<sup>16</sup> Yassine served as a symbol of AWI and the incarnation of its mission: linking political and social activism to inner spiritual transformation.

Yassine's death, though long anticipated, left the organization searching for a unifying symbol, and has raised speculation about a more decisive split into two—or more—factions, one political and the second spiritual. The political faction, in this formulation, would play the game of politics, recognizing the monarch's authority and essentially taking the road more-often traveled by transforming into an opposition group within the establishment; the spiritual faction would retain the Sufi ideological components but avoid politics, and focus on *dawa* (outreach) and *tarbiyah* (training or education).

Shortly after Yassine's death, and a stint of waning relevance for the group, Sheikh Muhammad Abbadi—also a once-imprisoned opposition voice—was elected secretary-general. The tasks previously held by Yassine, the Supreme Guide, were divided among other organizational leaders. The new leadership, however, has indicated a shift away from Yassine's steadfast opposition to politics—previously seen by the leadership as anathema to Islam but with political abstinence also likely helping boost Yassine's influence—with the apparent aim of enhancing its relevance and visibility. It remains unclear, as part of this shift, whether AWI will continue denying the king's religious authority as an element of its ideological or strategic outlook.<sup>17</sup>

All along, AWI's overt abstinence from politics may have, paradoxically, belied its fundamentally political purpose. Yassine, after all, founded the group upon leaving the Boutchichiyah Sufi order, which forbade political activity as inciting *fitna* (internal discord) and *bida* (heretical innovation).

This study assesses organizational changes in the year following Sheikh Yassine’s death as well as prospects for internal splinters, political participation, and the group’s changing relationship to the *makhzen*. The discussion is presented in the broader context of the conundrum faced by U.S. policymakers regarding preeminent Islamist parties and movements. U.S. strategic interests typically view the entry of Islamist organizations into the political sphere with trepidation, yet attempts to thwart Islamist emergence would have been perceived as steps to thwart Arab democracy—a perception that would undermine U.S. strategy in the region.

### Islamism and Notions of Moderation

For the purposes of this paper, “moderation” is defined as *a willingness to respect the rules of the establishment and the rule of law, to accommodate the will of the majority, and to embrace a pluralistic system that respects the rights and freedoms of all citizens*. This definition presents a contrast to a tempting and more pervasive conception of moderation as a necessarily liberal interpretation of the Quran or flexible practice of the faith. After all, as observed with the PJD, a more literalist approach to the Quran does not necessarily imply extremism in the political sphere.

The PJD, furthermore, has its roots in Wahhabi-Salafi exegesis and an Ikhwani reading of subversion. This is not the case with AWI. And in contrast to the PJD, Ennahda, and the Muslim Brotherhood, AWI has less history of clandestine operations or violent battle against the regime, adhering rather to a policy of peaceful and incremental change even as it refuses to recognize the king’s legitimacy or work with him.<sup>18</sup> In its religious orientation, AWI could be seen as falling to the “left” of AWI, given that it openly opposes literal, fundamentalist interpretations of the Quran and has condemned the PJD for rigid religious readings. (Indeed, the Moroccan state *madhab*, or school, of Maliki Islam is itself a conservative interpretation of the Quran.) AWI also falls to the “left” of the PJD in the area of jurisprudence, even as the former’s resistance to political activity may be seen as the more rigid stance.

AWI’s hardline refusal to recognize the king’s religious authority, and its expressed desire for more power to be devolved to elected officials, has historically—among other elements<sup>19</sup>—sustained the group’s popular support. As AWI seems to inch away from such entrenched positions, observers will keenly watch the effects on its popular support, its relationship to the *makhzen*, and its level of involvement in state affairs.

## Notes

1. See the work of Ray Takeyh, Asef Bayat, Gilles Kepel, and Olivier Roy, though these scholars differ in their definitions of post-Islamism; some see it as a shift away from typical Salafi or jihadist doctrine, while others frame it as a move of Islamization from public to private life, focusing more on the means of Islamization than on the tenets.
2. While AWI is often translated as “Justice and Spirituality,” the term *ih-san* actually refers to “doing good,” or to “betterment” of one’s Islamic character. This notion of *ih-san* is reflected in the group’s *dawa* or outreach platform, which places a dual emphasis on inner, individual spiritual development and on more Islamic communitarianism.
3. Moroccan authorities have disputed the number present at the funeral (perhaps 20,000, but no more than 70,000). AWI posited that 30,000 were present.
4. The worship of saints known as *moulays*, informed by Sufi ritual, is common in Morocco.
5. Allison L. McManus, “Politics after Abdessalam Yassine,” *Jadaliyya*, December 16, 2012, <http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/9029/politics-after-abdessalam-yassine>. See also Roxanne L. Euben and Muhammad Qasin Zaman, “Nadia Yassine: 1958–,” *Princeton Readings in Islamist Thought* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), pp. 302–310.
6. Henri Lauzière, “Religious Discourse of al-Salam Yasin,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 37 (2005): pp. 241–261.
7. Of course, some individuals within the party are critical of the king, but as a body it has moved away from anti-*makhzen* rhetoric.
8. Individual Moroccans may well dispute this claim, but the point holds in the general, more abstract sense.
9. More recently, Moroccan women have been permitted, by the king’s decree, to enter councils of the Ulama. Positions of *mourchidat* were created to allow women to advise other women in mosques, as well as radicals in prisons. Women have been identified as an important resource for furthering the standardized Moroccan Islamic message.
10. Regional ministry offices and new ministry-run regional councils of the Ulama have also been created, with more public money spent on the religious initiatives than previously. A larger portion of the national budget finances the growth of state-run mosques in more rural areas and in urban areas that previously lacked them—this to preempt any blossoming of unofficial worship and meeting spaces.

11. The organization for a time was called Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jamaa.
12. Henri Lauzière, “Religious Discourse of al-Salam Yasin,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 37 (2005): pp. 241–261.
13. Immediately upon writing the letter, Yassine bought a *kufan*, a traditional Islamic burial robe, to show his “readiness for martyrdom.”
14. A. Yildirim, “Muslim Democratic Parties: Economic Liberalization and Islamist Moderation in the Middle East” (PhD diss., Ohio State University, 2010), p. 302.
15. AWI’s geographic spread, while broader than that of most religious groups in Morocco, is modest in influence if compared to groups like Hamas in Palestine or Hezbollah in Lebanon or even compared to that of the secular Moroccan parties. In addition, although many cities have a spirited core of devotees, the focus nowadays is principally on Rabat and the new sheikh’s next steps rather than on AWI’s outreach to ordinary citizens across the country.
16. Despite the lack of exact numbers, membership is assumed to be large; AWI’s power also lies in its high level of organization and tight-knit and influential nature.
17. Francesco Cavatorta, “Neither Participation nor Revolution: The Strategy of the Moroccan Jamiat al-Adl wal-Ihsan,” *Mediterranean Politics* 12, no. 3 (2007).
18. AWI campus groups are a notable exception, in that they have engaged in violence. More on this in the next chapter.
19. Including the provision of services such as medical care, food through drives and kitchens, child care, and women’s services.

## *What Is al-Adl wal-Ihsan?*

Among the developments spurred by Sheikh Yassine's death has been a recalibration of AWI's leadership structure. The new structure, which no longer revolves around a single charismatic leader, will doubtless affect the group's strategic decisions and division of tasks. What remains to be seen is the extent to which AWI will remain in the shadows or instead pursue a more public profile.

### Structure and Beliefs

AWI consists of a twelve-member consultative council (*majlis al-shura*) that meets annually and a guidance council (*majlis al-irshad*), the fourteen-member presiding body. AWI also has the aforementioned religious-spiritual and political wings, along with two educational bodies, separated by gender. The position of Supreme Guide previously held by Yassine has now been changed to a general secretariat (*amana al-ama*), with Fathallah Arsalane and Muhammad Abbadi heading the political and spiritual factions, respectively. Both formerly led Sufi *zawiyahs* (schools), and Abbadi was seen as Yassine's spiritual number-two within AWI.

The political wing decides on AWI's strategic direction. Members of this circle, or *daira*, meet with external bodies, including political parties, other associations and groups, political actors, and sometimes officials before taking strategic steps. The political *daira* has three areas of focus: labor unions, youth, and women;<sup>1</sup> advocates for women's political equality play the major role in the last of these. For the religious-spiritual circle, which focuses on *dawa* (outreach), the three divisions just outlined also apply. Members of both the political and the spiritual *dairas* are now limited to five-year terms and subject to review.

Membership in AWI, while increasing, especially in the 1990s and early 2000s, has been difficult to quantify since the organization's formal establish-

ment in 1987. Recent estimates place the number anywhere between 50,000 and 500,000,<sup>2</sup> with 200,000 considered a modest, realistic middle ground. Given political sensitivities, AWI followers and leaders alike believe the organization's numbers and popularity are best left unknown to the authorities.<sup>3</sup> In addition, the lines between “member” and “sympathizer” have at times been blurred due to an open-door policy instituted in 2002.<sup>4</sup>

In its orientation, when compared with the PJD, AWI is much more domestically grounded, relying on Moroccans for funding through membership dues and preaching only to Moroccans. This picture is muddled somewhat by cash and other contributions sent by the group's substantial following among Moroccan emigrants in Spain.

The philosophical influences for AWI are likewise domestic. Unlike the PJD, known to be influenced by Tunisia's Ennahda movement and the transnational Muslim Brotherhood,<sup>5</sup> AWI draws its philosophies and political visions from Yassine's writings, which in turn were shaped by Moroccan Sufi *zawiyahs*, particularly those from the Zawiyah al-Boutchichiya order. AWI also draws on local jurisprudence.

AWI's vision for an international *khilafa* (caliphate) can be characterized as opposite that of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB). While the MB seeks a domestic caliphate that will spread to Arab and Islamic countries, AWI argues that a transnational Arab-Muslim consensus on the caliphate and its nature must precede its establishment within Morocco. The PJD has historically shared the MB view, but the PJD's increased party politics and need to remain in royal favor have stunted their discussion of a caliphate.

Unlike leaders of other Sunni Islamist factions, Yassine took no issue with Shiites and saw Shiite periods of power (e.g., the Fatimid Dynasty, from the tenth to the twelfth century) as contributing to the Moroccan religious identity. His writings do not dismiss or criticize the Shiite vestiges in Moroccan rituals or oppose Moroccan religious identification with Ahl al-Bait,<sup>6</sup> as the family and descendants of the Prophet are known.<sup>7</sup>

Such views show the distinctness of AWI and its Islamist worldview, both within Morocco and across the region. Neither Salafi nor Ikhwani, the group—as the previous chapter showed—is also independent from larger influences such as Qutb in Egypt, Khomeini in Iran, and Maududi in India and Pakistan.<sup>8</sup>

Despite ideological departures, AWI's, and even the PJD's, relationship to the state does have clear parallels to the Tunisian and Egyptian contexts, where years of imprisonment and marginalization eventually led to exploding Islamist

popularity during the Arab uprisings. The Moroccan crown, mindful of this dynamic, has shown periods of moderation toward the Islamists, including the PJD, in a policy dating back to Hassan II's days. In 2013, Islamists in Tunisia and Egypt were confronted and challenged by their respective "deep states." For a time, in 2013, the Moroccan PJD had been similarly weakened with regard to clout and legitimacy. This was due in part to the palace's success in implicitly threatening Morocco's Islamists with the same outcome that met their counterparts in neighboring countries, while at the same time using restraint when possible. Over this year, it has slowly regained its position and taken advantage of political openings and popular support. AWI, as noted, remains illegal for refusing to recognize the king's religious primacy.

### AWI's Platforms

The hallmark of Yassine's popularity was his willingness and perceived bravery in confronting the Moroccan state. In the 1990s, the *makhzen* attempted a rapprochement by releasing Yassine from house arrest. However, when it then offered to legalize AWI in exchange for recognizing the king's religious authority, Yassine refused, signaling to followers that he was a man of his *kalima* (word) who exhibited *rajoula* (manliness, steadfastness, reliability). This particular tactic is one the PJD has also been able to use in the last year.

AWI's political agenda is not well detailed, but Yassine's writings and attendant declarations by spokespeople have indicated that the eventual aim is to transform the culture and society through education, then transform the economy and political landscape, in a way that renders Morocco ripe for *sharia*, or Islamic law. Thus, while the organization rejects the notion of revolt, it does not reject gradual subversion.

At the same time, AWI's political platform calls for procedural democracy, including frequent elections and accountable leaders, but—due in part to its Sufi roots—says democracy cannot be effective when administered from the top, and that fundamental changes must occur at the individual (*fard*), family (*usra*), and society (*mujtamaa*) levels for democracy to work in Morocco. Indeed, AWI's hierarchy is arranged according to this principle (see fig. 1).

Nadia Yassine, the late founder's daughter and once a prominent AWI spokeswoman, often said that culturally, Moroccans might not be prepared for democracy; that the community was not sufficiently imbued with a democratic ethos because of a lifetime under monarchy; and that the society was as yet too immature for procedural democracy to work without persistent corruption and perverse incentives for those in power. AWI calls for further constitutional

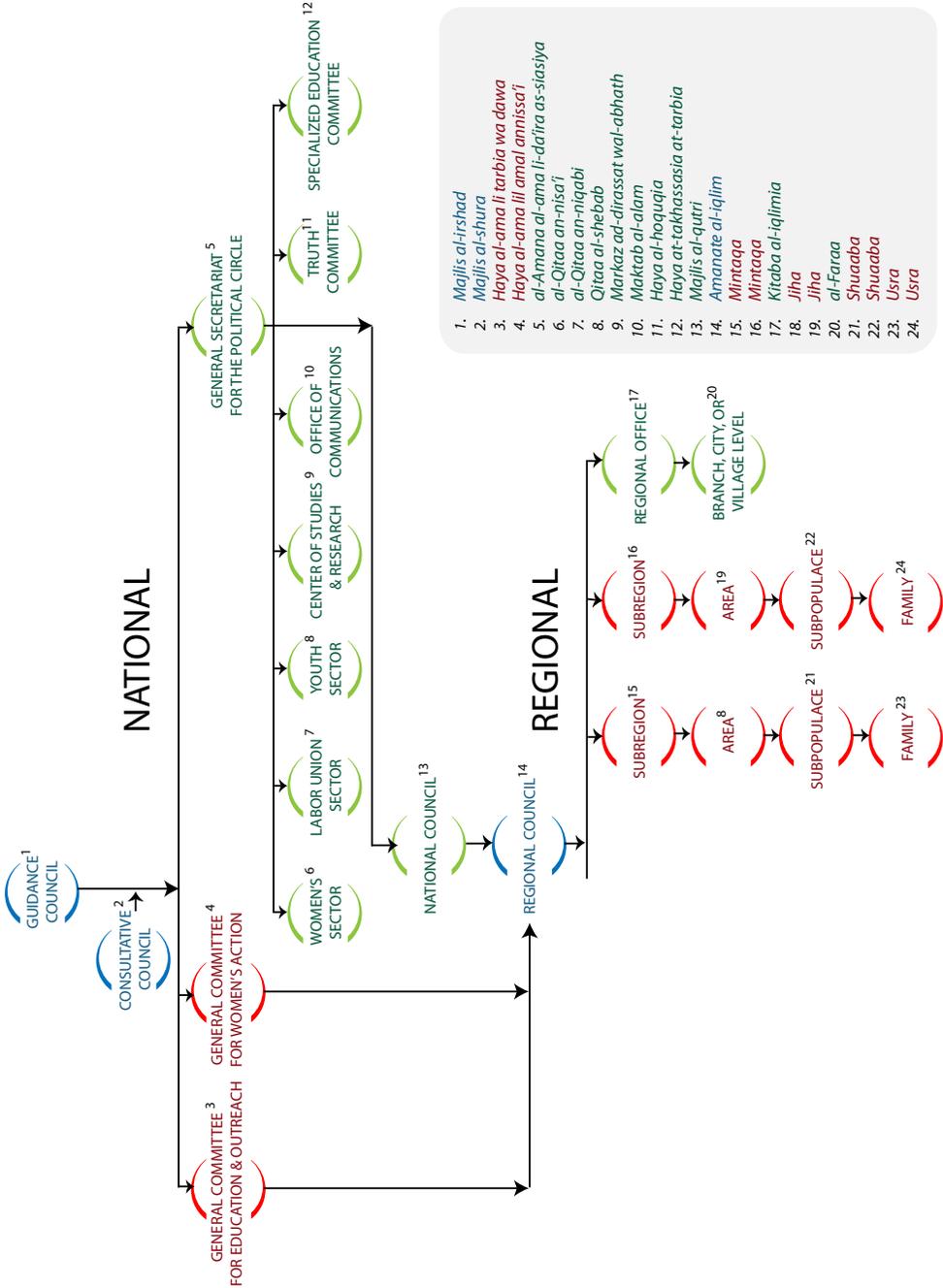


Fig. 1: AWI Organizational Structure

restrictions on the monarch's powers. When Nadia Yassine hinted at the necessity of a republican state, she was heavily criticized by the PJD for "incitement."

In its economic statements, AWI contends that the Moroccan economic system should be overturned entirely, that Islamic systems of banking be adopted, and that a truly free market economy be allowed to flourish. Sheikh Yassine did not oppose allowing the so-called invisible hand to operate but argued that the present force behind this hand was the monarch's. Crony capitalism, his argument suggested, should be replaced by greater meritocracy. While not opposed to free trade in theory, AWI asserts that Morocco's free-trade agreements with Western partners have been wracked by hegemony and asymmetry in bargaining power.

On foreign policy, AWI is mostly anti-West, a stance aligned with its opposition to cultural, colonial, economic, and political hegemony—and traceable to its core principle on resisting foreign intervention. In these views, AWI is not far from other Islamists, and it even shares some common ground with the far left.

When it comes to women, AWI welcomes comparatively less rigid or literal interpretations of the *Qur'an*. According to Sheikh Yassine, the Muslim woman is "torn between the unfortunate situation in which local masculine injustice has placed her, and the Western model whose apparent freedom attracts her."<sup>9</sup> In some of his appraisals of the Western critique of Islam's treatment of women, he appeals to notions of choice, alternative feminism, a parallel oppression of irreligious or Western women, and other ideas often cited by Muslim feminists. Nadia Yassine, who previously headed AWI's women's initiatives, was cited by observers as representing an Islamic feminism. To Muslim and women followers alike, she was a beacon of Islamic feminine leadership, while to Westerners she was Francophone, media savvy yet veiled, and a welcome change from the more-austere-looking, bearded men within AWI who nonetheless wielded the true power. Women, meanwhile, make up nearly half of the organization's national membership.<sup>10</sup>

This relative embrace of "feminism" is a key to AWI's appeal for many women followers unmoved by the Salafi-Wahhabi strain, and even by the PJD. The AWI approach likewise gives Moroccan Muslim women a response to a perceived Western penchant to "blame Islam" for women's problems, a penchant that informs the monarch's own politics and framing of Islamist movements. An examination of AWI's policies toward women and women's education bears out the notion that the group offers a third way, especially as set against the stances of other Islamist groups.

AWI initially shunned popular liberal reforms such as the *Moudawana*<sup>11</sup> (personal status law) and parliamentary gender quotas on several grounds: that they do not benefit women throughout the class structure, that they are cosmetic reforms conceived either outside Moroccan borders or in *makhzen* circles, and that as long as Morocco remains undemocratic, such reforms will do little to actually improve women's circumstances. However, sufficient pressure from women within AWI's political circle convinced the group to reverse its opposition to the *Moudawana*, and Yassine eventually called for bottom-up changes to make the law viable in practice. Feminist initiatives backed by Nadia, however, dipped once Yassine became too old and lost his personal clout within the organization.

While one cannot call AWI religiously "liberal," AWI's approach to Islamic jurisprudence is relatively flexible, open to individual subjectivity and views on *sharia*. AWI posits that the Moroccan Ulama would be the best authority on jurisprudence, if only the *alim* were not handpicked by the monarch. The group also believes that societal ills such as poverty, underdevelopment, and illiteracy actually block *sharia* from working in Morocco for the foreseeable future. According to Muhammad Salmi, chairman of AWI's human rights section:

Sharia has been the source of legislation in many Muslim societies, history. But application of sharia must be compatible with that point in history and the socioeconomic conditions. We can't cut off the hands of the real kleptocrats in our government, can you imagine cutting off the hand of a hungry petty thief? We cannot literally transpose sharia into present-day scenarios.<sup>12</sup>

## AWI's Recruitment and Growth

As an outlawed organization, AWI has historically been compelled to find alternative ways to assert its presence.<sup>13</sup> One such method has been to provide services in areas where the state falls short, a tactic it shares with other Islamist groups across the region. Such service provision highlights government failures along with mobilizing support for an Islamic system of governance and welfare, while helping recruit members. Mohamed Daadaoui and other Moroccan political experts note that the organization runs Islamic schools, literacy classes, clinics, blood banks, and soup kitchens. AWI likewise provides financial services such as funding for marriages, funerals, and medical expenditures; activities to build cohesion; and meat for those who cannot afford it on the various Eids.<sup>14</sup>

AWI holds strong appeal in the educational community, with Yassine himself having once served as a school inspector in Marrakesh for the Ministry of Education. The group has recruited teachers and students at both the university and high school levels and, according to Daadaoui, “It is estimated that most student leaders of the country’s fourteen universities belong to [AWI].” The extent of AWI’s reach in the educational system is evidenced by contentious PJD-AWI relations around education and in the accusation by PJD-affiliated student groups that AWI is working to “establish sole control over campus life and over [the] student union UNEM (National Union of Moroccan Students).”<sup>15</sup> AWI has been further accused of “falsification of election results in student elections” and of using “force and intimidation in order to prevent the holding of various seminars and exhibitions [organized] by other groups of students.”<sup>16</sup> Drawing a sharp contrast to AWI’s professed belief in republican government, the PJD called out AWI’s undemocratic inclinations, highlighting parallels to single-party governments. AWI student groups also have a history of clandestine activity, contravening one of AWI’s central tenets; and AWI’s student leadership has waxed and waned over time.

The king’s monopoly on religious authority, including his appointment of the Ulama, leaves much room for disaffection on the personal level. Here, AWI meets an essential need by appealing to potential followers’ spiritual self-improvement, something ostensibly missing from the state’s religious agenda. The organization’s recently invoked open-door policy marked a response to state attempts to limit AWI expansion; the effort allowed thousands to begin meeting in homes of AWI leaders and members to produce literature, communiqués, and other documents.

AWI also enjoys a certain class-related advantage over the PJD. Whereas the PJD has tended to seek older, more educated members—in part because its relations with the king have somewhat obviated the need to reach a broader swath—AWI’s appeal to the poor can be seen as both mission and strategy, serving as a foil to the regime and PJD. Likewise, AWI’s steadfast opposition to the regime has appealed to followers, particularly dissidents in the university and student realm. Online and printed publications—AWI has a dedicated bureau for the latter—help the organization disseminate messages and reach followers.

Yet the group’s expansion, particularly among the urban poor, has forced it to better define its geographic structure, which now can be broken down

into national, provincial/regional, and city/town. Activists as well as sympathizers have founded branches in poor suburban communes, where they also provide services including literacy courses, food drives, and basic medical care. These activists hold meetings in their homes and proselytize—much like other Islamist groups. More recently, despite some philosophical contention between leaders of the political and religious wings,<sup>17</sup> service provision and recruitment remain robust, and the organization continues to grow.

### AWI and Other Islamists

In 1997, Morocco permitted the PJD to participate in elections for the first time, echoing similar moves across the region to give legal status to Islamist parties. Islamism subsequently became an increasingly potent force in Morocco. In the Arab Spring's wake, some Islamist parties were given the opportunity to run in elections and govern, a role the PJD enjoyed but with its powers heavily circumscribed. The party had to play by palace rules, even as the king needed the PJD in office as a bulwark against further uprisings, given the party's large support base. The palace had thus co-opted the PJD, much as it had done to the socialist USFP decades earlier, weakening party support from more "extreme" socialist followers.

As for the PJD, its candidate, Abdelilah Benkirane, was elected prime minister in 2011 following a series of protests inspired by the Tunisian and Egyptian uprisings. While his election appeared to reflect a democratic transition for a historically autocratic regime acknowledging an Islamist resurgence, a deeper look reveals the PJD's status as actually legitimating the regime system. Indeed, many Moroccan experts have long doubted any imminent democratic shift such as that envisioned by some in 2011.

The palace's co-optation of Islamists has roots in the 1970s and 1980s, when King Hassan II allowed some Salafi-Wahhabi influence to take hold as a counterweight to the PJD and AWI—both of which the Salafi-Wahhabis considered infidels (*kufar*), the former owing to its political activity, the latter because of its Sufi component. The May 2003 Casablanca bombings, however, compelled the regime to completely change course regarding the Salafists, and King Muhammad VI initiated a severe crackdown in which hundreds of Salafists were arrested.

In the early 2000s, two leftist-Islamic strains emerged in Morocco: al-Badil al-Hadari (the civilizational alternative) and Harakat min Ajli al-Umma (the *umma* movement). Both groups attempted to merge leftist notions of civil rights and

constitutional reform with Islamic jurisprudence. Eventually, the parties' respective leaders, Mustafa Mouatassim and Muhammad Marwani, were arrested in the mid-2000s under accusations of terrorist involvement with the network led by the Moroccan-Belgian national Abdelkader Belliraj. One suspicion holds that the leaders were targeted over fears that the groups' relatively moderate tenets would garner too much support. Separately, the detentions of Mouatassim and Marwani remain something of a mystery, and Belliraj is serving a life sentence in a Moroccan prison even though he was found innocent in a Belgian tribunal last year. In 2008, then prime minister Abbas El Fassi froze both organizations, and the two continue their bid for legality with Prime Minister Benkirane.

### Is AWI Democratic?

In response to this question, AWI leaders might hedge that indeed no single definition or form of democracy exists. Yassine underscored the importance of distinguishing the Islamic democracy necessary in Morocco and other Arab states from the "atheistic, secular" democracy of the West. His teachings warn against the "religion of secularism"<sup>18</sup> and instead advocate a combination of procedural democracy with laws dictated by Islamic spirituality and values.

Yassine's attendant formation of a *majlis al-shura* characterized by a strain of autocratic decisionmaking has raised questions about its democratic character and intentions. Though Yassine extolled press freedoms, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, and freedom of conscience and expression, he framed these as qualities to be borrowed only. Under Yassine, dissent was unwelcome, disagreement following a consensual agreement was banned,<sup>19</sup> and the rank and file was rigidly subordinate to the leadership. According to Yassine, the *shura*—the organization's purported democratic apparatus—cannot be understood through the prism of Western democracy and a purely democratic system does not yet exist anywhere in its intended form. Yassine was also unequivocal in his belief that nothing within the proposed democracy could contradict Islam and sharia.

Such traits lead to the contention by Maghreb scholar Bruce Maddy-Weitzman that AWI's political philosophy is erroneously characterized as democratic, bearing more similarities than one might assume to that of other Islamists. He argues further that the democratic process envisioned by Yassine and his counterparts crystallized Islam in power without separating religion from power—a process that, by definition, contradicts democracy. Yassine's commendation of certain democratic ideas, Maddy-Weitzman concludes, was essentially "utilitarian and conditional."<sup>20</sup>

Further challenging the claim to democracy, some former followers allege that Yassine ran the organization as his own mini-kingdom,<sup>21</sup> a cult requiring fealty from supporters<sup>22</sup> and for the most part disregarding the views of lower-level members, thereby replicating the very structures he opposed. According to the scholar Francesco Cavatorta, “Candidates [reportedly] have to have [a] dream of the sheikh bestowing upon them worthiness of becoming a militant for the Jamiat [group]” in order to attain full membership.<sup>23</sup> Some political observers attribute such claims to the sheikh’s narcissism and a perceived desire to supplant the king’s symbolic national position, while others believe the organization’s internal structure is better explained by the mysticism in Yassine’s Sufi background.

Yet another challenge to AWI’s democratic potential involves the claim that Yassine specifically opposes the king’s role—and religious primacy—more than he does authoritarianism broadly speaking. This argument makes the point that AWI adherents consider the king’s title of Amir al-Mouminin as contravening true Islam. Indeed, one AWI tenet, *La malika fil Islam* (There is no king in Islam), makes this case quite plainly. Some therefore suspect that AWI would like to replace the traditional role of Amir al-Mouminin with clerics. Indeed, Yassine invented his own title of *Murshid*, or Supreme Guide, which remains irreplaceable.

Harsher critics of Yassine, including monarchists, extend arguments about his narcissism and personal antipathy toward the king. They see his advocacy of “Islamic dialogue” as a guise under which he maintained “divine” standing over his subjects. They assert that Yassine always monopolized the role of supreme ideologue and theorist while stifling ideas and interpretations from other members, even those with high status. This set of detractors also supports the hypothesis that Yassine opposed the king on more personal than philosophical grounds.

No doubt, some hold a more permissive view of the organization, arguing that AWI’s willingness to work with secular elements—including feminist groups—rival Islamists, and even government camps supports the case that it is not illiberal. Cavatorta, for instance, cites AWI’s 2004 “change of heart” regarding Moroccan family law to illustrate this flexibility.<sup>24</sup> But this argument falters when one considers that this willingness to work with ideological opponents may indicate less compromise or democratic ethos than a tactical choice to band with influential, organized, sometimes similarly marginalized groups. This theory also rests on a fundamental lack of evidence—that is, no

information can be attained on how AWI would behave if it were in power. Furthermore, AWI does not firmly specify its favored type of power structure. Nadia Yassine hinted at a republic and Arsalane suggested a caliphate, and one can only imagine how the two could be merged. A final consideration is that AWI's efforts at dialogue and cooperation occurred as Yassine's decisionmaking role was on the wane; the post-Yassine landscape has yet to fill out, making the future of such activity uncertain.

Whereas cooperation with external groups continues today, and Yassine's position-for-life has been supplanted by a seemingly more pluralistic general secretariat, internal power-sharing may pose challenges for the group's future. With the leadership now split between political and religious *dairas*, and members constrained by term limits and reviews, AWI's organizational unity and consensus-based decisionmaking may be at risk.

Given the swift organizational changes and selection of new leaders upon Yassine's death, the assumption can be made that steps toward elections had long been in the works. Fourteen nominations were made by the members of the *majlis al-irshad* and then winnowed down to two who were confirmed by a two-thirds vote. Then the *majlis al-shura*, composed of representatives around the country, voted on the two candidates.<sup>25</sup> Abbadi, however—Yassine's longtime friend and disciple—had been primed for the secretary-general position, and his victory again raises questions about the democratic character of the internal elections.

## Places of Operation and European Enclaves

Domestically, AWI's rise has been most pronounced in the poorer urban areas of Rabat, Marrakesh, Casablanca, and Tangier, with an especially strong base in the Rabat suburbs of Salé and Temara. Meanwhile, the leadership and members of the religious *daira* tend to be located mostly in the far eastern cities such as Bouarfa and Oujda.

Outside Morocco, AWI's base of support is strongest in Spain, despite the group's claim to be entirely domestic. In 2012, for example, an AWI follower named Mounir Benjelloun replaced the *makhzen*-aligned Muhammad Hamad Ali as head of the Spanish Federation of Islamic Religious Entities (FEERI), an organization dedicated to promoting religious freedom and the integration of Muslims into Spanish society. In 2011, according to Spanish intelligence services, FEERI was a prime instrument of Moroccan state control over immigration and Moroccans residing in Spain. Thus, Benjelloun's accession has caused Spaniards to worry about the possibility of Islam in Spain taking on a more political or subversive character.

Indeed, Moroccan political battles tend to play out in FEERI settings. In 2009, for example, pro- and anti-*makhzen* figures brawled at the FEERI congress. And FEERI's presence in Spain is indeed vast. The group controls nearly a thousand Spanish mosques, and AWI itself is established throughout much of the country, most significantly in Murcia, Andalusia, and Ceuta. While AWI shares the Spanish stage with several other Islamist organizations, including the Muslim Brotherhood and Hizb al-Tahrir, AWI has comparatively greater influence, derived from the Moroccan origin of most Spanish Muslims. The Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla are known for their AWI bases, which facilitate communication between Moroccan and Spanish AWI supporters.

Whether or not AWI chooses to acknowledge it, the group's Spanish presence gives it a transnational character, testing its claim to be free from foreign funding, ideology, and scope.

### The 'Moroccan Spring'

AWI's recent political activity is aptly described by the principle of "ripeness," most often invoked by Omar Iharchane, the group's political research head. When Arab Spring demonstrations spread to Morocco, AWI played a prominent role as part of the February 20 Movement, which advocated greater devolution of power from the king to parliament. The time was "ripe" to enter the political space, and AWI saw M20F as a vehicle to destabilize the monarchic order and help spark the Islamization of Morocco.<sup>26</sup>

After several months, AWI withdrew from M20F because of its secular character and the concomitant rise of the PJD. AWI had helped pressure the king to enact constitutional reforms. Now, the organization's subsequent goal—gaining the king's abdication—would not be feasible both because the time was not ripe and because the M20F umbrella would not permit such a mission. AWI thus released a statement citing insurmountable differences with M20F, including M20F's disorganization and lack of a platform, and stating that these differences only served as obstacles to upending the *makhzen*.<sup>27</sup> In addition, AWI asserted that the constitutional reforms enacted in response to the opposition campaign did not adequately limit the monarch's powers—one of the group's primary political aims.

Following AWI's separation from M20F, some supporters expressed frustration at the group's seeming inaction, while certain younger members continued their M20F participation in secret. To AWI's leadership, however, the costs of this dissatisfaction had not *yet* outweighed the strategic benefits of ideological steadfastness. Many saw the withdrawal of AWI from M20F as the biggest

blow to the movement. But AWI's public relevance seems to have dropped since its departure from M20F, and for some time now, its spokespeople have been increasingly out of the media and off other areas of the public radar.

## Notes

1. Abdessalam Yassine, "Murshid al-Adl wal-Ihsan," <http://yassine.net/ar/index/index.shtml>.
2. AWI member, interview by author, Rabat, Morocco, October 28, 2013.
3. Not disclosing the numbers also allows for the impression that the organization is widespread and influential. At some point, the sheikh's daughter Nadia dropped hints such as "We are numerous enough to start a violent revolution; however, we won't because it runs counter to our ethos." The interviewer's attention is here drawn to the worrisome tension between the group's nonviolence and its self-perceived ability to trigger a revolution owing to its substantial membership.
4. This is unlike the required *baya* and period of inculcation found in the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood.
5. Here as well, some individuals within the PJD, such as Saad Eddine al-Othmani and even the late Abdelkarim al-Khatib, might disagree with this comparison. Still, certain similarities are undeniable.
6. Yassine's mythology, as consistently developed by his lieutenants, asserts that Yassine himself is a *sharif*, or descendant of the Prophet.
7. The Moroccan regime is also visibly anti-Shiite. In 2009, it expelled Iran's embassy staff and cut off diplomatic ties with the Islamic Republic due to concerns over religious proselytizing.
8. An important distinction can be made here between Yassine's *fitna*, a state of discord and tribulation, and Qutb's *jahiliya*, or ignorance, which would require jihad or militant action to redress such a condition of apostasy, an action Yassine unequivocally opposed. Yassine was to an extent influenced by his Sufi counterpart Sheikh Hassan al-Banna—maintaining that Islam ought to inform most day-to-day issues, including politics, economics, and society. However, Yassine avoids characterizing Moroccan society as a whole as *jahili*. He instead states that the society is in a period of *fitna* and that *dawa* and preaching can redirect it. See M. Daadaoui, "Rituals of Power and the Islamist Challenge: Maintaining the *Makhzen* in Morocco" (PhD diss., University of Oklahoma, 2008).
9. Abdessalam Yassine, *Winning the Modern World for Islam* (Iowa City: Justice and Spirituality Publishing Inc., 2000), p. 94.

10. This was the case, anyway, before Yassine's death. The next chapter addresses the evolving balance of women in the organization.
11. Originally based on the Maliki *madhab* of Sunni jurisprudence, the *Moudawana*—which adjudicates on issues ranging from marriage 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 using Islamic jurisprudence, but the changes stirred internal controversy.
12. Muhammad Salmi, interview by author, Morocco, April 22, 2014.
13. Michael Willis, *Power and Politics in the Maghreb* (London: C. Hurst & Co., 2012), p. 184.
14. Again, this cannot be compared to the largesse associated with Hamas or Hezbollah in other parts of the region.
15. Michael Willis, "Between Alternance and the *Makbzen*: At-Tawhid wa al-Islah's Entry into Moroccan Politics," *Journal of North African Studies* 4, no. 3 (1999).
16. *Ibid.*, p. 62. The reference to "force and intimidation" is interesting given the organization's professed nonviolence. AWI's student groups have a sizable record of armed attacks.
17. This schism is discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.
18. Bruce Maddy-Weitzman, "Islamism, Moroccan-Style: The Ideas of Sheikh Yassine," *Middle East Quarterly* 10, no. 1 (Winter 2003), <http://www.meforum.org/519/islamism-moroccan-style-the-ideas-of-sheikh>.
19. Muhammad Salmi, interview by author, Rabat, Morocco, October 25, 2013.
20. Bruce Maddy-Weitzman, "Islamism, Moroccan-Style: The Ideas of Sheikh Yassine," *Middle East Quarterly* 10, no. 1 (Winter 2003), <http://www.meforum.org/519/islamism-moroccan-style-the-ideas-of-sheikh>.
21. A notable instance of his grandiosity was his reception when touring the country after his release from prison. At each stop, the highest-ranking local AWI followers would line up and kiss his hand as he reviewed them, and a young girl would offer flowers. These rituals are almost identical to those surrounding the tours by Hassan II and Muhammad VI. Yassine was also observed riding in a black Mercedes, waving to the crowd through the open window as uniformed bodyguards galloped alongside.
22. This can be compared to the Muslim Brotherhood's process of pledging *baya* to a leader.
23. Francesco Cavatorta, "Civil Society, Islamism and Democratization: The Case of Morocco," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 44, no. 2 (2006), p. 214.

24. Ibid.
25. Mohammed Masbah, "In Yassine's Footsteps," *Sada*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, January 10, 2013, <http://carnegieendowment.org/sada/2013/01/10/in-yassine-s-footsteps/fdml>.
26. AWI's participation in M20F also relates to the group's deeply entrenched notion of *qawma*, discussed in the next chapter.
27. Ahmed Benchemsi, "FEB20's Rise and Fall: A Moroccan Story," *Le Blog de Ahmed Benchemsi*, July 17, 2012, <http://ahmedbenchemsi.com/feb20s-rise-and-fall-a-moroccan-story/>.

## *A Changing Makhzen and the Future of AWI*

Whereas Algeria and Libya cracked down violently on Islamists when they began gaining support in the 1980s, Morocco's King Hassan II combined very selective repression with a more sophisticated system of co-optation. This system relied on weakening Islamist support bases by allowing "centrist" parties or factions to be outflanked by more "extreme" anti-*makhzen* counterparts. Indeed, this tactic did not begin and end with Islamism; it has been employed against any force seen as an existential threat to the king and his *makhzen*—notably, socialists and communists in the 1970s. This chapter begins by tracking the regime's gradual co-optation of the socialist USFP along with the conservative Istiqlal, and eventually the Islamist PJD. These precedents offer a possible course to acceptance for today's banned Islamists. In this context, the monarch sees AWI's integration as less threatening than it once was, while AWI views participation as less objectionable than it once did. The death of Sheikh Yassine, among other variables, also plays into the latter trend.

### **Socialists and Other Secular Opposition Elements**

In the years since the USFP's founding under other names and auspices in the late 1950s, it was alternately repressed and tolerated by the crown. But after the Green March of 1975, a mass demonstration orchestrated by the government to wrest the Sahara Province (now Western Sahara) from Spain, Hassan II sought to bolster his legitimacy by welcoming opposition camps into his tent. He calculated that even if such parties were hostile to the regime and organizationally dysfunctional, they could be appeased and appropriated to his own benefit. It was under this concept that he invited USFP leader Abderrahim Bouabid to travel to Asia and Central and Eastern Europe to garner foreign support for Morocco's claims to Sahara. With this trip, the

USFP gained capital and visibility in the name of national unity. For the crown, the tactic proved preferable to paring down the military to preclude a coup, as had been done in Tunisia.

After admitting the USFP onto the political scene, the palace maneuvered for it to join a coalition government with the monarchist Istiqlal Party. But the USFP resisted, on the premise that the parties had insufficient commonalities for consensus.<sup>1</sup> Gradually, cohesion among the USFP, Istiqlal, and other opposition parties eroded, as their competition for votes and palace patronage increased. Then, in 1981, against popular unrest following IMF reforms, rural flight and urban crowding, and a growing number of unemployed graduates, USFP-backed riots erupted in Casablanca. An intimidated palace pushed harder for USFP-Istiqlal integration in order to consolidate a support base for reforms, absorb accountability for royal decisions, and create a greater feeling of pluralism. But both parties boycotted the elections unexpectedly announced by the crown in the mid-1980s, viewing the move as a *makhzen* ploy that would leave them without any important posts. The USFP and Istiqlal thus remained marginal for the time being.

Against Moroccan support for the 1991 U.S. invasion of Iraq, including the deployment of troops, the crown faced protests from political parties and civil society alike. Two years later, the king offered the Alternance government as a way of showing his support for pluralism.<sup>2</sup> In the proposed arrangement, the opposition would be allowed to govern as long as it won a parliamentary majority and pledged allegiance to the palace, and the king would choose a prime minister. But the USFP and Istiqlal countered that the prime minister, not the king, should be empowered with making important ministerial nominations.<sup>3</sup> These demands were refused, and the opposition parties declined once again to participate.

Eventually, however, the parties would acquiesce. In the late 1990s, the USFP and Istiqlal grew hungrier for power and relevance. They are thought to have been lured, in part, by the promise of greater royal patronage and fatter paychecks. In any event, their resistance and principles had yet to yield the desired societal changes. According to another view, the parties' moderate voices had simply won out over those more firmly opposed to the *makhzen*. Before the 1997 legislative elections, Istiqlal and the USFP at last formed a coalition, known as the *koutla* (bloc). The *koutla* won the elections, with the USFP taking more seats than Istiqlal, prompting the appointment of the USFP's Abderrahman Youssoufi as prime minister.

## The Islamists

The Islamist PJD has had a quicker path to political participation than its USFP and Istiqlal peers. To begin with, Islamism did not pose a challenge to the regime until the 1990s, when regional factors—such as the civil war next door in Algeria—became pressing. But the monarchy acted decisively to appropriate Islamist groups, given its sharp concerns about repression leading to radicalization. The incorporated Islamist parties, meanwhile—the PJD and its ideological adjunct, Tawhid wal Islah (TI; Unity and Reform)—sprang from the more radical Shabiba Islamiyah, which was dissolved shortly after its founder, Abdelkarim Mouti, and other members were implicated in the 1975 assassination of the prominent Marxist figure Omar Benjelloun.

The rise of the PJD can be traced more locally to the emergence of Jamaat Islamiyah, which later became TI. Current prime minister Benkirane was among the early TI activists who signaled their opposition to violence against the state, breaking from their predecessor—which saw the state and society as being in a period of *jabiliya* and thus deserving of violent intervention—and indicating to the establishment that they sought public acceptance. TI tacitly accepted the political legitimacy and religious primacy of the monarch, while also engaging in *dawa* to advance its principles of education, morality, and the creation of a sharia-ripe society. In 1992, TI's request to create its own political party was rejected, but it was allowed to join and revive the dormant Constitutional Democratic Popular Movement, or MPDC.<sup>4</sup>

TI leaders were appointed to high-ranking positions in the MPDC, which relied heavily on TI for resources and funding but slowly distanced itself from the group and in 1998 was renamed the PJD. For the fledgling PJD to be recognized as a party, it could not have explicit links to the spirituality-focused TI, and TI members could not hold office in the PJD.<sup>5</sup> TI then issued a complementarity agreement, which divided roles between the PJD, responsible for political causes and representing Islam in state institutions, and TI, responsible for *dawa* and *tarbiyah* (education). This partnership continued until the PJD established economic and strategic independence, and new PJD members became unwilling to be linked to TI. Yet even today, the two groups continue to be opportunistically both connected and separate: the PJD appears to be free of ideologues and demonstrates strategic loyalty to the regime, while TI is more doctrinal and slightly critical of the regime. Of course, the PJD-TI border can be rather porous.

Since the late 1990s, the PJD has been allowed to participate in parliamentary and municipal elections, reflecting a party that showed a willingness to

evolve and a monarch willing to welcome Islamists into the governing coalition during a period of relative liberalization.

For the PJD, as well as the USFP and Istiqlal, political inclusion has come with two major implications: first, a necessary move toward the political center in order to participate, making the parties easier to manage; second, the parties' slow conflation with the regime both in their policy and in citizens' minds, thereby forcing them to share accountability for unpopular *makhzen* decisions. These developments represented a triumph for Hassan II, who had weakened the parties, boosted his Alternance platform, and created a semblance of pluralism and power sharing. King Muhammad VI has mostly continued his father's methods, with similar success. Squabbling, dysfunction, and paralysis in parliament have generally strengthened the king's hand as a mediator, hobbled the parties' stature, reinforced the king's ultimate veto power, and provided cover for stalled democratic and economic reforms. In this scenario, violent repression becomes more or less unnecessary.<sup>6</sup>

## Prospects for AWI

Will this history repeat itself with al-Adl wal-Ihsan? Is it possible, given the organization's search for a new strategic direction, that like these other parties, it will choose to join in governing on the monarch's terms? If so, would such a "co-optation" have the same effects as in the earlier cases? These questions are not easy to answer. Not only is it difficult to read AWI leaders' minds, but it is also difficult—as the organization changes—to know where its internal power will be concentrated in the coming years.

With these issues in mind, the remainder of this chapter will assess the political implications of three probable AWI courses of action: *reconciling* with the palace and becoming a recognized organization, awaiting "ripeness" and remaining *nonparticipants*, or *collaborating* with other marginalized political groups.

## Reconcile with the Palace

As earlier sections have implied, AWI's political *daira*, headed by Abdelwahad Moutawakel and implicitly by Deputy Secretary-General Fathallah Arsalane, appears to be establishing independence from the religious *daira*—echoing the separation between the PJD and TI. Despite a seeming lack of internal democracy, AWI likely has the strategic wherewithal and organizational tools to move forward with essentially separate political and religious wings. However, the choice of Arsalane, a well-connected, highly visible, politically savvy per-

sonality, for the deputy secretary-general position, almost as a foil to Muhammad Abbadī's purely spiritual role as secretary-general, hints at political intent behind the selection of prominent leaders.

Lately, parts of the political *daira* appear more inclined than before to embrace elements of modern political strategy, including campaigns, populism, and negotiation with the *makhzen*, while allowing the religious *daira* to continue pushing Yassine's mission of *dawa* and *tarbiyah* in a way that eventually Islamizes Morocco's democratic trajectory. This scenario evokes the PJD-TI dynamic, in which the political-religious division allows the PJD to cling to a version of its ideological self while still participating in the *makhzen*-based system—delegating outspokenness, religious preaching, and some measure of political dissidence to TI figures.

When asked about this specific possibility, Arsalane in particular references the Yassine-era “dual necessity,” in which the public-political branch (material necessity) must work in conjunction with the religious branch (spiritual necessity). A division of the two, Arsalane says, is harmful. Yet Arsalane's cases against political participation often suggest negotiations before the handshake rather than deep-seated ideological opposition:

The transformation of the group into a political party is not the group's problem, but rather the problem is the state that does not permit the establishment of a party except for those who have submitted to the red-lines set in advance.<sup>7</sup>

The state does not consider the issue of the establishment of parties a right of every citizen; [we have] a perception and a vision and a plan of action, and we do not want to enter under the dome of any of the other parties.<sup>8</sup>

The problem of partisan action in Morocco is not the law and the constitution but rather the directions that come from the real rulers of the country [and] if the matter were left to the law and the constitution, then we would have transformed into a political party a long time ago.<sup>9</sup>

Such statements depart notably from Yassine's own sentiments, which held that political participation could emerge only from societal readiness (“ripeness”) and the broader conditions experienced by Islamists, not the extent of the palace's democratic behavior. The passages just cited also conform to the language of Western democracy, possibly nudging aside Yassine's own views of a truer Islamic democracy to come. Readers may then note the divergence in rhetoric by Abbadī, head of the religious *daira*, regarding barriers to participation:

Islam is clear about ruling. It has to be through the *Shoura*, not inheritance [a monarchic system]. Shoura is what decisions should be based on.

And Yassine's vision for internal democracy follows:

We suffer from the king and gradually we will get rid of this regime and go back to God's book.<sup>10</sup>

In a discussion of faith at odds with Arsalane's points on constitutional barriers to participation, Abbadi continues:

The group, which was built on combating authoritarianism, cannot practice tyranny with its members. Our project is built on combating power solely. We consider Shoura a doctrine and belief before a political means to accomplish what we want. And, therefore, elections are used within the organization on all levels.<sup>11</sup>

Abbadi's focus here is on the innate democracy of the *shura* and the centrality of Islam to the future order. Like Yassine, he argues that the democracy in the *shura* apparatus precludes, and is irrelevant to, Western-style democracy. The divergence in his reasoning from that of the political chief might reflect either a true philosophical break or a deliberate strategy to achieve complementarity along the lines of the PJD-TI.

As an earlier chapter noted, Yassine himself is thought to have left the Boutchichya Sufi order not only because of restrictions on outreach but also because he wanted to pair Islamic mysticism, and its focus on spiritual enhancement, with politics. But nonparticipation in politics and nonrecognition of the monarch have had distinct strategic advantages for the group, allowing it to remain outside the fray. AWI leaders are fully aware that, given Moroccans' cynicism about party politics, becoming a party could damage their credibility. According to Cavatorta, writing in 2007, "Compromising on the issue is not a price worth paying because the movement perceives that its current success is based on the refusal to sit at the same table [with] all the other political actors in Morocco."<sup>12</sup> Such thinking also guided the USFP and PJD-TI in their reluctance to apply for party status, although AWI did actually apply unsuccessfully to become a party in its early years. Yet the extent of "PJD envy" exhibited by many in AWI's political *daira* indicates that perhaps compromise may be worth the risks.

According to one member of the PJD leadership:

Al-Adl wal-Ihsan withdrew from M20F; they see what we did as *tanazulat* [concessions]. The PJD is accused of losing our ideology and making *ai*

*tanazulat* [any concessions]. This is characteristic of radical movements. They would rather not be sullied by participating in politics, where compromise is paramount. They say, “Better keep our principles and lose moderate, middle-of-the-road supporters.” They ceaselessly complain and air grievances in hopes of overthrowing the hegemons. After this, they sit back and relegate the arduous task of actual governance to us “corrupt” politicians and retreat into their self-indulgent [enclaves] of idealism, conspiracy theories. When they are in our place, they *will* do same.<sup>13</sup>

AWI’s integration may not be as imminent as this respondent implies. Yet the fear that AWI will ultimately follow the PJD’s path has led some AWI members to defect. One prominent defector, who preferred to remain anonymous, said:

With respect to AWI, Yassine died a long time ago. His presence diminished in 2006. After “*al-ablam*” [his “dreams” incident, discussed later] the direction of the organization changed. The new de facto leadership stopped adhering to the original vision, and AWI is now just another political platform. It is still not clear to me whether Yassine slowly removed himself, or if he was sidelined by those we see in the limelight now.<sup>14</sup>

As the discussion thus far has shown, however—and as the PJD-TI arrangement indicates—AWI’s political circle may be able to pursue politics even if the religious circle doesn’t entirely condone such a course. Indeed, the PJD-TI splinter strategy sparked serious conversations within AWI’s *majlis al-shura* regarding political participation. And the foundations for political activity are there: a party structure with provincial and subregional branches, youth groups, a labor union, and women’s sections. The likely path toward political integration, even as the *majlis al-shura* expresses nervousness about AWI being co-opted, would be peaceful and incremental rather than by means of revolt—honoring the earlier-stated principle of socioeconomic “ripeness.”

Despite the possible trend toward AWI political participation, both external and internal obstacles remain. The palace, to begin with, would presumably need to show leeway on certain ritualistic acts of subservience—such as the requirement to kiss the king’s hand, attend the “feast of the throne,” and bow—as well as exhibit more accountability in general. AWI, in turn, would have to relax its antimonarchy stances. Neither shift is foreseeable in the near future. Another drawback to participation is AWI’s understanding that it would be unable to change policy in parliament—and that it would lose its present “outsider” clout. All the same, AWI has gained sizable public support while in the informal opposition, and has tried to capitalize on the PJD’s struggles with the

*makhzen* and the mid-2013 parliamentary vacuum to highlight the despotism inherent in the *makhzen*-led arrangement.

AWI's integration, and effective co-optation, would ultimately be a triumph for the *makhzen*, which would have "tamed" the largest, most politically cumbersome, and most ideologically stubborn Islamist faction in the country's history. This stubbornness has been a hallmark of AWI's popularity and identity more than for other co-opted parties. The USFP and the PJD calculated that they would recognize the king, gain recognition themselves, and then apply pressure for their respective brands of democratization and reform. But both parties ultimately applied minimal pressure and opted for deference to the powerful palace, a path a co-opted AWI would likely follow.

### Wait for Better Times

The political *daira* is indeed reluctant to show its cards. As one Moroccan journalist and AWI watcher put it, "They prevaricate so that they don't have to reveal to the monarchy the concessions that they are in fact willing, at this point, to make."<sup>15</sup> AWI is fearful of losing leverage and bargaining power, and appearing vulnerable before the *makhzen*. Its leaders, as the previous section made clear, are aware of the compromised fate of other recently co-opted parties.

Thus far, the group's refusal to recognize the king has served as a symbol of its "uncooptability," of the strength of its ideology-based strategy that has sustained its credibility and garnered support from Morocco's most disillusioned citizens, including the poor. The group wields influence, as discussed, through outreach as well as calling for protests and other gestures. In the early 1990s, around the same time the USFP and Istiqlal had joined politics, and the PJD was being wooed, the palace reportedly made similar offers to Yassine on the perennial condition that he recognize the king as Amir al-Mouminin. AWI declined.

Given recent dips in the influence of regional Islamist groups after their brief Arab Spring surge, AWI may be unlikely to choose this particular time to enter the mainstream. The decision in and of itself to forgo participation could affect the nature of the group's membership and influence—just as going public would have an uncertain effect on its backing. The question is, to what extent?

Another principle arguing for patience is that of *qawma*, or resistance, which is deeply embedded in AWI's organizational culture. The notion is that

future societal upheavals will present openings to be pursued. The concept of *qawma* likewise justifies partnering with other groups with seemingly divergent worldviews if the ends justify the means, such as when AWI joined with M20F. The group can be expected to take advantage of similar future opportunities to agitate for its *qawma* and thereafter seek power.

In particular, references to *qawma* or *al-ablam* can be traced to 2006, when Yassine publicly referred—much to the embarrassment of AWI leaders such as Arsalane and Moutawakel—to his dreams and visions of an imminent political and spiritual *qawma* in the country, after which an Islamic state would emerge. Dreams, as the previous chapter showed, were a central part of the perceived Yassine cult, with aspiring members apparently needing first to dream of Yassine bestowing membership upon them before they could attain it in reality.<sup>16</sup> Meanwhile, two events followed the failure of Yassine's dreams to materialize. The first was a crackdown on AWI followers, including hundreds of arrests, the confiscation of buildings and homes, and tight surveillance on members' activities and financial transactions. The second was a reported drop in membership<sup>17</sup> due to disillusionment and fatigue associated with the incident, even as Yassine himself mainly avoided being targeted.

After this organizational low point in 2006, members would have to wait until 2011, and the Arab uprisings, for another opening. Yet this opportunity, too, has now passed and the feeling is strong that, under present conditions, AWI's *qawma* cannot be realized. The king's concessions to M20F through the 2011 constitutional amendments have allowed for a veneer of democratic progress while enshrining the king's arbitrating role and entangling his major opposition blocs in petty politics. Pressure on the *makhzen* to enact reforms has thus been significantly relieved since M20F's impassioned calls in 2011.

Defections pose a particularly salient threat to AWI's near-term cohesion and political decisionmaking. While some of the group's more action-oriented youth have defected due to restrictions on participation,<sup>18</sup> more-ideological older members have also defected, citing the group's departure from original principles and loss of identity. Some women members themselves have departed, citing increasing patriarchy following Yassine's death.<sup>19</sup> Historically, the leadership has been much more dogmatic than are its followers, with the latter apparently more open to political participation and partnership with ideologically divergent groups. Indeed, even if AWI boycotts elections, its followers still cast votes—presumably for the PJD, the most ideologically similar party.<sup>20</sup>

Following Yassine's death, certain organizational tensions became more pronounced. Before Abbadi was named secretary-general in December 2012, for instance, now deputy secretary-general Arsalane and then spokesperson Nadia Yassine routinely engaged in public wrangling. The two would battle over the organization's image and direction, and over which of them should have more say; Arsalane would often dispute Yassine's statements aimed at both domestic and international audiences. Abbadi's entrance calmed the feuding, but the existing tremors affected the group's consensus, democratic procedure, morale, public stature, and significantly, its female membership. The infighting, moreover, revealed that the group's avowed religiosity did not preclude internal spats, as well as rumors of an internal cabal set to weaken any prospects of Nadia's leadership. Indeed, despite having founded an active women's branch within the organization, Nadia has hinted of being hampered by AWI's patriarchy and plays no current role.

Nadia, in addition, had emerged for a time as a popular, charismatic potential face of the organization, as well as a rendering of Islamic feminism. Yet her rise was far from assured following the sheikh's death, not least because the former Supreme Guide opposed "inheritance" in all forms—whether of wealth, ideas, leadership, or religion. In line with the Sufi notion of *subba*, Yassine condemned "*Islam al-mawruth al-majhul*" (Islam that is inherited and ignorant) and called on adherents to develop their own relationship with God.<sup>21</sup>

Aside from her public battles with Arsalane, Nadia was subjected to a public smear campaign even before her father's death, including charges of adultery—a cause for humiliation for a woman of her stature. Her interactions with American universities and appeal to Western sensibilities had no doubt caused discomfort. Attention was drawn to her commentaries, such as a 2005 assertion on BBC that "Muslims have inflicted a terrible injustice on women in the name of Islam," a statement many found unpalatable.<sup>22</sup> Efforts by influential members to silence her, and lessen her role within AWI, were ostensibly initiated under the pretext of the late sheikh's anti-*mawruth* ideology. Notably, Nadia has hewed closer to the more "conservative" nonparticipationist beliefs held by her father, as compared with Iharchane and Arsalane, who appear somewhat more ready to make concessions in exchange for participation. Parallels here can be detected to the fate of the USFP, whose moderate voices prevailed over those of the anti-*makhzen* nonparticipationists.

One female defector explained her view of matters:

Sheikh Yassine really wanted women to have a role in the organization. The new leaders just want women as figureheads, to show the monarch and the West that, “Look, we have women,” but our role is diminished now. This shows they too want to play the same gender game as the king. This is how the PJD uses women too.<sup>23</sup>

In the “gender game” referred to here, the king and other Arab autocrats position themselves as champions of women’s freedom and boast of the women in their ranks as proof of their so-called progressive policies, sometimes as a foil to Islamists. Many Moroccan political parties tend to replicate this system. Whether these women actually call the political shots is immaterial; more often than not, women serve as tokens or figureheads.

Broader than the question of perceived gender roles is the ebb in Islamist influence across the region. This, combined with the *makhzen*’s recovered clout and AWI’s soul searching, makes a continuation of the status quo a distinct possibility for the organization.

### Pursue Strategic Alliances

The third short-term option for AWI would be to continue eschewing politics and quietly organize against the monarch. Such organizing, rumors suggest, could even include a push for rapprochement with more secular anti-*makhzen* movements such as M20F, with the aim of strengthening both movements over time. Indeed, the ability of M20F to bring together the socialist left, other elements of the secular left, and Islamists in a region where religious-secular consensus is hard to come by was viewed by analysts as a feat. The alliance also posed a tough challenge to the *makhzen*, which had previously succeeded in straddling the two camps. With the Islamists’ departure, however, M20F was widely seen to have lost clout. The *makhzen*, therefore, sees a far greater threat in an AWI banded with other groups than even a growing AWI on its own. In the end, AWI could well try to join with secular leftists in a united effort to “bring down” the *makhzen*, although such a development is unlikely to occur under the M20F banner. The PJD is another potential “suitor” for the numerically strong AWI, although AWI has generally responded to the idea of dialogue rather than the charms of a single suitor.<sup>24</sup> Still other intergroup discussions have envisioned a democratic scenario of secular-Islamist alliances that averts the political fallout experienced in Egypt and Tunisia.

According to Arsalane, “common values such as social justice”<sup>25</sup> unite AWI and secular groups, and AWI has lately shown conciliatory behavior toward its former M20F peers. Observers note that Islamists and leftists may be inclined to agree at least temporarily, as they live out similar social realities. Abdallah Chibani, the spouse of Nadia Yassine, noted, for instance, that “AWI youth have supported reconciliation between secular and leftist currents.”<sup>26</sup>

The path of pursuing strategic alliances, of course, does not necessarily dictate an earlier or later entry to the political scene. Indeed, they are no strangers to the idea that the Islamist-secular divisions among opposition are in part what strengthens the king’s hand. In fact, at the time of writing, AWI had just recently hosted a rare conference with various members of Istiqlal, USFP, Moroccan businessmen, and leftists to discuss democratic reforms and lay the groundwork for future cooperation. They discussed issues of Islamism in power, the role of secularism, the issue of terrorism, among other items. First, what came of the conference is as yet unclear; second, there are murmurs that the leftists involved still express doubts about AWI’s vision for society. As AWI watchers continue to prognosticate, they will keenly track the internal developments and schisms within the organization for a hint at a future move.

### Additional Uncertainties Regarding AWI Participation

The question remains as to how AWI would perform as a political party. At present, its mechanisms are too weak to handle real political participation. Despite the group’s frequent rhetoric on the need for serious reform in foreign policy, the economy, unemployment, and religious affairs, its positions have always been founded on opposition to the monarchy. Some accommodation of palace policies would have to occur were AWI to participate, and here the PJD’s course offers potential clues for AWI’s future direction. Indeed, the PJD has been lambasted for failing to generate solutions on corruption, unemployment, and the other mostly populist platforms it has espoused. No doubt, the monarch and parliament’s blocking of every PJD initiative plays some role in this outcome, but something must be said for the PJD’s policy inexperience. AWI would be unlikely to somehow achieve better results than the PJD. It is also unclear how AWI would reconcile its calls for a procedural democracy with calls for eventual sharia.

A second unknown involves the PJD's fate should AWI decide not to ally with the existing Islamist party. To begin with, the PJD would lose at least some proportion of its AWI-identified supporters. The regime, meanwhile, could use AWI to oust the PJD as a new Islamist alternative, or vice versa. Indeed, some PJD members oppose the *makhzen* more strongly than they do rival Islamists—and would likely consider joining with like-minded AWI counterparts. Such figures may include the PJD's Mustafa Ramid, seen as a closer adherent to his form of Islamism than is Benkirane.<sup>27</sup> One potential AWI partner for Ramid could be Omar Iharchane, who is similarly more anti-palace than anti-PJD. If AWI and the PJD were to form something like the Islamist Green Alliance seen in Algeria, the coalition would coast to a sweeping parliamentary majority—a potential real concern for the palace. On the other hand, a simple AWI-PJD alliance would be unlikely to provide formidable competition for the palace in the longer term. Indeed, the palace will eventually draw upon its many tools to ensure that any potential Islamist coalition does not undermine the king's cult of personality, his popular support base, or his influence over parliament—which itself hosts significant party opposition to Islamist policies as well as Islamism in the government as a whole.

A final unknown should AWI enter the political mainstream is the fate of Morocco's Islamist fringe. Al-Badil al-Hadari and Harakat al-Umma (discussed in chapter 2) remain banned since the Belliraj incident and have too weak a following to bid for legality. While the extent of their extremist objectives is disputed, and their platforms actually reflect centrist democratic Islamism, they remain marginalized with little recourse.

Given that AWI has long been considered the greatest threat to the Moroccan establishment, the group's future moves are well worth monitoring. Should the party be integrated into the political mainstream, such a move would represent a turning point in Moroccan politics, with the vast majority of the country's dissonant Islamists gathered in one unified system. Subsequent developments would also lend clarity, or at least content, to the policy debate as to whether Islamists “moderate” once in power—even as moderation can be defined in various ways. Indeed, Islamists and Islamist groups do not move in lockstep, and the political contexts and histories in which such groups operate should be considered. What the co-optation of the PJD and the recent behavior of AWI show is that Islamists can indeed “moderate,” behaviorally at least, if given the right combination of incentives.

## Notes

1. The Istiqlal Party, founded by the nationalist-Islamist guerrilla fighter Allal al-Fassi, led Morocco to independence from France alongside Muhammad V. The party is now headed by Hamid Chabat. Lise Storm, *Democratization in Morocco* (New York: Routledge, 2007), p. 42; see also Pierre Vermeren, *The History of Morocco since Independence* (Paris: Éditions Le Découverte, 2002), p. 79–80.
2. James Sater, *Morocco: Challenges to Tradition and Modernity* (New York: Routledge, 2010), p. 63.
3. Lise Storm, *Democratization in Morocco* (New York: Routledge, 2007), p. 70.
4. Eva Wegner and Miquel Pellicer, “Islamist Moderation without Democratization: The Coming of Age of the Moroccan Party of Justice and Development?” *Democratization* 16, no. 1 (2009): p. 160.
5. Whether this actually stopped such interchanges was another story. For instance, current prime minister Benkirane was himself simultaneously editor-in-chief of *al-Tajdid*, TI’s newspaper, and a public PJD figure. His successor at the newspaper, Mustafa Khalfi, similarly straddled this TI role and PJD politics.
6. This does not mean other forms of repression do not endure. In spite of the closure of Morocco’s notorious Tazmamart prison, black sites still exist around the country, journalism is heavily circumscribed, those who openly support full autonomy for Western Sahara are at risk, and low-level AWI members—typically preachers and other religious figures—face imprisonment, asset seizure, and sometimes beatings.
7. “Fathallah Arsalan: Justice and Charity Cannot Fall under Any of the Parties” (in Arabic), *Souspress*, February 5, 2014, <http://washin.st/1ldQBM8>.
8. He is likely referencing the June 2013 absorption of Salafists into the Renaissance and Virtue Party, or that of the PJD into the MPDC decades earlier. It is widely believed that AWI has been propositioned by the palace to enter under an existing party’s umbrella.
9. “Justice and Charity Group Declares Its Readiness to Shift Political Party without the ‘Redlines’” (in Arabic), *Assdaa al-Maghreb*, January 8, 2013, <http://washin.st/1s99x8k>.
10. Echorouk Online, <http://www.echoroukonline.com/ara/articles/163912.html>.
11. Al-Jamaa.net, <http://www.aljamaa.net/ar/document/67123.shtml>.
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20. Voting for the PJD is reported firsthand by youth AWI members in the Souss region.
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22. Magdi Abdelhadi, "Accused Morocco Islamist Speaks Out," BBC, September 30, 2005, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/4297386.stm>.
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27. Some observers might feel Ramid has made various *makhzen*-aligned decisions as justice minister. At the peak of the M20F crackdown, with dozens of prison sentences in process, Ramid sought to cover up torture by the *makhzen* and publicly denied the existence of political prisoners in the country.

## 4

### *Conclusion*

In discussing how the United States might respond to developments in AWI and Moroccan politics, some points bear consideration.

First, Morocco is already an attractive ally. It cooperates in counterterrorism efforts, has a strong trade agreement with the United States, has growing relations with threatened western Sahel states such as Mali, Niger, and Togo, takes an agreeable stance on the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, and is stable relative to its neighbors. At a time when U.S. interests in the region have been challenged, and several Middle East countries have followed worrisome, even violent paths, policymakers should be wary of the sort of “friendly advice” that could have unintended negative consequences for either the monarchy or U.S.-Moroccan relations.

Second, as noted in the previous chapters, key uncertainties remain regarding AWI’s fate as an organization. Subsequent developments may lend clarity to the debate as to whether Islamists “moderate” once in power—even as moderation can be defined in various ways. The co-optation of the PJD and the recent behavior of AWI show that Islamists can indeed “moderate” in the interests of political expediency.

Given that AWI has long been considered one of the most potent challenges to the Moroccan establishment, the group’s future moves—whether to allow itself to be integrated, mount pressure on the regime, or quietly strategize with other opposition groups—are worth monitoring. The party’s integration into the political mainstream would be a turning point in Moroccan politics, in that the vast majority of the country’s dissonant Islamists would be gathered in one unified system.

For the Moroccan regime, the most desirable path is compromise and integration. AWI’s option of remaining quietly on the fringe only perpetuates the uncertainty regarding its relationship to the regime and its political modera-

tion. Furthermore, the possibility—however remote—of its banding with secular and other opposition groups would pose a direct threat the government.

### The U.S.-Morocco Relationship

Morocco formally recognized the United States with the Moroccan-American Treaty of Friendship<sup>1</sup> in 1786; permanent diplomatic relations began in 1905. The three pillars of this historical relationship comprise regional and national security, including counterterrorism cooperation; trade and economic development; and cultural exchange. All three areas contribute substantially to Morocco's overall stability.

**FIRST STRATEGIC PILLAR: SECURITY.** Although the countries of the Maghreb—Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia—were technically nonaligned during the Cold War, Morocco actively supported the Western bloc, with the United States maintaining bases there for the duration. Meanwhile Algeria tended toward the East, with a strong relationship between Algerian and Russian intelligence services.<sup>2</sup> This has left an imprint on the region's orientations to date.

Morocco is a strong partner in counterterrorism efforts and works closely with U.S. law enforcement. Indeed, Rabat has been particularly forthcoming in providing intelligence as well as symbolic support in the wake of September 11. In 2003, when terrorism shook Morocco on its own soil, domestic counterterrorism initiatives, as well as cooperative measures with Western partners, were pursued with renewed vigor. Morocco's role as a CT partner continues today in newer initiatives that respond to unrest near its borders.

Morocco's preventive strategies have been shrewd and soft-power focused. Rabat has recently invested considerable effort in exporting the system of "Moroccan Islam"—as discussed in the first chapter—to Sahel countries, including Mali and Niger.<sup>3,4</sup> At the very least, this shows a willingness on the part of Morocco to do what it can to stem extremism and to position itself as a regional leader. In this regard, Morocco is able to highlight its status as a foil to some very unstable neighbors and as a more viable guardian of the Western Sahara, legitimizing its claims to the region.

**SECOND STRATEGIC PILLAR: TRADE.**<sup>5</sup> The 2004 U.S.-Morocco Free Trade Agreement was signed during the George W. Bush administration and became effective in 2006. During the 2004 FTA negotiations and approval process, U.S. Trade Representative Robert Zoellick argued<sup>6</sup> that the United States could enhance its relationship with Muslim countries through free trade—pursued in the philosophy that signatories to FTAs are less likely to enter conflict, espe-

cially as trade flows between them increase.<sup>7</sup> Zoellick's thinking—typical of the time—was that freer trade would lead to stability, modernity, and even democratization.<sup>8</sup> Since that time, trade with Morocco has been used as a platform to bolster strategic, economic, and political ties with a moderate, friendly regime and could become a model for other Middle East countries.

Development initiatives, including the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) compacts, invest in cultivation of Morocco's competitive agricultural exports, small fisheries, artisans, youth and women's sectors, as well as a multitude of USAID projects in the areas of education, local government capacity-building, and engagement for at-risk youth.<sup>9</sup> Other resources include the Middle East Partnership Initiative, which provides support to journalists, businesspersons, NGO leaders, and lawyers, among others.

**THIRD PILLAR: CULTURAL EXCHANGE.** The initiatives mentioned above contribute to and allow for the people-to-people diplomacy that is a cornerstone in the U.S.-Morocco relationship, one whose strategic value is sometimes underestimated. The relationships nurtured by agencies such as the Peace Corps, Fulbright programs, and general tourism have lent a certain intangible quality to the appeal of Morocco for Americans, and conversely of the United States for Moroccans. Annually, more than 200 Peace Corps volunteers serve in Morocco, conducting development projects, living among disenfranchised populations, and serving as citizen ambassadors. Thousands of Americans annually study in Morocco, and American tourists number in the hundreds of thousands. As one AWI youth said to this author, "It's always the Americans who speak our obscure dialect." However negligible these bonds may seem, they constitute a powerful advantage.

### Caveats in U.S. Policy Options

Washington should not attempt to engineer any relationship between AWI and the monarchy. Indeed, little suggests that the monarchy even wants U.S. assistance with this task, and given AWI's long history of criticizing Western hegemony, such interference would likely be rejected wholesale by the organization. Moreover, previous experience has shown not only that U.S. navigation of internal Arab politics can be treacherous but also that Washington is often no more competent at handling these dynamics than the countries themselves.

In the shadow of the fallout from Tunisia's Ennahda and Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, Morocco should have an effective contingency plan to ensure that *the monarch continues to serve as a check on Islamist power*.<sup>10</sup> However auto-

cratic, the king has allowed the PJD to come to be the pluralistic, if less powerful, player it has been thus far. The lesson to be learned from Tunisia and Egypt is that while Islamism is not itself inimical to democracy, its unchecked power can result in the replacement of autocracy with a “theocratic” autocracy. Such theocracy, if combined with the desire to establish a caliphate as an ultimate goal, would lead to a return of leadership that is not only heavy-handed and corrupt, but also cool or even hostile to its Western partners. In Morocco’s case, the right combination of incentives as well as the existing check on Islamist power by the state serve as temporary buffers against potentially radical or theocratic approaches to politics and policy.

### Policy Options for Washington

Ultimately, the United States can and should do little to influence AWI’s internal decisions or to actively promote reconciliation between AWI and the palace. Given the key foreign policy pillars in Morocco and the uncertainties regarding AWI’s direction, Washington should only pursue options in the presence of greater certainty regarding AWI and its next steps, and related more broadly to governance and development. In this vein, the following are options worth considering:

- **The United States should welcome the possibility of a palace-AWI reconciliation, and of AWI’s integration into the political system.** AWI’s political immoderation and unwillingness to negotiate thus far is a reaction to perceived political and social constraints, not a reflection of religious fundamentalism.<sup>11</sup> In this regard, expressions of openness and inclusivity by the palace to nonviolent parties might incentivize AWI’s political moderation. Although certain Islamists may be conservative in their approach to religion, this fundamentalism does not necessarily extend to their political behavior, as evidenced by the PJD. Indeed, AWI might even serve as a counterweight to insidious foreign Islamist influences entering Morocco through “televangelism,” where the sermons of Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi and Amr Khaled are as popular, if not more so, than those of Sheikh Yassine.
- **Encourage constitutional reforms that pave the way for substantive inclusion.** The symbolic gesture of integrating the most powerful Islamist movement into politics can be fully realized only if some level of reform grants the parliament more power. Because AWI has seen—and been disheartened by—the path of the PJD, it has been reluctant to end its anti-monarchism. As of now, the king can terminate the government and par-

liament at will, and he can exercise legislative power in the parliament's absence. And if the bid to woo AWI includes integration into a powerless parliament, the prospects for its political moderation would be harmed, likely entrenching its hostility toward the regime and a return to its antagonistic positions.

In this regard, Washington could encourage American organizations dedicated to democracy promotion—such as the National Democratic Institute (NDI), the International Republican Institute (IRI), and others—to work with the Moroccan parties as well as the regime, contingent upon the buy-in of the latter. While a complete separation of powers between palace, parliament, and judiciary is too much of a reach at this time, the United States should continue to press the Moroccan government to give greater autonomy to the judiciary. The country's courts have historically been controlled by the palace and the Ministry of Justice, with judges often ruling as directed in the interest of their careers, undermining confidence and buy-in to the system.

- **Encourage and aid the Moroccan government to improve service provision, especially in urban slums.** Much of the legitimacy, reach, and bargaining power of unsanctioned groups like AWI come from their provision of needed social services—beyond simply their political and philosophical positions. One element of AWI's ability to win over poorer Moroccan citizens, as well as to deflect the regime's desire to repress them, has been to fill gaps in state services. The United States could support the Moroccan government's ability to be more competitive in this regard; it would be a much softer, more effective way of countering AWI operations that are usually within the purview of the state. As discussed earlier, the Moroccan government has already increased its spending on religious affairs to counter the popularity of AWI and Salafism, but spirituality is not the only dimension to AWI's appeal.

Of course, the Moroccan government has already undertaken development projects through the National Initiative for Human Development (INDH). Nevertheless, these efforts might be expanded beyond slow-to-materialize USAID projects and unseen MCC compact dividends to tangible, visible charity operations—much like the soup kitchens, Eid meat deliveries, and other services traditionally provided by Islamists. In addition, the INDH stamp is usually more visible in rural and semirural areas,

while Islamist *dawa* (including that of AWI) fills the vacuum among the urban poor.

One might wonder whether the Moroccan government ought to emulate the high-profile, low-impact initiatives of AWI (e.g., free food distribution, soup kitchens) at the expense of serious development efforts. However, INDH's work has been characterized as highly marketed and low impact: the organization has been criticized for handsome, but empty buildings with inadequate staff, whose facilities fall into disarray after a few years. Much of INDH's programming has been little more than a campaign abroad for Moroccan development. In talking with young people interested in community development, one discovers that many work with AWI and PJD groups almost by default, regardless of interest in Islam, politics, or either. If one asks these volunteers about working with INDH, they are either unaware of it or discuss the lack of observable results.

Nevertheless, INDH's stated goal of scalable projects need not be foregone in favor of more charitable ones. U.S. projects and programs could be designed to help the Moroccan government expand INDH and design its initiatives to specifically target the urban poor areas by adding charitable activities to its repertoire. Forthcoming austerity measures will pose a challenge to such social service efforts, and Morocco—like most of its neighbors—will have to reconcile necessary public programs with spending constraints.

In closing, *al-Adl wal-Ihsan*, a popular organization long seen as highly worrisome to the Moroccan regime, is at a crossroads. It would behoove the Moroccans to seize the opportunity presented by AWI's impasse. And the United States should use the soft tools at its disposal to help where it can.

## Notes

1. The oft-sung treaty is more, in this author's view, an interesting rhetorical tool than a plain fact. Morocco was not a state in its modern sense at the time, and the continuity between the pre-independence sultanate and Morocco's current monarchy is an ideological assertion that benefits the interests of both the United States and the monarchy at the expense of an alternative, democratic history—i.e., one that begins with independence. It also does not account for the complicated relationship between Morocco, the United States, and France between the World Wars that allowed France to retain its presence there longer than most Moroccans would have liked.

2. The Russian KGB trained and influenced the Algerian DRS, a move that has a heavy imprint on Algerian surveillance and politics to date.
3. In late 2013, Moroccan and Malian officials signed the Rabat Declaration, a religious accord that agreed on the propagation of Morocco's state-led religious practice. In early 2014, Muhammed VI traveled to Mali, Guinea, Gabon, and Cote d'Ivoire to oversee cooperation agreements on economics, African development, trade, and counterterrorism.
4. Vish Sakthivel, "U.S. Strategic Dialogues with Morocco and Algeria: Take Two," PolicyWatch 2232, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, March 28, 2014, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/u.s.-strategic-dialogues-with-morocco-and-algeria-take-two>.
5. Morocco's leading exports include phosphates and textiles, and the United States is the country's sixth largest trading partner, while Morocco tallies as the fifty-fifth largest importer of U.S. goods. Morocco's banking system is also one of the most liberalized in North Africa. More recently, Morocco has positioned itself as a regional leader in renewable energy, thus appealing to American investors.
6. Robert B. Zoellick, "When Trade Leads to Tolerance," *New York Times*, June 12, 2004, <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/06/12/opinion/when-trade-leads-to-tolerance.html>.
7. Gregory W. White, "Free Trade as a Strategic Instrument in the War on Terror? The 2004 U.S.-Moroccan Free Trade Agreement," *Middle East Journal* 59, no. 4 (Autumn 2005), pp. 597-616.
8. "Morocco to Discuss Free Trade with U.S.," *Washington Times*, January 22, 2003, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2003/jan/22/20030122-084452-7002r/>.
9. In 2013, Washington provided Morocco with a five-year, \$700 million MCC compact to fight poverty and stimulate economic growth, stipulating that Morocco improve its democratic and governance record; Morocco also has the largest Foreign Military Financing portfolio of the Maghreb countries.
10. For instance, while the Maghreb scholar Francesco Cavatorta has argued, "We do not know whether [the inevitable autocracy of Islamists] will be the case or not," Fareed Zakaria, describing the Arab world more broadly, argued in 2011 that "Arab rulers of the Middle East are autocratic, corrupt and heavy-handed. But they are still more liberal, tolerant, and pluralistic than those who would likely replace them."
11. The first section in this report defined "moderation" as a willingness to respect the rules of the establishment and the rule of law, to accommodate the will of the majority, and to embrace a pluralistic system that respects the rights and freedoms

of all citizens. The definition used here allows for the possibility of “moderate” Islamist forces committed to political pluralism and respect for the rule of law—as opposed to a more limiting definition entailing a “liberal” interpretation of the Quran or “progressive” practice of the faith.

## APPENDIX A

### *Glossary*

**Ahl al-Bait:** the family and descendants of the Prophet

**al-ahlam:** literally “the dreams.” Refers to the incident described in chapter 3 wherein a brutal government crackdown on AWI was sparked by Yassine’s claim that he experienced visions of an imminent spiritual awakening and the establishment of an Islamic state in Morocco.

**Alternance:** a system of power sharing offered to opposition parties by King Hassan II (r. 1961–1999). Under Alternance, if the opposition parties win a majority of seats in parliament, the king chooses a prime minister from that coalition.

**amana al-ama:** general secretariat

**Amir al-Mouminin:** literally “commander of the faithful,” a title held by the king of Morocco and typically understood as referring only to Sunni Muslims

**al-Badil al-Hadari:** literally the “civilizational alternative,” this leftist-Islamist political party led by Mustafa Mouatassim was one of two such movements that emerged in Morocco in the early 2000s; the other was Harakat min Ajli al-Umma. Both groups attempted to merge leftist notions of civil rights and constitutional reform with Islamic jurisprudence. Eventually, the leaders of both were arrested under accusations of terrorist involvement.

**baya:** an oath of loyalty pledged by members of the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamist vanguards

**bida:** heretical innovation

**daira:** circle

**dawa:** outreach—religious, spiritual, or charitable

**Eid:** a Muslim holiday marked by a feast. Often refers specifically to Eid al-Fitr, the breaking of the fast that ends the month of Ramadan.

**fard:** individual

**fitna:** internal discord

**Harakat min Ajli al-Umma:** literally the “Umma Movement” and led by Muhammad Marwani, Harakat was one of two leftist-Islamist parties that emerged in Morocco in the early 2000s; the other was al-Badil al-Hadari (see that entry for further information).

**Hizb al-Tahrir:** literally “Liberty Party,” a transnational Islamist group, based in Lebanon

**ikhwani:** relating to the Muslim Brotherhood

**Islam al-mawruth al-majhul:** literally, “Islam that is inherited and ignorant”

**Istiqlal:** literally “Independence.” A secular opposition political party that, along with the USFP, was co-opted by the *makhzen* in the late 1990s.

**Itihad al-Ishtiraki:** refers to the Socialist Union of Popular Forces, or USFP, a secular opposition party co-opted by the *makhzen* in the late 1990s

**jahiliya:** literally “ignorance.” Refers to the historical era before the founding of Islam, but is also used to describe contemporary states or communities that have not sufficiently embraced Islam.

**Jamaat al-Islamiyah:** literally “Islamic Group.” A Tawhid wal Islah forebear founded by Shabiba Islamiyah members who condemned the use of violence under Shabiba leader Abdelkarim Mouti.

**jamiat:** group

**kalima:** word (literally and metaphorically, as in “kept his word”)

**khilafa:** caliphate

**kufar:** infidels

**majlis al-irshad:** guidance council, the highest body presiding over AWI’s internal government, responsible for spiritual affairs. Members of the council nominated and eventually voted in AWI’s leader, in the new role of secretary-general, following Yassine’s death.

**majlis al-shura:** consultative council

**makhzen:** Morocco’s “deep state,” including the king, his circle, the military, and security apparatuses

**mawruth:** inherited

**Moudawana:** the personal status, or family, code in Moroccan law. The code

governs issues such as marriage, divorce, polygamy, inheritance, and child custody. The most recent revisions, in 2004, were made in response to pressure from women's groups and primarily affected women's issues.

**moulay:** lord, saint

**mujtamaa:** society

**qawma:** resistance

**rajoula:** manliness, steadfastness, reliability

**Shabiba Islamiyah:** literally the "Islamic Youth," this radical group is the precursor to the PJD and its ideological adjunct Tawhid wal Islah. Shabiba was founded by Abdelkarim Mouti and embraced violence as a means to establish a society based on Islamic law. The movement dissolved soon after Mouti and his followers were implicated in the assassination of prominent Marxist Omar Benjelloun.

**sharia:** Islamic law

**suhba:** personal relationship with God

**Supreme Murshid:** a supreme guide

**tanazulat:** concessions, compromises

**tarbiyah:** education, training

**tariqa:** path, way

**Tawhid wal-Islah:** Unity and Reform Movement, or TI, which grew out of Jamaat al-Islamiyah to become the ideological adjunct to the PJD. TI was denied status as an independent political party by the *makhzen*, but its members rose to prominent positions within the PJD's precursor, the MPDC. TI long maintained close but informal links with the PJD, but the movement's influence has waned as the PJD has moved toward the Moroccan political mainstream.

**Ulama:** Morocco's highest-ranking religious clerics, appointed by the king

**usra:** family

**zawiyah:** Sufi school

## APPENDIX B

### *Key Events in Post-Colonial Morocco*

- 1943: Istiqlal is founded as a political party advocating Moroccan independence from France and Spain.<sup>1</sup>
- 1956: The French and Spanish protectorates in Morocco end, yet Spain holds on to two enclaves on the Mediterranean coast, Ceuta and Melilla.<sup>2</sup>
- 1961: King Hassan II comes to power upon the death of his father, Muhammad V.
- 1963: Morocco holds its first general elections.<sup>3</sup>
- 1974: Sheikh Abdessalam Yassine gains renown after publishing an open letter, “Islam or the Deluge,” accusing King Hassan II of sacrificing the well-being of Moroccan citizens in favor of Western interests, corruption, and the accumulation of wealth. Yassine was subsequently arrested and, after several years in prison, confined to a mental asylum.<sup>4</sup>
- 1976: Following elections, both Istiqlal and the USFP are invited to join the government but decline.
- 1983: King Hassan II intensifies his efforts to co-opt the opposition into the regime. The elections of 1983–1984, however, are boycotted by Istiqlal and the USFP, which see them as “heavily manipulated by the *makhzen*.”<sup>5</sup>
- 1987: Yassine formally establishes AWI.
- 1989: Yassine is put under house arrest.<sup>6</sup>
- 1990s: The *makhzen* attempts a rapprochement with AWI by releasing Yassine from house arrest and offering to legalize the group in exchange for recognizing the king’s religious authority.

- 1992: Denied recognition as a party in its own right, Tawhid wal Islah joins and revives the inactive Constitutional Democratic Popular Movement.
- 1993: King Hassan II proposes the Alternance government, whereby he would appoint a prime minister from an opposition party if opposition parties won a majority in parliament. The USFP and Istiqlal outline a series of demands in response, among them that an opposition prime minister be given the right to appoint key ministers. The king refuses and the opposition parties decline to participate in the new government.<sup>7</sup>
- 1996: King Hassan II proposes changes to the Moroccan constitution that allow for direct election to the lower chamber of parliament. This creates the appearance of a powerful parliament and helps convince Istiqlal and the USFP to buy into the idea of Alternance. By campaigning in favor of these amendments, however, the opposition parties align themselves with the king's objectives and actually strengthen *makhzen* control of the political process.<sup>8</sup>
- 1997: After years of clandestine activity and persecution, the PJD is permitted to participate in elections.
- 1998: Morocco's first opposition-led government comes to power headed by the USFP, with participation from Istiqlal. Abderrahman Youssoufi becomes the kingdom's first opposition prime minister.
- 1999: King Muhammad VI comes to power upon the death of his father, Hassan II.
- 2000: Yassine is released from house arrest.<sup>9</sup>
- Early 2000s: Many AWI followers flee to southern Spain during one of several sporadic crackdowns on the organization in Morocco.
- 2002: AWI adopts an open-door policy that eases membership and access to the group's literature. Dating to the previous decade, the group expands briskly in membership and social service provision; it opens branches in rural areas and urban pockets alike, enjoying a surge in activist involvement.
- 2003: The regime backpedals on its previously lenient treatment of Salafists following a May bombing in Casablanca. A crackdown ensues and hundreds of Salafists are arrested.

- 2004: After initially opposing the *Moudawana* (personal status code) AWI reverses course upon consultation with other advocacy groups, adopting a more favorable stance particularly on women's rights.
- 2006: Yassine claims to have experienced visions of an imminent political and spiritual upheaval in Morocco, including the establishment of a caliphate. When these visions fail to materialize, many disillusioned followers flee AWI and the *makhzen* cracks down sharply on the organization's activities.
- 2011: In late January, youth activists in Rabat call for demonstrations on February 20 to show solidarity with the people of Egypt. Days before the demonstrations are to take place, AWI's own youth movement states its support for what becomes known as the February 20 Movement, or M20F. On this date, protests are held in fifty-three Moroccan cities, drawing a combined count of demonstrators ranging from 37,000 (according to Ministry of Interior) to 238,000 (according to the organizers).<sup>10</sup>
- On March 9, King Muhammad VI proposes constitutional amendments in order to quell growing protests.<sup>11</sup> The changes, which preserve some power for the king while establishing a more influential prime minister chosen by the majority coalition elected to parliament, are approved in a July 1 referendum by more than 98 percent of voters.<sup>12</sup>
- Just over a month before the November 25 parliamentary elections, AWI declares that it will boycott the vote, calling the process "deceptive." After his PJD party wins 27 percent of the ballots cast, Abdelilah Benkirane becomes Morocco's first Islamist prime minister.<sup>13</sup>
- As a new majority coalition forms in parliament, AWI formally withdraws its support for M20F on December 18.
- 2012: Sheikh Abdessalam Yassine dies on December 13. His funeral, held in Rabat the following day, is attended by tens of thousands of Moroccans.
- 2013: Islamist governments are challenged across North Africa. Mounting protests in Egypt lead to a military takeover on July 1, when forces commanded by Gen. Abdul Fattah al-Sisi arrest Islamist president Mohamed Morsi. Following mass demonstrations in Tunisia, the ruling Islamist party, Ennahda, agrees on September 29 to eventually step down. On December 17, Ennahda makes a deal with its secular rivals on establishing an interim government.<sup>14</sup>

2013 (cont.): Significant, though less consequential, anti-Islamist sentiment appears in Morocco, as Istiqlal announces its withdrawal from the PJD's ruling coalition in May. The king also sharply denounces the PJD's performance in an August 20 speech. Months of coalition negotiations lead to a deal signed on October 10, which installs a notoriously corrupt member of the centrist, pro-palace National Rally of Independents (RNI) into the coveted foreign minister position. This cabinet reshuffling allows Prime Minister Benkirane to remain in office, but with his power substantially diminished.<sup>15</sup>

## Notes

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## *About the Author*

Vish Sakthivel recently completed a year-long Next Generation Fellowship at The Washington Institute, during which she focused on North African politics and especially Islamic political issues in Morocco, where she lived for three years. A former Peace Corps volunteer in the kingdom and fluent in Arabic, she received a master's degree from Georgetown University's Public Policy Institute with a concentration in Arab studies. She is currently pursuing her doctorate at St. Antony's College, University of Oxford.

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In Morocco, the banned but highly influential Islamist opposition group al-Adl wal-Ihsan (Justice and Benevolence) is at a crossroads. The 2012 death of the group's supreme guide, Sheikh Abdesalam Yassine, an inveterate adversary of Morocco's political establishment, coupled with possible internal cleavages and other political changes, has raised questions about the future of the organization that could have important repercussions for stability and security throughout the kingdom. Will al-Adl wal-Ihsan reconcile with the monarchy and pursue an increased role in Morocco's politics or will it suffer internal feuds and fade into political obscurity?

