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Pragmatism Rather than Backlash: Moroccan Perceptions of Western Democracy Promotion

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with Jaber Afoukane, Fouad M. Ammor and Derek Lutterbeck

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This report was submitted by the Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies (MEDAC), Malta, and the Groupement d'Études et de Recherches sur la Méditerranée (GERM), Rabat. The author, Anna Khakee, is an international consultant and a democratisation expert at FRIDE, Madrid. Jaber Afoukane is a PhD candidate; Fouad M. Ammor is a Research Fellow at the GERM and Derek Lutterbeck is the Deputy Director of MEDAC.

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Executive Summary

1) This study examines perceptions of Western democracy promotion among its "targets" in Morocco – namely, NGOs, political party activists and parliamentarians, representatives of the judiciary and the state, journalists, and academics. Underlying this question is the assumption that perceptions of legitimacy and credibility are crucial for the effectiveness of democracy promotion, which touches sensitive institutions at the core of the political system. Legitimacy and credibility are particularly crucial in the Arab region, where suspicion of official political motives is rife. This report seeks to answer questions such as: Do Moroccan actors feel that they can legitimately accept democracy assistance from Western governments or organizations? Are some forms of democracy promotion, or certain sources of funding, perceived as more (or less) legitimate than others? In what ways (if at all) does Western funding alter public perceptions of an actor receiving democracy assistance? To what extent do different categories of actors (civil society activists versus civil servants, religious versus secular party representatives, etc) perceive Western democracy promotion differently?

2) Perceptions of those at the receiving end of democracy assistance have not been granted much attention in the already very substantial literature on democracy promotion. Instead, the focus of writings on the MENA region and Morocco, as elsewhere, has been on four, mainly donor-centred, issues: why Western states promote democracy in the region; what democracy-promoting actors are doing (or not doing); how effective and consistent democracy promotion efforts have been; and what specific problems and challenges Western countries have faced in seeking to promote democracy in the Arab World. This study adds a new angle to this literature.

3) Morocco is a monarchy where the king effectively controls the executive, the judiciary, the legislature and the armed forces. In addition, he owns vast swaths of the economy and is Commander of the Faithful. The country is nevertheless often perceived as one of the most liberal and progressive of the MENA region and thus a promising target for democracy promotion. This is due to reforms implemented over the last two decades, including the introduction of a directly elected lower house, the prohibition of torture, the emerging participation of opposition in government, the institution of a commission to investigate previous repression, and the revamping of the personal status code to strengthen the position of women.

4) Morocco receives democracy and governance assistance from the European Union and, to a lesser extent, from individual EU governments, most notably Germany, France, and Spain. The United States and Canada also provide Morocco with democracy support. Western NGOs are active in the area as well. In addition to democracy assistance, respect for democratic principles is included in the main agreements and initiatives existing between Morocco, on the one hand, and EU states, on the other. Morocco welcomed its first international election observation mission in 2007.

5) This study finds that, contrary to some expectations, there has been no severe backlash against democracy promotion in Morocco to date. Virtually no actor will outright refuse to work with Western partners: all Moroccan actors, from Islamists to feminists, are involved in some form of international collaboration. Religious parties and NGOs tend to prefer partnership and debate with Western interlocutors, rather than receiving financial assistance, which in some instances is entirely rejected.

6) There is, however, refusal to cooperate with the US government in some quarters, and the US embassy and US government bodies in Morocco have been targeted by boycotts of various kinds on the part of both civil society and political actors of all stripes, in particular since the beginning of the war in Iraq. This rejection has, however, almost always been confined to American government representatives, while the willingness to work with US civil society seems to have remained intact. As regards the Europeans, there are disagreements as to the legitimacy of the EU's policy of excluding moderate Islamists from its democracy promotion programmes.

6) Moroccan actors universally perceive foreign states as promoting democracy in their own self-interest, but do not subsequently conclude that there are any conspiracies or plots to undermine the country or its independence, and do not engage in "CIA spotting". Most interviewees agree that the perception of a Moroccan organization is not automatically altered if it accepts funds or participates in programmes with foreign donors (although accepting funds from US donors can have an impact on the image of the recipient), as long as goals and methods are clearly set and finances are transparent.

7) This generally nuanced stance reflects the fact that: (a) Moroccan parliamentarians, political party representatives and NGOs – here confined to the larger, policy-oriented NGOs

– have most often reached a well-defined and stable position vis-à-vis foreign donors and initiatives, and (b) that the position adopted can almost always be encompassed by one word: pragmatism.

8) The Moroccan government has not, as some of its counterparts elsewhere in the MENA region, played the "traitor" card against NGOs or other actors that accept foreign funding, having, on the contrary, encouraged NGOs to seek Western assistance. Islamists have also largely avoided that argument vis-à-vis secular NGOs in recent years (not least because they themselves have shown willingness to work with Western partners).

9) The international election observation mission of the 2007 parliamentary elections was perceived as relatively limited and "light" on the ground. Its conclusions are for the most part not disputed, not least because they ran closely in line with those of national observers.

10) It must be underlined that this "lack of a backlash" against democracy promotion in Morocco to date does not mean that it has been adverted for good: if Western policy towards the wider region takes another turn for the worse, attitudes could very well change. The opacity of some foreign donors (particularly some NGOs and quasi-NGOs) as to their own sources of funding also poses a problem. Moreover, if Moroccan NGO representatives become perceived as either pursuing foreign agendas – through insensitive donor meddling – or as using this money for their own enrichment, this could certainly also lead to a backlash.

11) Lastly, it must be stressed that this is a pilot study, the conclusions of which cannot necessarily be extended to other parts of the MENA region – indeed, in some ways, they seem quite specific to the Moroccan case. As such, similar research should ideally be conducted elsewhere in the region.

Introduction

Democratisation has been the stated goal of many Western states' policies in the Arab world since the end of the cold war.[1] This aim became something of a foreign policy mantra after the Al Qaeda attacks of 11 September 2001 in New York: this and subsequent attacks in Madrid and London led Western governments to stress democratization in Arab countries as one way of addressing the "root causes" of terrorism.

The West has not applied its democratizing zeal evenly across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, however. Morocco, as one of the most liberal regimes of the region and, simultaneously, both a victim of terror and the country of origin of some terrorists active in Western Europe, has been a main target of Western democracy promotion in recent years. Whether democracy promotion – including support for civil society, political parties and independent media, assistance to the parliament and the judiciary, electoral observation missions, positive and negative conditionalities,[2] and public praise and criticism – has had any effect has been widely debated, within and outside the region.

This report examines a different, but related, question: how have the EU, US and other Western democracy promotion activities been perceived in Morocco? This question is underlined by the assumption that perceptions of legitimacy and credibility are crucial for the effectiveness of democracy promotion, which by its very nature touches sensitive institutions at the core of the political system. Legitimacy and credibility are particularly crucial in the Arab region, where suspicion of official political motives is rife. It is not enough, then, that the policies be well-tailored to local needs, appropriately funded, and professionally executed: if the activities are seen as opaque and suspect, they are nevertheless likely to fail. Worse, a severe lack of credibility and legitimacy could undermine the whole endeavour by discrediting those that work to promote democracy and the goal of democratisation itself.

Unlike many other studies on Western democracy promotion in the MENA region, the focus of this study centres on the receiving end of such policies. The aim is to examine the degree of legitimacy and credibility attributed to democracy promotion in the eyes of those who have come in direct or indirect contact with such programmes (such as representatives of the media, parliament, NGOs, political parties, the state, etc). This report thus seeks to answer questions such as:

- Do Moroccan actors feel they can legitimately accept democracy assistance from Western governments or organizations?
- Are some forms of democracy promotion, or certain sources of funding, perceived as more (or less) legitimate than others?
- In what ways (if at all) does Western funding alter public perceptions of an actor receiving democracy assistance?
- Why do some actors refuse Western funds, and who are they?
- How are Western democratic conditionalities, criticism, and praise perceived? Are they seen as influential in moving society towards political change?
- To what extent do different categories of actors (for example, civil society activists versus civil servants, or religious versus secular party representatives) perceive Western democracy promotion differently?

The main finding of this study is that there has been no severe backlash against democracy promotion in Morocco to date. This contrasts sharply with government and popular reactions in a number of other countries in the region, such as Egypt and select Gulf states. At the same time, this study also highlights that focusing on the actual "targets" of democracy assistance – NGOs, political party activists and parliamentarians, representatives of the judiciary and the state, journalists, and academics – rather than on political leaders or the general public, can reveal a richer and more nuanced picture of how democracy promotion is perceived in the recipient country.

This study shows that virtually no actor will refuse outright to work with any Western partner. Religious parties and NGOs tend to prefer partnership and debate with Western interlocutors over financial assistance, which is in some instances completely rejected. There is, however, firm rejection of one particular Western interlocutor – namely the US government, which has been targeted by boycotts of various kinds on the part of both civil society and political actors of all stripes, in particular since the beginning of the war in Iraq. This rejection is, however, almost always confined to the American government: the willingness to

1 The author wishes to thank first and foremost Jaber Afoukane and Houda El Kheloufi of GERM (**Groupement d'Études et de Recherches sur la Méditerranée**) for their invaluable help with identifying and tracking down potential interviewees for this study. Prof. Khadija Elmadmad was also extremely kind and helpful in getting me in touch with key people, particularly in the justice sector. My heartfelt gratitude also goes to all Moroccan professionals who so generously shared their time and insights. Finally, many thanks to Fouad M. Ammor, Derek Lutterbeck, and Tobias Schumacher for reading and commenting on earlier versions of this manuscript. The analysis in this report, as well as any errors, are solely the author's.
2 Positive conditionalities consist in rewarding democratic reform with favours sought by MENA countries, such as development assistance, trade liberalisation, and more inclusive association agreements, while negative conditionalities may involve punishing undemocratic behaviour by withdrawing favours or imposing sanctions of various kinds.

work with US civil society organisations remains intact. Europeans face no such problems. However, there are disagreements as to the legitimacy of the EU's policy of excluding moderate Islamists from their democracy promotion programmes.

Moroccan actors universally perceive foreign states as promoting democracy in their own self-interest, but do not conclude as a result that there are any conspiracies or plots to undermine the country or its independence, and do not engage in "CIA spotting". Most interviewees agree that the perception of a Moroccan organisation is not automatically altered if it accepts funds or participates in programmes with foreign donors (although accepting funds from US donors can have an impact on the image of the recipient), as long as goals and methods are set and finances are transparent.

All this shows, firstly, that Moroccan parliamentarians, political party representatives and NGOs – here confined to the larger, policy-oriented NGOs – have usually reached a well-defined and stable position vis-à-vis foreign donors and initiatives. Secondly, it indicates that the adopted position can almost always be captured in one word: pragmatism. This stance is also reflected in the policy of the Moroccan government. It has not, as has its Egyptian counterpart for example, played the "traitor" card against NGOs or other actors accepting foreign funds, but has in practice encouraged NGOs to seek Western financing. Islamists have also largely avoided pursuing that line of argument vis-à-vis secular NGOs in recent years (not least because they themselves have shown willingness to work with Western partners).

The international election observation mission of the 2007 parliamentary elections – the first such mission in Moroccan history – was perceived as relatively limited and "light" on the ground. Its conclusions are for the most part not disputed, not least because they remained close in line with those of national observers.

It must be underlined that the relative "lack of a backlash" against democracy promotion in Morocco to date does not mean that such a backlash has been averted for good: if Western policy towards the wider region takes another turn for the worse, it could very well change. The opacity of some foreign donors (particularly some NGOs and quasi-NGOs) as to their own sources of funding is also a potential source of a future backlash. Moreover, if Moroccan NGO representatives are believed to be pursuing foreign agendas – through insensitive donor meddling – or as using the funds for their own enrichment, this backlash may emerge.

Lastly, it must be stressed that this is a pilot study covering only Morocco and that its conclusions cannot necessarily be extended to other parts of the MENA region. Indeed, they seem quite specific to the Moroccan case, as the only politically liberalizing country of the Maghreb. Similar research should thus ideally be conducted elsewhere in the wider region, seeing as results will most certainly vary significantly.

The study begins with an overview of the current literature on democracy promotion in the MENA region and Morocco, showing that it has tended to be rather donor-focused: little has, for instance, been written on the question of perceptions of legitimacy and credibility on the receiving end of these efforts. Section 2 goes on to provide a brief survey of the democracy promoting activities of Western governments and organisations. These initial sections aim to provide the necessary backdrop to the analysis of Moroccan perceptions of Western democracy promotion found in section 3. A series of concrete policy recommendations are then outlined in the conclusion.

1. Analysing democracy promotion in the MENA region: A focus on the donors

The perceptions of those at the receiving end of democracy assistance have not been given much attention in the already very substantial literature devoted to democracy promotion. Writings on the MENA region and Morocco, as elsewhere, tend to focus on four, mainly donor-centred, issues: **why Western states promote democracy** in the region; **what democracy promoting actors are doing** (or not doing); **how effective and consistent democracy promotion efforts have been**; and **what specific problems and challenges Western countries have faced** in seeking to promote democracy in the Arab World.

There is little agreement on **why Western states promote democracy** in the MENA region. For the EU, in particular, the objective of ensuring stability and reducing migration in its southern neighbourhood (Morocco is an especially significant source and transit country for irregular immigration into the EU) is often highlighted as an important rationale underlying its democracy promotion activities – as well as, incidentally, the limits to these efforts – in the southern Mediterranean.[3] As already mentioned, the lack of democracy in MENA states has also been pin-pointed as one of the "root causes" of terrorism. The fostering of democracy in the region has thus often been justified, particularly, but not only, by the US government, as a key element in the "war on terrorism".[4] Although not focusing specifically on the Arab World, others claim that in a globalising world, the interests of international capital – represented by the American state – see liberal democracy as the best way to assure stability and popular acquiescence in the developing world. The US government therefore initiated its democracy promotion in the 1980s. Nevertheless, the aim is not to create truly democratic political systems, but rather to ensure structures of rule that support neo-liberal economic reforms, while co-opting mass movements for social change.[5] Within the MENA region – although not primarily in Morocco – a variant of this argument, focused on Western powers' attempts to control Arab governments, and hence oil supply, is quite widespread.[6]

As a consequence of the sometimes bewildering plethora of actors and activities involved, **descriptive and comparative** studies are quite numerous: as subsequent sections will show, not only governments, but also a wide range of intergovernmental organizations, NGOs and quasi-NGOs, attempt to promote democracy in Morocco and the other MENA states, using a wide variety of means. Probably the best purely descriptive presentation of US government agencies, quasi-governmental and non-governmental agencies active in democracy promotion in the Middle East is published by the Carnegie Endowment.[7] In a number of studies, Richard Youngs focuses on EU democracy promotion in the Middle East and North Africa, analyzing the specificities and scope of European Union assistance. He notes, for example, the cautious nature of EU democracy promotion, the avoidance of conditionalities, and the focus on less controversial forms of assistance to civil society.[8] Echoing this conclusion, the EU position in Morocco is neatly summed up by Dorothée Schmid: "[the EU's] role seems to be presently limited to a field of action designed by the Moroccan officials themselves. The EU has no choice other than to praise Moroccan independent initiatives and push their logic to the extreme, hoping that it could finally trigger substantial change".[9] In a similar vein, a number of studies comparing US and EU assistance to MENA countries identify the following main differences: the US' more bottom-up approach, as compared to the rather state-centred EU, the EU avoidance of assisting political parties, and a greater institutionalization of EU policies.[10] There have also been differences regarding the inclusion of Islamists: while Europeans consider them, to borrow Richard Young's words, the "untouchables of the democracy assistance world",[11] they have been included in a number of US projects, not least in Morocco. As Boubekeur and Amghar note, US relations are "particularly advanced with the Moroccan Islamist party, the PJD [Justice and Development Party]" as the prospects of a PJD success at the polls in 2007 "prompted the US to support the PJD in the wake of the [Casablanca terrorist] attacks of 16 May 2003, whereas Moroccan political leaders have called for it to be disbanded".[12]

Linked to this is the issue of the **effectiveness and consistency of democracy promoting policies**. A common argument in the vast literature devoted to this question[13] is that democracy promotion has been less effective than was hoped,[14] a conclusion also valid for the MENA region. In a 2002 survey of democracy promotion in North Africa, Richard Gillespie and Laurence Whitehead noted that "less than a decade after the European Union started to extend its democracy promotion efforts to its southern neighbours, there are few if any signs of many tangible results".[15] Similarly, Richard Youngs claims that "the European Union's efforts to promote political reform in North Africa and the Middle East are running into the ground" because it is pursuing "a scatter-gun approach that supports ad hoc initiatives, rather than a coherent strategy for political reform, and a failure to support independent and socially-rooted reformers on the ground".[16] Analyses of post 9/11 US initiatives are no more enthusiastic.[17] With regards to Morocco specifically, observers basically reach the same conclusion: democracy promotion has only been marginally effective, not least

3 Aliboni, 2004; Haddadi, 2004; Schmid and Braizat, 2006; Youngs, 2004.
4 Carothers and Ottaway, 2005; Carothers, 2003; Cook, 2005.
5 The classical account in this vein is written by Robinson (1996).
6 Benjelloun, 2007; Hasbi, 2008, pp. 50-51. Other accounts, in contrast, explain the surge in conditionality and donor demands for democracy as the combined result of the end of the Cold War (which made third world allies redundant and thus made it easier to be "tough" on poorer states) and the increasing "aid fatigue" in rich countries, with concomitant demands from the public for better control and use of aid money (Nelson and Eglinton, 1993; Moore and Robinson, 1994). The backdrop to this is the argument that democracy, or at least good governance, is a precondition for the effective use of aid money, and hence for development. Yet for others, many of whom writing from a neo-conservative perspective, democracy promotion is simply a natural and constant part of US foreign policy in particular (Muravchik, 1991; Smith 1994).
7 Carnegie Endowment (undated). A detailed global equivalent covering European political foundations has been maintained by the Dutch Clingendael Institute (van Wersch, Jos and Jeroen de Zeeuw, 2005).
8 Youngs, 2002, 2004, and 2005. These findings are echoed elsewhere, see for example Warning, 2006, p.48; Kausch, 2008; Schmid, 2006b.
9 **Schmid, 2006b, p.26. See also Malka and Altermann,** 2006; Kausch 2008b. **Other studies focus more specifically on a particular type of democracy assistance,** such as assistance to human rights NGOs, to the judiciary or to the media. Thus for example, in a thoughtful article by Naomi Sakr, after comparing different international and regional funders and initiatives in the area of media freedom in the MENA region, Sakr concludes that "de-politisation", top-down agenda-setting and NGO fragmentation are not, as previously feared, necessary consequences of international funding (Sakr, 2006).
10 Boubekeur and Amghar, 2006; Huber, 2008; Stahn and van Hüllen, 2007; Ammor, 2005.
11 Youngs, 2004, p.12.
12 Boubekeur and Amghar, 2006, p.24. See also Sharp, 2006; Yacoubian, 2007.
13 A review by Gordon Crawford and Iain Kearton from 2002 counted no less than 110 donor evaluations of the effectiveness of democracy assistance, and this, of course, still leaves out the substantial amount of academic writing on the topic (Crawford and Kearton, 2002, p. iv).
14 However, methodological difficulties in measuring effectiveness should not be underestimated (see, for example, Burnell, 2007 (Ed.).
15 Gillespie and Whitehead, 2002, p.192. For a much more sanguine assessment, see Campbell, 2007, who claims (p.65) that "Far from being a failure, the policy of assisting democracy in the Middle East is starting to show remarkable dividends".
16 Youngs, 2006, pp. 1-2. For a similar conclusion, see Albioni, 2005, p.48.
17 United States Government Accountability Office (2005).

because of insufficient incentives for reform. Martina Warning, for example, compares EU democracy promotion in Morocco and Turkey and concludes that Turkey's prospect of EU membership has made a tremendous difference: "it must finally be conceded that the ENP [European Neighbourhood Policy, see section 2 for further discussion of this policy] as a diet version of enlargement simply cannot taste as good as the original".[18]

When the issue of **consistency** is examined, the conclusion is almost invariably the same: there is little of it. In some states, the West vigorously promotes democracy, while in other equally undemocratic countries the issue is hardly on the table. Even in those countries where democracy is promoted, the policies of promoting states do not always consistently favour democracy.[19] This is perhaps particularly true within the MENA region, where Western countries have generally tended to favour undemocratic but "stable" regimes over democratic but potentially unstable ones.[20] Certain authors even claim that the "hidden agenda of the Barcelona Process" is to reinforce authoritarian regimes in the Mediterranean for the sake of regional stability.[21] In the wake of 11 September 2001, the tension between long-term stability – often seen as most successfully furthered through democratisation – and short-term security concerns has often been solved at the expense of democratisation. Contradictions become particularly glaring at times. For example, the EU stresses human rights in its relations with Morocco, while simultaneously pressurizing it to crack down on migrants and combat terrorism, both of which are "likely to have negative consequences in terms of human rights".[22] Some see these contradictions as a consequence of the position of certain EU member states, such as France and Spain, which have long-standing contacts with the Moroccan ruling elite and a strong interest in border control.[23] In a study focusing specifically on Spanish democracy promotion in Morocco, Laura Feliu succinctly sums up the problem of inconsistency: "Can it be effective to invest in reform of the judiciary if one fails to condemn specific cases of unfair trials? Can one collaborate with the independent press if one fails to protest when publications are banned or when a retrogressive press code is passed? Is it coherent policy to finance feminist associations while remaining silent about the reform of the Mudawana?"[24]

Most analysts argue that democracy promotion is particularly difficult in the Arab world. The title of texts attempting to tackle the challenges faced by Western countries seem to speak for themselves: "Uncharted Journey: Promoting Democracy in the Middle East"; "The Wrong Way to Sell Democracy to the Arab World"; and "The Right Way to Promote Arab Reform".[25] Among the core themes invariably addressed are the difficulties in fostering democracy in a region where there is a long tradition of authoritarian rule and where the regimes in power have very limited, if any, interest in significant political liberalisation. Another important challenge discussed is the strong and – since the US-led invasion of Iraq – growing suspicion and distrust as regards Western countries (and in particular the US). In the Arab world, many wonder what the "true" objectives and hidden agendas behind Western democracy promotion efforts are.[26]

It is particularly this latter issue, of the credibility and legitimacy of Western countries' democracy promotion activities in the MENA region, which lies at the heart of this study. While there seems to be general agreement that Western – and in particular US – credibility is indeed a problem, no systematic study has thus far been undertaken to assess how democracy promotion is perceived in the MENA region. There have, of course, been a number of surveys undertaken in the region examining the credibility of the US, in general, as a promoter of political reform, all of which invariably point to its lack of credibility.[27] Several analysts note that Arab leaders tend to be – at best – very lukewarm towards this type of assistance and often see the purported Arab-Western partnerships as one-sided. A number of analysts have also detected a so-called backlash against democracy promotion, whereby some Arab political leaders actively pursue domestic groups and individuals for having obtained foreign funds and attempt to discredit Western democracy promotion in the eyes of the public.[28] A few studies include a passing mention of the perceptions among those at the receiving end of democracy promotion policies.[29] However, no specific and detailed analysis of how different democracy promotion activities, and of how different donor countries and organizations are perceived by both recipients and would-be recipients, has thus far been carried out. The present study represents a first step in filling this gap in the literature, focusing on the case of Morocco. In order to make more general conclusions, research would obviously have to be extended to other countries in the region.

18 Warning, 2006, p.51; see also Maalmi, 2008, pp.70-76.
19 Piccone and Youngs (Eds.) 2006; Uvin, 1993.
20 Gillespie and Whitehead, 2002; Haddadi, 2002; Hänggi and Tanner, 2005.
21 Béatrice Hibou and Luis Martinez, cited in Dorothé Schmid, 2003.
22 Schmid, cited in Warning, p.40.
23 Wegner, 2007; Feliu 2003.
24 Feliu, 2003, p.105.
25 Brzezinski, 2004; Carothers and Ottaway, 2005; Cook, 2005.
26 Malka and Alterman, 2006, pp.19-21.
27 Benjelloun, 2007; Ottaway, 2003; De Bartolo, 2008.
28 Carothers, 2006; Gershman and Allen, 2006. For specific instances of Middle Eastern government repression of international governance assistance work, see Campbell, 2007, and National Endowment for Democracy, 2006, p.7, 30. It must be stressed that the backlash against democracy promotion is not solely an Arab phenomenon: it is equally present in states such as Russia, China and Zimbabwe.
29 Boubekeur and Amghar, 2006, pp.21, 24-25; Malka and Alterman, 2006, p.20; Schmid and Braizat, 2006, pp.16-17, 22; Reinhardt, 2002, pp.15-16; Youngs, 2006, p.5; Kausch, 2007, p.11.

2. Western democracy promotion activities in Morocco to date: A brief overview

Introduction

Among the MENA states, Morocco has been a key target of Western democracy promotion efforts in recent years. The main reason for this is that it is often perceived as one of the most liberal and progressive countries in the region, and hence as an important test case for democracy. This might seem paradoxical, given that the country is a monarchy where the king – apart from being the head of state, with vast powers over the executive, the judiciary, and the legislature – is the commander-in-chief of the armed forces, has control of vast swaths of the economy, and, being considered a direct descendent of the Prophet Muhammad, is also Commander of the Faithful.

Moreover, important civil and political rights are only partially guaranteed in the monarchy. Media freedom (especially in its electronic forms) and the freedom of association are restricted. Elections are held under conditions of apathy – in the 2007 elections, some 63% of the electorate stayed home and 19% of those who actually voted cast a blank or invalid ballot – and the party system is dysfunctional. This, in turn, is a consequence of constitutional and practical arrangements that render the legislature toothless and fragment political parties. Perhaps most importantly, the power of the *makhzen* (the name given to the ruling elite surrounding the king) has not been affected by the reforms.[30]

Progress was achieved in some areas under the late King Hassan II. The most important include the constitutional reforms of 1996, which led to the creation of a Chamber of Representatives directly elected by universal suffrage, the prohibition of torture, and the beginnings of the *gouvernement d' alternance*, allowing, for the first time, opposition parties to participate in the government (yet ministerial appointments were, and still are, subject to approval by the king). Nevertheless, King Hassan II's decades of heavy authoritarian rule during the *années de plomb* ("the years of lead") cast a shadow over these late reforms.

The new King Muhammad VI has, albeit tentatively, continued on the path of reform, breaking with some of his father's legacies. He ordered, for instance, the establishment of the Equity and Reconciliation Commission to investigate repression during his father's reign. Perhaps the most notable reform has been the revamping of the *Mudawana*, the personal status code, to strengthen the position of Moroccan women in matters of guardianship, marriage, divorce, etc.[31] Other reforms include an ease of controls on the written press (which has led newspaper reporting to become the most vibrant in the region), increased recognition of Amazigh (Berber) rights, and a reinforcement of the torture ban. Moreover, decentralization and the empowerment of local communities have been pursued through the National Human Development Initiative, and the integration of moderate Islamists into the official political arena has led to a somewhat more open political climate. It is due to measures such as these that Morocco is seen by Western states as the most promising Arab candidate for reform.

Morocco receives democracy assistance from the European Union and, to a lesser extent, from individual EU governments such as Germany, France, and Spain. The United States and Canada also provide Morocco with democracy support. Western NGOs are active in the area as well. In addition to democracy assistance, the respect for democratic principles is a key element of the main agreements and initiatives between Morocco and Western states, such as those developed under the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and the European Neighbourhood Policy. This section surveys Western democracy promotion efforts and provides information on their institutional underpinnings.[32]

EU democracy promotion in Morocco

The history of EU-Moroccan relations dates back to the days of the European Economic Community, and Morocco is the Mediterranean country that has traditionally had the closest ties to the European Union.[33] Today, the EU's promotion of democracy and good governance is part of a dense institutional framework, including the multilateral Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP, also termed the Barcelona Process), underpinned by bilateral association agreements; the mainly bilateral European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), launched in 2004 and implemented with the help of action plans; and financial instruments such as the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) and the European Instrument on Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR). The European Union has stressed democratization in a number of other contexts as well: namely, the Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial meetings, European Commission Communications, the European Consensus on Development, ENP progress reports on Morocco, etc.[34]

The Barcelona Declaration of 1995 stresses the promotion of democracy and human rights, and the EMP association agreements all include a conditionality clause committing the partner countries to respect democratic principles and human rights (common Article 2).[35]

30 For commentaries and analyses of the 2007 elections, see for example, Democracy Reporting International and Transparency Maroc, 2007; Kausch, 2007; and Storm, 2008. For a review of the reforms and their limits over the last decades, see Naciri et al., 2004; Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2007; Carnegie Endowment and FRIDE, 2007.

31 For details on this reform, see Naciri et al., 2004, pp.27-31.

This clause has, however, never been applied towards any Mediterranean partner country to date. The emphasis in the agreements – and the EU/Moroccan association agreement is no exception in this respect – is instead squarely on trade and economic cooperation, with democracy and human rights remaining on the sidelines. The rationale behind this is that economic liberalization will eventually spill over to the political domain.

The ENP, launched in 2004, follows an "enlargement logic" by which partner states, depending on their progress, are offered access to the EU's single market and closer ties with the EU, without, however, any prospect of EU membership. It thus uses positive conditionalities, whereby political, economic, and institutional reforms are rewarded with closer economic integration with the European Union. The ENP action plans have a stronger governance component than the EMP association agreements. The EU/Morocco action plan therefore includes some elements on "Democracy and the Rule of Law", mainly focused on administrative capacity, decentralisation, corruption and reform in the justice sector. Moreover, under the heading "Human rights and fundamental freedoms", action points regarding the implementation of the law on freedom of association and of assembly, and also of the law liberalising the audiovisual sector are to be noted.[36] Yet the main emphasis is on administrative reform, and the concomitant fiscal, auditing, and legal reform requirements suggest that "the EU at this level is more intrusive than the United States", according to one observer.[37] The ENP includes no funding scheme; instead, the EU commits to providing "substantial financial support via an appropriate range of financial instruments" in order to meet the Action Plan objectives.[38]

The European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI, under which the former MEDA has been subsumed) is the main funding instrument of the EMP and the ENP. Thus, it is through the ENPI 2007-2010 National Indicative Programme that the EU-Moroccan association agreement and action plan are translated into concrete programmes. "Governance and Human Rights" receives EUR 28 million for 2007-2010, approximately 4% of the total, and "Institutional Support" receives another EUR 40 million. Prison reform and the training of court staff in the new *Mudawana* legislation, as well as legislation on minors, are the two poles of governance support. Human rights in Morocco is supported through the creation of a Moroccan institute of contemporary history to house, amongst other materials, the documents from the Equity and Reconciliation Commission (for more on that institution, see introduction to this section), an improved archive, and a history museum.[39] Morocco was also one of the first ENP states to receive funding (of EUR 28 million) through the ENP Governance Facility in 2007, as a reward for its commitment to political reform. These funds are being used to reinforce on-going reforms of the public administration.

The European Instrument on Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) is the specialized EU fund for governance and human rights-related projects in developing and transition countries. It is institutionally separate from the EMP and the ENP and mainly targets civil society. Over the last half-decade, allocations to Morocco have amounted to approximately EUR 1 million annually.[40] Support has been provided to NGOs active in a number of areas: namely, election observation; journalists' education and training; judicial reform; civil society support structures; youth; human rights (including women's rights and torture victims); women's participation in politics; work with street children and working children; etc.[41]

Post-colonial ties and new linkages: European states promoting democracy in Morocco

The old colonial master, **France,** is the largest of all donors (both bilaterally and multilaterally) in Morocco. France does not, however, have a strong tradition of democracy promotion abroad, and is often pin-pointed as the most reluctant of all EU states when it comes to democracy promotion in the Arab world in general, and in Morocco in particular.[42] Yet in the Moroccan context, governance – if not democratization – is nevertheless one of four "transversal intervention areas" of the Service de Coopération et d'Action Culturelle (SCAC).[43] The governance dimension encompasses modernisation of the civil service, justice, internal security, civil protection, decentralisation, and urban planning, and includes a project on youth participation in public life.[44] France also supports NGOs, mainly those working in social areas, but also human rights NGOs.[45] EUR 25-30 million have been allocated for governance-related work during 2006-2010. The lion's share (approximately EUR 22 million) is devoted to institutional support, and another EUR 3.7 million to civil protection and the police. The remaining funds go to NGOs working in the social sector, and to other governance projects.[46] However, as Dorothée Schmid notes regarding French governance assistance to Morocco, "Some officials would even acknowledge that the contents of some programmes and projects can be easily re-qualified in order to fit the "governance, democracy and human rights" category and satisfy the present collective preference for [democratic] reform, while no major re-orientation has taken place."[47]

32 UN efforts fall outside the scope of this report, seeing as they cannot be labelled "Western". They were also scarcely mentioned by interviewees for this study. The UNDP's work on governance in the MENA region, through its Arab Human Development reports, has received great attention. Its Programme on Governance in the Arab Region (POGAR), focused on capacity building, dialogue and policy advice in the areas of rule of law, participation, and transparency and accountability, is informed by the analysis in those reports. In Morocco, POGAR is complemented by bilateral work, undertaken jointly with a number of other UN agencies. One of the three main focus areas for the period 2007-2011 is "reinforcing capacities for democratic governance", with a focus on decentralization, and the issue of human rights and gender should permeate all programming in the country (UNDP, 2006, p.4). The resources allocated for the entire five-year period amount to USD 5.9 million for gender mainstreaming and USD 14.5 million for decentralisation and public participation (UNDP, 2006, Annexe 2; see also UNDAF, 2006).

Like France, **Spain** has traditionally put rather limited emphasis on democracy promotion in its development policies, particularly in the MENA region. Since the Socialists came into power with the 2004 general elections, this has changed however.[48] Morocco, an ex-colony, is one of the 23 priority countries for Spanish development assistance, and in relation to Morocco, democratic governance is one of four priority sectors. In 2004-2006, a yearly average of EUR 4.5 million was earmarked for "government and civil society" programmes being developed in Morocco.[49] The target areas identified for the period 2005-2008 were the reinforcement of social dialogue, civil society empowerment, rule of law, and decentralization. A large part of the assistance provided is decentralized out to the Moroccan regions and channelled through NGOs.[50]

Germany traditionally leaves democracy promotion to its political foundations, which are linked to the German political parties and funded through the Bundestag. Four of Germany's six political foundations are active in Morocco, i.e. the Friedrich Ebert Foundation (FES), the Konrad Adenauer Foundation (KAS), the Friedrich Naumann Foundation (FNS), and the Hanns Seidel Foundation (HSS).[51] All have a slightly different focus, reflecting their respective ideological backgrounds: FES centres its work on economic development and the promotion of women's and human rights NGOs; FNS supports economic development and the training and education of journalists; and HSS seeks to promote the rule of law and administrative reform. At the MENA-wide level, KAS is engaged in election monitoring,[52] but in Morocco, the focus is on the development of the social sciences and the humanities – and as such, work that is not directly relevant for democracy promotion.[53] These German foundations work primarily with civil society actors.

Other EU states have provided support for individual initiatives and projects mostly as part of regional programmes.

Newly found interest: US democracy promotion in Morocco

Until recently, Morocco was rather peripheral to US interests, although it has always been a staunch ally with close ties to NATO. US attention was instead centred on Israel and its neighbours, and on the oil-rich Gulf. However, this has changed, most notably after 11 September 2001. The US is now active in Morocco through a number of avenues. Funding comes mainly from the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), USAID, and the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour (DRL). Important implementing agencies include the main quasi-governmental organisations:[54] the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), the International Republican Institute (IRI), and the National Endowment for Democracy (NED).

The main post-9/11 US initiative in the MENA region is the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI). Launched in 2002, it offers support for political, economic and educational reforms and has had Dick Cheney's daughter Elizabeth at its helm since the outset.[55] MEPI's presence is largest in Morocco,[56] where programmes have targeted – apart from a range of region-wide activities (which have encompassed several media-related projects) –parliamentary reforms, support to political parties, and the strengthening of local government.[57]

USAID also provides democracy assistance, and increasingly so since 11 September 2001. In Morocco, USAID has worked on technical assistance and training for the Moroccan parliament, with the aim of strengthening the parliament's capacity to oversee public finances, review legislation and policy, and engage in a dialogue with its citizens. It has also attempted to encourage citizen participation in local decision-making, especially in relation to low-income housing needs. In view of the 2007 elections, USAID commissioned NDI and IRI to work with Moroccan political parties, including the moderate Islamist party PJD, to improve their capacity to develop politically viable policy positions and to effectively communicate those same positions to voters. NDI also assisted Moroccan civil society in ensuring voter participation in the elections, and has conducted a large number of focus groups (a particular type of polling technique) to gauge Moroccan public opinion.[58]

Lastly, the Human Rights and Democracy Initiative (HRDF) of the Bureau of Democracy – Human Rights and Labor (DRL) – funds some MENA-wide projects (on general democracy issues, media, women etc.) that have included Morocco. It has also funded judicial reform projects in Morocco.

To complete the picture, The Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative (BMENA), in principle a joint US-European initiative strongly advocated by the US and launched at a G-8 summit in mid-2004, must be mentioned. BMENA aims to support Middle East-

33 For a succinct overview of the history of EU-Moroccan relations, see Warning, 2006, pp.5-6.
34 See for example: "Reinvigorating EU actions on Human Rights and democratisation with Mediterranean partners: Strategic Guidelines", Brussels, 21.05.2003, Communication From the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament, COM(2003) 294 final; "The European Consensus on Development", Joint statement by the Council and the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council, the European Parliament and the Commission on European Union Development Policy (2006/C 46/01), paragraphs 86 and 101.
35 A thorough review of the EMP is provided in Schmid, 2006b, chapter 1.
36 European Union/Morocco, 2005. For a critique of the Action Plan, see Kausch, 2008.
37 Youngs, 2008, p.166.
38 European Union/Morocco, 2005, "Introduction".
39 Institutional support includes, amongst other things, public administration reform (improved budgeting, internal audits, evaluation and performance control, human resource management, etc.). European Union (undated), sections 3.2 and 3.3.
40 Kausch, 2008b.
41 EIDHR, 2007.
42 **See section 1 above; Schmid, 2006b, pp.15-16;** Youngs, 2008, pp.161, 163-4.
43 **Royaume du Maroc et République Française (2006),** section 4.2.
44 Ibid, see also http://www.ambafrance-ma.org/cooperation/index_developpement.cfm?view=dev_adg
45 http://www.ambafrance-ma.org/cooperation/index_developpement.cfm?view=dev_aa
46 Royaume du Maroc et République Française (2006), Annex 3.
47 Schmid, 2006b, p.22.
48 Zulueta Fülscher, 2008, pp.2-3; Youngs, 2008, pp.164-5.
49 Zulueta Fülscher, 2008, pp.8-9; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Spain, undated, p.9.
50 Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2007, p.29.
51 The newest of these *Stiftungen*, the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation – founded in 1996 and affiliated to the post DDR-Party of Democratic Socialism – is not active in Morocco. The Heinrich Böll Foundation (Green Party) disbanded its Moroccan activities (which mainly assisted NGOs seeking to promote women's rights and the cause of street children) in 2007 (interview Azeddine Akesbi, former Secretary General, Transparency Maroc, Rabat, 9 June 2008).
52 See MENA Election Guide: http://www.mena-electionguide.org/about.aspx

ern reform in the political, social, and economic domains. With the main emphasis being on better coordination, its ambitions are relatively modest. However, the political part of the initiative is also implemented through a Forum and a Foundation the Future. The yearly Forum for the Future, the first of which was held in Morocco in 2004, brings together government, business and civil society leaders. Due to conflicting views on how to further reforms, no meeting has been held since 2006, however. The Foundation for the Future is intended to provide assistance to civil society organisations that work to foster democracy and freedom in the Broader Middle East and North Africa. The Foundation is based in Amman since 2008, and started its grant-giving activities in 2007. So far, it only has limited activities in Morocco, and is thus of marginal interest to this study.

Some American initiatives have been very high profile. The US' work with the Moroccan parliament and political parties, as described above, is among these. Another project that has received extensive attention is the two opinion polls undertaken by the IRI in the wake of the 2007 elections, not least because polling had not until then been part of the political landscape in Morocco. The polls predicted that PJD had a following of approximately half the electorate, which would have entailed an upheaval of the Moroccan political landscape. The American ambassador's official show of support for Nadia Yassine, a leader of the officially prohibited Al'Adl wal-Ihsan (Justice and Spirituality) movement, when she was detained in 2005 for publicly declaring that she would prefer Morocco to be a republic rather than a monarchy, was also widely noted. Another noteworthy initiative was the participation in a meeting organised by the PJD in spring 2006 on "American Decision-Making and its Impact on Moroccan-American Relations", which brought together American politicians and Moroccan Islamists from the PJD party, with the aim of exploring outlets in the US decision-making processes for the expression of PJD opinions.[59]

The 'other North Americans': Canadian democracy assistance

Morocco is the largest recipient of Canadian development assistance in the Maghreb region, and a priority area of that assistance is governance.[60] Thus, one of three priorities for the intervention of ACDI, the Canadian development agency, is "citizen participation", and one of the three target partners is civil society.[61] Citizen participation is translated into programmes on gender equality, reinforcing the dialogue between the state and civil society, decentralisation, and participatory development.[62] Projects have included support for decentralising the education sector and improving local government in the north of Morocco. Many projects have a regional focus (encompassing the *Francophonie* or the entire Arab world).[63] Canadians have mostly worked through Moroccan associations, targeting smaller, less high-profile NGOs.[64]

Western NGOs and other non-state initiatives

The line between Western state and Western NGO-financed democracy assistance is sometimes blurred. As we have seen in the American case, quasi-governmental organisations are key to democracy promotion policies. Similarly, the German foundations, while entirely autonomous from political interference, are fully funded by the German state. In other cases, Western states are partial funders, or together provide the bulk of funds for Western NGOs.

NGOs with a sustained presence in Morocco (and a mixed funding base) include Oxfam-Novib (Netherlands), which works on a number of projects directed towards what it labels as "the right to be heard", and Oxfam Québec, active in human and women's rights.

US civil society has been active in exchanges and programmes with Moroccan organisations. The Ford Foundation has a long-established programme in the Middle East and North Africa, run from Cairo. Its current focus is on Egypt and the Palestinian territories, however. The Open Society/Soros Foundations programming in the region, by contrast, is recent. Smaller American NGOs present in Morocco include the Open Budget Initiative. Similarly to the US government, US civil society actors also encompass Moroccan religious parties in their programming. Thus, for example, Nadia Yassine was invited by the University of California Berkeley for a tour of the US, which included stops at Harvard and other top-universities.[65] An American think tank, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, invited the PJD in May 2006 to speak on the subject: "An Islamic party faces the challenges of democracy and development".[66]

53 **German Embassy, "Les acteurs du système allemand de la coopération au développement"**: http://www.rabat.diplo.de/Vertretung/rabat/fr/05/Wirtschaftliche__Zusammenarbeit/akteure.html For more details, see http://www.fes.org.ma/accueil.html, http://www.hssma.org/index.htm, For a good recent introduction to the specificities of the work of these Stiftungen, see Sakr, 2007 pp. 13-14.
54 Quasi-governmental organizations are independently-run organizations established and funded by the U.S. Congress or through funds from USAID or other government agencies.
55 Malka and Alterman, 2006, p.24.
56 Malka and Alterman, 2006, footnote 2, p.40.
57 US Department of State, 2007.
58 USAID Morocco Democracy and Governance Programme: Activities http://www.usaid.gov/ma/programs/dg_activities.html, NDI Worldwide Morocco http://www.ndi.org/worldwide/mena/morocco/morocco.asp, Boubekeur and Amghar, 2006, p.23-24.
59 Boubekeur and Amghar, 2006, p.24: see also Sharp, 2006, pp.10-17.
60 http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/morocco
61 CIDA, 2002, p.x.
62 CIDA, 2002, section 3.3.
63 CIDA Project Browser Search result for Morocco
64 Telephone interview, Driss Khrouz, Professor , Mohamed V University Rabat, and Secretary-General of GERM, 8 July 2008.
65 Interview, Nadia Yassine, Head of Women's section, Justice and Spirituality Association, Salé, 12 June 2008
66 .Boubekeur and Amghar ,2006, p.24.

International election observation

While there was no international observer mission present during the 2002 parliamentary elections in Morocco, domestic observers were allowed to monitor the poll for the first time. In view of the 2007 elections, the Moroccan authorities took an additional step by inviting an international observation mission headed by the NDI, to the country.[67] The 50-person strong delegation was composed of legislators, former government ministers and ambassadors, civic leaders, as well as specialists on the region, and on elections and human rights, from 20 countries around the globe. This delegation was preceded by a pre-election assessment team. The delegates visited polling stations in selected locations.[68] Domestic and international observers concurred that the 2007 elections were the most transparent and fair in the history of Morocco, as "overall, the voting went smoothly and was characterized by a spirit of transparency and professionalism". However, the mission stressed that "the low voter turnout... and significant number of protest votes suggest that Moroccan authorities will need to undertake further political reforms in order to encourage widespread engagement in the political process. Those reforms should aim to enhance the power of elected representatives, while also increasing the transparency of the system and accountability to the electorate".[69]

67 The reason for choosing an American-led effort was, on the one hand, that NDI had previous experience working with the Moroccan parliament and its political parties and, on the other, that the Moroccan decision to allow international monitors came very late: an EU or OSCE mission would have taken longer to organize (interviews, Rabat, 6-12 June 2008).
68 National Democratic Institute (2007).
69 National Democratic Institute (2007). This can be compared with Le Collectif Associatif pour l'Observation des Elections (2007).

How then, are the various programmes, projects, and initiatives here outlined perceived in Morocco? This section examines the issue in detail, starting with the official Moroccan position and views within the state sector. It then moves on to examine Moroccan NGOs', political parties', and media representatives' often well-reasoned positions vis-à-vis foreign donors and initiatives. Perceptions pertaining specifically to US and European democracy promotion respectively are treated under the two subsequent headings. Lastly, Moroccan views of Western civil society actors and the international election observation mission of 2007 are briefly discussed.

The report centres on the perceptions of people who are directly or indirectly targeted by democracy promotion efforts and often, through their activities, help translate these into actions on the ground. It is based on a wide range of in-depth interviews with key representatives of the parliament, civil society organizations, as well as organizations sponsored by the state, political parties, the judiciary, media, and the academic world. The reason for this focus, rather than examining perceptions of the population at large, is the unlikelyhood that a large share of the public has any opinion on what is a rather narrow set of specific policies. While it makes sense to question the general public, through quantitative surveys, broader research into their ideas about democracy and impediments to democratization in their country, or about particular democracy-promoting policies and actors, their legitimacy and credibility, would risk being too specific, and thus producing poor results. Centring solely on political leaders is also less fruitful, given that their formal position is often already known (see section 1). As a result of this focus on organizations and individuals who are direct or indirect targets of democracy assistance, the perceptions discussed in this report most often concern the specific activities and programmes of Western states, rather than the larger existing policy frameworks (i.e. the EMP, ENP, MEPI, etc.).

3. Moroccan perceptions of Western democracy promotion: Pragmatism

Introduction

Views in the Moroccan state sector

Many Arab governments, including some that are close allies to the West in general and to the US in particular, play on their people's ambivalence towards the West. The Egyptian government has, for instance, at times prompted imams from leading mosques to attack prominent democrats and human rights activists accepting foreign (and in particular American) funds, accusing them of being "traitors" supporting an "American infidel idea".[70] In contrast, Moroccan governments, even when faced with NGOs that have defied their policies, have refrained from playing the "traitor" card. This was also true under the reign of Hassan II, his restrictions on NGOs and political activities notwithstanding.[71]

Under Mohammed VI, the law on associations was altered (in 2002) so as to make it easier for NGOs to seek and accept foreign funds.[72] The main reason for this was that NGOs provide important social services that the government could not guarantee, and these NGOs could not function and grow without foreign funding. However, not only social service NGOs benefited from the easing of regulations, but also advocacy organisations. The main control mechanism on foreign resources is the need to notify the government of the receipt of any such funding within thirty days, otherwise the association may risk being dissolved.[73]

The Moroccan government has therefore not attempted to discredit NGOs by using the argument of foreign funding. Instead, it has employed a strategy of co-option of civil society by cooperating with and incorporating national NGO elites into government service.[74] According to interviewees, the "traitor" argument would in any event not work in Morocco, for two main reasons. Firstly, the Moroccan government itself makes use of foreign aid for a variety of purposes, and even set up quasi-NGOs in the 1980s in order to tap into international donors' new strategy of funding civil society organisations.[75] Secondly, Moroccan political parties and NGOs are part of a long tradition of opposition and contestation, and they cannot, therefore, easily be accused of being foreign implants or lackeys.[76]

In 2006, the Moroccan Ministry of Foreign Affairs reportedly sent a note to foreign embassies in Rabat reminding them of their obligations when assisting Moroccan associations. This note was mentioned with some astonishment by several interviewees, particularly given that the note was never made official, nor was it – as far as is known –followed up with any other action. Some observers have speculated that the government's concern with funding for terrorism or for groups close to the Polisario Front were the main reasons behind the note. The note is perceived as an isolated event, not affecting the government's generally liberal approach. The palace has also reportedly been rattled by specific democracy promotion policies on other occasions (see, for example, the IRI opinion poll affair detailed below), but official reactions have not targeted democracy promotion or NGO reception of foreign funds *per se*.[77]

70 National Endowment for Democracy, 2006, p.30; Malka and Alterman, 2006, p.26.
71 Telephone interview, Driss Khrouz, Professor , Mohamed V University Rabat, and Secretary-General of GERM, 8 July 2008; interview, Hamid El Kam, Director, Centre de Documentation d'Information et de Formation en Droits de l'Homme, Conseil Consultatif des Droits de l'Homme, Rabat, 8 June 2008.
72 Previously, only those select foundations with the status of public utility (utilité publique) were allowed by law to seek foreign funding (Fettouhi, 2002, p.67).
73 Article 32 bis, dahir N°1.58.376 15, novembre 1958 relatif au droit d'association, Naciri et al., 2004, p.112.
74 Naciri et al., 2004, p.126 ff.
75 Sater, 2007, p.22.
76 Telephone interview, Driss Khrouz, Professor , Mohamed V University Rabat and Secretary-General of GERM, 8 July 2008; interview, Azeddine Akesbi, former Secretary-General, Transparency Maroc, Rabat, 9 June 2008; see also Khrouz, 2008.
77 Clarifications regarding the note and the IRI opinion polls were repeatedly sought from the Moroccan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, without success.

Political parties and media outlets, in contrast to NGOs, are not entitled to receive money from foreign sources under Moroccan law. They can participate in training and exchanges of views, however. The rules are rather supple, so that, for example, the editor-in-chief of the main Arab-language Islamist publication, *Al-Tajdid*, and other journalists have been admitted to study at American universities and to follow training courses at the US Congress. Although the freest in the MENA region, Moroccan print media are subject to regular harassment and court procedures implying closures and even imprisonment, mainly for overstepping *les lignes rouges*, the "red lines" delimiting what can be said, in particular about the king. But here again, the "foreign influences card" is not used by authorities in such cases. The press are also careful not to overstep legal boundaries concerning foreign funding.[78]

The Moroccan judiciary has been one of the main target areas of recent Western reform efforts (although exchanges, especially with France and the European-level courts, are nothing new, but rather date back to the 1960s)[79]. When Western judicial reform efforts are mentioned to people working in the judiciary, similar arguments as those used by Moroccan NGOs (see below) are advanced: Morocco has a strong legal tradition and experience which is not affected; it has no inferiority complex vis-à-vis any other state; programmes are designed in accordance with Moroccan demands; and everything is done in the open.[80] Special Western emphasis has been put on rather sensitive issues, such as the effective implementation of the new *Mudawana* – a reform that has been resisted by conservative members of the judiciary. Again, it is agreed that members of the judiciary have not had any problems with the foreign training or other programmes: the problems have been with the *Mudawana,* not with foreign-sponsored initiatives regarding its implementation. In any event, members of the judiciary are obliged by law not to comment on political decisions, and once the king had decided on the *Mudawana* "everyone shut up", as one member of the judiciary put it off the record.

In contrast to many NGOs, the foundations under royal – and, by extension, state – patronage, rely mainly on domestic sources of funding. Thus, the Fondation Mohammed V pour la Solidarité, the royal foundation with the largest remit, relies on its general fundraising campaign held every November, to which all Moroccans are expected to contribute in accordance to their means. Funds also stem from sales of stamps and badges, private benefactors, and partnerships with and support from Moroccan firms. The foundation does not receive any funding from abroad, although it has seen funding offers from various countries in Europe and the Arab world.[81] According to a representative of the foundation, this is because, technically, the foundation is not ready to open up to foreign funding; although, he was quick to stress, at the political level, it would pose no problem. The reliance on domestic funding is also a consequence of the solidarity principle purportedly at the basis of the foundation, which implies reciprocity between Moroccans.[82]

NGO, political party, and media strategies and positions towards democracy promotion

None of the persons interviewed for this study could identify an NGO that would outright refuse Western funds or cooperation with the West. This reflects the double reality of Moroccan civil society: the scarcity of domestic funding, particularly for secular NGOs, on the one hand, and on the other, the great pragmatism of all significant Moroccan NGOs, from Islamists to feminists. Pragmatism is not confined to NGOs: political parties and MPs, from the religious PJD right across to the secular left, all participate in programmes proposed by various Western actors.[83]

Moroccan pragmatism could be summarized as follows: as long as partners in the West do not interfere in defining goals, programmes, or activities, if there is transparency on both sides, and if the Moroccan actor has a strong identity, sense of direction and possibility to diversify funding, there is no problem with accepting money from Western sources, as long as these are themselves democratic. *Nous n' avons pas de complexes* is a phrase that comes up over and again. "What's important is not the financing, but rather the human resources, transparency, competence, and programming" stresses one PJD parliamentarian who is also heading a women's NGO.[84]

Pragmatism also includes recognition of the political nature of assistance in all instances. "All states further their own interests" is a common observation from NGOs, parliamentarians, and party officials. It is up to Moroccan actors to read and understand these interests, and see if and how they can maintain their identity and autonomy within these parameters. Recognition of the political motives of Western democracy promotion has also, in the Moroccan case, implied a critical analysis of its contradictions and inconsistencies, without resorting to "CIA spotting" and conspiracy theories. "Looking for conspiracies is a thing of the Mashreq, not the Maghreb" smiled one observer.[85] A discussion summary from 2000,

78 See, for example, Syndicat National de la Presse Marocaine (2007) "Ingérence américaine dans la liberté de la presse", where the union stresses the illegality of accepting foreign funds.
79 Interview, Abdeljawad Raissi, **Président de chambre à la Cour Suprême détaché à l'Institut Supérieur de la Magistrature, Rabat, 9 June 2008.**
80 **Interviews, Abdeljawad Raissi, Président de chambre à la Cour Suprême détaché à l'Institut Supérieur de la Magistrature, Rabat, 9 June 2008; Mhamed** Drissi, Director, Association des oeuvres sociales des magistrats et fonctionnaires de la justice, Rabat, 10 June 2008.
81 Interview, Abdeljabbar Bouroua, Project Leader, Communication and Institutional Development Pole, Fondation Mohammed V pour la Solidarité, Rabat, 11 June 2008.
82 Ibid.
83 It must be noted that MPs and party members across the political spectrum tend to simultaneously be involved in (and often head) NGOs (for a historical discussion of this phenomenon, see Sater, 2007).
84 Interview, Jamila El Mossalli, MP, PJD, Rabat, 11 June 2008.
85 Interview, Nadir El Moumni, political scientist, Mohamed V University, Rabat, 12 June 2008.

prepared by the Espace associatif, a main Moroccan NGO umbrella organisation, sums up the position valid still today: "Financing is no almsgiving by the North, because there are doubtless interests, declared and implicit, even though the idea of an imperialist and Zionist conspiracy has been discarded."[86] Another matter often stressed by interviewees is the fact that no financing, including that from the Moroccan state and from the private sector, is altruistic and without interests. Such funding can thus be equally, if not more problematic than financing from abroad.[87]

The pragmatic position on foreign funding has remained relatively stable over many years (with the exception of attitudes towards the US government as a partner, as discussed below). It crystallized during the early days of civil society activism and international involvement, when the issue was widely discussed by civil society actors.[88]

There is some disagreement as to whether acceptance of foreign funds or participation in foreign-funded activities changes Moroccans' perceptions of a specific NGO or political party. Some claim that Moroccans have a negative image of organisations that accept money from abroad, seeing it as a form of "prostitution".[89] Others stress that, on the contrary, foreign funds permit a certain visibility. The majority of interviewees think this is a non-issue, however: "Financing is not important, what matters are the actions. Society is not interested in this issue," according to a female PJD MP who is also the president of a major women's NGO in the country.[90] A colleague from the at times repressed Justice et Spiritualité concurs: "We would not criticise others [for accepting Western funds], as we also receive some through the small organisations in our network".[91] A keen observer of associational life in Morocco agrees: "People look first at who's involved in the NGO, then what it does. The origin of funds does not really come up".[92]

The issue of Western financing is not totally absent from the debate, however. During the discussion on the new *Mudawana*, Islamists used the "foreign funding card" against women's NGOs that supported the reforms. However, most observers, including those from secular NGOs, saw this as a mere temporary glitch due to the heat of the debate, and as an argument that was quickly abandoned because it did not "stick". In recent years, and according to an experienced NGO activist, "they have become more careful and their discourse no longer leans on that kind of argument".[93] In order to avoid any potential criticism, some NGOs refuse foreign funds for specific campaigns. The Association Marocaine des Droits de l'Homme (AMDH), for instance, has chosen to rely only on domestic funds for its campaign to de-penalize homosexuality, otherwise "people will use the acceptance of foreign funds to discredit us". AMDH does this even though they consider that their "image is good" and that "it is difficult to blacken us".[94]

The pragmatic acceptance of Western democracy promotion does not however mean that differences are absent or that acceptance is in any way unconditional or universal. PJD MPs and party members, as well as NGOs close to the party, stress that decisions on whether to participate in Western-sponsored programmes and events are taken on a decentralized, individual basis. Thus many, but not all, PJD members participate in parliamentary training sessions sponsored by USAID through NDI (see below). Party representatives and representatives of NGOs close to PJD participate in events organized by, for example, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, and are eager to stress their openness and interest in international cooperation, discussion, and other exchanges. At the same time, they are more inclined to stress their relative disinterest for certain programmes, or Western programmes' lack of fit with Moroccan realities. Moreover, PJD-associated NGOs and the Justice and Spirituality movement are, as a rule, more reluctant to receive Western funds than their secular counterparts. "We are not for foreign financing, but prefer working with our own funds or with the government"; "Western financing, with its strings attached, does not respect Moroccan values"; and "it is a kind of corruption" are some statements expressed.[95] Moreover, some secular NGO representatives testify to an increasing malaise when it comes to the relationship with Western actors, which is tainting the otherwise relatively rosy picture. "People are more and more wary of the West in general, given Iraq, Palestine, the issue of migration and the image in the West of Moroccans and Arabs", according to one NGO representative.[96]

The fact that journalists from several newspapers have benefited from American-sponsored training does not raise any eyebrows within the Moroccan journalistic profession. Two key figures in the field said that "We have no problem with that" and that "a scientific education is a good thing".[97] Thus, the Syndicat national de la presse marocaine has not adopted any official position on the issue (although it has in other circumstances criticized American interference, see below). It is a matter up to each publication and journalist to decide, seeing as "Moroccan journalists are mature", according to the secretary general of the union.[98] Within Islamist circles, the decision of the editor in chief of the Islamist *Al-*

86 Espace associatif, 2002, p.73, author's translation.
87 For a similar conclusion, see Kausch, 2007, p.11. Smaller NGOs are often more vulnerable to losing their sense of purpose and integrity vis-à-vis foreign donors, and donors in general, than are the larger, more well-known NGOs with resourceful leaders from large urban areas (i.e. including most NGOs active in democratisation and human rights issues); interview, Latifa El Bouhsini, Chef de service de la division étude et de la promotion sociale, Ministry for Social Development, the Family and Solidarity, Rabat, 11 June 2008.
88 Telephone interview, Naima Benwakrim, former President, Espace associatif, 31 May 2008; Espace associatif, 2002.
89 Interview, Fatiha Saddas, member Union socialiste des forces populaires (USPF), Rabat, 7 June 2008; interview, Khadia Elmadmad, President, Association Migration et Droit, 10 June 2008.
90 Interview, Bassima Hakkaoui, MP, PJD, and President of **Organisation du renouveau de la prise de** conscience féminine**, Rabat 11 June 2008.**
91 Interview, Nadia Yassine, Head of Women's section, Justice and Spirituality Association, Salé, 12 June 2008.
92 Telephone interview, Driss Khrouz, Professor , Mohamed V University Rabat and Secretary-General of GERM, 8 July 2008.
93 Telephone interview, Naima Benwakrim, former President, Espace associatif, 31 May 2008; interview, Azeddine Akesbi, former Secretary-General, Transparency Maroc, 9 June 2008; interview, Moroccan NGO representative, 8 June 2008.
94 Telephone interview, Khadija Ryadi, President, AMDH, 23 May 2008.
95 Interviews, Bassima Hakkaoui, MP, PJD, and President of Organisation du renouveau de la prise de conscience féminine, Rabat, 11 June 2008; Lahcen Daoudi, Vice-Secretary-General PJD, Rabat, 10 June 2008; Mustafa Ramid, PJD MP, 4 July 2008.
96 Telephone interview, Moroccan NGO representative, 23 May 2008.
97 Telephone interview, Ahmed Réda Benchemsi, Editor, *Tel Quel*, 26 June 2008; interview, Younes M'Jahed Younous, Secretary-General, Syndicat national de la presse marocaine, Rabat, 10 June 2008.

Tajdid daily to accept US-sponsored education and training is neither greeted with joy, nor with outright condemnation: "I'm not against his decision, but not for it either. It is up to everyone to make his own choices" says Mustafa Ramid, a PJD parliamentarian often seen as one of the "hawks" within the party.[99]

A nuanced distaste for US government interventions

It is widely recognized that the United States is viewed with great suspicion as a promoter of democracy in the Arab world, even within the United States itself – and Morocco is no exception in this respect.[100] This study confirms, but nuances, this fact. Moroccan NGOs are split as to their perception of American democracy promotion efforts. Some NGOs accept American government aid, while a sizable share of Moroccan associations refuse it outright.[101] Resistance to US initiatives is at times based on disagreement with US stances in the Arab region, such as the war in Iraq and its support for Israel over the Palestinians. In other instances, it is due to the more "offensive" US strategy on democracy promotion (see section 1), which is often perceived as "meddling in" or "infiltrating" the internal affairs of Morocco. Such unease is not only, or indeed primarily, an Islamist phenomenon: some of the fiercest opposition has come from secular NGOs. Neither is unease solely an NGO affair: certain American actions have led to a strong reaction from the Moroccan royal palace and from political parties across the political spectrum.

Timing has also been an issue as regards some US initiatives. The only larger US policy initiative that was specifically mentioned by many Moroccan interlocutors was BMENA – perhaps surprisingly given its relative lack of success. The timing of this initiative – a year after the US invasion of Iraq – made many Moroccans perceive it as another example of US attempts to heavy-handedly push through its agenda in the region.

Those NGOs that accept American government assistance stress that they are not "politicised", and that as long as there is no meddling with the goals and programming or political interference of any other sort, there is no problem with accepting US government funds. One NGO responsible even stated that the vocal refusal of US funds was a "political overstatement" by associations wanting to "cover their activities with the Moroccan government".[102] Some NGOs cite timing – in the case of joint programmes started before the Iraq war – for the existence of programmes with US government-sponsored bodies. "If the project had started today, we would have declined" they stress.

Other Moroccan NGOs' refusal to cooperate with US government agencies, also extended in particular to IRI as a Republican institution, is based on the lack of respect for democracy and human rights that they believe the United States showed by invading Iraq in 2003 and the US policy on Palestine. One interviewee, who has worked for a number of years in the NGO sector, stated: "Even I, considered to be the most flexible and open [with regards to foreign funding], am now reluctant vis-à-vis the US".[103] One main critic of US government aid acceptance explained: "It indeed is a poisoned chalice for serious NGOs that think they serve a good cause by accepting American aid, but then end up losing their souls and being discredited. Imagine for one second that AMDH accepts assistance from the American administration or American NGOs close to it, and it's finished, our credibility."[104]

In the autumn of 2006, a coalition including some major Moroccan NGOs[105] initiated a petition to boycott the American embassy in Morocco and US activities in the country. It was then reiterated in 2007.[106] The main reason for this was the American strategy being pursued in the Middle East, and specifically the "colonization" of Iraq. The American ambassador to Morocco, Thomas Reilly, was also condemned for his "questionable declarations and actions" that went against "commonly accepted diplomatic tradition".[107] One reason for the critique of the American embassy in particular was its efforts to find interlocutors in the media sector:

> *The services of the [American] diplomatic representation have, on several occasions, contacted the Syndicat national de la presse marocaine to offer their assistance... Faced with the rejection of this initiative, [they] unsuccessfully resorted to approaching an agency to play this role. The American embassy has tried to propose its programmes to the SNPM sections, but they have all refused the offer... The SNPM considers that the programmes of the American administration aim to spread specific concepts of its hegemonic policy in the region... The petition has denounced US attempts to infiltrate Arab media and civil society in a bid to embellish its image and turn attention away from the crimes committed in Iraq and other regions of the world.*[108]

98 Interview, Younes M'Jahed Younous, Secretary-General, Syndicat national de la presse marocaine, Rabat, 10 June 2008.
99 Telephone interview, Mustafa Ramid, PJD MP, 4 July 2008.
100 Thus, for example, in a report to Congress, Jeremy M Sharp writes that, compared to the US, "EU intentions are far less suspect among Moroccans in general" (Sharp, 2006, p.16).
101 The qualitative nature of this study makes it difficult to gauge exactly what percentage of advocacy NGOs accept/refuse US financial support.
102 Telephone interview, Amina Bouayach, President, Moroccan Organisation for Humans Rights (OMDH), 28 May 2008.
103 Telephone interview, Naima Benwakrim, former President, Espace associatif, 31 May 2008.
104 AMDH representative, cited in *Le Journal Hebdomadaire*, translation by the author.
105 Association Marocaine des Droits Humains (AMDH), Syndicat National de la Presse, Union des Ecrivains du Maroc, Coalition Marocaine pour la Culture et les Arts, Association Marocaine de Soutien à la Lutte Palestinienne, and Groupe d'Action National pour le Soutien à l'Irak et la Palestine.
106 **Syndicat National de la Presse Marocaine (2007a)** "Ingérence américaine dans la liberté de la presse", Syndicat National de la Presse Marocaine (2007b).
107 Syndicat National de la Presse Marocaine (2007b).
108 Syndicat National de la Presse Marocaine (2007a) "Ingérence américaine dans la liberté de la presse", translation by the author.

Most political parties have at times boycotted events organized by the US embassy in Morocco. These boycotts have usually been limited in time, being used to mark disagreement with specific US actions in the region: the invasion in Iraq again being the prime example.[109] MPs, in particular those of the PJD, have been critical of the USAID project with the Moroccan lower house of parliament. Reasons vary; therefore, the deputy leader stresses the fact that the decision was taken by the government, rather than by the parliament itself, while another PJD MP asks "why should they come and 'teach' us when they themselves are not equal to the task?"[110] A close observer of the process noted that it was USAID's role as the instigator that posed a problem: "with an American NGO, it would have been easier".[111] Across the board, interviewees are eager to stress that they are not "against the US, only against its current policies" and that they have good relations with some Americans and have participated in some US-sponsored events.

Moroccan actors take the distinction between state and non-state actors quite seriously. Thus, even actors that would refuse official American support can imagine working with American NGOs. For example, the AMDH representative who considered American aid a poisoned chalice, simultaneously felt "a thousand times closer to the American pacifists that fight for the end of the occupation of Iraq than to certain Moroccans who, in the name of fighting terrorism, violate people's human rights while lying low in front of the American master" (see also section on Western civil society below).[112]

The IRI opinion polls of 2005 and 2006 triggered controversy in Morocco (for more details about these polls, see section 2 above). Members of both main traditional parties agree that they were "not professional", and the Istiqlal Secretary General made a pronouncement against the poll.[113] "These polls were politically dishonest in a country where democratisation is still fragile. They don't help", according to a leading USFP representative.[114] Some observers saw the results as tilted in PJD's favour.[115] For the PJD, in contrast, the result was "truthful", but its representatives stress that they did not want IRI to undertake such a poll.[116] Shortly after the polls, the government proposed a law curtailing political opinion surveys in Morocco, and the palace was reportedly "rattled by what it saw as American meddling in Moroccan affairs".[117]

The "eternal Europeans" face new challenges

The democracy promotion efforts of the European Union and European states are generally better received than those of the Americans. In contrast to claims in some other studies,[118] no interviewee mentioned European cultural imperialism, the EU position on the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in July 2006, or the failure of the EU to recognize Hamas in their discussion of EU democracy promotion. Unease regarding migration and Europe's policy of following the American lead after 11 September 2001 was, however, highlighted on a couple of occasions, but very rarely in comparison to the repeated comments about US actions in the region.

The reason for judging the Americans, but not the Europeans, according to their wider policies in the Middle East, is, according to one observer of Moroccan civil society, because Moroccans' knowledge of Europe is much better than that of the US. The US is therefore more likely to be judged according to its international political stances, while Moroccans are familiar enough with the nuances of European political life to understand even adverse European policies.[119] This does not however mean that the relationship is friction-free: "NGOs are critical of the EU, but it doesn't go as far as boycotting", one NGO observer noted.[120] Nor does it mean that relations are robust enough to withstand any future test. In fact, although EU countries have a lower profile in terms of democracy promotion in Morocco than the EU as such, some of these countries have encountered limited boycotts, particularly the United Kingdom, which suffers due to its association with the US agenda, and Italy, because of certain statements made by its government ministers.[121]

The potentially most controversial aspect of EU assistance seems to be its exclusion of religious parties and NGOs, which contrasts with the more inclusive US approach (see section 1 above). A number of interviewees, from secular parties and NGOs, as well as their religious counterparts, find that the EU policy is flawed. The president of the USFP parliamentary group, Ahmed Zaidi, stressed that "it is not right. As long as the parties accept the democratic rules of the game, they should be accepted. I'm against exclusion".[122] "The European Union and other donors should respect the diversity of Moroccan society, and open up to all political leanings – that's what it means to be democratic", stressed one PJD parliamentarian.[123] According to the deputy leader of the PJD, "European politicians are hostage to public opinion in Europe – that's normal, but the result is there: Europe finances the others against us".[124] Nadia Yassine of the Justice and Spirituality movement stresses

109 Interview, Fatiha Saddas, member Union socialiste des forces populaires (USPF), Rabat, 7 June 2008.
110 Interview, Lahcen Daoudi, Vice-Secretary General PJD, Rabat, 10 June 2008; telephone interview, Mustafa Ramid, PJD MP, 4 July 2008.
111 Interview, Nadir El Moumni, political scientist, Mohamed V University, Rabat, 12 June 2008. However, "several democracy specialists in Morocco noted that PJD members have seized opportunities for additional training and technical support from a variety of international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to a far greater extent than older, more established Moroccan parties. Experts also noted that the PJD initially rejected participating in U.S. government-sponsored training programs; however, over time, its opposition abated" (Sharp, 2006, pp.14-5).
112 AMDH representative, cited in Le Journal Hebdomadaire translation by the author.
113 Telephone interview, member Istiqlal, 29 May 2008, interview Fatiha Saddas, member Union socialiste des forces populaires (USPF), Rabat 7 June 2008.
114 Telephone interview, Ahmed Zaidi, President of the USFP parliamentary group 20 June 2008.
115 Interview Younes M'Jahed Younous, Secretary-General, Syndicat national de la presse marocaine, Rabat 10 June 2008, Khalaf 2006.
116 Interview, Lahcen Daoudi, Vice-Secretary-General PJD, Rabat, 10 June 2008, telephone interview, Mustafa Ramid, PJD MP, 4 July 2008.
117 Khalaf 2006, El Azizi 2006.
118 Boubekeur and Amghar 2006, p.24, Malka and Alterman, p.20.
119 Telephone interview, Driss Khrouz, Professor , Mohamed V University Rabat and Secretary-General of GERM, 8 July 2008, see also Khrouz, 2008.
120 Telephone interview, Mohamed El Habib Belkouch, Director of the Center for Information and Traning on Human Rights , 26 May 2008.
121 Interview, Fatiha Saddas, member of Union socialiste des forces populaires (USPF), Rabat, 7 June 2008.
122 Telephone interview, Ahmed Zaidi, President of the USFP parliamentary group, 20 June 2008.
123 Interview, Jamila El Mossalli, MP, PJD, Rabat, 11 June 2008.
124 Interview, Lahcen Daoudi, Vice-Secretary-General PJD, Rabat, 10 June 2008.

that, through this approach, "the EU misses the real vectors of society".[125] Other relevant actors, in contrast, are forcefully against the inclusion of the PJD and other Islamists in EU programmes. The reasons given include the funding they allegedly receive from the Gulf and Iran (but which, according to other representatives of secular organisations, does not exist) and the fact that the Islamists do not respect the basic rules of democracy, such as pluralism and human rights. "They would not sign the Barcelona Declaration, so why should the EU fund them?" asks one observer of Moroccan civil society.[126] At the same time, it is unclear whether Islamists would accept European funding. One NGO representative and PJD member, for example, stressed that with European funding, the goals of Moroccan NGOs are often distorted, and "our association rejects this, and thus the EU refusal does not pose a problem to us".[127]

Another significant problem with EU funding, unrelated to the question of legitimacy and credibility, is the "extremely cumbersome" EU procedures, cited spontaneously by almost every single respondent. "They are not adapted to developing countries", concluded one interviewee.[128] The administrative and other requirements are such that a number of NGOs, including very resourceful ones, hesitate, or even entirely rule out, applying for EU funds.

Western civil society: A mixed picture

Western and international NGOs are in principle ideal partners for many Moroccan actors, since they do not have the kind of political interests attached to states – a fact stressed by many interviewees. Thus, although Nadia Yassine of the Justice and Spirituality Association rejects US government assistance given that it would "tarnish our reputation and be a real stamp on us", she also admitted that when she received an invitation from the University of California Berkeley: "I jumped on the occasion, as this kind of civil society collaboration interests us a lot". She also saw the *mouvements altermondialistes* (alter-globalization movements) as promising.[129]

Western NGOs also rank highly among the preferred Western funders. One foundation, Friedrich Ebert, stands out as being almost unanimously respected in Morocco. As a civil society representative put it: "Everyone is fine working with them". This is because the foundation is considered serious, flexible and easy to work with. Additionally, its representation in Morocco is directed by Moroccans. A number of other Western NGOs, which have worked in the country for many years, enjoy a similar reputation. However, in general, and according to NGO representatives, Moroccan NGOs think in terms of "projects" rather than "donors" (except as concerns US government assistance, as discussed above).[130] They will thus submit project ideas to the donors they believe most likely to be interested and knowledgeable in that particular area.

This picture is not without its blots, however. One problem recognized by many interviewees is the opaque character of how Western NGOs are funded. While the sources of funding for associations and foundations with a relatively long history in Morocco, such as Oxfam-Novib and Oxfam Québec, are relatively clear, most of the NGO representatives interviewed for this study agree that many international NGOs are insufficiently transparent in this regard, and that this posed a problem. "One has to dig into their identity" since "no [NGO] donor will say where its funds stem from; and among Moroccan NGOs there is a discussion on this issue".[131] The Espace associatif notes that "foreign associations appear, chase projects and control credit lines, while never revealing what has been decided or what has effectively been given".[132] One NGO representative nevertheless noted that the requirement that all Moroccan NGOs declare their sources of finance to the government mitigates the problem of opaque funding of some Western NGOs.[133]

Electoral observation

The issue of international election monitoring did not seem controversial among those interviewed for this report. According to one political party representative: "It's done everywhere, so why not in the Arab world? It's a plus".[134]

The international observation mission of the 2007 parliamentary elections is perceived to have been relatively "light", having deployed few observers on the ground and a relatively small number of experts before and after the poll. "This was a symbolic mission, with some observers visiting select polling stations", according to one close observer.[135] This evaluation has led to some criticism: "The control on election day was not good", according to one PJD representative.[136] Others brush it aside, explaining that "it is a favourite Moroccan tradition to be dissatisfied once the election results are known".[137]

125 Interview, Nadia Yassine, Head of Women's section, Justice and Spirituality Association, Salé, 12 June 2008.
126 Telephone interview, Driss Khrouz, Professor , Mohamed V University Rabat and Secretary-General of GERM, 8 July 2008.
127 Interview, Bassima Hakkaoui, MP, PJD, and President Organisation du renouveau de la prise de conscience féminine, Rabat, 11 June 2008.
128 Interview, Azeddine Akesbi, former Secretary-General, Transparency Maroc, 9 June 2008.
129 Interview, Nadia Yassine, Head of Women's section, Justice and Spirituality Association, Salé, 12 June 2008.

A number of interviewees found great similarities in the analysis and recommendations offered by the national and international observers. The international observation mission, through its first report and associated press conference, "put its finger on crucial problems", such as the Moroccan constitutional arrangements and the lack of a proper role for parliament.[138] However, in the opinion of one NGO observer, the subsequent national congratulations from the West, stating that "Morocco is advancing on its path to democracy", undermined the conclusions of the report.[139]

130 Interview, Moroccan NGO representative, Rabat, 8 June 2008; interview, Azeddine Akesbi, former Secretary-General, Transparency Maroc, 9 June 2008.
131 Interview, Bassima Hakkaoui, MP, PJD, and President Organisation du renouveau de la prise de conscience féminine, Rabat, 11 June 2008; interview, Moroccan NGO representative, Rabat, 8 June 2008.
132 Espace associatif, 2002, p.94.
133 Interview, Moroccan NGO representative, Rabat, 8 June 2008.
134 Interview, Fatiha Saddas, member of Union socialiste des forces populaires (USPF), Rabat, 7 June 2008.
135 Telephone interview, Mohamed El Ayadi, researcher, Hassan II University, Casablanca, 7 July 2008.
136 Interview, Lahcen Daoudi, Vice-Secretary-General PJD, Rabat, 10 June 2008.
137 Telephone interview, Mohamed El Ayadi, researcher, Hassan II University, Casablanca, 7 July 2008.
138 Telephone interview, Moroccan NGO representative, 23 May 2008; interview, Lahcen Daoudi, vice-secretary general PJD, Rabat, 10 June 2008.
139 Telephone interview, Moroccan NGO representative, 23 May 2008.

Conclusions and policy recommendations

This study has shown that, in contrast to a number of other Arab states, Morocco has not experienced a total backlash against democracy promotion. It has also made clear that a focus on the actual "targets" of democracy assistance – namely, NGOs, political party activists and parliamentarians, representatives of the judiciary and the state, journalists, as well as academics – can bring out a richer and more nuanced picture of how democracy promotion is perceived in the recipient country, in comparison to merely analysing perceptions amongst leaders or the population at large. In Morocco, the picture that emerges is one of pragmatism. This pragmatism means that relevant players very rarely adopt an "all or nothing position", which would imply stark alternatives: either you accept democracy funding from the West, or you altogether reject association with Western democracy promotion; either you trust your Western partners blindly, or you don't even trust them for a second; either you work with all US partners, or you avoid any contact with American democracy promotion efforts; either you think foreign funding is always positive, or you believe it never is; either you think refusal to participate in democracy promotion activities should be used as a tool of political protest, or you think it never should be, etc. This is not tantamount to "flip-flopping" from side-to-side or to an "anything goes" attitude, but rather means that actors have critically reflected on the issue of Western funding and reached quite nuanced positions with carefully delimited boundaries. The fact that virtually every actor participates in at least some international initiatives is of particular importance in the Moroccan case – no one can take the "moral high ground" on this issue. It is equally important that the Moroccan government has never in any way criticized associations for accepting foreign funding, but has, on the contrary, encouraged NGOs to seek such financing.

Proponents of democracy assistance generally lament the lack of resources devoted to the endeavour, and the sums committed to such initiatives are, as this report also makes clear, very limited. However, the interviews for this report revealed that the importance of democracy assistance reaches well beyond the modest means invested. It is an issue that parliamentarians, political party members, NGO representatives, and state agents know well and discuss regularly, and on which they have, more often than not, adopted a clear position.

This does not however mean that all is well and good: US government assistance is contentious, as is the EU policy of excluding moderate Islamists. The opacity of some foreign donors (particularly NGOs and quasi-NGOs) as to their own sources of funding is also a potential problem. The misuse of funds by meddlesome donors, as well as Moroccan NGOs, is always a threat, although one not currently acute in Morocco. With respect to these and other associated issues, the following policy recommendations seem warranted in guiding future Western democracy promotion endeavours in Morocco:

- Western government donors should continue to demonstrate, and improve, transparency in their activities, partners, funding schemes, etc. This would mirror the importance Moroccan actors, especially the more professional civil society associations, generally place on their own transparency with regard to the funding received and what it is used for.

- Governments should be careful not to obfuscate their funding for Western NGOs and other agencies working in Morocco. Particularly the US, with its many quasi-governmental foundations and agencies (IRI, NDI, NED, etc), should avoid the temptation to make its assistance more "palatable" by channelling it through NGOs in a less than perfectly transparent manner. This is absolutely crucial in preventing that a country such as Morocco, so far not prone to adopting conspiracy theories or to engaging in "CIA spotting", does not come to harbour such suspicions, which would have adverse consequences for the promotion of democracy in the country as a whole.

- International NGOs, quasi-NGOs and other agencies must become far more transparent as to their own sources of funding. Some already are, but many are not, which poses a moral dilemma and a potential for a backlash amongst Moroccan NGOs.

- The US government should consider the issue of timing in its efforts to step up activities in Morocco. The present moment, when the image of the US has reached a historical low, is perhaps not the most appropriate for extending democracy promotion in a country such as Morocco. In contrast, this recommendation does not apply to purely non-governmental US initiatives, which have not suffered from the generalized distaste for the US government.

- International actors should continue to be (or, in certain cases, become) "hands-

off" regarding priorities, activities, agenda-setting, etc. given that this is crucial for the credibility of Moroccan NGOs.

- Inclusion of Islamists that accept the democratic rules of the game and are willing to engage with Western countries as partners in existing democracy promotion programmes seems important. Exclusion, such as currently practiced by the EU, may lead to: (a) facile Islamist critiques of organisations that accept Western assistance as being "bought" or "un-Moroccan"; (b) search for other sources of funding, which might entail radicalisation; and, most importantly, (c) a sense of an unequal playing field, which, as Moroccan actors are quick to point out, goes against the basic principles of democracy. Europe should therefore reconsider its rigid stance on democratic and moderate Islamists.

- Policy coherence (i.e. ensuring that all foreign policies promote – or at least do not work against – democracy and human rights) should be improved. This is difficult for Western countries, given their reluctance or incapacity to deal with migration issues and the terrorist threat, as well as their prioritisation of short-term stability and economic links with the ruling elites. In those cases where policy incoherence is the most blatant, countries might have to ponder whether their programmes are still viable and credible.

- Given the severe shortages of domestic funding, unsound in the long-term, the Moroccan government should do everything in its power to encourage domestic funding for NGOs that reaches well beyond the royal foundations, recognising that this is a country with a sizable wealthy elite and an emerging middle class. This may, for instance, include facilitating NGO access to the status of "utilité publique". As things stand at present, many Moroccan associations would collapse without foreign funding.

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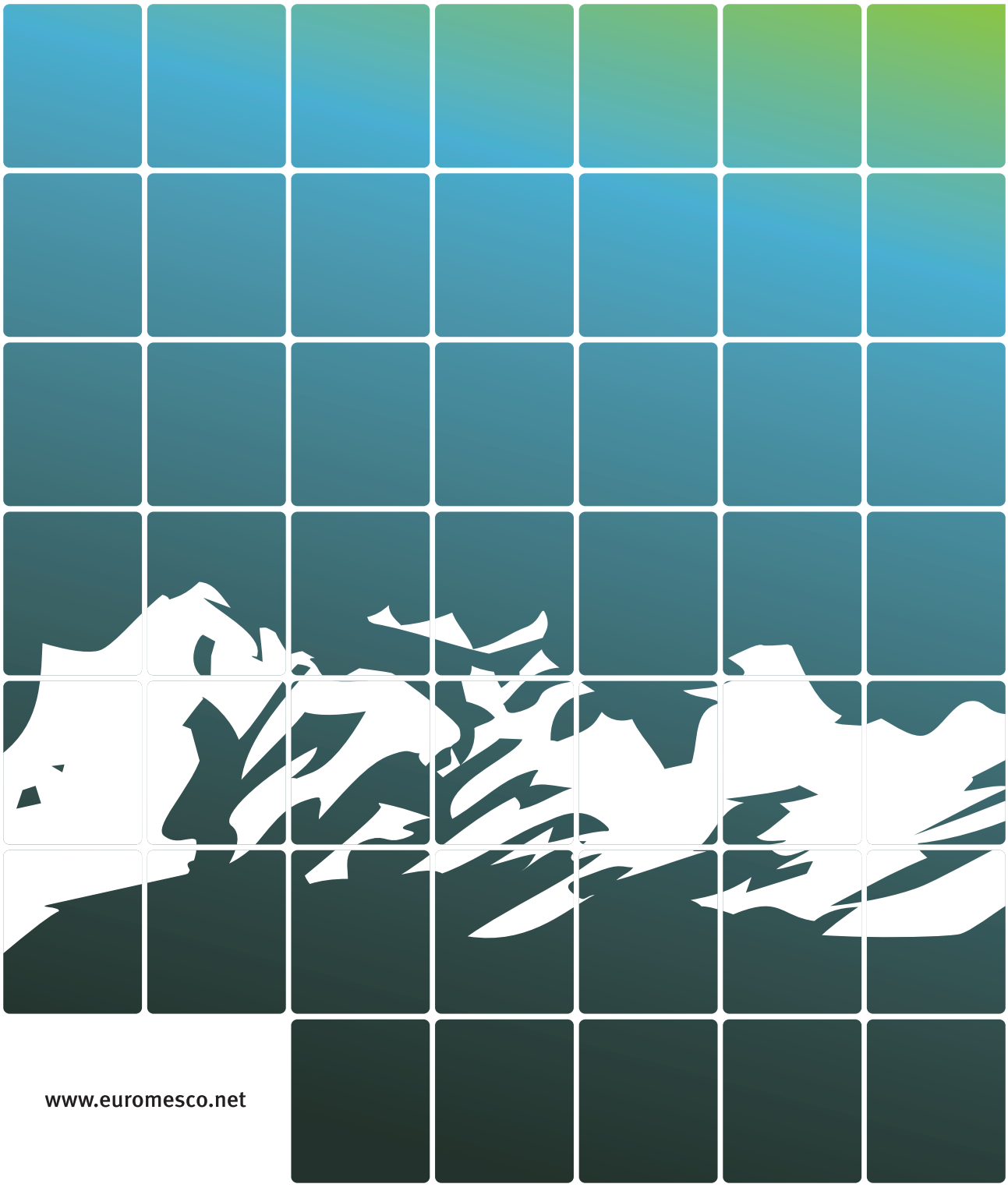

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