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Gabriel Harr-Siebenlist April 10, 2023

Faithfully Commanded: An Analysis of the PJD's post-Islamist Character and Operation Within Morocco's Hybrid Regime

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Abstract

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The events transpiring in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) in the last decade or so, beginning with the Arab Spring in 2011, have created a strong case analysis for the rise and fall of political Islam, which flourished in nations like Morocco, Tunisia, and Egypt after the protests. As Islamist parties came into and out of power in the 10 years following, a narrative took shape which viewed the changes within these parties as resulting from the moderating factors of taking up the torch of governance; some scholars, to describe this shift, posited that MENA had reached a post-Islamist phase.[1] In the case of Morocco, where the Justice and Development Party (PJD), officially referred to as a "conservative political party with an Islamic reference point"[2] governed from 2011-2021 under the ultimate supervision of the monarchy within the nation's hybrid regime, this paper argues the uniqueness of the PJD's case and for the separation of Morocco from this general narrative. The PJD's devastating loss at the polls in 2021 following 10 years of governance and preceded by more than a decade of support building (1997-2011), rather than coinciding with the typical evaluation of Islamist inclusion-moderation framework, reveals much more about the balance of political participation in Morocco and how Islamism functions in this unique context. This paper will explore the PJD's identity as a more accurately defined post-Islamist party and why that definition is important in understanding its formation, growth, and policy-making, all while facing the dismantling processes of Morocco's monarchy and political system. The paper will also include a discussion of the Justice and

[1] Asef Bayat. "What is Post-Islamism." *ISIM Review* 16, (Autumn 2005): 5.
[2] Reda Benkhaldoun, in conversation with the author, Rabat, May 2022.

Spirituality Group (JSG), a non-participatory Islamist entity, to contrast the PJD's identity and efficacy. Incorporating a series of interviews with politicians, scholars, and election officials in Morocco, this paper will also provide an in-country perspective on the relationship between the party and the palace in order to better explore how the post-Islamist PJD's identity and adaptability has allowed it to exist and exercise influence within its nation's hybrid political scene.

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Introduction

I came to Morocco believing I had a fundamental understanding of the political landscape. I had a feeling that Islamists were a hot topic, suspected that they were much more moderate than Fox News and CNN would have us believe, and speculated that much like any other political party in the rest of the world, they were forced to abandon their dreams of grand dogma and pursue pragmatic platforms, ultimately disappointing their constituency in nearly the same way that every party and government tends to. I set about conducting interviews in May of 2022 with a bias towards evaluating the ideological changes of the Justice and Development Party (PJD) and attempting to learn if its movement from opposition to governance after 2011's Arab Spring had manifested a significant effect on its platform and policy. I held this shift to governance, in line with an inclusion-moderation framework, to be the main mechanism at play in Morocco, as it was in their oft-cited neighbor, Tunisia. I believed the PJD's Islamist identity, and the changes within that, to be the most significant candidate for evaluation. Throughout my interviews, however, I consistently stumbled into the colossal shadow of the monarchy. It was included in every discussion and often recognized as a severely influential factor in policy creation, parliamentary processes, and elections. What became clear to me was the fact that Morocco's monarchy was, at a basic level, unignorable. It was not simply a structure with veto-power, nor a symbolic figurehead of an ancient nation – rather, it played a highly active role in influencing the political goings-on of the North African state, a dynamic with which all political parties must contend. Some scholars argue that the compliance the PJD has shown in regard to the palace's interventionist stance has "enabled the PJD to establish itself as a moderate political force within the political system," yet ultimately has failed to elicit "a meaningful

reform of power structure."[3] Regardless of the results, interaction with the palace clearly seemed to be a vital aspect of Morocco's political process. I began to realize that the Arab Spring was not necessarily the factor which instigated a distinct character change in the PJD, nor was it the only focal point of Morocco's recent political history. I stopped looking at Morocco's developments in the last two decades as corresponding with an "Arab-Spring → Islamists → Moderation" trajectory in mind, and allowed my search to disregard the regional narratives into which Morocco is often grouped. I decided to evaluate Morocco on its own terms; this would mean incorporating research on Islamist movements, other political parties, and most importantly, the longstanding and mighty institution of the monarchy.

Thierry Desrues defines a hybrid regime as one "where there are institutional arrangements that are based on principles of democratic legitimacy as well as civil rights and civil liberties, but which are distorted by a series of legal restrictions and subordinated to an authoritarian configuration and exercise of supreme power," an apt description of Morocco's framework.[4] Morocco spent the 1960s-1980s under the ʿAlawid King Hassan II's "Years of Lead,'" during which the monarchy-led state jailed and killed dissidents with little recourse; however, marked by the release of a slew of political prisoners in 1989, the nation witnessed a notable change in course and the beginning of what Mohamed Kadiri refers to a "calculated opening" of democracy in the nation.[5] The term "calculated opening" is useful on a macroscale to explain the Moroccan monarchy's development of its political system, in that it implies a highly deliberate and tactical agenda in the pursuit of forming a state which has proven

[3] Salim Hmimnat, "Reform Within Stability: The Justice and Development Party's Discursive Representation of Islah in Morocco Post-2011," Institute of African Studies, Mohamed V University, Rabat, 2020: 1.
[4] Thierry Desrues, "Mobilizations in a Hybrid Regime: The 20th February Movement and the Moroccan regime," *Current Sociology* 61, no. 4 (April 2013): 410.
[5] Mohamed Kadiri, "The Evolution of Morocco's Human Rights Movement," *Arab Reform Initiative* (September 2017): 5.

remarkably stable.[6] Throughout the Arab world, "monarchies in the last 70 years have been 7.6% likely to experience a revolution [while] republics 26.2% likely,"[7] and with Morocco's ʿAlawid dynasty maintaining their cohesion for centuries, enduring the likes of colonialism and more recently, the Arab Spring, the nation has proven its system to be capable of weathering political storms. Yet this system is not marked solely by its monarchy: since independence in 1956 whereupon Hassan II's father King Mohamed V (r. 1956-1961) began to centralize power within the monarchy, the nation has borne witness to the development of democratic openings of varying shapes and sincerity.[8] The most visible of which are their bicameral parliament (containing a lower House of Representatives composed of 395 representatives directly elected by voters), the transference of key cabinet positions to elected officials, and the widening and increase of efficacy in elections.[9] Therefore, it is not as simple as saying that Morocco is an autocracy; of course there is final and absolute power within the kingship, but there is also influence stored in various nodes throughout the political landscape, including democratically elected positions. Within this hybrid regime lies the possibility for resistance and limited autonomy on the part of non-palatial entities.

One might ask why a monarchy which already has control would lend power and influence to other institutions such as parliament? Why would it lean into enhancing the non-authoritarian aspects of the hybrid system? In terms of Morocco's identity within the global arena, Desrues suggests devolution and democratic openings are a matter of securing international aid, where "this hybridization benefits from being labeled 'good governance' by the international financial institutions and western governments that many of these countries depend

[6] Mohamed Hashas, "Moroccan Exceptionalism Examined: Constitutional Insights pre-and post-2011," *Istituto Affari Internazionali* 13, no. 11 (December 2013): 5.
[7] Victor Menaldo, "The Middle East and North Africa's Resilient Monarchs," *The Journal of Politics* 74, no. 3 (July 2012): 707-708.
[8] Hashas, "Moroccan Exceptionalism," 5.
[9] Marvine Howe, "Morocco's Democratic Experience," *World Policy Journal* 17, no. 1 (2000): 66.

on to gain access to credit."[10] It is also significant that Morocco's government has taken the form of a multi-party system, witness to numerous coalition governments throughout its recent history. This system, developed and expanded at several points in the 20th century by the nation's first two kings[11] is a critically effective way to prevent opposition from banding together and posing a united threat to the palace, where the multi-faceted nature of this type of governance prevents "the emergence of a strong party, [maintains] a balance among political parties, and further [divides] an already fragmented political elite."[12] In terms of public opinion, Anderson opines that Middle Eastern monarchs "have the option to limit their own prerogatives by constitutional restraints and to share powers, thereby retaining the right to reign," suggesting that monarchies utilize devolution in order to appease citizens, who in turn permit the status quo to continue.[13] It is also apparent that increasing the transparency of elections is an effective way to sow contentment among the populace. In a survey conducted over several decades in Morocco in which citizens expressed an increasingly positive perception of the transparency in their state's elections, "the results indicated that the more respondents perceive elections to reflect democratic standards, the more strongly they believe in the regime's right to govern and the less likely they are to have joined non-compliant protests."[14]

However, Moroccan monarchs do not simply reign — they, in a very real sense, rule. All of these benefits, resulting from the nation's democratic openings, should not be mistaken for anything but well-informed political tactics for retaining the monarchy's authority over its

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[10] Desrues, "Mobilizations," 410.
[11] Mohamed Daadaoui, "Rituals of Power and Political Parties in Morocco: Limited Elections as Positional Strategies," *Middle Eastern Studies* 46, no. 2 (March 2010): 195.
[12] Driss Maghraoui, "Working Under Constraints: The PJD in the Aftermath of the 2016 Elections," Rice University, Baker Institute for Public Policy (May 2018): 1, https://www.bakerinstitute.org/research/behind-pjds-durability.
[13] Lisa Anderson. "Absolutism and the Resilience of Monarchy in the Middle East." *Political Science Quarterly* 106, no.1 (January 1991): 2.
[14] Scott Williamson, "Elections, Legitimacy, and Compliance in Authoritarian Regimes: Evidence from the Arab World," *Democratization* 28, no. 8 (May 2021): 1491.

citizens and the stability of its nation. Morocco's hybrid system is not a happy accident, but rather the result of much development and amendment throughout the later 20th century, a process which has resulted in a fairly stable nation especially compared to its MENA neighbors in light of the Arab Spring. It is in this framework, looking at King Mohamed VI (r. 1999-present) not solely as a symbolic leader or the latest in the line of succession but as a deft political maneuverer following in the footsteps of his father and grandfather, that we must evaluate the PJD. We cannot consider the group solely as an Islamist (or post-Islamist) entity, but rather as a political party operating in Morocco's potent hybrid regime, under the stiff management of a savvy supervisor.

Throughout this paper I will use terms such as monarchy, palace, crown, king, and kingship to refer in a broad sense to the institution which rules over Morocco and has had legitimacy as a dynasty for centuries. While I often use them interchangeably, there is considerable nuance in these terms. Though this paper does not delve into the specifics of the palace as a governing organ, there is more to the institution than just the king; advisors, family members, and various actors within the palace's inner circle all play a complicated and dynamic role in acting cohesively as the orchestrators of state. For the sake of maintaining focus in this narrative on the PJD and their relationship with the monarchy, I use these terms rather interchangeably; other work and literature endeavors to define and track the specific power dynamics within the palace.

This paper will begin with an overview of the concept of Islamism, and then move on to establishing the PJD's character as that of a post-Islamist group by evaluating a history of its ideological shifts, whose distinct timeline and source of pressure from the palace differentiates the party from broader regional narratives, ultimately making the case that this post-Islamist

designation is helpful in understanding the PJD's growth strategies and adaptability which cemented its spot in the political arena. We will then track the PJD's growth throughout the 2000s, evaluating its tactics and successes, as well as the electoral repression it faced at the hands of the monarchy; such a discussion lends insight into the interplay between palace and party, and explores how the post-Islamist PJD actually goes about accumulating support in a regime beset by limitations. This examination will be followed by an analysis of the party's 10 years in governance beginning in 2011, taking a look at how the palace and Morocco's passive political qualities led to the PJD's gradual dissolution, as well as the party's tenacious ability to affect limited change and policy in spite of such challenges. Finally, this paper will contrast the PJD's post-Islamist identity and experience with that of the Justice and Spirituality Group (JSG), whose non-participatory stance might merit them the designation of "true" Islamists and has hindered their ability to fully affect change in their nation. On a broad level, this journey through the last two decades seeks to answer the following: what does Islamism look like and how does it perform in a hybrid regime like Morocco's?

This project does not seek to be absolute; there will always be limitations, the likes of which will be discussed in depth later in the paper. Rather, it seeks to be multi-faceted, and consider the breadth of Morocco's political landscape, interrogating the idea that the PJD can be simultaneously limited and autonomous, at varying junctures — that a post-Islamist faction's own hybridity, defined both by its ideological concessions and their reliance on typical Islamist strategies, reflects the similarly eclectic nature of their political reality. Though the topic of Islamism throughout MENA has been extensively explored, I have found the prevailing knowledge in the field to, in various ways, fall short in the pursuit of explaining and

understanding the uniqueness of Morocco's political scene. There is, however, still much to learn and consider in regards to that which has already been written.

A. Literature Review

The existing literature relevant to my study can be grouped into a few main camps: it examines Islamism as a broad ideology; it analyzes Islamism in the context of the Arab Spring; it assesses Islamism's relationship with democracy; and it explores the function of Islamists under authoritarianism. While useful in expanding our knowledge about how Islamists interact with various government systems and political transformations, each of these individual camps fails in some way (however minor) to fully account for the story of the PJD in Morocco. This paper therefore intends to take up the torch and illuminate the missing aspects of the field's commentary on these following concepts: Islamism, hybrid regimes, and Moroccan politics. Each sector on its own has developed concepts that reflect political realities in other parts of the world yet fail to seamlessly line up with Morocco's narrative; additionally, through their separation, each body of scholarship only assists in only a part of Morocco's case analysis. A major goal of this paper is to bring these fields together. Their disparateness neutralizes a holistic perspective of the case, which is necessary to develop a political understanding of an entire nation and its Islamist movements over the course of decades.

Morocco is, in a general sense, often left out of discussions of Islamism. Perhaps this is because it is geographically on the periphery of the Arab World; perhaps it is because in recent memory the nation has not experienced upheaval like that of its neighbors in Tunisia, Libya, or even Egypt. Regardless, even when discussing subject matter as specific as North African Islamism, Morocco finds itself left out of the dialogue in a significant way; for example, in a

2017 Brookings Institution report on Islamism after the Arab Spring, the article's authors write that "mainstream Islamist groups—which generally seek to operate within the confines of institutional politics—find themselves brutally repressed (Egypt), fallen from power (Tunisia), internally fractured (Jordan), or eclipsed by armed groups (Syria and Libya)."[15] This exposition casts a wide net across the region, and yet conveniently leaves out Morocco, a nation where Islamist groups do in fact "operate within the confines of institutional politics." Perhaps this omission is due to the fact that their decline in support at the polls by 2021 was in no way as dramatic or violent as those of neighboring states. Yet again, we find that as Ashraf El-Sherif draws a connecting line through North African Islamists' activities, stating that "In Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) played a prominent role in the protests, as did [Ennahda] activists in Tunisia. The Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LlFG) was closely involved in Tripoli's liberation,"[16] he similarly fails to meaningfully incorporate Morocco. Again, the nation does not fit easily into El-Sherif's particular narrative; in his article, the discussed groups (Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood and Tunisia's Ennahda) who came into power were ones who participated in the Arab Spring revolutions. In Morocco, the governing PJD abstained from participating in the revolution at all — though it should be noted that the Justice and Spirituality Group (JSG), its formally unrecognized Islamist rival, was counted among the protestors. Thus, not quite fitting the bill for El-Sherif's narrative and not making the cut for the Brookings report, Morocco's PJD is marked absent from this discussion.

Much of literary discourse on Islamism focuses on its place in the broader ideological arena. Jocelyne Cesari finds that "political Islam is not simply a religious version of the national

[15] Rashid Dar, Shadi Hamid, and William McCants, "Islamism after the Arab Spring: Between the Islamic State and the nation-state," The Brookings Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World, Brookings Institution (January 2017): 7.
[16] Ashraf El Sherif, "Islamism After the Arab Spring," *Current History* 110, no. 740 (December 2011): 358.

ideology, or rather, merely an ideology. More accurately, political Islam is the cultural bedrock on which both nationalist and Islamist ideologies are grounded."[17] She contends with its role as a reaction to and an element of state building, its relationship to nationalist ideology, and the ideas of religious nationalism. These are perhaps valuable insights and discourses for many Islamists, and are likely to explain some of the PJD's electoral success; yet, as this paper goes to great lengths to show, the PJD has never been a totem of ideological firmity, but rather, dynamacy. It is in its flexibility that the PJD proves most interesting and valuable from a scholarly perspective. Rather than ideology, as explored by Cesari, this paper analyzes the PJD's praxis and response to its political environment.

I must admit, however, that this mutability is often discussed within scholarly circles on Islamism, most often exemplified as part of the inclusion-moderation framework. In *Islamic Exceptionalism*, Shadi Hamid, discussing Islamist parties' tilt towards gradualism, and adaptability, makes the point that perhaps Islamists have become "too modern" in response to their playing of the game, their political participation.[18] He argues that, by coming into power, their platforms have changed significantly in response to the people's demands. Pointing to Ennahda in Tunisia, Hamid suggests that such changes are caused perhaps by pressures like that of opposing political parties, ultimately bringing about ideological and organizational shifts within the Islamist entity. But Morocco distinguishes itself from this inclusion-moderation narrative at multiple levels; unlike Tunisia, neither the PJD's platform nor self-identification changed significantly upon coming to power, and the PJD's pressures have come not from other political parties, but rather the palace itself, an entity not present in Morocco's neighboring

[17] Jocelyne Cesari, *What Is Political Islam?* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2010): 7.
[18] Shadi Hamid, *Islamic Exceptionalism*: *How the Struggle over Islam Is Reshaping the World* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2017): 10.

states. So while the PJD has indeed changed, it changed far before its period of governance, a result due more to the totalitarian influence of the king than to political pressures of participation.

Dr. Carrie Wickham does an excellent job of determining whether inclusion-moderation narratives actually represent a sizeable reason for Islamist ideological change in her work, "The Path to Moderation," wherein she point out that it is often the case that parties adapt their platforms, or moderate, not necessarily due to participating in governance, but as a "strategic calculation."[19] These calculations include paying the ideological entry tax to a dubious democratic opening in an authoritarian or mixed system. She writes specifically about the case of Egypt, where the *Wasat* party diverged from the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood in the 1990s to present itself as a more viable (and moderate) Islamist opposition during the authoritarian rule of Mubarak. Wickham states that "when authoritarian leaders have opened their political systems to Islamist groups, many have responded by renouncing violence, accepting the rules of electoral competition, and developing party (or quasi-party) organizations to mobilize the popular vote. Less clear is whether or not participation can trigger ideological moderation."[20] Morocco follows a similar narrative of course, but where Wickham focuses on Egypt's authoritarian regime, Morocco's case differs in the nature of its regime type. Morocco's authoritarianism, unlike Egypt's, is a monarchy which has centuries of shored up legitimacy and claims to be the guardian of Islam in its nation — presenting an obvious point of conflict with Islamist factions. Thus, again, I point to a hole in the literature. As apt as Wickham's analysis is in the Egyptian case, Morocco's unique conditions necessitate a specific and comprehensive study incorporating this understanding of inclusion-moderation narratives as well as the study of monarchical pressures on Islamists.

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[19] Carrie Rosefsky Wickham, "The Path to Moderation: Strategy and Learning in the Formation of Egypt's Wasat Party," *Comparative Politics* 36, no. 2 (2004): 207.
[20] Wickham, "The Path to Moderation," 206.

There is, again, a sizable amount of literature pertaining to Islamism under authoritarian regimes. Take that of Dr. Ellen Lust, specifically citing "Missing the Third Wave." In this 2011 review, Lust examines a number of case studies throughout the Middle East, including Turkey, Tunisia, Jordan and Syria. Morocco is mentioned a few times, though most often in passing or within a group. Early in the article, Lust states:

> Islamists had been excluded from the political arena and thus were a relatively unknown entity. This widened the gap between secularists and Islamists, weakening opponents and making it difficult for them to push for democratic reforms. In contrast, where Islamist forces appeared weak from the outset, or where their inclusion in the political arena had led to more trust between Islamist and secularist opposition, both secularist and Islamist opponents were willing to push for greater reform.[21]

What is a powerful critique, discussing how authoritarian regimes at differing moments both exclude and include Islamists from political participation, extends directly to Morocco. In the Moroccan case, the JSG was excluded from politics and thus has made little headway in direct political action, whereas the PJD (at first marginal) was included and made its way into parliament, pushing for reform. Seemingly a strong match, Lust creates a broad narrative that incorporates many cases, but does not necessarily analyze the Moroccan case as one of extraordinary significance. It also is worth noting that articles in the field of authoritarianism centralize the obviously significant factor of totalitarian repression and in doing so often underrepresent the flipside of Morocco's hybridity, which is its (limited) participatory space for extra-authoritarian actors like political parties; in my paper, I argue that in a hybrid regime, considering the democratic openings with sincerity is a necessary aspect of the narrative.

On the other hand, Islamism is often compelled into discussions of its compatibility with democracy, this making up a significant amount of the literature in the field. Ellen Lust argues in her aforementioned work that "the fear of political Islam, combined with institutional structures

[21] Ellen Lust, "Missing the Third Wave: Islam, Institutions, and Democracy in the Middle East," *Studies in Comparative International Development* 46, (June 2011): 165.

that shaped the secularist–Islamist divide, explains both the obstacles to democratization during the Third Wave and the variations in civil and political liberties that exist across it."[22] She therefore treats the significance of Islamist factions in terms of their hindrance of or adherence to democracy. I argue that this obsession with democracy is over-analyzed; the MENA region as a whole contains very few full-fledged democracies regardless of the presence of Islamists, and thus discussion of democracy and Islamism currently represents an imaginative area of study that does not necessarily deal with the reality of the situation. Bassam Tibi, rather than solely suggesting Islamism as an obstacle to democracy, goes so far as to say that "Islamism subjects the individual to an all-encompassing ideology that is a new form of totalitarianism."[23] However this discussion of Islamism and totalitarianism is not wholly salient in the context of Morocco. While the nation of course is not considered a full democracy, this is not the case because of the threat of an Islamist invasion and its so-called oppressive ideology, but rather, because of the strength of the palace. The Islamists in Morocco are positioned both as victims of and abetting bystanders in totalitarianism, but certainly not the mainstage agents of it: the PJD has suffered near dissolution at the king's hand, and JSG members have perpetually been arrested and excluded from the political sphere. Again, here the literature begs Islamism to exist at the polar ends of the spectrum of totalitarianism or democracy, when in fact, Morocco's PJD interacts somewhere within that range, existing in the gray area.

Even in literature which speaks directly to Morocco, there is a tendency to rely heavily on one aspect of its political system: the monarchy. I am by no means saying that the monarchy is a small piece of the puzzle; on the contrary, it makes up one massive side of the dialogue to which the PJD's experience in politics speaks. Yet the at-times blinding focus on the monarchy in

[22] Lust, "Missing the Third Wave," 165.
[23] Bassam Tibi, "Civil Islam as an Alternative to Islamism" in *Islamism and Islam* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2012): 226.

Morocco may be overemphasized at the cost of the aspects of its regime which enable participation. For example, Intissar Fakir provides a detailed history of political parties in Morocco: "Over time, the distinction between opposition and loyalist parties became harder to discern, as all parties, by choice or necessity, inched closer to the monarchy to ensure their political survival."[24] In outlining Morocco's political dynamic as centering solely on the interaction between monarchy and party, I believe Fakir understates the other sources of momentum and power in Morocco's political system. He ruminates that the popularity of parties hinges mostly on their relationship to the palace: for instance, that if parties cozy up to the *makhzan* (deep state rooted in the palace)[25] too strongly, they lose popular support, or that if they do not cozy up at all, they do not get to participate. While this is certainly a facet of Morocco's system that I believe is significant to the PJD's history, what is overlooked in an overview like Fakir's are the successes and sincere growth of a party like the PJD. By framing the group's electoral successes and failures as based solely on their negotiating strategies with the palace is to deny the very real grassroots campaigning and local governance which has secured their spot, at the very least a notable presence, in the mind of Moroccans; it also denies the agency of Moroccans to effect political change. For this reason, my paper takes a look at both the PJD's strategies of growth and development and how the monarchy has inhibited or allowed this activity. Both sides are significant; in dealing with a regime that is hybrid, one must also contend with the aspects of a political story that are, even at a small level, pluralistic.

As an aside, much of the literature on authoritarianism in the 21st century incorporates ideas of soft sovereignty and seemingly democratic tactics of governance — which is a powerful

[24] Intissar Fakir, "Morocco's Islamist Party: Redefining Politics Under Pressure," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, December 28, 2017: 5, https://carnegieendowment.org/files/CP319_Fakir_FNL.pdf.
[25] Abdeslam Maghraoui, "Political Authority in Crisis: Mohammed VI's Morocco," Middle East Report no. 218 (2001): 13.

frame of reference for Morocco. Sergei Guriev and Daniel Treisman explore the concept of "spin" authoritarianism, which has shifted away from the direct violence and terror of older dictators. These new authoritarians "did not loosen their grip over the population—far from it, they worked to design more effective instruments of control. But they did so while acting the part of democrats."[26] Awareness of these emerging tactics is a valuable tool when exploring the hybrid authoritarianism of Morocco's political landscape.

In summary, much of the prevailing literature on the subject fails to sufficiently flesh out the case of Morocco if only because it misses its complexities. This is understandable, as there is much to explore in the field of broader analysis, and so much of the work on Islamism attempts to treat it as a general ideology or pit it against other political philosophies. Islamism is often left out of Arab Spring narratives because it does not clearly match the model of assisting in revolutions leading to governance. The PJD's ideological timeline is often ignored and the party is dragged into inclusion-moderation narratives of platform alteration; the literature also often fails to fully acknowledge the difference in the source of the political pressure spurring these changes. The literature which genuinely and seriously treats with Morocco's Islamists generally fails to fully integrate a discussion of Morocco's far more sovereign and directly transformative vessel, the monarchy, leaving the PJD rendered as a monolithic parallel to their neighboring Ennahda and Muslim Brotherhood; on the other side of the coin, when considering the palatial structure, the literature mistreats the PJD's case as solely existing in parasitic tandem with the monarchy. In fact, the truth and value in studying this specific case is to see both how the PJD adheres to the rules set by the monarchy, and how it exercises independent political power and mobilization amidst a challengingly repressive but technically hybrid political environment. And

[26] Sergei Guriev and Daniel Treisman, "Fear and Spin," In Spin Dictators: The Changing Face of Tyranny in the 21st Century, 3. Princeton University Press, 2022. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1xp9p7d.4.

thus, the literature I seek to produce will treat the case of Morocco separately from Tunisia and Egypt, a healthy distance away from the Arab Spring, without solely relying on inclusion-moderation narratives, and accepting its major pressures as originating from the monarchy while also exploring the ways in which the PJD has worked apart from and against the palace. Rather than attempting to use the PJD to do battle in wider ideological conflicts about democratic character, I look at its praxis, actual effect within Morocco, and its specific experiences.

This paper is novel because of its focus on what other literature has neglected: the distinct identity of the PJD and the unique environment in which it operates – an innately ideologically shifted post-Islamist group responding to the pressures of an hybrid authoritarian regime, yet growing in genuine, pluralistic methods. It is a valuable case study in demonstrating how pluralism and politics are performed in a hybrid system, as well as how Islamism forms and shapes itself in response to these pressures. The PJD presents a story of ideological compromise, local politics, specificity, and complexity. Missing those features, ultimately, is the limitation of the pre-existing literature: in attempting to draw wide connections among various countries and Islamist groups, it misses considerable local nuance. This paper suggests that Morocco is, at its core, unique. As Shadi Hamid and a number of scholars speak about the idea of "Islamic Exceptionalism," I urge readers to, rather than perceiving Islamists based on their at-times tenuous facade as ideological movements or including swathes of nations in a single narrative to create thematic coherence, take the time to examine one state at a time. Within this one nation, within Morocco, exists such a wide variety of distinct factors that it indeed proves necessary to evaluate the state on its own terms. After my time in Morocco and conducting this research, I now join the ranks of my interviewees who often referred to the ever-present condition of

"Moroccan Exceptionalism," or that for better or worse, Morocco's geography, history, and political condition render it absolutely unique. This paper is in effect, a tribute to that idea.

B. Methodology

I have taken two main approaches in constructing this paper, that of a traditional secondary source analysis as well as a personally conducted interview campaign from my time in Morocco. To begin with the former, I used a secondary source approach which involved delving into several fields of literature; I explored news and scholarly articles/media regarding Islamists, authoritarianism, and North Africa during the Arab Spring to form a broad understanding of the political conditions surrounding Morocco in recent history. It is important to me that, in discussing the PJD, we consider it in multiple lights rather than a single dimension. Perhaps it does not fit snugly into the Islamist box, but rather is more aptly described as post-Islamist; so what exactly does that entail? To provide a balanced perspective, I have used Asef Bayat's theory of post-Islamism as a lens to understand the PJD's qualitative shifts and entry into Morocco's official political arena, but have retained an examination of traditional Islamist growth strategies to help us understand the party's methods for mobilization through, for instance, charitable institutions or collegiate activism. On a broader scale, I have also engaged with the idea that the PJD's story has as much to do with its status as Islamists of some sort as it does a party in Morocco's hybrid regime, which meant looking at literature on authoritarianism and hybrid systems. So, in writing a paper which seeks to elucidate the multi-faceted and complex nature of the PJD's experience and in doing so provide a case for evaluating Morocco apart from blanket narratives about Islamism or hybrid regimes, the secondary source analysis was by necessity multi-faceted, focusing on the varying themes and processes with which the party itself has

contended throughout the last 20 years. As an aside, I have included the occasional reference to American politics throughout the paper; this acts as a sort of acknowledgement of my own positionality and that of my readers, as well as a means to demonstrate the universality of many of the political processes and issues discussed in the text. Keeping all of these facets in mind and tying them into a cohesive narrative meant the deliberate creation and analysis of a bibliography that was rather eclectic and open-minded.

To a large degree this secondary source accumulation was qualitative rather than quantitative. In dealing with politics, much of what I evaluated were policy goals, theoretical frameworks, and party histories. That being said, there is a degree of statistical interpretation present in this paper. This featured heavily in the section on the electoral process; it was easy to find secondary opinions that discussed electoral corruption, but the specifics of how it is executed are an important feature of the narrative. So, to truly understand how Morocco as a system has managed to manipulate its pluralist entities and election processes, I worked with redistricting data and election results to understand some of the corrupt processes which limit the true representative nature of the polls. It is a chapter like this which highlights the utility of combined approaches of qualitative and quantitative study, casting the brightest light on what is often intentionally obscured by the Moroccan regime.

Where the methodology becomes multimodal is the use of primary sources. I was able to spend four months in Morocco conducting interviews to obtain “on-the-ground” perspectives on the subject matter of my paper. These interviews were by no means comprehensive, nor standardized. They had more to do with meeting the people whom these political happenings actually affect than they did creating a uniform poll to use as exhaustive evidence. I interviewed 12 individuals in total, through two different periods (May 2022, August-December 2022) with

some requesting anonymity or withdrawing permission to use their quotes. I came prepared for these interviews with a basic idea of what I was seeking to find, the most genuine goal being to listen to what my interlocutors had to say, rather than to elicit specific responses (which I felt would be irresponsible). In saying that, I recognize the intellectual pitfalls of an approach which disregards uniformity; but as stated above, it was important for me, as an American college student, to be most concerned with listening. Some interviews were conducted in English; the majority were conducted in Modern Standard Arabic mixed with Moroccan Darija. In these situations, the use of a translator and research partner, Dr. Anouar El Younssi of Emory University, was of the utmost importance. However, it should be noted that the interview conducted with Dr. Said El Hajji was conducted in Fuṣḥa, with my own translation.

In including these interview responses, I have attempted to utilize everything of note that was said; of course, there is great subjectivity in this process, as I did not have the space to include each interview in its entirety, most being an hour or longer. The core ethos guiding the inclusion of these resources was the principle that I would set out to conduct the interviews far before I began to write the paper. It was important to me that, in conducting my research, I did not begin with a hypothesis; I believed that doing so would lead me to cherry pick my sources, magnifying those that agreed with my hypothesis and muting those that did not. Rather, I entered Morocco for the first time in May 2022 with a broad knowledge of Islamism, North Africa, and the PJD's timeline of governance — but little more than that. It was once I began to speak to the different actors of the PJD including founders, former members and current critics, as well as independent legal scholars, and politicians, that a hypothesis began to take shape. These interviews are the voices which formed the actual thesis of this paper. Thus, though a great degree of subjectivity was used in the shape and execution of interview inclusion, the thesis of

the paper itself was derived from the interviewees' responses in keeping with the spirit of good-faith and representation.

I have included interviewee responses at various junctures throughout the paper where I make statements about widely known information for which Moroccan public reception, or insider attitudes (like that of the internal functioning of the PJD), would prove valuable. For example, if I were writing about the principle of internal democracy in the PJD, I made sure to include responses from party members. Or, if I was evaluating the character of Benkirane using sources depicting him in a positive light, I would endeavor to include the voices of his critics. The interviewees, I believe, supply a very real and significant tether to the Moroccan atmosphere and political attitude, which is vital in discussing the politics of that nation. If I were to write a paper attempting to reveal something about Moroccan power-dynamics and refused to acknowledge the perspectives of Moroccans, it would be neither comprehensive nor fair, and arguably would therefore reproduce many of the problems with existing literature about Islamism in Morocco writ large.

In terms of the processing and application of Arabic names and concepts, I was guided by the *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* (IJMES) transliteration system. However, as pertains to names of figures and political parties, I have defaulted to the most commonly accepted spellings used by the organizations and people in question.

Chapter 1 - Post-Islamism: Why is the PJD Unique and Why Does it Matter?

This chapter will begin with an overview of Islamism and go on to explore Asef Bayat's concept of "post-Islamism," evaluating what behaviors and identity markers of the PJD define its conceptual designation most accurately; these include the social initiatives and practices that correspond to typical Islamist behaviors, as well as the various ideological shifts it has experienced in its history that would both classify the group as post-Islamist, and separate it from the broader groupings scholars generally place to unify North African Islamist movements. This examination will set the stage for the following chapters in that the designation of "post-Islamist" helps explain how the party's sacrifices have ensured its acceptance in the political process, and how its Islamist references and roots continue to aid the group's growth growth, giving it the opportunity to play a hand in its nation's development.

To begin with, Bayat articulates Islamism as being "defined by the fusion of religion and responsibility," a basic enough starting point from which to explore the PJD.[27] Certainly, the umbrella term Islamism contains a variety of groups, both violent and nonviolent, transnational and national. We generally understand Islamism as the effort and project to integrate Islamic values and principles into the political, social, and economic spheres of public life to varying extents and depths. While it is true that the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) is considered Islamist, it is also true that the far more liberal, pacifist, and politically participant party "Ennahda" in Tunisia are Islamists. Islamism in its inception began as a movement through which Islamic values were reiterated in order to challenge problematic authority in MENA. Bassam Tibi explores this deliberate recreation by suggesting that "Islamism is an example of an invented tradition which brings previously marginal elements of Islam … to the center."[28] That

[27] Bayat, "Post-Islamism," 5.
[28] Tibi, "Civil Islam," 225.

is, it is important to understand Islamism in the 20th century as a recontextualized and reconstructed application of Islam; like all projects of revival, it is done in the pursuit of a specific agenda. In its infancy, we can see the formation of the Islamist project as a reaction to the looming shadow of European colonialism in the Middle East, famously consolidated into the Muslim Brotherhood by Hassan al-Banna of Egypt against the English ingression, and decades later further developed by Sayyid Qutb as a response to the Nasserite secular regime.[29] Mahdavi would assert that Islamism is not only a response to colonialism, but also to the governments formed after the fact, stating that "a return to the Islamic tradition is a modern response to the crisis of Muslim societies in the postcolonial era."[30] This anti-colonial tilt can be extrapolated to fit the concept of a response to repressive power in general. In this light, Morocco's "Shabiba Islamiya," or Islamic Youth, began to take form.

In the wake of Moroccan independence from France and Spain in 1956, various political blocs emerged. Reflecting regional trends, the ʿAlawid Monarchy, which dates back to 1631, was rivaled by political parties epitomized by the nationalist Hizb Al-Istiqlal, or Independence Party. Nonetheless the Monarchy soon presented itself as the mainstay power in Moroccan governance.[31] It was in the wake of that assertion that the Shabiba Islamiya came about as a broad movement, a part of a region-wide Islamist trend already articulated in terms of resistance after Morocco's experience of cultural repression under the French and Spanish, aiming its ideological weaponry at nearly every actor in the game, including the monarchy. The Shabiba Islamiya was militant, and presented itself as more than just a peaceful alternative to the monarchical system – it did not accept other parties, and was implicated in the assassination of

[29] Vartan Gregorian, *Islam: A Mosaic, Not a Monolith* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2003): 77–78.
[30] Mojtaba Mahdavi, "Muslims and Modernities: From Islamism to Post-Islamism?" *Religious Studies and Theology* 32, no. 1 (November 2013): 57.
[31] Hashas, "Moroccan Exceptionalism," 5.

several labor/socialist politicians in the 1970s, experiencing a resulting government crackdown for its crimes.[32] It was with the memory of this crackdown and period of Moroccan history in general, dubbed King Hassan II's politically repressive "Years of Lead," in which some figures from the movement such as Abdelkrim al-Khatib, Lahcen Daudi, Abdelilah Benkirane, and Saadeddine Othmani (among others), came together under a new structure to participate in the 1997 elections. This group eventually agreed on the name "The Justice and Development Party."[33]

In keeping with their Islamist roots, the PJD set about accruing support in the ways typical of many Islamist organizations, and here we can look to the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) in Egypt, a paragon of Sunni Islamism, as a good model to follow. Like the Egyptian MB who, prior to its banning in 2013, segmented itself into a political and social arm, the PJD embraced a binary model divided into *ḥaraka* (movement) *ḥizb* (party): the Movement of Unity and Reform (MUR) works as its social arm, and the Justice and Development Party (PJD) operates in politics, each managing their different areas of operation but linked by the same basic mission. These entities are not only closely interlinked, but operate in conjunction.

In line with broader Islamist grassroots practices, the MUR engages in extensive social work and education initiatives. Moroccan historian Saied El Hajji, himself a member of the PJD from 2015-2018, makes it clear that the PJD "gained serious support because of their associations and charitable institutions," referencing MUR.[34] These endeavors include creating information machines functioning at the epistemological level, publishing newspapers such

[32] Mohamed Darif, "The Moroccan Islamist Movement, from Seccessionism to Participation," in *Islamist Movements of Europe*, ed. By Frank Peter and Rafael Ortega (London: I.B Taurus, 2014): 60.
[33] Ibid., 48-49.
[34] Saied El Hajji, former member of the PJD and Moroccan political historian, in conversation with the author, Tangier, November 2022.

as *al-Tajdīd* and *al-Furqān*,[35] and centered university involvement as a site of massive base-building. The MUR is officially in charge of *daʿwa*, religious outreach or preaching, but as part of the process helps develop student-led organizations as a notable feature of the movement's growth alongside the PJD's political concretization — by the 1990s, the MUR had enmeshed itself at the collegiate level to foster support of the movement and its ideals.[36] Mustapha El Khalfi, the former Minister of Communications, Speaker of the Government, and member of parliament for the PJD, describes his involvement at this stage: "In university I was a member of the student movements, concerned with social justice and fighting for equity. At the beginning of the 90s there was an emergence of a modern Islamic movement in Moroccan universities. I was a member of this general movement that defends constitutional moderation, participation, and the link, compatibility between democracy and Islamic reference."[37] It is clear from his statement that the MUR was not just interested in propagating faith; it was also espousing the combination of ideas of liberalism and Islam that reflect Asef Bayat's understanding of post-Islamism which we will soon detail. Involvement in the MUR would often promote involvement in the PJD: as an anonymous former member of the party comments, while there is an official separation between MUR and PJD, in reality the respective members are drawn from the same pool and often operate at both levels.[38] Whatever the case, the political ideas espoused in the late 1990s by the MUR at the university level were enticing to a new generation of Moroccans interested in politics. What El Khalfi calls "the third way," an approach to toleration and compromise between different perspectives, Tangier party member Mohamed Benjelloun describes as being attractive to him at that young age when he joined during his

[35] Ashraf Nabih El Sherif, "Institutional and Ideological Re-Construction of the Justice and Development Party (PJD): The Question of Democratic Islamism in Morocco," *Middle East Journal* 66, no. 4 (2012): 662
[36] Driss Bouyahya, "Islamist Movements in Morocco and their Typology," *European Scientific Journal* 11, no.10 (December 2015): 3.
[37] Mustapha El Khalfi, in conversation with the author, Agdal, November 2022.
[38] Anonymous former PJD member in conversation with the author, Ksar El-Kebir, May 2022.

university experience: "'When I joined [MUR], I didn't lose friends… [the MUR] doesn't boycott other people."[39] Indeed, the use of MUR at the university level, as well as its newspaper endeavors, established the PJD's effective growth strategies as being firmly and notably reconcilable with that of traditional Islamist grassroots politics.

In addition, the PJD has shown to align itself in typical Islamist fashion when it comes to backing conservative social policies. For example, far before the 2004 Moudawana (or Family Code) update was coming about under King Mohamed VI, protesters took to the Casablanca streets in 2000 to urge the formation of more liberal policies towards women regarding inheritance and court status; in response, the PJD helped bolster the larger counter-protests in Rabat which encouraged conservatism towards women in line with its interpretation of the Islamic concepts and values of modesty.[40]

With the Islamist lineage of the Shabiba Islamiya in tow, the MUR in mind, and with some of the PJD's social stances understood as Islamist, why attempt to complicate the matter or distinguish the party as anything else? While certainly many of its practices and origins confirm the PJD's place in the Islamist movement, it proves helpful to utilize a post-Islamist classification to better understand the concessions and sacrifices the PJD has made to be officially recognized within Morocco's political system. Bayat's operant definition of post-Islamism is "not only a condition, [but] also a project, a conscious attempt to conceptualize and strategize the rationale and modalities of transcending Islamism in social, political, and intellectual domains… rather it represents an endeavor to fuse religiosity and rights, faith and freedom, Islam and liberty."[41] It is a deliberate process of reconciling Islamist motivations and

[39] Mohamed Benjelloun, PJD member in conversation with the author, Tangier, May 2022.
[40] Katie Zoglin, "Morocco's Family Code: Improving Equality for Women," *Human Rights Quarterly* 31, no. 4 (2009): 968.
[41] Bayat, "Post-Islamism," 5.

goals with the realities of one's political situation. That fusing of religiosity and rights brings to mind much of what El Khalfi described as the doctrine of MUR's university movements. Bayat proposes that the move to this phase of identity comes about when "Islamism becomes compelled, both by its own internal contradictions and by societal pressure, to reinvent itself, but does so at the cost of a qualitative shift."[42]

The PJD has experienced several poignant ideological shifts to what Bayat refers to as "post-Islamism" at various points in its complicated history, shifts which have been essential in constructing its identity. To begin with, its splintering from the Shabiba Islamiya into the PJD brought a significant change in ideology: from militant, anti-regime, and dogmatic, to pragmatic pacifist friends of the palace. The newly minted PJD was founded on the core concepts of the use of Islam as a reference point, principles of liberalism and internal democracy, and significantly, co-existence with and support of the king; this nearly complete reversal on the acceptance of the monarchy represented a necessary action in making the party palatable to the crown.[43] In addition to this change in attitude towards the palace, the PJD also agreed to officially remove the moniker of "Islamists" as it entered a political arena in which the monarchy had banned explicitly religious parties.[44] Rather, its members and ministers defined it from the start as a "conservative political party with an Islamic reference point,"[45] which, though seemingly semantic, does represent an official and technical flight from the Islamist movement. Finally, in more recent memory, the PJD experienced a massive shift away from what remained of its religious Islamist rhetoric after the 2003 Casablanca bombings. Pellicer and Wegner note that "the most critical moment of the party's history coincided with its entry into local politics in

[42] Bayat, "Post-Islamism," 5.
[43] Darif, "The Moroccan Islamist Movement," 48-49.
[44] "2021 Report on International Religious Freedom: Morocco" US Department of State, June 2, 2022. https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-report-on-international-religious-freedom/morocco/.
[45] Reda Benkhaldoun, PJD Ambassador to Malaysia, in conversation with the author, Rabat, May 2022.

2003 … [where] Islamist terrorist attacks in Casablanca created a political climate in which a party ban was not unthinkable. Under this threat, the PJD made a number of ideological and political concessions that led to its later rehabilitation."[46] Far before the Arab Spring or the 2011 elections, Morocco's monarchy and political climate forced the PJD to undergo important qualitative shifts to participate in politics, and at a basic level, exist. Together, the splintering off of and reversal of relationship to the king from Shabiba Islamiya, the entrance into politics as a technically non-Islamist party, and the removal of Islamist rhetoric following 2003's Casablanca bombings constitute ideological concessions made in the attempt to reconcile their Islamic values with the political realities of the moment — in doing so, these decisions push the PJD into the category of "post-Islamists" more snugly than classic Islamists. That category, and the history of how it came to fit, carries with it a framework to understand the adaptability and compromise utilized by the party to stay afloat in Morocco's hybrid environment without denying its mobilization of typical Islamist strategies like social initiatives, and thus, is a valuable tool and fundamental step in explaining its story.

However, some scholars, agreeing at least in principle with the idea of these ideological shifts, attempt to push Morocco's PJD into a broader narrative which inaccurately situates its post-Islamist phase as occurring around 2011's Arab Spring. The prevailing literature frequently and erroneously discusses Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, Tunisia's Ennahda, and the PJD in tandem. In speaking of Islamists after the Arab Spring, Khalil Al-Anani explicitly points out that, "during the [2011] election campaigns in Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco, Islamist parties abandoned religious and dogmatic propaganda," again grouping Morocco into that same

[46] Miquel Pellicer and Eva Wegner, "The Justice and Development Party in Moroccan Local Politics," *Middle East Journal* 69, no. 1 (Winter 2015): 36.

convenient Arab Spring moderation narrative.[47] Al-Anani also points to a shared anti-corruption stance to be a signal of a "pragmatic shift":

> In Egypt, for example, the MB's candidates in the last parliamentary election did not use the movement's slogan 'Islam is the solution'. Rather, they focused on how to overcome poverty, fight corruption and bring social justice. Ironically, their platform endorses the free market economy and advocates privatization policies. Likewise, the PJD in Morocco pledged to eradicate corruption from state institutions and to rebuild them on transparent and accountable bases. In Tunis, Rached Ghannouchi, leader of Ennahda, consistently emphasized that his party will fight corruption and eliminate poverty.[48]

The fight against corruption has been an Islamist focus since its inception as a concept (and was frankly shared by all Arab Spring protestors): the MB in Egypt against colonial injustice and corruption, and the Shabiba Islamiya against the despotism of Morocco's monarchy, as mentioned. This is not a part of a post-Islamist shift — it has always been in Islamist narratives, particularly since they consider themselves morally superior to secular governments. Al-Anani is using widespread, basic fundamental traits of Islamist movements as proof that they have changed as a result of their participation; in reality, these values have long been part of Islamist platforms. It may be that anti-corruption does not seem explicitly "Islamic" at face value and thus would conveniently contribute to inclusion-moderation frameworks as evidence of a pragmatic shift — yet again, it represents a core tenet of Islamism writ large. An argument like Al-Anani's relies on a collective sense of stereotype and generalization to pursue a cohesive narrative about Islamism and the Arab Spring, when it is at times more pertinent to analyze these various parties independently.

Other scholars have much to say on the topic of regional Arab Spring post-Islamist shift narratives, and as previously mentioned, Ennahda is often the point of comparison. Indeed, Ennahda began to distance itself from traditional Islamism after the Arab Spring in 2011 from

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[47] Khalil Al-Anani, "Islamist Parties Post-Arab Spring," *Mediterranean Politics* 17, no. 3 (November 2012): 468.
[48] Ibid., 469.

the inside out, based on what was going on in their government, constitution, and political process at the time. One could of course argue that the post-Islamist phase, the fusing of religiosity and modernity/liberalism, is epitomized by the likes of Ennahda in Tunisia, a group which famously rebranded itself as "Muslim Democrats" in 2016.[49] As we have already established, the PJD branded itself away from Islamism as early as 1997 upon its entrance into the political arena as a technically non-religious party. Another point of similarity can be found regarding the social-political division found in Islamism, where Fabio Merrone explains that

> Ennahda's leaders saw [the 2014 constitution] as a culmination of the party's historical mission to provide a clear Islamic identity for Tunisia. Consequently, the leadership no longer saw a reason to pursue an explicitly Islamist platform. This allowed them to formally separate Ennahda's political ambitions from its preaching activities, which are known as dawa and are identified with its religious movement. As a party, Ennahda would advance a political agenda, while militants who wanted to continue engaging in religious proselytism were invited to leave the party.[50]

What Merone describes is of course a shift: the segmentation of Ennahda into the politically focused party, and its religious outreach and *da'wa* organization, occurring in 2014 after the ascendance to governance. But as outlined above, for the PJD this shift occurred earlier, the MUR existing even before the PJD was officially founded in 1997, and far before their majority rule in Moroccan parliament. The Arab Spring's thrusting of Islamists into power therefore could not have contributed to this example of Bayat's qualitative shift for the PJD. The PJD began as a party already distanced from the label "Islamist," and came about pre-segmented, rising into governance divided and delegated.

As an aside, another point made for the case of general Islamist moderation/Arab Spring argument cohesiveness is the fact that the Islamists parties who experienced a qualitative shift

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[49] Sharan Grewal. "From Islamist to Muslim Democrats: The Case of Tunisia's Ennahda." *American Political Science Review* 114, no. 2 (2020): 519.

[50] Fabio Merone, "Politicians or Preachers? What Ennahda's Transformation Means for Tunisia," Carnegie Middle East Center, January 21, 2019, https://carnegie-mec.org/2019/01/31/politicians-or-preachers-what-ennahda-s-transformation-means-for-tunisia-pub-78253.

following their rise to governance were a part of the Arab Spring protests at all. Though admittedly in the case of Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood waited towards the end of the protests to join the January 25th movement, it was in fact their organization and social power that allowed them to co-opt the Tahrir protests towards the latter period and bring the revolution to fruition.[51] Merone states that "Islamists alongside liberals, leftists and ordinary public took to the streets in major cities not to liberate Palestine or Iraq but to free themselves from tyranny."[52] But again Merone misses the mark in the case of the PJD, who did not participate at an official or organized level in the February 20th movements in Morocco (the country's particular case of Arab Spring fervor), and whose stance on that precise issue was part of what allowed its rise to governance in regards to the king's tacit approval.[53]

This is all to say that in the case of broader regional narratives, Morocco's timeline defies the standards. Not only does the PJD's ideological shifts compel it into the category of post-Islamist, their early occurrences and main pressures being the monarchy compel the party to be studied separately from Ennahda or the Muslim Brotherhood. The PJD is not just an Islamist party, but a faction that was, in accordance with the rules of the monarchy, birthed into the political scene as post-Islamist. It began its official political career already bent and altered, rather than experiencing these changes further down the road. Not only did the group's "qualitative shifts" occur far before the Arab Spring, they occurred far before the lofty weight of public representation and popular rule was even a possibility. In Morocco, Islamism's alternative, revolutionary spirit, its desire to confront and challenge through a selective reconfiguration of Islam, needed to be dulled from the start, their platform re-articulated, their attitude towards

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[51] Eric, Trager, "Late to the Revolution" In *Arab Fall: How the Muslim Brotherhood Won and Lost Egypt in 891 Days* (Washington, Georgetown University Press, 2016): 20
[52] Ibid.
[53] Fait Muedini, "The Role of Religion in the 'Arab Spring': Comparing the Actions and Strategies of the Islamist Parties" in *Oxford Handbook Topics in Religion* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2014): 6.

power systems changed, far before the party was even founded. This meant that the PJD, by the 2000s, was entering into participation already adept in the ability to alter itself and make ideological sacrifices, a disposition which proved vital in their ability to remain in the ring for the subsequent 20 years. Through its post-Islamist framework of adaptability and transformation, the PJD was allowed to participate in formal politics; yet keeping with some of its Islamist strategies, specifically the social arm MUR, it found itself able to build a base. In a hybrid regime like Morocco, it is clear to see that the PJD also reflected a hybrid ideology; that of older Islamist ideals paired with a concessional attitude qualifying it as post-Islamist and contributing to its perseverance.

Chapter 2 - Growth and Limitations Throughout the 2000s

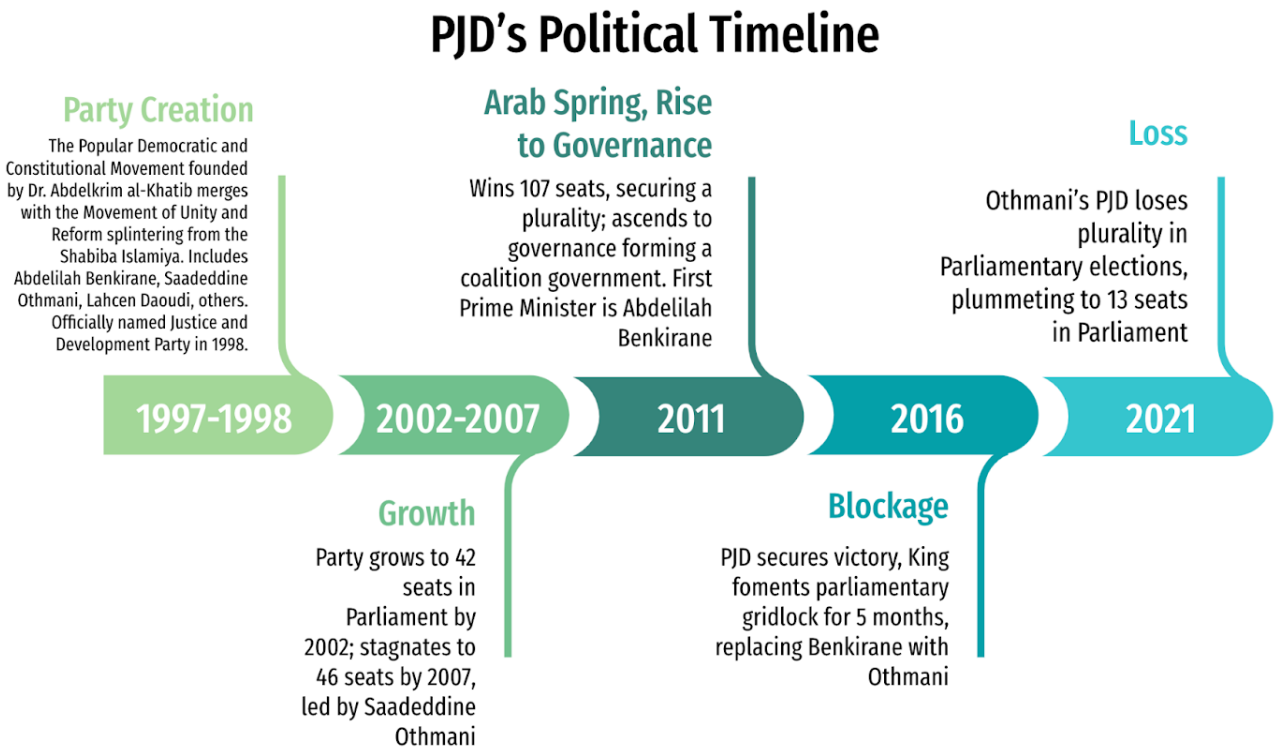

Figure 2.1: "The results of the legislative elections," Elections, Kingdom of Morocco, March 19, 2023, http://www.elections.ma/elections/legislatives/resultats.aspx?Id=T1uzm+f7U/WFF+rn+x03Zg==&IE=1

Abandoning the militancy of Shabiba Islamiya, adhering to the king's rules and disavowing their technical status as Islamists, the PJD moved forward ideologically shifted, as post-Islamists, into a period of acceptance by the crown and thus facilitated its official recognition as a political participant. With its political body formed in 1997, and its social arm the MUR already enmeshed in collegiate activism and producing newspapers, by the 2000s the PJD was ready to begin to build up a constituency. Using those new ideas and grassroots

approach to Islamist politics through the MUR and its university involvement, the PJD continued to grow throughout the 2000s in a way that Saied El Hajji describes as "*shayʾan fa shayʾan*," or bit by bit.[54] It was herein that the strong organization within the party (a characteristic typical of Islamists as demonstrated by the likes of the Muslim Brotherhood) distinguished the PJD from the pack and assisted the group's growth in a major way as it began to take seats in parliament. At a basic level, "the prominent role of the party's organization, manifest in all aspects of the PJD campaign, is the most striking gesture of the PJD relative to other Moroccan parties."[55] Not only did the PJD organize months before the elections, "very early by Moroccan standards," but it also centered campaign strategies at the local level including "a party platform, a video advertisement, and standardized slides for candidates' presentations."[56] These campaign efforts distinguished the PJD from other parties, showing its transparency and organization in particular, and though not gaining a governing majority at the national level with 42 seats in parliament by 2002, its victory was impressive for a new actor on the scene — what's more, the party gained significant traction in elections at the municipal level.[57] Throughout the next four years, the party would continue in this way: gradually. Indeed, the PJD's success in the municipalities is arguably one of the strongest factors leading to a growth in its support.

In a study measuring the seats gained in municipal elections during the 2002 elections by the PJD as compared to their national success in those districts during the 2007 national elections, Pellicer and Wenger found that "among PJD-governed municipalities, the party's [2007] election performance sky-rocketed in places where its 2002 results had been strong to begin with."[58] These figures demonstrate the very real success of its local governance between

[54] El Hajji, Tangier, November 2022.
[55] Pellicer and Wegner, "Moroccan Local Politics," 38.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Abdellatif Hissouf, "The Moroccan Monarchy and the Islam-Oriented PJD: Pragmatic Cohabitation and the Need for Islamic Political Secularism," *All Azimuth* 5, no. 1 (January 2016): 49.
[58] Pellicer and Wegner, "Moroccan Local Politics," 49.

2002-2007, or at the very least, continuance in effective campaigning during this period. This is all to say that El Hajji's "*shayʾan fa shayʾan*" feels like an apt description of the PJD's work ethic and success in garnering support in the 2000s. In true Islamist fashion, the party worked at a grassroots level first through associations and university involvement, followed it up with uniquely organized and directed campaign strategy, and continued with good governance to grow its base. By all accounts, the PJD seemed to have followed the rules to gain parliament seats freely and fairly, rising to a marginal increase of 46 by 2007, but maintaining its constituency all the same.[59]

However, this conclusion requires a genuine evaluation into the transparency of elections in Morocco. If the PJD expanded its base on its merit alone, perhaps this was simply a triumph of post-Islamists maintaining successful Islamist campaign strategy. However, where does election manipulation play into this? What about palatial control? An anonymous former member of the PJD, whose interview mostly consisted of criticism of the party, admitted that the PJD did not participate in voter fraud during its growth[60] – but perhaps it was the victim of it?

The NDI, or National Democratic Institute, which deploys poll monitors to various elections around the globe, reported that in Morocco's 2007 national elections "officials administered a voting process that was, by and large, procedurally sound and transparent," meaning there was no immediately apparent voter intimidation or tampering, and "the move to the use of the national identity card (CIN) as the only required form of identification was a positive change."[61] It seems, at face value, that the election ran well, which may be the case; indeed, as shown by Williamson's investigation into the perception of the *free and fair* quality of

[59]Amr Hamzawy, "The 2007 Moroccan Parliamentary Elections Results and Implications," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (September 2007): 4, https://carnegieendowment.org/files/moroccan_parliamentary_elections_final.pdf.
[60] Anonymous former PJD member, in conversation with the author, Ksar El-Kebir, May 2022.
[61] National Democratic Institute (NDI) "Final Report on the Moroccan Legislative Elections, (International Observation Mission)," (November 2011): 6-7, https://www.ndi.org/node/23466.

elections previously mentioned as a legitimizer of regime politics, Moroccans have perceived their elections to function relatively sincerely in recent history. Speaking to Abdallah Badda, a poll monitor in Ksar El-Kebir for the 2011, 2016, and 2021 elections, he has always understood the elections as a transparent endeavor. He explains, "Steps are being taken to simplify the process. For me the process goes properly, as it should be. Everybody comes, takes the documents they're supposed to use."[62] However, it bears remembering that there are many routes towards vote manipulation. Sater describes how "political representation of those with traditional allegiance to the King … has been reinforced in the electoral process through gerrymandering."[63] Gerrymandering, or the process of redistricting, remains a powerful tool for subtle manipulation of election results. The NDI concedes that in 2007 "among the weaknesses identified … was the decision – despite political parties' calls to address the issue – to maintain an electoral districting system with wide discrepancies in representation between districts that distorted electoral outcomes."[64] This is not something that happens on an arbitrary basis. Pellicer and Wegner make clear that "redistricting has occurred before every single election in the 2000s," meaning that there is deliberate manipulation happening at every available opportunity; a process which has the capability to alter district results and influence who wins.[65]

The process of redistricting in Morocco operates on the knowledge of different areas historically having differing political leanings, and in turn, allotting a disproportionate number of representatives per district as compared to the population. As discussed by the NDI, the "report on the 2007 legislative elections noted that the number of voters per district varied substantially, with as few as 3,667 registered voters per seat in one district and as many as 83,257 in another…

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[62] Abdallah Badda, poll monitor, in conversation with the author, Ksar El-Kebir, November 2022.
[63] James Sater, "Parliamentary Elections and Authoritarian Rule in Morocco," *Middle East Journal* 63, no.3 (Summer 2009): 385.
[64] NDI, "Final Report," 6.
[65] Pellicer and Wegner, "Moroccan Local Politics," 34.

[and] redistricting was not carried out in a systematic manner (population figures for the new districts were not even available)."[66] The report goes on to explain that the divergence in "representation for each seat remains outside international standards," which indicates that the redistricting is done with a prejudicial lilt – not uniformly, and not corresponding to actual population size.[67] For instance, Sater shows that

> Tangiers, (with strong pro-PJD tendencies) have four representatives for 310,000 electors, i.e. one representative for 77,000 voters. In Fez, 194,000 voters have the same number of representatives, i.e. one representative for 47,000 voters. Laayoune, with its large non-Sahrawi (Moroccan) community that displays strong attachments to the Crown (who also often are veterans), has three representatives for its 92,000 voters, i.e. one for 31,000 voters.[68]

This arrangement demonstrates that cities like Laayoune which show a strong connection to the crown, and by proxy the parties such as the monarchy-supported National Rally of Independents (NRI),[69] can more easily gain seats in parliament than can less reliably loyalist districts. Therein lies a clear disadvantage to the PJD, and the fact that redistricting is done before each election means that district lines can be updated to reflect changes in political orientation and maintain an electoral bias.

Pellicer and Wegner point out too that "vote-buying and more traditional clientelist practices also remain widespread,"[70] and that "in a recent study, 44% of voters in Casablanca reported that they have been offered money by political parties."[71] Indeed during the 2007 elections, the NDI states that "accusations of vote buying were common" though there was difficulty verifying these claims – such a practice is, by nature, hard to trace, perfectly predisposed to its clandestine nature.[72] Other discrepancies in the electoral process include the

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[66] NDI, "Final Report," 14.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Sater, "Parliamentary Elections," 385.
[69] Hissouf, "Moroccan Monarchy," 44.
[70] Pellicer and Wegner, "Moroccan Local Politics," 34.
[71] Sater, "Parliamentary Elections," 388.
[72] NDI, "Final Report," 6-7.

fact that "redistricting details were not available early in the electoral process and a map was never published," meaning that parties were not universally able to access information that would guide them in forming campaign strategies.[73] Another common feature of the 2007 election which can provide the basis for manipulation is spoiled ballots, where as many as "19% were blank, spoiled, or deemed protest."[74] Indeed, if this statistic is cross referenced with Sater's information from the major cities during this election (Tangier had 32% invalid votes, Fez had 30%, and Laayoune had only 15% invalid votes) we see a startlingly large number of invalid ballots occurring in cities that have tended to support the PJD.[75] So who exactly conducts these manipulations? Who is responsible for interpreting polling information such as the quality of ballots and whether they are legible? These "illicit practices … have been tolerated or repressed through the King's control of the Ministry of Interior,"[76] the ministry which operates elections and is almost always led by a politician close to the palace.[77]

Looking at the numbers, it is clear that there were significant redistricting, vote-buying, and vote-scrubbing practices in the 2007 elections which disadvantaged the PJD. Mohamed Benjelloun even comments that the PJD in the 2000s "received orders not to participate in elections in certain areas," and that in response to such orders, "'[we] have the option to say no, or say yes, and move gradually.'"[78] Even in the current scene, the PJD has "condemned what it described as 'violations' during the polls citing amendments of the election laws and vote-buying'" in reference to its 2021 loss, where "the party said the election results did not reflect the political map of Morocco nor the free will of the voters."[79] The PJD seems to have

[73] NDI, "Final Report," 15.
[74] Ibid, 13.
[75] Sater, "Parliamentary Elections," 385.
[76] Ibid.
[77] Maghraoui, "Under Constraints," 4.
[78] Mohamed Benjelloun, in conversation with the author, Tangier, May 2022.
[79] Ahmed Asmar, "Morocco's PJD Says Vote Results 'Setback' to Democracy," Andalou Agency, September 19, 2021, https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/morocco-s-pjd-says-vote-results-setback-to-democracy/2368966.

faced electoral tampering throughout its history and was especially inconvenienced in the 2007 elections. Nonetheless, the party managed to maintain its place in the parliament. If you speak to "PJDians" as Abdallahh Badda refers to them,[80] they will tell you that it was their gradualism and hard work that eventually brought them to power in 2011.

It is, however, important to remember the plural uses of elections in authoritarian regimes. Not only are they "'defensive mechanisms' to maintain fledgling regime legitimacy and 'safety valves' to diffuse challenges to regime and state authority strategies in times of economic crisis," but are also a litmus test or a finger in the wind to judge the political leanings of a nation.[81] Gandhi and Lust-Okar point out that authoritarian elections "may serve an informational role as well. The results of multiparty elections help regime incumbents identify their bases of support and opposition strongholds."[82] Clearly, in 2007, the monarchy, operating through the Ministry of the Interior, identified the oppositional stronghold as the PJD, and beset the party with a significant amount of electoral stunting. The PJD, in opposition, espousing new ideas and fresh takes, operating through the MUR to organize university movements, and in general taking the Islamist approach to local grassroots politics to form a base, was beginning to grow into what historian El Hajji refers to one of the most influential political parties in the country.[83] The 2007 elections showed King Mohamed VI just that, and by 2011, knowledge of opposition strongholds became of critical importance to the palace. Herein lies one of the most crucial questions: why did the 2011 elections, a major turning point for the PJD, feature a landslide victory in stark contrast to 2007's electoral repression of the very same party by the

[80] Abdallah Badda, in conversation with the author, Ksar El-Kebir, November 2022.
[81] Daadaoui. "Rituals of Power" 195-196.
[82] Jennifer Gandhi and Ellen Lust-Okar, "Elections Under Authoritarianism," *The Annual Review of Political Science* 12 (June 2009): 406.
[83] El Hajji, in conversation with the author, Tangier, November 2022.

very same palace? Why, and how, did the post-Islamist PJD win? Why was it, as I am attempting to show, allowed to win?

By the time the Arab Spring swept into Morocco in the form of the February 20th movement, both Tunisia and Egypt's regimes had been ousted and the prospect of regime change in Al-Maghreb seemed imminent. The united force of an entire nation's populace can pose serious problems for a regime, and the Arab Spring was, for all its missteps and disorganization, massive, largely united in demands throughout the region for economic improvement, human rights improvements, and government transparency. It was at this time that the PJD separated itself from the likes of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, as it steered completely clear of protests.[84] Looking at the party's founding principles of friendship to the palace or talking to its members and spokespeople, this stance is not so surprising. If you ask Mohamed Benjelloun, he would tell you that "with no Arab Spring, I don't think the PJD would get the number of seats it got at that moment."[85] I would have previously interpreted that as meaning that the political vacuum had opened wide and blown the winds of change in the direction of a new alternative, the PJD. However, in the context of Morocco, I no longer have such a naïve trust in the narrative of an organic Islamist rise to power that did genuinely take place in Tunisia and Egypt. I now understand Benjelloun's statement to mean something a bit different. He goes on to say that "the PJD was very clear from the beginning that it would not participate in the demonstrations in the streets."[86] Whereas the Muslim Brotherhood eventually allocated logistical support for the revolution in Cairo's Tahrir Square,[87] the PJD in Morocco stayed at home, and was "not ready to make changes to the system."[88] Mustapha El Khalfi, the spokesperson during much of the party's

[84]Muedini. "The Role of Religion," 6.
[85]Mohamed Benjelloun, in conversation with the author, Tangier, May 2022.
[86] Ibid.
[87]Trager, "Late to the Revolution," 20
[88] Benjelloun, Tangier, May 2022.

reign, puts it better than I ever could; "to have both; to be modern without losing your Islamic reference. To reform, without losing the stability of the country. These are the two ideas [of the party],"[89] with the salient point being "no revolution." The Arab Spring was necessary for the PJD to gain seats because it provided an opportunity to show the palace that it could help assuage the protests.

The PJD was, and had been since its official creation, staunchly pro-regime, and anti-revolution. Salim Hmimnat refers to the party as "refo-lutionary," meaning committed to reform rather than revolution, which is a useful term for capturing why exactly the PJD ascended to parliamentary plurality in 2011.[90] During the Arab Spring, Moroccans were anxious for change, searching for alternatives to the political status quo. An Islamist party (or at least one with an Islamic reference point) as we have seen across the region, felt at once new and familiar. More than that, it was genuinely successful in its campaigning, and grew an incredibly strong base in the 2000s – strong enough to warrant election tampering in 2007. King Mohamed VI saw his people clamoring for change, saw dictators toppled by mobs of men, women, children alike. He saw instability and the possibility of turmoil as later emerged in Libya, Syria, and Yemen. Perhaps he realized that one of the stronger political currents at the time had historically avowed never to challenge the king's power, and was not taking part in the protests. By selecting the PJD and facilitating its success in the 2011 elections, he was able to quell the screaming masses with the image of change while maintaining his own sovereignty. It might be that the 2011 elections were not even manipulated; perhaps for the first time in 10 years they were truly transparent, and the results reflected the gradual growth of the Justice and Development Party – or perhaps his majesty still played a helping hand. Regardless, in the same spirit of the 2011 Constitution, the

[89] Mustapha El Khalfi, in conversation with the author, Agdal, November 2022.
[90] Hmimnat, "Reform Within Stability," 1.

PJD's victory at the polls provided to some extent, a symbolic closure to the threatening revolutionary energy brewing in the streets that year, and with those developments the protests slowed. The king was able to, in a maneuver of political tai chi, assuage the turmoil bubbling in his nation during the Arab Spring — though he did so by bringing a rising node of power into the spotlight.

With the ideologically post-Islamist PJD first shifting its identity to a permissible status within Morocco's political arena, and then going on to grow its support with typical Islamist grassroot activism and local governance in spite of election tampering, the party finally arrived at the point of governance. Now that the PJD was in parliament, the palace would have to shift its repertoire of tools to handle and dismantle the movement burgeoning at its hip. It could no longer simply repress the PJD at the polls — for the next few years, the crown would have to utilize other strategies for control. As mentioned in the introduction, Morocco's multiparty system itself provides a vessel through and a tool with which rival axes of power can be eroded, and eventually taken apart. So, in 2011, with the PJD in power and headed by Abdelilah Benkirane as the Prime Minister, we now move to evaluating the condition of the post-Islamists during their tenure, their relationship with the king, and the passive and active strategies employed by the palace and through the system to block, limit, and dismantle power at the level of parliament and political parties.

Chapter 3 - Palatial Conflict

A. Soft Strategies of Dissolution

Our examination of the post-Islamist PJD now turns heavily to how the party interacts with the palace. Earlier we saw that the pressures of the monarchy within Morocco's hybrid system compelled the PJD to change its values and form, to shift into a phase of identity concession. We also saw these concessions serving as valid sacrifices, as the party was still able to accumulate popularity utilizing the aforementioned Islamist practices within its campaign strategies. Now we examine how Morocco's system pushes back against the post-Islamists, how it warps the party's integrity and begins to sow the seeds of dissolution, beginning with insidious and passive features of the state's multi-party system.

With the PJD in parliament, "the palace sought a strategy that would curb the popularity of the PJD in critical and gradual ways, but would not necessarily require the removal of the party from power."[91] Fortunately, the nature of Morocco's hybrid system means that simply by participating in the political game, the party would be subjected to various pressures that would eventually break it. This is where the Moroccan case begins to bear similarities to the inclusion-moderation narrative, which purports that simply by participating in governance, Islamists can begin to lose favor and zeal from their supporters.[92] Make no mistake – although I am attempting to show Morocco as unique from this general narrative, much of this participation discourse did play a role in weakening the PJD. A self-proclaimed critic of the party supplied that "what [Benkirane] said before becoming president of the government changed," and that he could not keep his word.[93] The PJD, invariably, both at the level of failed campaign promises as criticized by Abdallah Badda and at the level of internal party structures, began to change.

[91] Maghraoui, "Under Constraint," 2.
[92] Bayat, "Post-Islamism," 5.
[93] Badda, Ksar El-Kebir, November 2022.

Though one of the founding tenets of party was support for internal democracy, an anonymous former member opines that there was a shift in this value during its period of governance in which the PJD began to develop an "us and them," perspective, whereby "'they' are the real runners of the show, don't accept criticism, and don't accord themselves with the motto of the party."[94] Indeed as Saied El Hajji notes, moving from opposition into governance for a party means that it begins to "divide the internal viewpoints," and points of internal disagreement exist in conflict in an environment of higher stakes; such pressures, naturally, can lead to a decline in internal democracy. All in all, these are processes which take place in almost every system, simply as a facet of politicking – yet this "normality" does not take away from the significance of their effect: the beginning of loss of trust in the party by the PJD's own members, and the Moroccan people. It, again, is pertinent to note this change in support as a part of the inclusion-moderation framework; many post-Islamist parties lose support from their constituency after their qualitative shifts, interpreted as a lack of commitment to Islamist ideology.. It speaks to Morocco's challenging hybridity that the PJD experienced on one hand some of the effects of that framework, and on the other was affected greatly by the specific mechanics of repression created by the authoritarian aspects of the state, which we will now explore.

Aside from these passive processes which can be attributed to the natural movement and pressures of politics, this paper will also discuss strategies and systems set up deliberately throughout history by the Moroccan monarchy which act without the direct interference by the palace; soft strategies they might be, but strategies for dissolution nonetheless. Maghraoui uses the phrase "*segmentary politics*" to refer to this phenomenon, in which Moroccan elections are used to bring popular parties into "the multi-party system … and subsequently curb their

[94] Anonymous ex-PJD member, in conversation with the author, Ksar El-Kebir, May 2022.

potential rise," and through which the palace's conditions set upon the political system act as a dissolving agent to the integrity of any party that becomes too well organized.[95]

The beginning of the multi-party system was established early on in Morocco's history — as soon as two years after independence. "King Mohamed V … issued in May 1958 'The Royal Contract,'" in which he specified the nature of the political system of the country as being a "constitutional monarchy based on a multi-party system" as one of the first acts in setting up the state.[96] Sater discusses how throughout Moroccan history, the monarchy has encouraged the development of the multi-party system through splits in various parties with secular ideologies: "[The UNFP, National Union of Popular Forces] split from the Istiqlal in 1959, and [the USFP, Socialist Union of Popular Forces] split from the UNFP in 1974. The PSD [Democratic Socialist Party] split from the OADP [Organization of Action for Democracy and the People] in 1996. In all these cases, the Palace offered individual currents in parties the opportunity to participate in government in exchange for support for the monarchy, often through face-to-face talks,"[97] and according to Daadaoui citing a more recent example, in 1997 "King Hassan invited the largest opposition party, the USFP, to form the new government under the leadership of Abderrahmane El-Youssoufi, who distributed cabinet portfolios among several opposition parties."[98] In these historical instances, monarchs have made the effort to divide parties or make deals with prime ministers to do so, storing power among differing entities within parliament – a process that of course, splits the share of control, and thus creates the conditions necessary for gridlock, challenging the ruling party's ability to enact policy during its tenure. The same conditions occurred for the PJD in 2016 during what is referred to in Morocco as "The Blockage."

[95] Maghraoui, "Under-Constraint," 1.
[96] Hashas, "Moroccan Exceptionalism," 5.
[97] Sater, "Parliamentary Elections," 385.
[98] Daadaoui, "Rituals of Power" 199-200.

Upon winning the plurality once more in 2016 under Benkirane, the PJD this time faced severe resistance in forming a coalition government from both the Party of Authenticity and Modernity (PAM) and the National Rally of Independents (NRI), the latter of which was founded under Hassan II (r. 1961-1999) as a pro-palace plant.[99] As Maghraoui puts it, "behind-the-scenes political maneuvering and the utilization of other political parties by the palace were sufficient to block the formation of a coalition government headed by Benkirane."[100] In essence, the often necessary nature of coalition formation as precipitated by the Moroccan multi-party system creates a juncture at which it is extremely convenient to inconvenience the ruling party, rendering a climate in which it is that much harder for non-palatial entities to organize. As Maghraoui suggests, this tendency towards coalition-building provided an opportunity for the palace to shake the foundations of the PJD. Though not acting directly, but instead working through other parties like PAM or NRI, the palace could subtly take part in creating gridlock and form The Blockage to destroy the momentum of the PJD and create rifts. Perhaps the most significant result of this multi-party coalition fiasco was the change in leadership from Abdelilah Benkirane to Saadeddine Othmani, as Benkirane was deemed unfit for the ministry due to him presiding over the five months of delay in forming a government. Maghraoui goes on to detail that "following the decision to remove Benkirane from office in what was perceived as a humiliating experience for many within the PJD, it became clear that internal 'cracks' might turn into long-lasting divisions."[101] Not only did The Blockage affect internal cohesiveness, but the leadership change affected the way the supporters and voters saw the party: "the fact that the intra party vote on party leadership favored El Othmani by a slim margin – 51% for El Othmani and 49% for the mayor of Fez, Driss el-Azami, further pushed the PJD into a position of

[99] Hissouf, "Moroccan Monarchy," 44.
[100] Maghraoui, "Under Constraint," 3.
[101] Ibid.

weakness vis-à-vis the monarchy because, from the perspective of the voters, it showed the party's predisposition to be as acquiescent and submissive as other parties."[102] By playing upon the tendency towards coalition governance within Morocco's multi-party system, the palace was able to foment gridlock that jeopardized both the internal stability of the party and its reputation in the face of its supporters. Both Benkirane and Othmani seemed to have left a bitter taste in the mouth of many Moroccans.[103] According to Badda, "[Othmani] lacks the art of responding. As a person, I saw him more suitable for the head of government than Benkirane but maybe he lacks courage and experience," and that "Benkirane for me is not excellent at politics… maybe he excels at one man shows."[104]

By 2016, the basic difficulties of translating campaign promises, failures of internal democracy in the face of newly acquired pressures of governance, and the soft strategy of multi-party system division allowing the palace to sow gridlock and cycle through party leadership had coalesced into major problems for the PJD, and the party struggled to present a united and efficient node of power. Another facet of Morocco's multi-party system which acts as a self-limiter and soft cap on the power of parliament's parties is the ability of and propensity for party members and officials to drop their affiliation and move to other groups. During 2016-2021, under Othmani's leadership, Abdallah Badda acting as a poll supervisor noticed familiar names under new party affiliations on ballots: "Moving from parties to parties is to me, the biggest sign that you cannot compete. And this is what happened to the PJD. So many that used to be a part of the PJD changed, they left, they changed their affiliation. And others had

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[102] Maghraoui, "Under Constraint," 2.
[103] Youssef El Kaidi, "Benkirane and His Unpopular Social Policies in Morocco," Morocco World News, January 10, 2016, https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2016/01/177127/benkirane-and-his-unpopular-social-policies-in-morocco. Hassan Masiky, "Morocco: Prime Minister Saadeddine Othmani is Already a Lame Duck," Morocco World News, March 26, 2016, https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2019/03/268970/morocco-prime-minister-saadeddine-othmani.
[104] Abdallah Badda, in conversation with the author, Ksar elKebir, November 2022.

their own, new parties so that they could participate in the [2021] election."[105] Whereas in the US perhaps, a politician would have a hard time dropping his Democrat status and registering as a Republican, in Morocco, the multi-party system's plurality of entities is a ripe environment for officials to jump ship at the sign of water and scatter into the wind, weakening the core of the party and their reputation, whereupon "the PJD [becomes] linked to failure in Moroccan political life."[106] As represented by value shifts, major parliamentary gridlock, and the migration of PJD officials, the soft limits and strategies of Morocco's system were already beginning to make mincemeat of the PJD's support – all this without the King playing a direct public hand in its dissolution.

It is also pertinent to add the "Islamist Advantage," understood as the political sway held by Islamist parties due to their proximity to Islamic concepts and values in Muslim societies, is rendered nearly unavailable to the PJD in the Moroccan system, where the king is defined and understood as "*amīr al-muʾminīn*," or "commander of the faithful."[107] With the king's constitutional role established as the leader of religion and baked into the core of Morocco's nationhood itself, the Islamist advantage becomes a less significant edge for the PJD — not to mention that the party's earlier shifts towards post-Islamism already began to downplay those elements of its character. Articulated by Abdallah Badda as: "we are already Muslims. I don't need someone to teach me about Islam … I severely criticize the PJD for this." [108] The PJD is shunned for its relationship to Islam, while the monarchy's Islamic authority goes uninterrogated. It is, instead, ingrained into the king's position of authority; unquestioned, blameless.

[105] Badda, Ksar elKebir, November 2022.
[106] Ibid,.
[107] Olivier Roy, "The Transformation of the Arab World," *Journal of Democracy* 23, no. 3 (July 2012): 10.
[108] Badda, Ksar El-Kebir, November 2022..

The ideological conflict presented by these competing sources of Islamic authority in Morocco likely merits its own study. More than merely dulling the PJD's Islamist advantage, the king's authority over Moroccan Islam brings into question the status of Islamist movements in the nation at all. On the surface it would seem that the king's status as "*amīr al-muʾminīn*" would mean that the Islamist goal of bringing Islam into governance has already been completed, at least in name. In fact, that context may shed light onto the aforementioned fact that explicitly religious parties are barred from political participation. More than that, the king's religious guardianship sets up Islamists in Morocco as directly oppositional — a dangerous thing to be. While this paper centers more on the PJD's praxis and concrete experience within the Moroccan system, there remains much to be explored in the realm of the ideological effects of a religiously anointed authority system in competition with Islamist movements. Departing from the cultural areas of competition, we will now directly explore how the palace has successfully done battle with the PJD in the fields of policy, undermining and delegitimizing the post-Islamists.

B. Direct Palace Intervention

Though the passive and subtle strategies of party dissolution in Morocco remain potent, there are also many occasions when the king acts directly to control the political scene of the state and has worked against the best interest of the post-Islamist PJD. It is the king's responsibility to appoint the cabinet ministers (often not members of parliament or political parties at all) responsible for executive management.[109] There is a selection of these executive offices which Benkirane refers to as 'les ministères de la souveraineté,' or the ministries of sovereignty.[110] Though all ministries (besides the prime ministry which, as of the 2011

[109] "The King's Powers," Ministry of Youth, Culture, and Communication, Kingdom of Morocco, February 27, 2023, https://www.maroc.ma/en/content/king%E2%80%99s-powers.
[110] Ann Wainscott, "Why did Morocco's prime minister call for a boycott of Dannon Yogurt?" *The Washington Post*, June 20, 2014, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2014/06/20/why-did-moroccos-prime-minister-call-for-a-boycott-of-dannon-yogurt/.

Constitution, needs to be chosen from the ranks of the majority party in parliament) are appointed by the king, these ministries of sovereignty have traditionally been headed by politicians and technocrats close to the palace, and thus represent the king's will personified through their respective responsibilities. The make-up of this group of ministries has been fluid throughout the years, and different scholars have their own takes on which offices should be included within the concept. From the perspective of Driss Maghraoui in 2018, it included the Ministry of Foreign Affairs under Salaheddine Mezouar, the leader of the social-democratic NRI (one of the parties that helped form Benkirane's Blockage), the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of the Interior (which we remember as being in charge of elections), the latter two both headed by technocrats "known for their close relationships with palace circles."[111] These ministries, responsible within the Council of Ministers for operating on policy of highest strategic importance, are part of what is referred to in Morocco as the *makhzan*. With these focal points of direct intervention, the palace and the *makhzan* as a whole were able to make life difficult for the PJD in various ways, including the previously analyzed Ministry of Interior's election tampering, and by undercutting the PJD's influence in significant policy, the likes of which we will promptly explore. These endeavors proved discouraging for the PJD, such that Benkirane regularly made public comments complaining that "the real power resides within the king."[112]

The king's three ministries, as well as the fact that the crown creates the majority of policies in Morocco through *ẓahīr* (royal decrees), together form a way to undercut the popularity and faith of voters in their political parties.[113] In operating on policy at the highest level in terms of both quality and quantity, the palace legitimizes itself and by comparison makes

[111] Maghraoui, "Under Constraint," 4.
[112] Ibid.
[113] Daadaoui, "Rituals of Power," 200.

the PJD seem ineffectual. This dialectic was manifested immediately in 2011 when the king signed and brought into effect a new constitution which gave the popular appearance of change, with even the PJD admitting that "the king succeeds in leading the reform agenda, first by adopting the new constitution."[114] He also "created institutions (such as the Royal Institute for Amazigh Culture in Morocco or the Royal Advisory Council for Saharan Affairs) or ad hoc committees outside the influence of democratic institutions (for example, the Consultative Commission for the Reform of the Family Code, the Equity and Reconciliation Commission and the Advisory Committee for Regionalization)" to work on issues of social justice, principles the PJD was theoretically built to address.[115] This slew of committee creation allows the king to present and legitimize himself as the actual agent of something understood as almost universally lauded by the citizenry: social progress.

The king not only spearheads and undercuts the parliament as co-author of policy in Morocco at the level of social justice, but most notably, at the level of "high" strategy as previously mentioned in the context of his Council of Ministers, especially in foreign affairs. As Minister of Communication El Khalfi clarifies, "the strategic issues [are to be examined by the Council of Ministers] … as presided over by the king."[116] The king is the polity that takes actions like normalizing the ties with Israel or managing the relationship with Morocco's northern neighbor, Spain.[117] As a result of these policy interjections, the king is understood by many Moroccans as the supervisor and guardian of Morocco acting in good faith for the people: "sometimes we can see very clearly that the parliament isn't capable enough to take seriously

[114] El Khalfi, Agdal, November 2022.
[115] Desrues, "Mobilizations," 413-414.
[116] El Khalfi, Agdal, November 2022.
[117] Khalil Al-Anani. "Moroccan Normalization with Israel: Temporary Deal or Permanent Peace?" Arab Center Washington DC, July 8, 2021, https://arabcenterdc.org/resource/moroccan-normalization-with-israel-temporary-deal-or-permanent-peace/ ; Andrew Lebovitch and Hugh Lovatt, "Endless Concessions: Spain's Tilt to Morocco." European Council on Foreign Relations, March 23, 2022, https://ecfr.eu/article/endless-concessions-spains-tilt-to-morocco/.

some decisions, and here, the palace interferes."[118] Certainly, it is easier for one authoritarian ruler to introduce changes more efficiently than a 395-member parliament.

The King's power at the level of the three ministries, majority stake in policy creation through *ẓahīr*, championship in symbolic social justice, and overarching control of ultimate foreign policy decisions being entirely within the realm of the palace, show the direct hand the palace has taken which positions it in the eyes of the Moroccan population as the supreme authority — whereas by contrast, the PJD seems to be doing very little. This loss of legitimacy and support combined with the previously examined structural dissolution proved too great an obstacle, and by 2021's election, the party had fallen to 13 seats in parliament.[119]

It is also worth noting that during our interview, Mustapha El Khalfi related to me the existence of a fake news issue within Morocco: "the last two or three years, there was a systematic attack against the party in the digital world, based on fake news, to develop a climate of hatred against the party."[120] When I questioned him about who exactly was behind these efforts and to provide some specific instances of it, he stated that "this is the machine that some of the opponents of the party, some, not all, by using fake news, are going to destroy the party." El Khalfi asserted that these instances of social media smear campaigns and internet hate comments are committed by "fake names, false accounts." It remains to be proven if this is the doing of another party or that of the *makhzan*. This is an as-of-yet under-examined current in Morocco's political sphere, which, as we have seen in the case of the US, can be a powerful force in destroying political parties' standing. I am open to the interpretation that this fake news

[118] Badda, Ksar El-Kebir, November 2022.
[119] Bernabé Lopéz Garcia and Said Kirhlani. "The Moroccan Elections of 2021: A New Political Architecture for a New Development Model," Real Instituto El Cano, October 1, 2021, https://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/en/analyses/the-moroccan-elections-of-2021-a-new-political-architecture-for-a-new-development-model/.
[120] El Khalfi, Agdal, November 2022.

"hate machine" could be operated, in part, by the palace, or by parties acting against the PJD and in accordance with the palace's agenda.

Chapter 4 - Policy Pedigree

With its death by a thousand cuts through the soft strategies of a multi-party system and its undercutting as the agent of legitimate policy by the king himself, the PJD seems a somewhat sympathetic figure. We are left with the disappointing question: what exactly has the post-Islamist PJD managed to accomplish, for all its ideological shifts and adaptability? And more than that, if the PJD is aware of the processes and limitations of the Moroccan political game, why does it participate? What gives its members hope that their participation in a system rigged against them will affect change?

There are many explanations as to why parties participate in elections and politics under authoritarian and mixed regimes. Daadaoui proposes "that parties view elections as opportunities to resist regime domination of the public discourses … and ultimately to change the rules of the political game" and that "prolonged periods of electoral contestation could lead to instances of democratic transition."[121] Indeed, Mustapha El Khalfi has rigorously asserted that "one of the elements we emphasize is the general wave of democratization and demand for more political openness."[122] However, while we have seen several symbolic openings of democratic institutions throughout Morocco's history, the previously explored examples of policymaking and cabinet control exercised by the monarchy to this day suggest to me that at this juncture, Morocco has simply not reached a phase at which parties themselves are directly and independently increasing democratization. This, however, does not mean that the post-Islamist PJD has not affected its nation.

Even the party's most ardent critics admit that "there have been some strong gains to Ksar El-Kebir in terms of providing infrastructure and development."[123] It might be in the realm

[121] Daadaoui, "Rituals of Power," 196.
[122] El Khalfi, Agdal, November 2022.
[123] Anonymous former PJD member, Ksar El-Kebir, May 2022.

of pragmatic, ground level improvements to constituents' lives that the PJD has succeeded. The former Minister of Communications gave me an overwhelming list of policies enacted by the PJD including "the policy for poor people" which brought "financial aid to … more than 130,000 families," and a scholarship program in which "2 million kids, mostly in rural areas, are receiving monthly financial aid to pursue their education" – where, according to El Khalfi, the number of recipients was tripled and the amount of money disbursed increased by 50%.[124] Though this specific policy of social support is difficult to verify to ascertain its effectiveness, a monitoring report on the PJD's economic policymaking notes that the PJD-led government "created a new social benefit status to spur entrepreneurship and private sector growth by offering social coverage (social benefits) for those who are self-employed or have initiated a new business."[125] It seems that the PJD has found some success specifically in injections of capital to support business and education, at the individual level. Apart from the approach of specific, targeted welfare, the PJD's economic strategy played a considerable hand in new infrastructure and economic development. El Khalfi relays to me that the party also enacted "a policy to build roads in the rural areas, almost 10,000 kilometers" and "a policy to build health complexes in each region."[126] Certainly, the leading area of PJD economic growth during their tenure was in the realm of industry and infrastructure, including Port of Tangier development, as well as more work on the Casablanca-Tadla-Azilal highway.[127] El Khalfi passionately asserts to me, in a French café by the road in Agdal, that "targeted social policies" are the "policies that change the lives of Moroccans."[128] It is pertinent, however, that "drought-related problems in agricultural

[124] El Khalfi, Agdal, November 2022.
[125] A.Kadir Yildrim and Elaine Zhang, "The Party of Justice and Development and Post-2011 Economic Policymaking in Morocco," Rice University's Baker Institute for Public Policymaking, August 19, 2021: 14, https://doi.org/10.25613/dqaa-jg10.
[126] El Khalfi, Agdal, November 2022.
[127] Yildrim and Zhang, "The Party of Justice and Development," 12.
[128] El Khalfi, Agdal, November 2022.

production, falling tourism revenues, and a steep decline in phosphate revenues have led to a poor economic performance in recent years."[129] It is also important to recognize that the PJD by no means "fixed Morocco's economy" during its experience in governance; that is not the claim being made. These initiatives are included to show that, on a practical level, policy was created and enacted, independent of the king (though perhaps in alignment with his own economic agenda). These "targeted social policies," like that of the scholarships or subsidies for entrepreneurs, are at their core, independent policies which represent the PJD's semi-autonomous ability to affect change and create motion within its nation. Though they perhaps do not change the world or transform institutional political power, they do help elucidate the hybridity of Morocco and its ever shifting balance of power which, at times, is seized by this post-Islamist party.

These economic policies represent real action, though limited in their scope – one must also keep in mind these policies were pursued amidst the ever-present difficulties and soft strategies of dissolution within Morocco's multi-party system. In spite of this, and even within the shadow of the king's perpetual pedigree of social justice and high strategy policy making, the PJD has put in place grassroots programs to help its citizenry at a fundamental level. Moreover, perhaps Salim Hmimnat is correct in saying that the PJD was the party most "capable of challenging, from inside, the Moroccan regime's rules of the game."[130] What exactly did this challenge look like? El Khalfi states that it has "made some reforms fighting corruption" like the "green line, a number hotline where you can report bribery,"[131] which, according to him, has resulted in the arrest of many corrupt officials (though specific figures remain nebulous). In an electoral system in which bribery in the form of vote-buying occurs constantly, electoral

[129] Yildrim and Zhang, "The Party of Justice and Development,"14.
[130] Hmimnat, "Reform," 1.
[131] El Khalfi, Agdal, November 2022.

corruption happens under the oversight of the king's Ministry of Interior, and fighting corruption ranks consistently high on citizens' demands, this policy on the surface would constitute positive representation of the people's will.[132] The general efforts of anti-corruption initiatives have produced mixed results; in addition to El Khalfi's hotline, the PJD's 2014 development of the National Body for Integrity, Prevention, and the Fight Against Corruption, a constitutive body meant to investigate instances of corruption before the cases arrive at the judiciary, was critiqued as a "step back" by some civil actors in terms of its investigative agency as compared to that of the older committee upon which it was built.[133] However, by 2016, the PJD's government enacted the National Anticorruption Strategy, a comprehensive plan containing "239 detailed projects" to combat corruption in the various ministries of the government, carrying with it an investigative body which incorporated seats for civil society and convened four times a year to examine the strategy's efficacy.[134] As the former minister puts it, "if you would like to succeed in drafting effective public policy, and implementing this policy, you should incorporate civil society … because they, in terms of proximity, know the real problems on the ground."[135] El Khalfi also "succeeded in adopting in parliament a new press code and to establish the National Press Council to strengthen the professional free work of the journalists," adding a purported increase in press freedom to the PJD's legacy in government.[136] These reforms did in fact make it through parliament, where their major success was "the elimination of prison time as punishment. The code still punishes many nonviolent speech offenses, but only by fines and court-ordered suspensions of publications or websites."[137] While Morocco's press freedom

[132] Yildrim and Zhang, "The Party of Justice and Development," 9-10.
[133] Fakir, "Politics Under Pressure," 14- 15.
[134] Ibid. 15.
[135] El Khalfi, Agdal, November 2022.
[136] Ibid.
[137]Human Rights Watch, "The Red Line Stays Red: Morocco's Reforms of its Speech Laws," May 4, 2017, https://www.hrw.org/report/2017/05/04/red-lines-stay-red/moroccos-reforms-its-speech-laws.

remains limited and journalists viewed as unfavorable to the palace face persecution through other channels, this PJD policy El Khalfi describes, in effect, removed one official means through which the regime could imprison reporters.

These are policies that are not only aimed at helping the lives of everyday Moroccans, but also ones which challenge the mechanisms of authoritarian regimes, namely bringing in nongovernmental organizations, persecuting corruption, and facilitating free speech. While the actual efficacy of these policies is debatable, they do not count for nothing.[138] At the very least, they are attempts at enhancing transparency and improving the lives of Moroccans at an individual level. While clearly limited in the scope of their movement, as well as ideologically altered by the palace's rules for participation, these innate post-Islamists have capitalized on their identity and operated flexibly throughout various openings in their hybrid system. While the king might control high level policy, the PJD is able to effect targeted economic change for the Moroccan people, and lay the groundwork for further transparency in the form of press laws and anti-corruption efforts. Herein lie the points of this examination: the PJD's actual praxis, its effect on the nation, and how these projects are conducted in the context of its relationship with the palace. To further show how this adaptable post-Islamist identity has proven significant, this paper will supply a comparison of the PJD to a group which would perhaps be better described as "true" Islamists.

[138] Reporters Without Borders, "2021 World Press Freedom Index: Journalism, the vaccine against disinformation, blocked in more than 130 countries," April 2021, https://rsf.org/en/2021-world-press-freedom-index-journalism-vaccine-against-disinformation-blocked-more-130-countries.

Chapter 5 - The Other Islamists: Jamaʿa al-ʿAdl wa al-Ihsan

It is crucial, in discussing Islamism in Morocco, to mention the Jamaʿa al-ʿAdl wa al-Ihsan, or Justice and Spirituality Group (JSG). If we designate the PJD as post-Islamist based largely on its ideological concessions, then it is the JSG that we can designate as "true" Islamists; the organization has self-identified as mobilizing political Islam, and envisioning an Islamic form of governance. Founded as an association in 1973 by Islamic leader Abdeslam Yassine and focused on Sufi principles, the JSG has followed a remarkably different path than the PJD; however, it is one that has met with similar systematic pressure from the hybrid state.[139] From its inception, the JSG has maintained an unmistakably confrontational attitude towards the monarchy. In 1974, Yassine wrote a 114 page letter to the king of the time, Hassan II, calling on him to repent, for political parties and the representative assemblies of the time to be dissolved, and for a re-commitment of the state to the Islamic democratic value of *shūrā*.[140] This was an endeavor of particular gall and fortitude, considering that the letter was sent after multiple attempts on the life of Hassan II, including the raid on his summer compound in Skhirat, which spurred a significant change of attitude towards political dissidence. After the attempts on the king's life, the monarchy began a brutal and violent crackdown on society, the aforementioned Years of Lead. What is particularly noteworthy is that Yassine also called during this time for the rejection of Western imperialism and what he and his group considered the negative effects of Western modernization.[141] Significantly, both opposition to the monarchy's purported corruption of values, as well as to Western imperialism, are traits of classic Islamist parties as explored in

[139] Tamba François Koundouno, "Al Adl Wa Al Ihsane, the Lampshade in Morocco's Experience of 'Tolerant Islam'?" Morocco World News, March 20, 2019, https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2019/03/268449/al-adl-wa-al-ihsane-lampshade-morocco-tolerant-islam.
[140] Referring to Yassine's open letter "Islam or the Flood," accessed on: Imam Abdessalam Yassine Foundation, A Brief Account of Imam Abdessalam Yassine's biography, March 14, 2017, https://yassine.org/en/imam-yassines-journey/
[141] Bruce Maddy-Weitzman, "Islamism, Moroccan-Style: The Ideas of Sheikh Yassine," *Middle East Quarterly* 10, no. 1 (Winter 2003): 43-51.

the earlier chapter on post-Islamism. These values bring to mind the original stances of movements like the Muslim Brotherhood, who stood for opposition as an intention, as a specific point and mobilization of Islamic ideology. This stance is, critically, something which parties like the PJD sacrificed upon their entrance into Moroccan politics, a process which I outline and analyze as Bayat's "qualitative shift" in reaction to the Monarchy's pressure. A similar shift did not occur for the JSG under the leadership of Yassine. And while the Shabiba Islamiya movement began to change and transform under the threatening Years of Lead, ultimately birthing the innately post-Islamist, anti-revolutionary-minded PJD who would work alongside the monarchy, the 1970s and on saw no such change for the stalwart JSG, who, because of this ideological stability, I argue to be the most genuine model of actual Islamism in the North African country.

Scholar Loubna Flah uses a striking linguistic analytical approach to several of Abdeslam Yassine's speeches and manifestos to help us understand the Islamist character of the group, beginning with its name, wherein the word for "spirituality" itself, *iḥsān*, "refers to an advanced stage in the journey of the Sufi disciple marked by a profound knowledge of God."[142] Thus, as Flah points out, the very title of the group itself positions its Islamic perspective as a core tenet — its politics being not only inspired by spirituality, as in the case of the PJD, but truly informed and guided by it. With no compromises in the title of the group, it should be no surprise that its political agenda was similarly fixed, with the non-acceptance of adaptation being a key characteristic of the JSG:

> The Jama'a forged a different path through its uncompromising and challenging positions towards Moroccan politics. Yassine outlined his reformative project in a number of books and articles addressing several issues ranging from democracy, Shura (the Islamic principle of consultancy) to women's emancipation. He opted for a non-participative

[142]Loubna Flah, "The Discourse of Jama'at Al Adl Wal Ihsan (Justice and Spirituality Group) on the Concept of Democracy," *International Journal of Linguistics* (May 2016): 2.

> approach on the grounds that Moroccan political parties are not granted larger prerogatives to operate a significant change in politics.[143]

As Flah outlines, the JSG, both unwilling to change its official self-understanding and branding as Islamists, as well as disinclined to play the political game under the monarchy, has opted to stay out of official political participation since its inception. Though the government has not allowed the JSG to participate in formal politics, the group has also made no attempts to alter, neuter, or transform itself into a shape acceptable to the regime. Throughout the years since its birth, the JSG has maintained, in keeping with that stance, its platform — and in some ways, a militant attitude in expressing itself and its values (though it is important to note that the group espouses non-violence as a core tenet). The group refers to its members with "the collocation جند الله (the soldiers of God) signal[ing] the JSG's high level of mobilization. The collocation جند الله constitutes a self attributed legitimacy through the self- assignment of a divine mission."[144] So the severity of the JSG's stance is articulated not only as militant, but as divinely guided. This of course distinguishes the JSG again from the PJD, which not only displays no deliberate reference to Islam in its title, but certainly does not call its members soldiers — and in fact has at least technically relegated religion to the non-political sector within the Movement of Unity and Reform (MUR). And while certainly the JSG's Islamist attitude is much stronger than the PJD's, something they share is their commitment to not fomenting revolution; this is perhaps the only reason that the JSG has not been eradicated entirely, though, as we will explore below, it has experienced a fair share of repression.

It is not the principles of democracy that Yassine and the JSG dispute. Rather, and much more precarious for their own safety and posterity, "Yassine does not express any particular adversity towards the main principles of democracy but rather towards the dishonesty of the

[143] Flah, "Discourse," 1.
[144] Ibid., 6.

political elite,"[145] of course calling out the *makhzan* and the king with it. In doing so, directly and publicly calling the character of the king and his cronies into question, the JSG has dug itself into a hole that one can be convinced is insurmountable, as the group could easily become a target of the king's violence. In spite of the directness of Yassine's criticism, Bruce Maddy-Weitzman states that whatever change Yassine was intent on would "be achieved through peaceful means, through persuasion and education."[146] In one of his speeches, Yassine assured the Moroccan people, and implicitly the Moroccan regime, that after exposing corruption within the state the group was not going to incite revolution — instead, its rhetoric emphasized militant strength as a more abstract idea.[147] Perhaps these assurances were meant for the JSG's constituency, and Yassine was simply guiding his followers. However, I believe that these statements were in part aimed at the particularly menacing King Hassan II, assuring the palace that in spite of the strong rhetoric it used, the JSG meant only to criticize the system rather than tear it down. In this regard, I believe we see that for all the moral posturing of these "true Islamists," the JSG ends up in the same boat as the post-Islamist PJD – unwilling (and perhaps unable) to truly and directly challenge the system. Non-participation does not mean revolution.

As a result, "al Adl is at times accused of espousing a self-defeating strategy because it does not play the game it supports (procedural democracy) and, at the same time, refuses to play the revolutionary subversive card." [148] Nonetheless, I think we must also qualify this with the stark reality of Morocco's political situation. Were the JSG to break that implicit aforementioned promise to the people and the king of ideological strength over revolution, it is not unreasonable to believe that its members would pay for their actions with their careers, and perhaps their lives.

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[145] Flah, "Discourse," 7.
[146] Maddy-Weitzman, "Islamism, Moroccan Style."
[147] Flah, "Discourse," 5.
[148] Francesco Cavatorta, "Neither Participation nor Revolution: The Strategy of the Moroccan Jamiat al-Adl wal-Ihsan," *Mediterranean Politics* 12, no. 3 (October 2007): 386.

Under the lead years of Hassan II, that threat of violence was certainly in place, forcing the JSG into an immovable position: on one side, hemmed in from participating based on its adamant values and criticism of the corrupt Moroccan farse-laden representative system, and, on the other, propelled against revolution because of the ever-present threat of the strong hand of the monarchy. Even in more recent times,

> following the attacks on Casablanca and the successive episodes of violence perpetrated by militants of the group Salafist Jihad, Mohammed VI reshuffled the security apparatus and granted the security services the resources and autonomy to carry out a very severe crackdown on all suspected militants, leading in the process to a considerable number of human rights abuses.[149]

The palace made sure to show the JSG that the figurative gun was, indeed, still loaded. On the less physical side of repression, within the last 20 years, "Al Adl Wal Ihsane demonstrations, conferences and other events are systematically banned by Moroccan authorities, in the name of such vague and quasi-surreal legal pretexts as 'public order', 'security' and 'morality,'"[150] thus limiting the ability of the group to find any real public traction outside of the hushed and excited whispers of a "true Islamist alternative." In addition, the group is often, via pro-monarchy media sources tied to the same vein of Islamism as the likes of the Islamic State; an unfair comparison, but one which strikes fear into the citizenry unfamiliar with the group's true goals, and which justifies the aforementioned soft actions, as well as much more hardline responses.[151] Moroccan security forces in the last 20 years have begun a tradition of evicting those tied to the JSG — as far back as 2006, where "the Oujda home of Al Adl Wal Ihsane's secretary general, Mohamed Abbadi, was sealed off, with his furniture and personal belongings inside. Various other members have faced the same fate - a measure deemed illegal by many observers, but routinely justified

[149] Cavortata, "Neither Participation nor Revolution," 392.
[150] Ali Lmrabet, "Morocco: The Regime's Hidden War Against Islamist Movement," Middle East Eye, April 21, 2022, https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/morocco-hidden-war-al-adl-wal-ihsane-regime.
[151] Ibid.

by media with ties to the Moroccan regime."[152] Abbadi, it is worth noting, was no mere "soldier of God" for the JSG; he was the group's secretary general. These, of course, are only the actions we hear about, and it stands to reason that other crackdowns have taken or are taking place.

In spite of their admittedly dangerous and brutal persecution, I believe it is fair to criticize the "choice of the Moroccan Jamiat al-Adl wal-Ihsan neither to participate in institutional politics nor to undertake violent actions to transform the regime."[153] Without attacking its ideals nor its constituents, we can certainly conceptualize the JSG's refusal to participate paralleled by its refusal to revolt as inaction (though not apathy), just as the PJD's willingness to change their values has drawn criticism. However, it is significant to note that, where the PJD abstained from Morocco's February 20th movement during the Arab Spring, the JSG did in fact participate in the protests — though it remained limited in its engagement ironically due to the group's "'respect for the monarchy.'"[154] While the PJD perhaps has not "changed anything" (a common perspective among my interviewees, and yet one which I believe is up for debate) though it holds seats in parliament, one might feel compelled to say that the JSG has changed little in Morocco besides providing a point of comparison to the system, and to the Justice and Development Party. However, not participating in parliament does not necessarily mean abstaining from political action as a whole.

In recent times, the JSG has interestingly made a foray into the political realm through its legal practices. The highly publicized arrest of journalists Soulaimane Raissouni and Omar Radi have made international waves and formed an ideological juncture for various political entities within Morocco. Radi was unjustly charged with "insulting the judiciary" via various critical

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[152] Lmrabet, "Hidden War."
[153] Cavatorta, "Neither Participation nor Revolution," 381.
[154] "Morocco February 20 protest leaders quit after row," Reuters, February 19, 2011, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-morocco-protest/morocco-february-20-protest-leaders-quit-after-row-idUKTRE71I3K220110219.

tweets and put to trial in 2020, where he was additionally subjected to false charges of rape and espionage that keep him detained to this day.[155] Raissouni faces a similar strategy of persecution due to his outspoken opinions on the regime, facing years in prison.[156] What is specifically notable about these cases, aside from being representative in the ways that the regime circumvents press codes passed by the PJD designed to protect journalists, is that some of the lawyers representing these men, pro-bono, are actually from the JSG. Though obviously Raissouni and Radi are not Islamists, the JSG has reached across its ideological divide, perhaps in the effort to oppose the palace or in the sincere interest of defending justice, lending its lawyers to make up part of the legal counsel for the accused men. Examining a Casablanca court transcript from Radi's case, one can see that first on his list of defenders is Abdul Rahman Bin Amr, a prominent lawyer in Rabat, who, during a period of persecution and jailing in the 1980s, met and befriended none other than Imam Abdesslam Yassine, whom Bin Amr later legally defended in proceeding legal interactions.[157] Additionally, a defender of both Radi and Raissouni is Miloud Kandil, himself a current member of the JSG.[158] Thus we cannot fully dismiss the JSG for not participating at all in its parliamentary system; this act of protest, this boycott, does not preclude it from being understood as "politically active." And though perhaps the group cannot save these men from unjust persecution, the JSG is able to retain its ideological stability and still, though the courts, attempt to affect change on an individual scale.

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[155] Hannah Garry, "Morocco vs. Omar Radi," International Human Rights Clinic, September, 2020, https://cfj.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Fairness-Report-on-the-Trial-of-Omar-Radi-in-Morocco.pdf ; Human Rights Watch, "Morocco: Journalist in Prison After Unfair Trial," November 25, 2020, https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/11/25/morocco-journalist-prison-after-unfair-trial.

[156] Reporters without Frontiers, "Souleiman Raissouni: Courage in the face of Persecution," May 26, 2020, https://rsf.org/en/souleiman-raissouni-courage-face-persecution.

[157] Court Transcript of Omar Radi's proceedings, Casablanca, November 25th, 2021, presented by a confidential source in Atlanta, GA, March 15, 2023.

[158] Ahmed Eljechtimi, "Moroccan court confirms 5-year sexual assault verdict on dissident reporter," Reuters, February 23, 2022, https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/moroccan-court-confirms-5-year-sexual-assault-verdict-dissident-reporter-2022-02-23/.

While we might be tempted to, in comparison with the PJD, lambast the JSG's lack of commitment to anything but ideology, we must take into account that while we sit in the leather armchairs of academia casting aspersions and asking for action, the JSG has faced eviction, imprisonment, and the ultimate threats of shadowy death throughout its existence. In all this time its members have retained their spirituality and Islamic current while others bend and shift to the whims of the king — more than that, they have made efforts to support free speech and the lives of persecuted journalists. At the end of the day, though the JSG is technically an outlaw group, it is decently behaved — and certainly if one wants to continue their plans of protest under Morocco's autocratic hybrid regime, one must be on their best behavior. It is unclear what the JSG's true influence will be. Is it waiting for another Arab Spring? Will it continue to abstain as a macro-level act of protest, refusing to participate in the king's games, and refusing to recognize him as *amīr al-muʾminīn*? We are unable to answer these questions now, but what I believe is valuable about the JSG's narrative is that it exemplifies an Islamist party which refuses to participate in Morocco, refuses to undergo that "Bayatian" qualitative shift, and yet is not necessarily, despite their stalwart character and legal pursuits, capable of revolutionizing Morocco's system. While moral purists and other Islamists throughout the world might applaud the JSG and disparage the comparatively pragmatic PJD, I urge against this. While the JSG might be admired for its rigidity, the flexibly post-Islamist PJD has actually brought itself into governance and has at times challenged, albeit in subtle ways, the king's power. Benkirane used his platform to call out the *makhzan* for its corruption and abuse of power — and he did so as prime minister, not guerilla leader confined to the sidelines. That visibility matters; elected representatives saving their bravery and compromising on their ideals allows them to eventually come to a place where they can speak from a post of authority *against* the authorities. And

what's more, as we have explored throughout this paper, the PJD was able to promote policies that it believes help the lives of everyday Moroccans. The willingness to undergo a qualitative shift, to adapt to the threatening Moroccan monarchy and its power structures, and consistently endeavor to work (as insubstantial as it might prove) — this is the ethos of the PJD that differentiates it from the JSG.

As the PJD has altered its ideologically foundations and entered the political arena as a post-Islamist entity, it has been able to pursue precise applications of power and policy at the level of social welfare and targeted infrastructure. The JSG, on the other hand, has maintained its Islamist principles, oppositional attitude towards the crown, and thus has been relegated largely to less mainstream agendas of political action – that of court proceedings. Within both frameworks, participatory and rejectionary, Morocco's Islamists and post-Islamists attempt to exert power in their limited spaces. While the Islamist JSG remains rigid, the post-Islamist PJD has operated through compromise.

Conclusion

It is with this that I ask us to consider the PJD in Morocco not simply another member of the post-Islamism narrative wherein parties are blunted by the agentless structures of political participation, nor the unwitting lackeys of the monarchy. Morocco is, at all steps, a hybrid system, a hybrid regime. I think that the PJD's story, if anything, proves that there is at different moments and differing steps, a certain balance and relationship of power between monarchy and party. It is not a completely one-sided story, but rather a conversation. The PJD, biting the metaphorical bullet of Bayat's qualitative shift and altering its identity to enter the political scene, channeled the power of grassroots Islamist politics in the late 1990s and continued with effective campaigning and good local governance during the 2000s — by the end of this period, I think it is clear to see that the PJD positioned itself as a major force in Moroccan politics. The party constructed a legitimate base and as a result posed a visible threat to the sovereignty of the monarchy. I believe at the same time, that threat was registered and dulled by the monarchy's control over electoral mechanisms, and through a process of redistricting, vote-buying, and ballot interpretation, the PJD was contained and repressed. 2011's Arab Spring provided a moment of strange parallel motion in which the PJD's support pushed it into power and its nonrevolutionary temperament made them the prime candidate for the king's selection as a means to slow the turmoil brewing on the streets at that time. It was, at various steps, a dialogue of support and power, headed by both authoritarian electoral manipulation, and undeniable strength in public appeal. A question that also comes to mind is whether Morocco can truly be called an authoritarian state? It feels too convenient, and inaccurately denies the nation's hybrid nature which I go to great lengths to establish. The label "authoritarian state" leaves little wiggle room;

and indeed this whole project seeks to demonstrate that there is in fact enough room within the system for parties like the PJD to fit, and at times, act.

The PJD's experience in parliament was, in a word, difficult. The group faced the normative difficulties of governance, inability to make good on campaign promises, ideological changes caused by structural power reserves held by the king, and internal divisions and decline of democracy due to the stress of governance. The PJD was at this point faced by an onslaught of opposition, manifested in the powers of the multi-party system to act as a vessel for the king's dissolution of ruling parties' support through opposition mobilization and political deadlock, as well as the king's co-optation of social reform and complete control over high order strategy and policy, legitimating the monarchy and by contrast making the PJD look frivolous to the nation. At the same time, PJD members would tell you that they managed to enact change in the areas of infrastructure and welfare for their constituents and that, in their own way, perhaps they even challenged the authority of the *makhzan*. The press policy, NGO inclusion, and corruption Green Line that Mustapha El Khalfi described could, with proper utilization, mean genuine challenge to the monarch's muscle. None of this would have been possible had the PJD not bent to the monarchy's authoritative rule-setting. This is not to say that the PJD has effectively changed the political status quo. I believe the PJD is actually an excellent case study of the capacity of Morocco's hybrid system to monitor and control popular parties and movements, breaking them apart through subtle and non-violent means. In a way, studying the PJD has been a masterclass in neo-liberal politics and has left me morbidly impressed with how subtly the King took one of the country's greatest political movements in recent memory[159] and by 2021, made them out to be "losers."[160] It is important to understand that in the 21st century, most autocrats do not simply

[159] El Hajji, Tangier, November 2022.
[160] Badda, Ksar El-Kebir, November 2022.

retain power through murder and military crackdown. In fact, in Morocco, this is rarely the case. Morocco's governance is still a site of autocratic politics, but conducted through deft political maneuvering, clandestine observation, and the utilization of different facets of a hybrid political system. It is also important to recognize that many of these functions are at play across the world. Unwieldy multi-party systems, coalition gridlock, fake news machines, corrupted ballots, and redistricting are all common in Western nations.[161] I have sought to treat Morocco independently, to examine it in and of itself — but it is important to me that the takeaway of this paper is not an Orientalist construction which centralizes an Arab state's dysfunction as innate or unavoidable. I believe the fairer conclusion to be the understanding that political manipulation takes place at a level that is far more nuanced, drawn over different sites and time periods, than is often recognized. We as citizens of any nation must be vigilant as we proceed in ensuring that the space for genuine representation and governance is open and possible, transparent, and effective.

The PJD is also a compelling study for the relation between hybrid authoritarianism and post-Islamism; namely, in Morocco, the presence of an authoritarian structure creates the conditions necessary for Islamist ideological concessions in order to participate at all. Morocco shows us that in these hybrid regimes, parties have the option to either abstain from participation like the JSG, or, allow themselves to change, weather the effect in support this will incur, and then root around for areas to operate. The relationship between PJD and palace in Morocco shows that post-Islamist parties are able to, at a certain level, operate within the confines of hybrid authoritarianism at the cost of qualitative concession and with the stipulation of the near constant challenges posed by the regime. Perhaps a takeaway is that Islamist parties, refusing to undergo qualitative transformation, do not have the ephemeral temperament necessary to work

[161] Sarah Repucci and Amy Slipowitz, "The Global Expansion of Authoritarian Rule," Freedom House, Spring 2022, https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2022/global-expansion-authoritarian-rule.

within this system, whereas post-Islamists, like the PJD, are eligible to be a part of the process. Where a regime is hybrid, Islamists must follow suit. When in Rabat, do as they do.

I do not feel it is pertinent to dive into a statement about how there is hope for Morocco yet. There is no easy way to predict the future developments of any nation, much less one as dynamic as Morocco. But the statistics show that even in this system, there is certainly reason for political engagement. The PJD, knowing the constraints far more intimately than I ever will, still participates, as do other parties. Its members are still able to formulate policy that helps people, builds roads, and gets funding for kids to go to school. As far as genuine political change goes, I am not even convinced it will happen in the United States, or that what goes on in Morocco is that much different from what goes on in the US. What I do believe is that the ultimate site of significance is the improvement of lives at a material level and on a person-by-person basis. In participating in this unequal relationship with the palace, in entertaining the dialogue of elections, corruption, participation and defamation, the PJD has sought to do that very thing. Regardless of what you think of the group's politics, to participate in an environment like that is, by definition of its conditions, an impressive endeavor.

Limitations and Further Research

There were within this project some obvious limitations. For one thing, my language skills, consisting of strong English, proficient Spanish, middling MSA, terrible Darija, and equally lacking French, limited both those whom I could interview, and the secondary sources I could read. To be sure, many great thoughts could have been elicited from other interviewees whom I could not understand and are written in essays and journals from Morocco in another language. There is also the point that interviewees answered questions knowing that they live in

a political system in which there are certain red lines not to be crossed; questioning the character of the king is one of them. I, as a student and visitor, took great steps to avoid asking them questions that would directly make interviewees choose whether to say anything potentially endangering. This will limit some semblance of my primary sourcing; I will say that I have learned the significance of the negative impression by doing these interviews. Like BB King says of the blues, "the notes you don't play are as important as the notes you do." Meaning that what my interviewees did not say, chose not to disclose, amalgamated, paints a picture that still has a definite shape — it just takes a bit of interpretation.

Some other limitations of this project concern access to accurate election statistics. While I was able to access some election results through previously completed reports like those of the NDI and other NGOs, it is difficult to find a full report of elections broken down by district. Even if I were able to, it is worth noting that they are created by the Ministry of the Interior. I am not sure I could necessarily attest to the veracity of their statistics. And yet, focusing on the elections became a massive part of my project. We always hear the phrase "corrupt elections" thrown around, but rarely know what that looks like. I became determined to learn.

Of course, going forward, I would seek to interview more people to develop a stronger sample size and variety of perspectives. One potential step forward is that I could work with Moroccans in the United States, who are under less pressure to remain discreet in their answers.

Work that must be done is ascertaining the effectiveness of the PJD's social policies in the last 10 years. Part of their saving grace, at least as portrayed in this paper, were those claims. I do not necessarily doubt the statistics Mustapha El Khalfi gave me. He is, of course, the former Minister of Communications, and I assume he is being both accurate and truthful. Nor do I doubt the secondary sourcing I utilized in that section. However, I need to dig deeper and get a holistic

understanding of whether these policies truly helped — that is of course, the most important thing.

I leave this project only for the time being, knowing that there is much work to be done. There are other parties to look at; the Union of Socialist Forces in the late 90s or Hizb al-Istiqlal right after independence were both potent oppositional forces ultimately dissolved and brought under the palace's wing, much like the PJD is now. Like grandfather like father, like father like son. In evaluating Moroccan Islamism of course, Jamāʿa al-ʿAdl wa al-Iḥsān perhaps merits a paper of its own.

A further limitation, or perhaps a guiding principle, is the pluralistic scope of this paper — it is not necessarily a hyper-concentrated analysis. To discuss Islamism, and more accurately post-Islamism, it became necessary to investigate the broader political system of Morocco in all of its monarchical and hybrid glory, meaning that this paper obviously covers various political systems and ideologies and puts them into conversation with each other. While this means that each side does not receive a fully thorough investigation, that work has already been done by the scholars mentioned in the literature review; it is my work which deliberately seeks to consider the many parts of the whole that makes up Morocco. Also, in the vein of monarchical resilience, the sovereign methods used in the Years of Lead during Hassan II to maintain stability and protect the palace are tragic, cruel, and highly impactful events about which I did not go into detail. The simple fact is that this exploration is just that: an exploration. It weaves together a plurality of facets due to the simple fact that governing a country is multifaceted. I decided that if I was to at least try to tell a fair story, I would have to include many faces of this dialogue; and that the only zone I could limit would be the time, taking basically the late 1990s to modern day, with brief allusions to the latter half of the 20th century.

I believe my contribution to the fields of post-Islamism and North African politics is significant and novel. As explored in the literature review, the prevailing scholarship in this area either neglects to mention Morocco, equates it to its neighbors, emphasizes the authoritarian nature of its regime at the cost of its pluralistic aspects, or ignores the practical operation of political parties in favor of their ideology. This paper captures both the nuanced relationship between parties and the palace in Morocco which demonstrates the true hybridity of its system, and examines how a post-Islamist lens, correctly applied in regards to chronology and causation, is an accurate and utile framework to explore the Justice and Development Party's experience. It does these things while also separating Morocco from regional stereotypes and broad narratives, and highlights the nation in a realm of scholarship which often minimizes its presence.

There is much to do, and always more to learn. Morocco is still evolving. The possibility that aspects of this research could be elucidated as limited in light of new developments as Morocco steadfastly marches alongside the progression of time means that the work is simply not done; it demands constant attention, constant updates. Continuing this thread as the political developments continue will bring me to a stronger understanding of the relationships between repression, progress, limits, and hope; the relationships which I believe, constitute the story of Morocco.

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Lahcen Daoudi. Rabat, May 2022.

Anonymous former PJD member. Ksar El-Kebir, May 2022.

Mustapha El Khalfi. Agdal, November 2022.

Saied El Hajji. Tangier, November 2022.

Abdallah Badda. Ksar El Kebir, November 2022.

Reda Benkhaldoun, Rabat, May 2022.

The author received IRB interview training during their time in the School of International Training in Morocco during Fall of 2022. Interviews conducted prior to this were done with the presence of Dr. Anouar El Younssi of Emory University. All interviewees gave their verbal consent to audio recording and for their responses to be used in this paper to be submitted to SIT prior to the beginning of the interviews. Those who didn't wish for their names to be included are listed as "anonymous."