

Social Movements, Parties, and Political Cleavages in Morocco: A Religious Divide?

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Abstract and Keywords

The primary political cleavage in predominantly Muslim countries often appears to reflect an Islamist-secular divide. This chapter considers cleavages in electoral authoritarian regimes. It argues that, in this setting, the Islamist-secular cleavage is neither as divisive nor as important as it seems to be. It makes three broad claims. First, it argues that ideology—whether secular or religious—matters less than the stance an opposition group takes toward the ruling regime. The primary political question is not whether religion should guide politics, but whether to adopt a more cooperative or confrontational approach to the regime. Second, this analysis stresses the need to consider both formal political parties and social movement organizations (SMOs) when analyzing cleavages under electoral authoritarianism. The most critical actors are typically opposition SMOs, not political parties who participate in authoritarian electoral institutions. Including both allows us to see the limited importance of ideology in authoritarian politics. Third, this chapter suggests that opposition groups do not need to choose between religious and secular frames, but can incorporate elements of both. In a predominantly Muslim society, secular organizations may justify and propose policies on religious grounds, and Islamist groups can support secular aims. Religious and secular frames are not mutually exclusive alternatives. This chapter draws on the history of politics in Morocco to illustrate these claims.

Keywords: Islam, religion, authoritarianism, leftist opposition, contentious politics, Morocco

How do religious cleavages work in states that are predominantly Muslim? In states that include adherents to multiple world religions, religion marks off different communities of belief. In predominantly Muslim societies that are relatively homogenous with respect to religion, the question that sets opposition groups apart is the degree to which religion should influence politics. Adherents of political Islam seek a greater role for religion in the political life of the country, while secular groups do not (Ayooob 2004, 1; Schwedler 2013). Specified in this way, religious and secular ideologies are alternatives to one another. Organizations orient themselves in the political landscape according to their views

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on the appropriate role of religion in politics: they may self-identify as Islamist or draw on secular frames such as class, nationalism, and regionalism.

This understanding of political cleavages as dimensions along which political organizations' ideologies can be plotted originated in the study of political party formation in democracies.¹ These studies focused on the relationship between voters and political parties, analyzing how parties established programmatic identities that allowed them to appeal to supporters on the basis of their ideological commitments—on where they stood on questions such as what role religion should play in state laws and policies.

Yet the logic of political cleavages in non-democracies is different. This chapter focuses on predominantly Muslim states ruled by electoral authoritarian regimes. Electoral authoritarian regimes are the most common type of authoritarianism in the contemporary world. They have institutional features of representative democracies, such as elections and political parties, but these institutions do not provide the opposition with the opportunity to lead (Schedler 2015). Unlike democracies or hybrid regimes, political authority under electoral authoritarianism resides in a regime that does not alternate in power.²

This chapter makes three main claims about political cleavages under electoral authoritarianism. First, it argues that programmatic differences such as secular versus religious ideologies matter less than the stance an opposition group takes toward the ruling regime. In a democracy, parties are primarily concerned with capturing votes and winning elections, but in an authoritarian regime, opposition groups must contend with the regime itself. The primary political question in these settings is whether to adopt a more cooperative or confrontational approach to the regime; this cleavage divides the opposition, with some actors opting to participate in the pseudo-democratic institutions in place, while others criticize from outside those institutions.

This cleavage is only apparent if both political parties and groups engaged in contentious politics are included in the analysis. Thus, the second claim this chapter makes is that studying both formal and contentious politics is useful for understanding how opposition works under electoral authoritarianism. A study that includes both political parties and social movements is better able to show the range of political opposition in an authoritarian country than one that focuses exclusively on either formal or informal politics. For instance, a study that examined only political parties might overemphasize ideological differences among the parties because it omits, by design, opposition groups that have not formed political parties. In this chapter, I show that social movement organizations (SMOs) have common goals even when they differ ideologically. Likewise, an Islamist political party can have more in common with a leftist political party than it does with an Islamist SMO.

The third, related claim I make in this chapter is that political parties and SMOs do not have to choose to be either religious or secular; they can be both. In a predominantly Muslim country, religious and secular frames are not mutually exclusive alternatives—they do not exist at opposite ends of a spectrum. The lines between religious and secular political aims are frequently blurred. Denoex (2002, 6) defines political Islam as “a form

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of instrumentalization of Islam by individuals, groups and organizations that pursue political objectives." In a predominantly Muslim country, all political parties and SMOs may seek to use religion instrumentally, regardless of whether they explicitly identify as Islamist or not. Secular opposition groups can draw on Islam to justify their policy platforms, recruit followers, or criticize the regime. Their main concern is not always limiting the role of religion in politics. Further, Islamist organizations do not solely or consistently advocate for deepening the role of religion in the political sphere. They have secular goals that they may share with some non-Islamist groups.

The difference between explicitly Islamist-oriented groups and other groups is not reducible to their respective positions on the desirable role of religion in politics. For this reason, as Pepinsky writes in this volume, "voting for an Islamic party is not always a vote for Islam, and voting for a non-Islamic party sometimes is." Similarly, secular goals, such as reducing unemployment or poverty, can lead a person to support an Islamist SMO, just as religious reasons can lead to support for SMOs that are considered secular in orientation.

This essay draws on the case of Morocco to illustrate these claims. Morocco is an electoral authoritarian state; it is headed by a hereditary monarch and has a parliament with limited powers to which parties are elected.³ The population is 99 percent Sunni Muslim, and over 90 percent of Moroccans self-describe as either religious or somewhat religious (Arab Barometer 2017). Morocco has had both secular and Islamist political actors, making it a good exploratory case for investigating the role of religion in political cleavages.

The next section begins with a historical overview of political opposition in Morocco that sets up the empirical questions to be addressed. It then discusses political opposition in three different time periods. I begin with the anti-colonial movement and show how activists relied on religion to advance an ostensibly secular nationalist cause. Next I discuss the postcolonial period, considering the leftists and the two most prominent Islamist organizations, al-'Adala wa Tanmiya (the Party of Justice and Development, or PJD) and al-'Adl wal-Ihsan (the Justice and Charity Group, or JCG). I show that Islamist organizations do not consistently seek to change the religious orientation of the political system, and they share some political goals with leftists. I then discuss the 2011 protests, describing how political actors attempted to align their goals with religious principles.

As Ayoob (2004, 1-2) writes, "the political manifestations of Islam, like the practice of Islam itself, are to a great extent context specific, the result of the interpenetration of religious precepts and local culture, including political culture." Yet though context shapes the role of Islam in politics, we can and do observe commonalities across different cases. The arguments in this chapter are stated in general terms and may be assessed in other settings. In principle, the arguments apply to any predominantly Muslim state with an electoral authoritarian regime.⁴ In my empirical section, I consider whether it is reasonable to treat Morocco as comparable to other states with electoral authoritarian regimes. A hereditary monarchy is one type of electoral authoritarianism. If Islamism is different in monarchies than other types of authoritarian regimes, the argument may not generalize. I

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consider whether the Islamist opposition is exceptionally weak in Morocco because of the king's religious legitimacy, and I argue that the presence of a religious head of state has not foreclosed opposition on religious grounds. I argue against the view that there is an *ex ante* reason to dismiss the potential wider applicability of the insights I derive from the Moroccan case, and I draw on new scholarship on other electoral authoritarian regimes that suggests the ability of these claims to travel elsewhere. The conclusion situates the theoretical points made here in the growing literature on the rise of political Islam.

Political Cleavages and Electoral Authoritarianism in Morocco

The role of Islam in Moroccan politics initially appears to conform well to the ideas that (a) the main difference between Islamist and non-Islamist organizations lies in their opposing views on the extent to which Islam should inform politics, and (b) secular and religious frames are alternatives to one another, with some frames more prominent in particular periods than others. Indeed, when I began to study the role of Islamist frames in Moroccan politics, my initial thought was to conceptualize religious and secular frames in this way—as alternatives that resonate more in some periods than others—and to trace the appeal of Islamist versus secular ideologies over time.

This approach made sense because a quick overview of political opposition over the last century suggests that the importance of religion in Morocco has waxed and waned over time. Secular and Islamist movements and parties have been dominant at different points in time. A loose periodization of opposition activity in Morocco starting from the French conquest to the present day could easily be described in terms of the rise, fall, and rise again of Islamist frames for collective action. The French conquest prompted a *salafiyya* movement that saw the calamity of conquest as a punishment for departing from the correct practice of Islam (Eickelman 1985; Munson 1993). This movement evolved into a reform movement seeking rights within the framework of the French protectorate; when reform efforts failed, the movement became a nationalist one seeking independence (Lawrence 2012, 2013). Nationalism dominated starting from the Second World War, lasting into the postcolonial era, with the Istiqlal (Independence) Party forming an alliance with the new king. Then, starting in the 1970s, leftist groups mounted a challenge that culminated in the formation of a political party, the Socialist Union of Popular Forces (USFP), which eventually won elections in 1998. The shift from contentious politics to inclusion in formal politics as a political party resulted in co-optation (on this process, see Lust 2006). With the waning of the leftist opposition, Islamist groups gained in popularity. Abdessalam Yassine founded al-'Adl wal-Ihsan (JCG), an Islamist/Sufi social movement group, in 1987 (Daadaoui 2016). The Islamist political party al-'Adala wa Tanmiya (PJD) also benefited from the cooptation of the leftists, increasing its electoral gains starting in 2002. In 2011, protests spread across Morocco, organized by a coalition of human rights groups, leftists, and Islamists that resulted in a new constitution and the victory of the PJD in the 2011 parliamentary elections.

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It is possible to recount this history as one in which secular and Islamist frames have competed with one another over time, with arguments for or against an increased role for Islam in the political life of the country resonating more in some periods than in others. This section seeks to complicate this narrative. The ideologies that have been invoked by Moroccan social movements and political parties—nationalism, regionalism, socialism, human rights, and Islamism—are not a menu of options from which only one must be chosen. I suggest that religion often plays an important role, regardless of whether an SMO's or party's dominant frame is secular or religious. To some extent, almost all political activists in Morocco are Islamist, because they invoke Islam to justify their platforms, and because they rely on mosques and religious networks to mobilize.

Religious arguments and counterarguments are pervasive among political organizations in Morocco. The differences between them are differences of emphasis and degree, not a clash between religious and secular positions. The main cleavage in Morocco is not a religious one, despite the presence of groups that self-define as Islamist or secular. The primary question that divides opposition groups in Morocco is whether to challenge the authoritarian regime or work within the limitations it imposes.

Islam and Anti-Colonialism

An examination of political opposition during the protectorate era offers the opportunity to look at political cleavages under a different authoritarian system than the one that was established at independence. The French protectorate was declared in 1912. It left the sultan in place; he worked with the colonial administration and acted as a figurehead. During the period, the French created some electoral institutions, holding local elections in 1947 and 1951 for chambers that served an advisory purpose (Lawrence 2013, 198–200).⁵

One initial reaction to the French conquest resembles responses to colonial incursions elsewhere in the Muslim world: a group of Moroccan elites, influenced by the Egyptian thinkers Djamal ad-Din al-Afghani and Sheikh Mohamed Abdou, saw the conquest as an indicator that the country had become vulnerable to external domination because it had departed from the true practice of Islam (Halstead 1964, 437). Accordingly, these elites, who were largely educated at the Qarawiyyin Mosque in Fes, were inspired by Salafist thought to promote religious reforms (Ait Mous 2013, 744; Joffé 1985, 290). They focused their efforts not on the French invaders, but on opposing the worship of *marabouts* (saints) and the religious brotherhoods that they argued had distorted and corrupted the religious faith (Halstead 1964, 440).

Members of this group shifted toward a stance of heightened confrontation with the French when the “Berber Dahir” crisis erupted in 1930. The *dahir* (decree) issued by the French was intended to codify existing customary laws in the Amazigh (called Berber at the time) areas of Morocco; it was a short document, not intended to alter the law but to preserve the status quo (Hoisington 1978, 434). A group of urban elite activists, including former members of the *salafiyya* movement such as Allal al-Fasi, politicized the *dahir*, ar-

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guing that it was an attempt to divide Berbers and Arabs and limit the sultan's sovereignty in Amazigh areas. They depicted the decree as a threat to the umma (Muslim community) because it removed the Berbers from the jurisdiction of shari'a. Rumors circulated that the intention was to convert Berbers to Catholicism (Lawrence 2012, 477; Wyrzten 2015, 2). The crisis gained international attention when Chakib Arslan, a Geneva-based pan-Islamic activist, took up the cause and began to publicize it across the Muslim world as a French effort aimed at the de-Islamization of the Berber population (Wyrzten 2015, 2).

Protests erupted in multiple towns, and the prayer of *latif* (said in times of calamity) was recited in mosques throughout the country (see Hoisington 1978; LaFuente 1999; Pennell 2000). The French authorities, in partnership with local leaders, suppressed the protests and had the sultan send a letter to be read in mosques in Fes, Meknes, Salé, Rabat, Casablanca, and Marrakech. In the letter, the sultan described the decree as a simple administrative measure, and he forbade the use of mosques for political discussions (Hoisington 1978, 437).

Though protests subsided, the crisis had two important lasting effects. First, as Wyrzten (2015) argues, it served to shape Moroccan national identity in ways that have persisted into the contemporary era, politicizing categories such as "Arab" and "Berber," which produced, over the course of the colonial period, a dominant identity centered on Arab-Islamic high culture.

Second, the protests prompted ongoing mobilization, as the (primarily) Arab elites who had politicized the *dahir* established a reformist group, the Kutlah al-Amal al-Watani, composed of religious and literary groups seeking reforms from the protectorate administration. These religious leaders made secular demands; the reforms they sought were inspired by leftist platforms in France and by the promises of the protectorate treaty itself. Some of their demands included the appointment and promotion of Moroccans in all branches of the administration, freedom of the press, freedom to assemble, improvements to the educational system, and the establishment of municipal councils and a national council elected by the population.⁶

The movement for reform was not a mass-based social movement, but an elite effort with limited popular support. Mass action began during World War II, after the leaders of the reform movement formed the Hizb al-Istiqlal (Independence Party) and began organizing protests in favor of independence. The independence movement was broad-based and relied on protests, strikes, boycotts, petitions, elections, and, at the close of the colonial period, rural insurgency and urban violence.⁷

The shift from a religious revivalist movement, to a reformist effort, to an explicitly nationalist mass movement could be interpreted as suggesting a decline in the centrality of religion to politics over the course of the colonial period. Yet neither the reformist movement nor the nationalist movement can accurately be coded as secular. While the reformists advocated for changes that drew upon the democratic principles that the French claimed to be importing to North Africa, they were not secular in orientation. The majori-

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ty were learned elites trained at the Qarawiyyin or at the other great institutions of learning in the Islamic world, such as al-Azhar. Many were religious scholars. While some of their goals may be described as secular, they also sought to increase the number of Arabic schools, and they stressed Islam as a core part of Moroccan identity. This was not a secularist effort.

The nationalist movement initially appears to be a better candidate for coding as secular. Nationalism is a flexible ideology: it is the straightforward principle that the nation has the right to exist.⁸ This flexibility helps explain its widespread appeal; at the time of the Moroccan independence movement, nationalism was salient across the globe. The principle of nationalism does not require that the nation have any particular characteristic; the nation's identity could be based on religion, language, ethnicity, shared history, or any experience that generates a sense of solidarity (Renan 1996 [1882]).

Yet in Morocco, both the content of the movement and its strategies reflected the centrality of Islam to political mobilization. Religion was an important part of the claim to nationhood. The protectorate officials had, since their arrival, coded the population by religion, crafting their reports around the European, Muslim, and Jewish communities. Moroccans, too, saw Islam as an important part of national identity; and in their speeches, nationalist leaders suggested that defending the nation was a religious duty.⁹ Some scholars have suggested that members understood the national party as a type of religious brotherhood (Halstead 1969, 252; Rivet 1999, 369–371). Moroccans also relied upon religious sites and holidays to mobilize effectively. Nationalist demonstrations often began at the mosque; after prayer, a group would gather and march through the streets. Mosques also provided meeting places and places of refuge when repression occurred. Demonstrations also occurred with greater frequency during religious holidays, such as *Aïd es-Seghir*, *Aïd al-Kebir*, and *Aïd Mouloud* (Lawrence 2013, 203–204). Moroccan nationalists were not secularists. In important ways, the Moroccan nationalist movement was also a religious movement.

Mobilization throughout the colonial period incorporated both religious and secular appeals and goals. Religious and secular claims were not in competition with one another, but were complementary—both secular and religious reasons could be marshaled to oppose French policies and ultimately the French presence. What did change over the course of the period was the stance that Moroccan leaders took toward the protectorate. Initially, reformers focused on religious advocacy that did not challenge the French regime.¹⁰ During the reform period, they directly criticized French policy, pointing to discrepancies between colonial aims and their actual practices. During World War II, the movement changed. Instead of seeking reform within the context of the protectorate, the nationalist movement rejected French rule altogether and fought to end it.

Moroccans drew on both religious and secular ideologies to protest colonial rule. This makes sense, since the French were foreigners who were not co-religionists. The next section turns to the post-independence period, when secular and religious objectives might be expected to come into conflict more than they did under colonial rule. In the

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postcolonial era, the ability of political groups to combine religious and secular rationales is less intuitive.

Postcolonial Political Cleavages

In the years following independence, social movement actors and political parties in Morocco primarily identified as either Islamist or leftist, which suggests that the secular-religious divide was the main political cleavage. Yet a focus on self-definitions is misleading. The primary cleavage that has defined Moroccan politics in the postcolonial period is not a religious one. Instead, it is the divide between royalists and those who have opposed the monarchy's move to monopolize political power.

In support of this claim, this section considers the orientation of both social movement organizations and political parties. Both Islamist and leftist groups are divided in their stances toward the monarchy. Further, conditional on their orientation toward the monarchy, leftists and Islamists have taken similar positions on questions of political participation and policy. Their goals are not reducible to claims about the extent to which religion should play a role in politics in the kingdom.

Leftist Opposition in the Postcolonial Era

With the arrival of independence in 1956, King Mohammed V sought to limit the power of the Hizb al-Istiqlal and gain control over other groups that had sprung up during the final years of the anti-colonial struggle.¹¹ In 1959 a leftist party was created when Mehdi Ben Barka, Abderrahim Bouabid, and Abderrahmane Youssoufi split with the Istiqlal to form the National Union of Popular Forces (Union Nationale des Forces Populaires, or UNFP). Its platform included agrarian reform and democracy. The UNFP took a more confrontational stance toward the monarchy than the Istiqlal party, led by Allal al-Fasi. With the death of the king in 1961, al-Fasi supported the new king, Hassan II, calling for national unity (Miller 2013, 163). Yet in creating the 1962 constitution, the king sought to ensure that the *Istiqlal* would not retain its dominance. The constitution prohibited a single ruling party (Buehler 2018, 46; Waterbury 1970, 256). The king also built loyalist parties led by palace insiders to offset opposition parties, a strategy that has continued to the present day (Buehler 2018, 47).

While the Istiqlal accepted the new constitution, the UNFP opposed it, with Ben Barka declaring that “the primary task of the Moroccan people is to battle this totally feudal regime” (quoted in Miller 2013, 167). Ben Barka's (1966) essay, *The Revolutionary Option in Morocco*, laid out his confrontational strategy, and led to widespread arrests of UNFP militants and the declaration of a state of emergency, which lasted from 1965 to 1970. Ben Barka himself was kidnapped on the streets of Paris in 1965 and never seen again, presumably assassinated.

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The UNFP was not the only organization confronting the regime; during the late 1960s and early 1970s, protests and strikes occurred on university campuses, organized by the Moroccan National Students Union. High school students also carried out demonstrations (Miller 2013, 168). On the far left, an organization called Ila al-Amam (To the Forefront) opposed the monarchy and faced severe repression in the early 1970s. One of its founders, Abraham Sefarty, was condemned to life imprisonment in 1977, an event that some suggest marks the beginning of what is known as the “years of lead” (approximately 1975–1990) during which the regime imprisoned and tortured political opponents (Miller 2013, 170).

Not all leftists agreed with these groups’ confrontational stance toward the monarchy. Bouabid, formerly of the UNFP, established the Socialist Union of Popular Forces (Union Socialiste des Forces Populaires, or USFP) in Rabat; it renounced violence and announced that it would participate in electoral politics (Buehler 2018, 61–62). The USFP advocated agrarian reform and state economic planning. Its secularist stance included refusing to wear djellabas for a royal speech on the grounds that these cloaks were associated with Islamic symbols of monarchy. This move was not so much a rejection of religion as a rejection of the monarchy’s appropriation of traditional and religious symbols.

The monarchy prevented the USFP from gaining too much electoral power after the state of emergency ended and through the 1980s by fielding loyalist candidates running as “independents” and creating royalist parties. The monarchy also controlled most ministry appointments. In the 1980s, as Lust (2006, 130) writes, political contestation remained primarily between the king and the parties, although bread riots and other contentious strikes and protests occurred during the decade in response to neoliberal reforms. In 1996, constitutional reform reduced the number of king-appointed ministers, which motivated the USFP to enter the government. In 1998 the USFP, led by the former political prisoner and founder of the UNFP Abderrahman al-Youssoufi, formed the *Alternance* government, leading the parliament for the first time. Al-Youssoufi’s appointment as prime minister prompted hopes that a genuine democratic transition had begun. The USFP, however, lacked a majority and had to share power with rural loyalist parties. It did not control important ministries and could not implement deep reforms. Ultimately, the USFP came to be seen as a party that had been co-opted by the monarchy, and it faced competition from Islamist opponents.

Islamist Opposition in the Postcolonial Era

In 1969 ‘Abd al-Karim Mouti’, a former UNFP member, founded the al-Shabiba al-Islamiyya (Islamic Youth) organization, which focused on clandestine activities, as well as public and educational initiatives (Clark and Dalmasso 2015; Miller 2013, 188). A dozen members of this group withdrew to create the Islamic Group, which focused solely on social and educational activities, renounced the use of violence, and recognized the monarchy as legitimate. This group created At-Tawhid wa al-Islah (the Unity and Reform Movement) in the 1980s, which sought official recognition and the right to form a political party (Willis 2004, 55). They entered electoral politics in 1996, in partnership with an exist-

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ing political party. In 1998, they renamed their organization the Party of Justice and Development (PJD), keeping the Unity and Reform Movement as a social movement organization (Clark and Dalmasso 2015, 194–95).

The PJD won nine seats in parliament in 1997, and was invited to join the coalition government led by the USFP. The party declined, preferring not to associate itself with a government whose chances of success were uncertain. It adopted a position of “critical support” for the new government in the hope that this would allow the party to back al-Youssoufi’s reformist agenda while maintaining the flexibility to distance itself from the new government’s failures (Willis 2004, 56).

The PJD’s political aims differed from the USFP’s in several respects. While the leftists opposed the regime’s neoliberal reforms, resisting budget austerity and privatization, the PJD offered moderate support for the regime’s agenda. PJD leader Abdelilah Benkirane stated, “We believe in the free market, but we think the state needs to take up its role to restore economic balance and justice in society. We support pro-social neoliberalism” (quoted in Buehler 2018, 65). The PJD also differed in its stance on reforming the *Moudawana*, the law governing the family, opposing proposals to ban polygamy, raise the minimum age for marriage, and alter the right of husbands to repudiate their wives (Willis 2004, 56). While the PJD’s religious orientation shaped the latter stance, its economic policies had little to do with religion.

The PJD and the USFP’s *Alternance* government also converged in important areas. Both had opposed Morocco’s pro-Western stance during the 1991 US war in Iraq; their pro-Palestinian views were shared by most parties in parliament, and they opposed the creation of a palace-sponsored political party (Buehler 2018, 68; Willis 2004, 56). Further, their overall stance toward the royal palace and the system of government was the same: while pushing for moderate reforms, neither the USFP nor the PJD has ever challenged the monarchy’s political dominance. In contrast to both leftist and Islamist groups that operate outside the party structure, the USFP and the PJD accept the institutional rules set in place by the monarchy.

The other major Islamist force in Moroccan politics is the JCG, an association that operates outside formal institutional channels and reportedly has more supporters than the PJD, although its actual membership is unknown. The JCG differs from other Islamist social movements in the wider Muslim world, largely because it was organized by a charismatic individual, the former high school teacher and Sufi mystic Abdessalam Yassine (Willis 2004, 58). Yassine gained notoriety when he sent a public letter to Hassan II in 1974 in which he questioned the king’s religious legitimacy and called upon him to repent and “return to God” (Miller 2013, 189). In response, Yassine was sent to a mental hospital for three years. When he was released, he was placed under house arrest, but he continued to build his movement, creating the JCG in 1987.

Since its inception, the JCG has operated as a social movement, with a strong base among university students and in the cities, despite the fact that it was outlawed in 1990. The association’s success has depended upon its ability to provide a range of social services,

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such as healthcare, basic welfare, blood banks, and literacy courses (Daadaoui 2016; Lust 2006, 139). It has elected to remain outside institutional party structures. After his release from house arrest in 2000, Yassine told the press that his association “is a movement focused on spiritual education, not a political party ... but we are partly interested in politics” (quoted in Daadaoui 2016). Yassine continued to confront the king when Mohammed VI took the throne after his father’s death in 1999, criticizing the monarchy’s accumulation of wealth, and directly attacking the king’s religious legitimacy by calling the traditional ceremony in which elites pledge their allegiance, “a sacrilegious ceremony in which the king is worshipped” (quoted in Daadaoui 2016).

The association’s political stance has had more in common with the banned leftist parties like the UNFP or Sefarty’s Ila al-Amam than with the PJD, despite sharing an explicitly religious orientation.¹² Yassine, like Ben Barka and Sefarty, explicitly criticized the king’s monopolization of wealth and power. His concern, like theirs, was with the system of rule in Morocco, and he too was repressed for directly confronting the king. As Lust (2006) has argued, a key feature of the Moroccan opposition lies in the distinction between groups that operate within the formal political system and those that exist outside it. Yassine’s association, like the leftist organizations that preceded it, is anti-royalist and concerned with social justice and economic redistribution. The difference between the leftists and the JCG is that Yassine, in his publications and texts, marshals religious arguments to defend these goals.

Islamists and Leftists in Morocco’s 2011 Uprising

In February 2011, as popular uprisings spread across the Arab world, Moroccans took to the streets in approximately sixty cities and towns.¹³ Buehler (2018), seeking to explain why these protests failed to produce the same unity of purpose that occurred in Tunisia, stresses the failure of Islamists and leftists to ally in support of the protests. He writes that “whereas many of Morocco’s Islamists participated in the protests, its leftists did not” (Buehler 2018, 166). From this perspective, the Islamist-secular divide was a critical determinant of participation in this mass wave of protest. Buehler, however, focuses exclusively on the realm of formal politics; by Islamists, he means the PJD, whose members participated at high levels early on in the protests, and by leftists, he means the USFP, which did not endorse the protest movement.

Broadening the analysis to include social movement organizations produces a different picture. The February 20th movement was largely made up of human rights activists and leftist groups that were not associated with the USFP. It also included activists seeking Amazigh rights and student union groups, and it relied on the trade union for meeting space. Only one small group, the Mouvement Alternatif pour les Libertés Individuelles (MALI), was openly anti-religious.¹⁴ The majority focused on corruption, economic prob-

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lems, and authoritarianism. Leftists were among the first movers that organized the initial protests, but they were not aligned with the USFP.

Islamists were a part of a coalition that participated in the 2011 protests. PJD leaders and members participated in the protests up until March 2011, although Benkirane refrained from officially endorsing them. A more important role was played by the JCG, which formed an alliance with the February 20th movement and participated in protests until December 2011. A coalition that included Islamists, leftists, and a small number of atheists and republicans was not easy to maintain, though the activists were committed to a broad tent strategy that they argued would maximize the chances of gaining real movement toward “a king who reigns but does not rule.”¹⁵ When progress toward that goal appeared stalled, Yassine withdrew his organization from the protests and resumed a rejectionist stance toward the monarchy until his death one year later.

In response to the protests, the king authorized changes to the constitution and called for new legislative elections. In November the PJD came first in the elections, winning more seats than the royalist Party of Authenticity and Modernity or the USFP, now widely seen as having failed to implement meaningful change during its years leading the parliament. Upon the PJD's victory, Benkirane immediately reached out to leftists to form a coalition government, but they rejected his invitation, and Benkirane was forced to cooperate with centrist and royalist parties (Buehler 2018, 170–172).

The PJD's electoral triumph mimics the victories that occurred in the wake of the uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt. Yet the reasons for the PJD's victory have little to do with its religious orientation, or the desire to deepen the role of religion in the state. In the run-up to the election, Moroccans who voted for the PJD reported that they did so not because they supported a religious platform, but because the other parties running had already tried and failed to address the country's pressing economic woes. By this logic, it was the PJD's “turn” to take the reins, and voters hoped that the PJD's Islamist orientation, and particularly Benkirane's reputation as an upright and moral character, meant that they would be less corrupt and more honest than their predecessors had been.¹⁶

Hereditary Monarchy and the Religious-Secular Cleavage

Morocco is a religiously homogenous country led by a king who is a descendent of the Prophet and holds the title “Commander of the Faithful.” The monarchy in Morocco has a “quasi-divine” aura (Daadaoui 2011, 6). Religion is a central component of the regime's identity; the state's motto is “God, the King, the Nation,” and these three words are engraved on hills throughout Morocco. The king's religious legitimacy sets him apart from other leaders of electoral authoritarian regimes. Some scholars have suggested that religious legitimacy explains the regime's longevity (see Daadaoui 2011; Hammoudi 1997). If these claims are right, we might expect to see less opposition in Morocco than we do in other kinds of authoritarian regimes. Indeed, the amount of critical opposition described

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above may seem surprising if the monarchy's characteristics truly shelter it from challenge.

This chapter, however, is not aimed at addressing regime duration or the overall strength of the opposition.¹⁷ For the purpose of this analysis, the relevant question is whether the monarchy's religious authority affects the religious-secular cleavage in such a way that this chapter's arguments are unlikely to hold elsewhere. The king's religious role may mean that the religious cleavage is less pronounced in Morocco than in countries where the political leader is not also a religious leader. The fusion of religious and political authority in the person of the king may leave fewer openings to politicize religion, or to argue about the role of religion in the state.

Yet while the salience of the cleavage in Morocco may differ from other cases, it is worth exploring these arguments elsewhere. The religious authority of the monarchy has not prevented Islamist challenges that resemble those that have occurred in other places. As Miller (2013, 188) writes, "[t]he monarch, despite all of his galvanizing potential, has never held absolute control over the definition of Islam, leaving an open space for other contenders."

During the colonial period, Allal al-Fasi envisioned an independent state in which religious authority would be exercised by an educated and essentially apolitical ulama (Miller 2013, 188). In the 1970s, the Islamic Youth adopted an anti-royalist stance, questioning the monarchy's religious authority. As described above, the JCG has questioned the king's religious legitimacy since the late 1980s. Opposition leaders can and do question royal plans and policies by arguing that they deviate from Islamic principles and practices.

Even when they do not question the regime, SMOs and political parties take positions on religious questions. Heated debates over the rights of women to divorce or inherit, for instance, have occurred during periods of monarchy-initiated legal reform. Religion remains salient for politics. My claim is not that religious questions are not contentious, but that the religious cleavage does not differentiate SMOs and political parties as clearly as their stance toward the regime does.

Three other historical episodes illustrate the ways that the king's religious authority is not automatic, but requires active work on the part of the palace and is subject to contestation from below. The first is King Hassan II's reaction to the series of coup attempts that occurred in the early 1970s. In addition to reorganizing the armed forces, he revitalized ties to the conservative Islamic establishment in order to create a counterweight to the military and political parties (Miller 2013, 175). His efforts to build those ties show that the king is not the only important source of religious authority in Morocco. The support of the religious leadership did not automatically follow from his religious credentials.

The second episode occurred in 1975, when the king organized the Green March, a 350,000-person march of volunteers armed only with Qur'ans and Moroccan flags to take back the Spanish-occupied region of the Sahara. With this event, the king sought to shore up flagging popular and military support by acquiring Morocco's "lost territory," not via

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military action, but by wielding the word of God. This move worked to unify the country behind the king, but by the 1980s, that unity had again fragmented and the king faced new domestic challenges in the form of strikes, protests, and the formation of Islamist and other civil society organizations.

The third episode was the construction of the Hassan II Mosque, completed in Casablanca in 1993. The king commissioned the mosque to demonstrate his piety, but the project provoked intense public criticism over the size and cost of the mosque. Critics argued that the king's initial plan to build the second-largest mosque in the world was ostentatious and impious, an inappropriate use of resources in a highly impoverished country.¹⁸ Cartoons, jokes, and articles pointed to corruption in the collection of funds; the poor were said to be repeatedly taxed for the project.

The king's religious role has not foreclosed contestation in Morocco. While few among the opposition, or the wider public, question his religious role as a descendent of the Prophet and the Commander of the Faithful, religious and political authority are not the same. The SMOs that have adopted a more confrontational stance toward the regime have argued that the king's religious role does not confer the right to consolidate political control. Members of the February 20th movement and the JCG have pushed for a genuine constitutional democracy that retains the king in a symbolic and religious role, echoing the calls for a limited monarchy made in the early twentieth century. These claims are part of the national conversation, suggesting that vibrant debate exists even in a hereditary monarchy with religious legitimacy.

Further research on other cases can help to clarify whether the king's role has deflected religious opposition in Morocco, making this case markedly different from other places in the Muslim world. In fact, recent work points to similar dynamics elsewhere. In this volume, Pepinsky studies the cases of Indonesia and Malaysia from the perspective of voters, and argues that "voting for Islam is a more complicated and conditional phenomenon than the assumption of Islam as a programmatic identity implies." Like this chapter, he suggests the need to look beyond party labels to the policies driving identification with Islamist platforms. In his study of Tunisia, Grubman (2020) is directly concerned with the same outcome I address here: the formation of political cleavages. In electoral authoritarian regimes, Grubman argues, parties have difficulty developing distinctive ideological platforms. Before the 2011 revolution, parties under Ben Ali were shaped by their relationship to the regime:

Faced with a highly repressive and exclusive regime cloaking itself in the rhetoric of liberalism and pragmatism, opposition parties had little opportunity or incentive to organize around shared platforms for governing—let alone to communicate them to the public. Instead, they built their "brands" primarily by navigating their distance from the regime, earning formal recognition or not, participating in elections or not, and ganging up with each other or not (Grubman 2020, 86).

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Grubman's focus is on economic cleavages, but it is encouraging that in a non-monarchical authoritarian regime, he too found that the key factor shaping opposition groups was how they handled the regime, a question that parties and SMOs in a democracy do not face.

Conclusion

Opposition groups in Morocco, both institutional and extra-institutional, identify with religious or secular frames. But a focus on the ideologies that opposition groups have used to situate themselves in the political spectrum obscures the primary political cleavage that has divided Morocco since the colonial era: the division between those who are critical of the monarchy's political dominance, and those who accept it. Paraphrasing Rémy Leveau, Miller (2013, 214) writes that "the crux of the political struggle in Morocco is not over ideology in all its competing forms, but rather over tactics and accommodation of interests." Leveau (2000, 122–123) states, "Morocco's most important institutional problems ... concern the interaction and power-sharing between the monarchy and Morocco's political parties." These insights are reflected in work that focuses on the importance of co-optation for regime stability (see Buehler 2018; Lust 2006).

Scholars writing on Moroccan politics often focus either on political parties or on social movements, but considering both kinds of opposition is important for understanding how attitudes toward the palace affect opposition strategies. Antagonistic stances toward the monarchy are largely expressed outside the realm of formal politics. These stances have been taken by both religious and secular actors, including leftists, civil society organizations such as human rights and women's rights groups, and Islamist movements such as the JCG, as well as smaller underground Islamist organizations. Formal political parties, whether they are leftist or Islamist in orientation, adopt cooperative stances toward the monarchy.

Through discussing opposition groups in Morocco, I have sought to advance three general claims. First, I have stressed that political cleavages should not be expected to work similarly in democracies and autocracies. The logic of political cleavages in democracies is that they reflect an underlying distribution of preferences for policies—they reflect what people want their government to do. Since people do not all support the same policies, cleavages mark off programmatic differences. In autocracies, policy preferences cannot be translated into policy outcomes without approval by a regime whose power is not constrained by free-and-fair competitive elections, as in functioning democracies. Parties and SMOs in electoral authoritarian regimes have to decide how to contend with a regime, not just how to win support. It is principally their stance toward the regime that situates them in the political arena. That stance also matters for how and whether they are able to gain support from different segments of the broader public.

Second, this analysis has called attention to the need to consider both formal political parties and informal political groups when attempting to understand opposition politics under electoral authoritarianism. The most critical actors are typically not political par-

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ties who have accepted the authoritarian rules of the game, and by focusing solely on political parties, it can be easy to overstate regime stability, as many who follow the Middle East learned after the 2011 protests. In this chapter, including both SMOs and political parties made it possible to see the platforms that are shared by organizations with different ideological identities. SMOs often shared a similar stance toward the regime and espoused the same economic and political goals, regardless of whether they were Islamist or leftist. Political parties also differed less than a focus on ideology might lead us to expect.

Third, I argued that actors do not need to choose between religious and secular frames, but can incorporate elements of both. In a predominantly Muslim society, secular organizations may justify and propose policies on religious grounds, and Islamist groups can support secular aims. Indeed, key issues such as poverty alleviation, education, and corruption are not easily classifiable as either secular or religious. The PJD in recent years has focused on economic problems, prioritizing those over issues such as prostitution, alcohol consumption, or women's rights, areas that are often key components of Islamist platforms. The USFP has supported pan-Arab and pan-Muslim causes such as the plight of Palestinians or Iraqis. Social movement actors also have both secular and religious goals, and they draw on religious justifications to make claims about social justice, welfare, and development. Opposition groups are more diverse than a focus on the secular-religious cleavage would suggest. In seeking to build support and carve out a position toward the regime, they can adopt a variety of different policy platforms.

In making these claims, this chapter seeks to contribute to a growing body of work that has questioned the causal role of religiosity in producing Islamist success at the ballot box (see Grubman 2020; Masoud 2014; Pepinsky, Liddle, and Mujani 2012). I extend this insight from parties and voting to social movement organizing, adding to work that suggests that religiosity may not be the variable that sets opposition groups apart. This chapter also aimed to contribute to understanding the logic of cleavages in electoral authoritarian settings, advising caution when important insights from the study of cleavages in democracies to non-democracies. Much of the existing work on political Islam has been concerned with the question of whether Islamists, or even Muslims more generally, would be able to abide by democratic rules once democracy was attained.¹⁹ But not all regimes are democratizing, and political cleavages are not the same in places where there is a regime that seeks to weaken and co-opt critical voices. In making this point, I join scholars like Schwedler (2006) and Yadav (2013) who study how Islamist parties act within authoritarian regimes.

This chapter has set aside some important questions for future study, such as how a regime's use of repression affects which political groups survive and even thrive under authoritarianism, or why some ideologies are more popular and resonant at particular points in time. These are worthy topics to address. This chapter's aim was to think through the nature of the secular and religious cleavage in predominantly Muslim coun-

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tries under electoral authoritarianism, and to suggest that cleavages are not always what they seem to be.

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Notes:

- (1.) See Boix (2009); Downs (1957); Lipset and Rokkan (1967).
- (2.) For a discussion of hybrid regimes, see Levitsky and Way (2010). On the role of democratic institutions in authoritarian regimes, see Gandhi (2008).
- (3.) On the monarchy's power and the limited role provided for parliament by the constitution, see Maghraoui (2011); Waterbury (1970).
- (4.) Electoral authoritarian regimes include monarchies, military regimes, personalistic regimes, and single-party regimes. In single-party regimes, in which the ruling regime is a party that participates in the electoral institutions, some modifications to the theory may be required, though the claim that the stance toward the regime is the opposition's primary concern still holds. In single-party regimes, the cleavage structure may look different than it does in a personalistic regime or hereditary monarchy because the ruling party's ideology may shape the ideologies available to the opposition. On these subtypes of authoritarianism, see Geddes et al. (2014) and Smith (2005).
- (5.) Questions about how to classify colonial regimes are not settled in the literature; French colonial rule was clearly undemocratic and sometimes had features of modern electoral authoritarianism, though inconsistently. This chapter does not assume that French rule is the same type of rule as the postcolonial monarchy; including it allows for consideration of cleavages in a different context.
- (6.) For more on the plan of reforms, see Abun-Nasr (1975); al-Fasi (1970); Lawrence (2013, chap. 2); Rézette (1955); Waterbury (1970).
- (7.) On these tactics, see Lawrence (2010, 2013).
- (8.) On the definition, see Gellner (1983); on its flexibility, see Kocher et al. (2018, 124).
- (9.) These claims did not go uncontested; in one instance, a reformist leader was ejected from the mosque by prayer-goers who argued that he was using the mosque for political, not religious purposes (Lawrence 2013, 202).
- (10.) French rule was challenged directly during the early years of the protectorate in the areas that had not been conquered; in mountainous areas, tribes fought French rule until 1934 (Porch 1982).
- (11.) On the splintering of the nationalist movement into multiple groups, see Lawrence (2010). On the king's consolidation of power in the early years of independence, see Waterbury (1970) and Zartman (1964).

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(12.) In contrast, Daadaoui (2011, 11) sees both the PJD and the JCG as sharing the goal of mitigating the authoritarian effects of the regime; I would suggest that the JCG is far more confrontational about this goal than the PJD is, and the former's participation in the 2011 protests supports this view.

(13.) On the organization, goals, and mobilization processes of the uprising in Morocco, see Benchemsi (2014) and Lawrence (2017).

(14.) This group was known for holding picnics in public during Ramadan in protest of a law prohibiting the breaking of the Ramadan fast. The group is also pro-gay rights. See http://www.manifeste.org/rubrique.php?id_rubrique=93.

(15.) Author field notes from the February 20th movement's General Assembly, November 2011.

(16.) See Cammett and Jones Luong (2014) for a broader discussion of how Islamists' reputation for trustworthiness can be an advantage at the ballot box.

(17.) On the question of hereditary monarchy and regime longevity, see Brownlee et al. (2013); Lawrence (2014); Menaldo (2012); Yom and Gause (2012).

(18.) Building a mosque that would rival the ones in Mecca and Medina was criticized as disrespectful of Muslim holy sites. Today, the mosque is the largest in Africa, and the fifth largest in the world.

(19.) For a sample of work in this vein, see Grewal (2020); Kalyvas (2000); Langohr (2001); March (2009).

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