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Linkage and the Case of Political Deliberation in Morocco

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Linkage and the Case of Political Deliberization in Morocco

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Abstract

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Many scholars of democratization posit that increased linkage between a hybrid regime and the West will lead to increased democratization. In Morocco during the past decade, however, authoritarianism continued to flourish despite increased linkage with both the United States and European Union. This project seeks to explain the source of this contradiction, arguing that increased linkage actually created a favorable environment for the deliberalization of Moroccan politics.

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INTRODUCTION

During the 1990s, Morocco experienced an unprecedented period of liberal reform. After nearly thirty years of political oppression and authoritarian monarchical rule under King Hassan II, these reforms came as a welcome surprise. The long repressed political opposition, particularly leftist parties, gained access to political participation while journalists and human rights activists enjoyed a respite from the state's security apparatus. It seems as though the so-called "Bullet Years" had come to an end and when Hassan II passed away unexpectedly in 1999 many observers, both foreign and domestic, anticipated continued political reform and liberal change under the new king, Mohammad VI. Yet, during the decade or so since the death of Hassan II, Morocco failed to witness any period of reform rivaling that of the 1990s. In fact, during the period between 1999-2011 Morocco experienced a period marked by political deliberalization, democratic backsliding, and a weakened commitment to reform in general.

Surprisingly, during this same period linkage between Morocco and developed countries in the West increased significantly. This marked regression vis-à-vis liberal democratic reform in spite of increased linkage directly contradicts a number of theories concerning the role of external actors in the process of democratization. In this paper, I will address this contradiction, arguing that increased linkage, particularly in the form of economic and intergovernmental ties,

between Morocco and the West fostered an environment favorable to increased authoritarian rule and a subsequent shift away from liberal reform.

METHODOLOGY

While a number of theories exist to address the impact of linkage on democratization, this study will focus specifically on the theory put forth by Steven Levitsky and Lucan A. Way in *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes in Post-Soviet States*.¹ In *Competitive Authoritarianism*, the authors posit that democratization within hybrid authoritarian regimes depends largely on international interests. They contend that “linkage,” or the extent ties between governments, and “leverage,” the capacity of a one regime to exert influence over another, play a crucial role in determining the democratic trajectory of a given country. In countries where linkage and leverage are high, a hybrid regime will face external pressure to democratize and democratization may begin. In states where linkage and leverage remain low, authoritarian practices will most likely continue. Table 1 shows the possible outcomes of variation in linkage and leverage.

¹ Levitsky and Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes in Post-Soviet States*. Steven Levitsky *Soviet States* is a Professor of Government at Harvard University. Lucan A. Way is an

	High Linkage	Low Linkage
High Leverage	Consistent and effective democratizing pressure	Intermittent and limited democratizing pressure
Low Leverage	Consistent but diffuse, indirect democratization	Weak external democratizing pressure

Table 1: How Variation in Linkage and Leverage Shape External Pressure for Democratization.²

Levitsky and Way’s theory of linkage and leverage serves as a useful starting point in determining hybrid regimes propensity to democratize. However, this paper will expand upon their theory in an attempt to explain the variance in behavior exhibited by the regime of Mohammad VI in Morocco, where external pressure to democratize and internal attempts at democratization exhibited an inverse trend when compared with linkage. I argue that Morocco’s willingness to support Western regional interests, in particular the War on Terror and the Peace Process, afforded the kingdom a unique type of leverage of its own. By creating for itself a sort of diplomatic niche, Morocco ensured that it would face little pressure from outside to initiate liberal or democratic political reform. In return for cooperation, Morocco increased its linkage with the West. Facing little internal or external pressure to democratize and capitalizing on the benefits of increased linkage, the Mohammad VI regime pursued a policy of liberalization in areas that

² Levitsky and Way, *Linkage versus Leverage. Rethinking the International Dimension of Regime Change*, 388.

posed little threat to their monopoly on power, while simultaneously limiting reform or even deliberalizing in other areas. In short, increased linkage provided the monarchy with the tools necessary to leverage its own citizens and revert to its previous authoritarian practices.

Levitsky and Way provide a useful point of departure for understanding the nature of relationships between the West and hybrid regimes like Morocco. However, their theory suffers from a number of shortcomings. When addressed, these shortcomings help to account for difference in both their anticipated results and developmental realities in the Moroccan case. This study will seek to comment and expand upon the Levitsky and Way's theory of linkage and leverage in order to address such unmet expectations. In particular, I contend that the limited definition of linkage proffered in *Competitive Authoritarianism* requires further analysis, especially in regard its component parts. Levitsky and Way calculate linkage utilizing four variables:

1. Economic Ties: Measured by the extent of trade with the United States and 15 EU member countries (exports and imports over GDP) (log) (1990-2000), excluding years when a country is democratic.
2. Social Ties: Measured by the average annual number of a country's citizen's traveling to or living in the US and EU (1990-2000) as a share of total country population (log), excluding years when a country is democratic.
3. Communication Ties: Measured by per capita average annual international voice traffic (1993-2000) and per capita average annual internet access (1995-2000), excluding years when a country is democratic.

4. Intergovernmental Ties: Measured by membership in the Organization of American States (OAS) or potential membership in the EU. ³

Each of these factors suffers from a problem of scope that, in turn, limits their effectiveness as indicators of linkage. A focus on economic and intergovernmental ties, though logical, overlooks other equally significant non-trade ties. Furthermore, assessing intergovernmental ties, in terms of EU and OAS membership privileges the geographic neighbors of the west and ignores other significant intergovernmental ties with states ineligible for membership in these organizations. Furthermore, Levitsky and Way's emphasis on the importance of social ties as determined by the size of expatriate communities in the West fails take into consideration the existence of small communities that might proves significantly influential. Finally, the decision on the part of the authors to utilize social and communication ties as primary indicators of linkage goes largely unjustified and unexplained, and accordingly I will exclude it from the following study. Yet, even in spite of the limitations of their study, utilization of Levitsky and Way's method of calculating linkage shows Morocco's linkage with the West increased over time across all four categories.

However, given the limitations of the indicators presented by Levitsky and Way, particularly in regards to social and communication ties, this paper will focus and expand exclusively on economic and intergovernmental ties between Morocco

³ Levitsky and Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism*, 374.

and the US and EU as determinants of linkage. The decision to give primacy to these factors reflects an adherence to a more traditional definition of linkage, as these two factors ultimately prove more important and convincing when determining the likelihood of external pressure to democratize. Accordingly, I will focus on other factors influencing economic and intergovernmental ties, including free trade agreements, foreign direct investment, and foreign aid. I will then assess intergovernmental ties through an analysis of the impact of the EU Neighborhood Plan, NATO Major Non-member Ally Status, and the Morocco Millennium Challenge Compact.

Another point needing further evaluation concerns the actual method of determining linkage. Levitsky and Way determine linkage through relative statistical analysis, choosing to rank each of the world's "non-democratic" countries in quintiles "based on [their] ranking relative to all non-Western countries in the world (5=highest quintile; 1=lowest quintile). The scores on the four dimensions are summed into a total score, which was recalculated so that scores range from 0 to 1."⁴ Unfortunately, the results of such an analysis cannot, at least for the time being, be replicated.⁵ Accordingly, I will not attempt to rank Moroccan linkage relative to all other non-Western, non-democratic countries. Instead, I will compare Moroccan

⁴ Levitsky and Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism*, 374.

⁵ Levitsky and Way provide their computational formula in the index of Competitive Authoritarianism. Given the convoluted explanation provided, however, I could not replicate their results.

linkage over two periods (1990-1999 and 1999-2011), arguing that linkage increased from one period to another. While this method does not specifically align with the methodology outlined by Levitsky and Way in their study, it provides useful insight into whether linkage and leverage in Morocco increased or decreased over time and how such fluctuations impacted internal and external pressure for democratization.

WHY MOROCCO

Very little differentiated the Moroccan monarchy from its authoritarian counterparts throughout the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region during the period beginning in 1999 and ending in early 2011.⁶ Though often considered comparatively less repressive than other hybrid regimes in the region, the Mohammad VI regime exhibited many of the same behaviors as the Mubarak regime in Egypt, the Assad regime in Syria, and the Bin Ali regime in Tunisia.⁷ The political opposition faced repression and persecution, the regime violated basic human rights, and clientelism ran rampant in the upper echelons of government. In terms of Human Development Indicators, the trajectory of Morocco closely mirrored

⁶ In early 2011 the Arab Spring began to sweep through the Arab Middle East and North Africa. Following its arrival in Morocco, the regime undertook political reform to avoid political disorder and social unrest. Thus, this paper will focus on the years preceding this shift in policy.

⁷ Levitsky and Way exclude Morocco from their study of the impact of external pressure on democratization on the grounds that the most important official is not elected. I argue that this exclusion is inappropriate, as Moroccan parliamentary and local politics are incredibly free, fair, and productive.

regional trends during the past decade.⁸ Although underperformed Egypt, Tunisia, and Arab states, Morocco also witnessed steady improvements in per capita income, health, and education.⁹

While the past decade of Moroccan politics differed little from region-wide trends, it did differ from Moroccan politics during the 1990s when King Hassan II made serious attempts at liberalizing Moroccan society and politics. Though not all encompassing, the reforms enacted by Hassan II marked an important shift away from authoritarian politics and toward a more inclusive, pluralistic regime. This move towards increased participation and pluralism began to wane when Hassan II's heir, Mohammad VI, came to power in 1999. Such a regression in the presence of greater linkage contradicts the theory put forth by Levitsky and Way and Morocco's exceptionalism in this regard warrants further attention and examination.

I should note here that Levitsky and Way exclude Morocco from their study, arguing that it does not fit their definition of a hybrid regime because "the most important executive office is not elected."¹⁰ This exclusion of Morocco deserves

⁸ UNDP Country Profile: Morocco

⁹ UNDP Country Explanations: Morocco

¹⁰ Levitsky and Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism*, 32.

Levitsky and Way also exclude from their study regimes in which "the top executive positions are filled via elections but the authority of elected governments is seriously strained by the military or other nonelected bodies," as well as "competitive regimes under foreign occupation." This presents a serious problem insofar as the authors eliminate nearly all regimes in the MENA region, including non-monarchies like Egypt and Syria.

further review and consideration as, parliamentary and local elections and the institutional battles that they alleviate or exacerbate are important in the Moroccan context. Furthermore, the Moroccan electoral sphere during the period taken under study by Levitsky and Way witnessed important increases in political participation. However exceptional Morocco may appear when compared to the regimes studied by Levitsky and Way, it still provides an electoral arena in which we can trace whether politics are becoming more or less competitive. Since Levitsky and way provide no reason why the causal mechanisms of their theory would not apply in other electoral contexts, we may apply their theory of linkage and leverage to the case of Morocco during both the decade preceding and following the new millennium.

LINKAGE AND LEVERAGE UNDER HASSAN II

From the 1970s to the early 1990s, political liberalization in Morocco remained virtually nonexistent. King Hassan II actively and brutally persecuted his political opposition and effectively limited the growth of Moroccan civil society. In the first few years of his reign, Hassan II made piecemeal attempts at political reform, but this period of liberalization came to a quick close after two failed coup attempts in 1971 and 1972. The ensuing crackdown came swiftly and decisively. A MERIP report published in 1977 described the situation, stating:

For all the talk of constitutionalism, Morocco remains an absolute monarchy where legal opposition politics are permitted only the most tenuous

existence. The regime has sought to suppress every form of organized political life . . . In the past eight months alone, there have been nine political trials, affecting more than three hundred political prisoners. . . Informed sources estimate that Moroccan jails now contain hundreds of political prisoners still awaiting trials as well as thousands of others detained for political reasons.¹¹

By the early-1990s, the dire socio-political conditions in Morocco attracted the attention of international human rights groups. In 1991, Amnesty International issued a report, claiming that

The Moroccan authorities have for decades routinely practised a system of *garde à vue* detention where a detainee can be completely cut off from the outside world. This system of indefinite incommunicado detention disregards the most basic safeguards for detainees against torture and denies them the chance to consult their lawyers, see their families or challenge the legality of their detention before an independent judicial authority.¹²

Such conditions, neither new nor unique in the MENA region, signaled a fundamental lack of change within the kingdom during a period of more than two decades. This type of treatment and governance characterized the rule of Hassan II, causing the liberal reforms that came in the final years of his reign to take many by surprise.

In 1992 and again in 1996 King Hassan II called for the amendment of the country's constitution. While the monarchy retained an inordinate of power, Hassan II moved to increase the legislative power of parliament. The power to

¹¹ Paul, *Wave of Repression Sweeps Morocco*.

¹² Amnesty International. *Morocco: A Pattern of Political Imprisonment, 'Disappearances,' and Torture*, 5.

select the country's Prime Minister still lay in the hands of the king, but the new constitution forced him to choose from his appointee from the majority party. The reforms also led to the formation of a new "Constitutional Council," possessing the power of legislative oversight. Additionally, King Hassan II sought greater political pluralism within the Moroccan political system, allowing for the participation of previously illegal Islamist parties in electoral politics. Again, the king retained an inordinate amount of power, but from a regional comparative perspective no other regime could rival or even parallel this shift in policy.

In 1997 this political opening and period of reform led to the victory of an opposition party, the Socialist Union of Popular Forces, in Morocco's parliamentary elections. This opposition victory and the successive period of parliamentary leadership, known as the *alternance*, marked an important moment not only for Morocco but also for the region as a whole. The victory of the Socialist Union of Popular Forces marked the first time that an opposition party in the Middle East achieved an electoral victory in parliamentary elections.¹³ Though not indicative of full democratization of the Moroccan political system, the success of the opposition at the polls in this election indicated a clear shift in the regime's toleration of the opposition and a willingness to consider a political opening.

¹³ Cohen and Jaidi, *Morocco: Globalization and its Consequences*, 58.

The impetus for internal democratization in the 1990s remained minimal. Hassan II's control of the armed forces remained intact and the country witnessed no discernable spike in public mobilization in opposition to his repressive policies. The opposition mounted challenges to the regime's repressive conduct, but none that seriously threatened the regime's durability.¹⁴ Though we cannot definitively know for sure what spurred Hassan II's move towards social and political liberalization, in the next few pages I offer two possible explanations for this dramatic change in policy. The first possibility relates to Hassan II's age and the issue of succession, and the second reflects a concern on the part of the monarchy over the arrival of a Third Wave-style political revolution in Morocco.¹⁵

In terms of succession, liberalization of political and social life in Morocco makes sense, as moments of leadership change can often create an opening for dissent. When a regime, especially an authoritarian one, experiences a period of leadership transition opponents of the regime may perceive a window of opportunity for reform and change. We can therefore infer that Hassan II wanted to minimize the likelihood of this outcome in the event of his death, and began to implement gradual reform in the hopes of circumventing such a situation.

¹⁴ Perhaps the most threatening movement during this period was the POLISARIO Movement, which battled with Morocco, Algeria, and Mauritania for control and sovereignty over the Western Sahara.

¹⁵ The term Third Wave and its accompanying theory of democratization can be traced to Samuel Huntington. Huntington introduced the term in his 1991 article, *The Third Wave*, and expanded on this theory in his subsequent book *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*. Beginning in Portugal in 1974, the Third Wave represented a global resurgence of democracy unparalleled since the period between WWII and the early 1960s.

The second explanation, concern over the possibility of a political revolution, proves likely as well. Beginning in the 1970s authoritarian countries in various regions of the world fell victim to the democratic aspirations of their citizens. Though this so-called Third Wave of democratization bypassed the Middle East and North Africa, regional autocrats concerned themselves with preventing similar movements within their own countries. Both Algeria and Mauritania, though mired in domestic political struggles, enacted moderate liberal and democratic reforms during this period in the hopes of quieting dissent. Given the economic crisis experienced in Morocco during the mid-1980s, the continued struggle over control of the Western Sahara, and popular dissent against the regime a desire on the part of the King to hedge his bets against popular revolution would not come as a surprise.

Although I cannot definitively prove these theories given the lack of access to Moroccan archives and a dearth of online media archives, they serve to explain the emergence of liberalization more effectively than a theory focused on international pressure. US support of political liberalization in Morocco during the 1990s proves unlikely, as both Clinton administrations relied implicitly on Morocco to support the United States' regional interests. During the Gulf War Morocco allied with the United States, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia to oust Saddam Hussein from Kuwait. Additionally, Morocco played a role in supporting the United States in brokering a

peace treaty between Arabs and Israelis during the 1993 Oslo Accords. In this context, political reform of the type undertaken in Morocco during the 1990s contrast with Western interests, and thus the likelihood that liberal reforms resulted from the application of international leverage remains improbable.

Moreover, during the 1990s the United States hesitated to exercise leverage in North Africa on a number of occasions. The continuing conflict over the Western Sahara and the outbreak of the Algerian Civil War in 1991 bred both regional and domestic instability. While Morocco clashed with Mauritania and Algeria over rights to the mineral-rich Western Sahara, domestic tensions in all three countries came to a head. In the midst of these crises, the United States quickly condemned human rights abuses, but did little to leverage the three countries to improve their human rights record or their commitment to democratic progress. In the case of Mauritania, the United States continued its support of the country's authoritarian Prime Minister Maaouya Ould Sid'Ahmed Taya as he faced and violently repressed internal challenges to his authority. In Algeria, the United States and France helped to engineer and finance a military coup that ousted the country's democratically elected Islamist leader. Meanwhile, in Egypt, the United States provided continued endorsement of the Hosni Mubarak regime, even though his repressive policies directly contradicted the Clinton administration's commitment to spreading

democracy in the region.¹⁶ These actions clearly indicate an inclination on the part of the United States to support authoritarianism over democratization in North Africa during the 1990s. In this context, the use of leverage on Morocco to democratize would make little sense and would contradict US regional objectives.

To say that the West exerted no leverage on Morocco during this period would be a mistake. Because continued abuses of human rights in Morocco, the EU made sparing attempts to encourage Hassan II to loosen his vice grip on the activities of the regime's opponents. In fact, in 1992 the European Parliament (the EU's directly elected representative body) withheld an aid package from Morocco in the hopes of encouraging human rights reform within the kingdom.¹⁷ Yet, in spite of continued abuses US funding and support of the Hassan II regime fluctuated very little over time. In years when the United States deemed Moroccan cooperation crucial to the furtherance of US regional objectives, aid increased in spite of human rights abuses and then returned to normal, pre-Gulf War and pre-Oslo rates.¹⁸

A NEW KING, A NEW PATH

Thus, the final decade of Hassan II's rule differed markedly from the previous three decades. Following the coup attempts of the early 1970s the Moroccan political arena experienced marked deliberalization and political or civil society opposition

¹⁶ Brownlee, *Democracy Prevention*, 61.

¹⁷ Ottaway and Riley, *Morocco: From Top-down Reform to Democratic Transition?*

¹⁸ U.S. Agency for International Development Economic Analysis and Data Services. "US Overseas Loans & Grants: Morocco."

faced incredible levels of repression and persecution. By the 1990s this changed and Morocco witnessed attempts, albeit concentrated, at political liberalization. Many believed that Hassan's heir, Mohammad VI, would carry this process even further. Yet, between 1999 and 2010 the new king did little to further open the country's political arena. Meanwhile, the new king enacted sweeping neoliberal economic reforms, believing that the democratizing policies enacted by his father would serve until such a time as the country achieved modernization.¹⁹

In an attempt to make Morocco a more desirable trade partner and appear more favorable to Western observers and governments, Morocco provided the United States with valuable support in both the War on Terror and the Peace Process. Although Morocco had historically allied with the United States and Europe, the regime's strengthened commitment to US and EU regional objective in the wake of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks brought unprecedented advantages.

Following the US invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, Morocco became a linchpin in the fight against regional terrorism. Following the September 11 terrorist attacks the UN lauded Morocco for hosting an international conference in Agadir aimed at addressing terrorism and MENA regional security. As the war progressed and later expanded into Iraq, Morocco became an essential ally in detaining suspected

¹⁹ Roula Khalaf, "Arab rulers with a new agenda: Roula Khalaf on whether economic modernisation can proceed fast enough to curb demands for political reform:" *Financial Times*, February 3, 2000.

terrorists. Following a number of terrorist bombings in Casablanca in May 2003, Moroccan parliament passed the Law to Combat Terror, which gave Moroccan authorities a veritable carte blanche to detain dissidents. This law immediately led to domestic outcry and criticism, with Moroccan and international human rights groups arguing that its arbitrary definition of what constitutes a terrorist crime allows for the detainment and torture of regime opponents.²⁰

The Moroccan government has also collaborated with US intelligence agencies to detain and torture suspected Al-Qaeda operatives. Those in Morocco who oppose these practices, particularly journalists, often find themselves on the wrong side of this arbitrary legislation and frequently face arrest and torture. From 2001 to 2010, any American criticism of Morocco's anti-democratic practices may have endangered the special symbiotic relationship between the two countries. The US stood to lose a location for the outsourcing of terrorist detainment and torture; the Moroccan monarchy stood to lose its excuse to eliminate its own opponents. Instead, the United States spent more money on ensuring the durability of its Moroccan ally. In 2007, Morocco became a Millennium Challenge Corporation Compact member, an interesting move on the part of the United States government considering membership typically depends on a domestic commitment to

²⁰ Human Rights Watch, *Human Rights in Morocco*.

advancement civil liberties and human rights.²¹

In addition to its utility in the War on Terror, Morocco has been an important friend to the United States in dealings with Israel. Unlike its authoritarian neighbors, Morocco sporadically engaged with Israel during the 1960s and 1970s. King Hassan II's consistent support for Israel most likely stemmed from his desire to suppress the POLISARIO movement in the Western Sahara. Support for Israel during the tumultuous during this time meant US military aid to the kingdom to in order to help win the fight for the Western Sahara.²² By 1994, this courtship resulted in the first attempts at an official diplomatic relationship and Morocco became one of Israel's staunchest regional allies. Even in spite of periods of tension and severance of diplomatic relations, Morocco has proven more willing than its neighbors to support the peace process. In spite of the recent strains on Moroccan-Israeli relations due to the expansion of Israeli settlements and continued attacks on Gaza, the United States still looks to Morocco as a critical actor in brokering an Arab-Israeli peace deal. In a letter to Mohammad VI in July 2009 President Obama

²¹ As a Millennium Challenge recipient, Morocco received \$697.5 billion from the United States in 2007 to help reduce poverty and aid in economic development.

²² "Obama: Morocco Can Be Leader in Solving Arab-Israeli Conflict." *Arabia 2000*, July 4, 2009.

underscored this hope, urging the monarch to “be a leader in bridging gaps between Israel and the Arab world.”²³

The preceding pages highlight two very important points. First, Morocco seemed well-positioned to continue along a democratic trajectory when Mohammad VI ascended to the throne in 1999. Second, Morocco’s continued support of Western regional objectives fortified the regime against external criticism and pressure to democratize. The remainder of this paper will address the benefits reaped by Morocco because of their support of Western objectives and explain how Mohammad VI used those benefits to ensure the continued survival of his regime. The following sections will show that the benefits of increased linkage in the absence of leverage permitted the Mohammad VI regime to reform in some areas while stifling reform in others. In so doing, the government succeeded in appeasing its citizens and quieting its critics.

INCREASING LINKAGE

The United States’ reliance on the Mohammad VI regime to support the War on Terror and the Peace Process explains their unwillingness to leverage the Moroccan regime to further democratize. Any change of leadership in the upper-echelons of Moroccan government could threaten Morocco’s overall complicity. Thus, it comes

²³ Lee Lescaze. “U.S. Unveils \$2.5 Billion Foreign Arms Aid Plan.” *The Washington Post*, March 3, 1977.

as no surprise that the Bush and Obama administrations committed themselves to continued and friendly relations with Mohammad VI despite his authoritarian record. In return for continued Moroccan support, the West made efforts that led to increased economic and intergovernmental linkage with Morocco.

As mentioned previously, Levitsky and Way offer a useful framework for predicting the likelihood of democratization in a hybrid regime. However, the narrow scope of their definition of linkage ignores other pertinent economic indicators that serve to highlight the extent of economic ties between countries. A focus on “the extent of trade with the United States and 15 EU member countries” renders itself useful as a starting point, but reliance on this indicator alone as the determinant of the level of economic ties between nations proves problematic, even though these ties increased for Morocco during both periods under study.

Figure 1 clearly demonstrates that economic ties between Morocco and the US and EU, as defined by Levitsky and Way, increased during the two decades under study. Yet, this does little to reveal the depth of these ties. To truly understand the increased linkage between Morocco and the West we should direct our attention to changes in other factors often cited as affecting the linkage between countries.

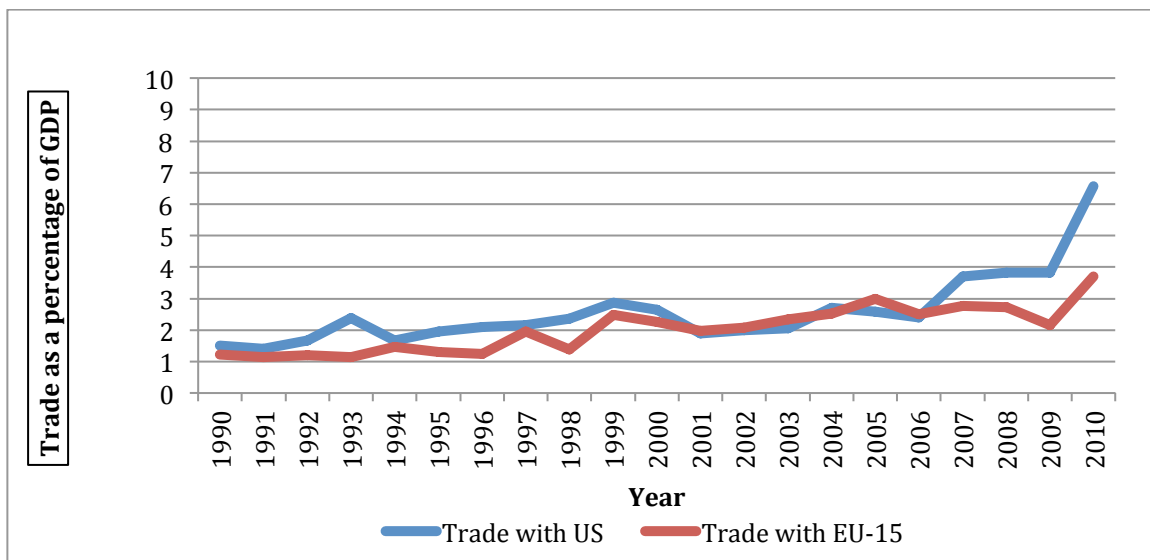


Figure 1: Extent of Trade with the US and EU-15 Member Countries for Morocco, 1990-2010²⁴

ASSOCIATION AND FREE TRADE

Figure 1 indicates that trade between Morocco and the West increased steadily since 1990, but this increase reveals only part of the story.²⁵ The trade relationship in this case proves more deeply entrenched than the increase shows. In September 2000, Morocco signed an Association Agreement with the EU building upon the 1976 Cooperation Agreement between the two parties. Title II Article Six of this new Association Agreement stipulates that

The Community and Morocco shall gradually establish a free trade area over a transitional period lasting a maximum of 12 years starting from the date of the entry into force of this Agreement in accordance with the provisions of this Agreement and in conformity with those of the 1994 General Agreement

²⁴ International Monetary Fund, *Direction of Trade Statistics: Morocco, 1990-2010*.

²⁵ According to the US Census, US annual trade (imports plus exports) with Morocco in 2010 was approximately \$2,632 million. For the sake of comparison, in 2010 annual US trade with Israel was \$32,267 million, US trade with Egypt was \$9,073 million, and US trade with Jordan was 2,148.

on Tariffs and Trade and the other multilateral agreements on trade in goods annexed to the Agreement establishing the WTO.²⁶

Under this Agreement, the Moroccan Free Trade Area would expire in 2012. In 2013, the EU began talks with Morocco not only to extend the Association Agreement but also to replace it with a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement. This proposed agreement, which Morocco will most likely accept in spite of its many disadvantages, reflects the consistent deepening of economic ties between Morocco and the EU, ties that quantitative data alone fails to elucidate.²⁷

We observe a similar deepening of ties in the case of Morocco and the United States. The potential for a US-Moroccan free trade agreement emerged in 2003. The resulting US-Moroccan Free Trade Agreement went into effect in 2006, replacing the 1985 Treaty Between the United States of America and the Kingdom of Morocco Concerning the Encouragement and Reciprocal Protection of Investments. The stated goals of this agreement include support of “the significant economic and political reforms that are underway in Morocco” and providing “for improved commercial opportunities for U.S. exports to Morocco by reducing and eliminating trade barriers.”²⁸

²⁶ European Union, “Euro-Mediterranean Agreement: Morocco.”

²⁷ “al-magreb usir ila itifaqiyya al-tabadul al-hurr ma’ euroba raghem silbiyyatHa ‘ala iqtisaad al-balad mustaqbilan.” (Morocco insists on the Free Trade Agreement with Europe despite its consequences for the country’s economic future). *Alif Post*, March 4, 2013.

²⁸ Office of the United States Trade Representative. “US-Morocco Free Trade Agreement.”

Morocco also increased its ties with the West in other ways. In 2004, Morocco earned Major Non-member status in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and in 2005 Morocco adopted the European Neighborhood Policy Action Plan. This agreement, aimed at increasing governmental ties between the EU and the kingdom, went much further than the Association Agreement and the Agadir Agreement in its commitment to bilateral communication and interaction. It required Morocco to commit itself to the protection of human rights and promotion of democratic reform, but simultaneously offered Morocco the opportunity to participate, albeit limitedly, in EU policy planning and implementation.

As a result of increased linkage with the US and the EU and binding intergovernmental agreement, Morocco has witnessed a increase in the amount of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) over the past decade. Under Hassan II FDI accounted for less than one percent of Moroccan GDP; by 2010 FDI accounted for nearly five percent of GDP. ²⁹ Although it represents a relatively small portion of overall GDP, this increase between 1999 and 2010 shows that free trade led to increased investment in Morocco and thus increased revenue for the regime of Mohammad VI.

This section and the one immediately preceding it reveal two important trends. First, Morocco's commitment to US regional strategic objectives ensured the

²⁹ World Bank Databank, *Primary Income on Foreign Direct Investment: Morocco, 1990-2010*.

Mohammad VI regime against external democratizing pressure. Second, in return for services rendered in the War on Terror and the Peace Process, linkage between Morocco and the West increased. The following section will explain how the combination of these trends affected Moroccan domestic politics and allowed the monarchy to circumvent political change.

POLITICS AS USUAL: ENSURING DOMESTIC STABILITY AND REGIME DURABILITY

Increased linkage and the absence of external pressure to democratize created a situation in Morocco favorable to the continuation of the Mohammad VI regime, even in spite of liberal backsliding. Between 1999 and 2011, Mohammad VI has pursued an aggressive policy of liberalization to attract foreign investment. In return, major Multinational Corporations like 3M, Goodyear Company, and Pfizer (among countless others) relied on the regime to provide a stable and safe environment in which they could conduct business. The domestic uncertainty and unrest faced by the Moroccan regime in the 1970s and 1980s as a result of poor economic progress, government repression, and lack of social development could not repeat itself if Morocco hoped to capitalize on its increased linkage with the west.

Although Morocco's agreements with the US and EU placed emphasis on the need for domestic political reform, such reform in Morocco slowed after 1999 with little change rivaling the reforms instituted by Hassan II. Political change and

reform could lead to uncertainty on the part of investors concerning the safety of their investments. Regime continuity ensures the longevity of markets, while major political reform could portend potential upheaval and domestic conflict. Hassan II faced this same conundrum in the 1960s and early 1970s; political liberalization led to two separate attempts on his life but repression led to increased discontent and criticism aimed at the regime. Mohammad IV has consistently proved more adept at walking the fine line between reform and repression. From 1999 to February 2011, the monarchy made little effort to further democratize the political process in Morocco, choosing instead to focus on the liberalization of the economy and Moroccan society.

The 2004 *Moudawana* (Family Code) best represents this attempt at social reform. This bill greatly expanded the rights of women and children in Moroccan society.³⁰ In terms of ensuring stability, this move reflected both domestic and international concerns on the part of the regime. The treatment of women in Morocco has long been a concern of international human rights groups. A 1995 Human Rights Watch report indicates that

Despite progress in certain other aspects of the human rights situation in Morocco during the past few years, the impact upon women's rights has been slight. The activities of a group of women struggling for equality since independence led to the creation, in the mid to late 1980s, of a number of non-governmental organizations dedicated to protecting and increasing awareness of women's rights. A decade later, dozens of women's rights

³⁰ Human Rights Education Associates. "The Moroccan Family Code (Moudawana) of February 5, 2004."

organizations are active in these efforts. Morocco ratified the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women in June 1993. However, as the discussion below indicates, the government has failed to modify domestic laws in conformity with Morocco's obligations under the convention.³¹

The *Moudowana* sought to address these issues, as well as redress the inherent problems of its predecessor, the 1958 *Moudowana*. While the updated *Moudowana* received criticism from women's rights groups and leftist opposition parties as insufficient, it nevertheless improved some aspects of family life within the kingdom. This move highlights the regime's ability to institute reform that stabilizes both itself and society. On the one hand, the updated *Moudowana* shows that the government takes human rights seriously and demonstrates its intention to liberalize the country, thus denying the opposition an opportunity platform from which to challenge the monarchy. Additionally, the *Moudowana* seeks to limit the role of Islam, particularly the more conservative Salafi variety, in family life and in the country's legal framework. Secularization and liberalization of family life serves to undermine the influence of the Islamist opposition.

At the macro level, liberalization of the economy and increased linkage with the West has proven mostly beneficial. As previously noted, primary income on FDI in Morocco increased significantly. Since 1999, similar trends emerge when analyzing other major economic indicators. Trade as a percentage of GDP increased

³¹ Human Rights Watch, "Human Rights in Morocco."

from 55% to 82% between 1999 and 2010.³² During the same period, national GDP witnessed a 66% increase. In regards to all of these indicators, the rate of increase jumped dramatically following the US-Moroccan Free Trade Agreement.

The Moroccan government reinvests the revenues off FDI and increased foreign aid into massive public works projects aimed at further modernizing the country and attracting more foreign investment. For example, construction of a new state of the art port, dubbed Tangier-Med, in Tangier began in 2003. This project aimed at stimulating economic progress in the north of the country, with the hope of increasing exports, creating jobs, and promoting tourism. In a country where unemployment remains a major problem (see Figure 2), the government deems such projects vital to stability. Morocco also embarked on the Moroccan Integrated Wind Energy Project, leading to the construction of nearly twenty wind farms since 2000. This project, funded by the Moroccan government in combination with several Gulf countries, seeks to provide the country with inexpensive renewable energy in the hopes of attracting new investment to the developing country. The government even created a number of training programs at Moroccan schools and universities to ensure employment for Moroccan citizens.³³

³² World Bank Databank, "Trade as a Percentage of GDP: Morocco," 1990-2010.

³³ Kingdom of Morocco - Moroccan Investment Development Agency. "Investment Opportunities: Wind Energy."
<http://www.invest.gov.ma/?Id=67&lang=en&RefCat=3&Ref=146>.

As a result of macro development, similar (though admittedly less rapid) changes and improvements also occurred at the micro level. When he came to power in 1999, Mohammad VI faced a nation gripped by illiteracy, poverty, and poor access to health care. Progress in these areas has been slow and has hardly kept apace with macro developments, but reflects honest, albeit limited, efforts to improve the standard of living. As a result, the percentage of Moroccans living on less than \$2 per day decreased to 14% in only eight years.³⁴

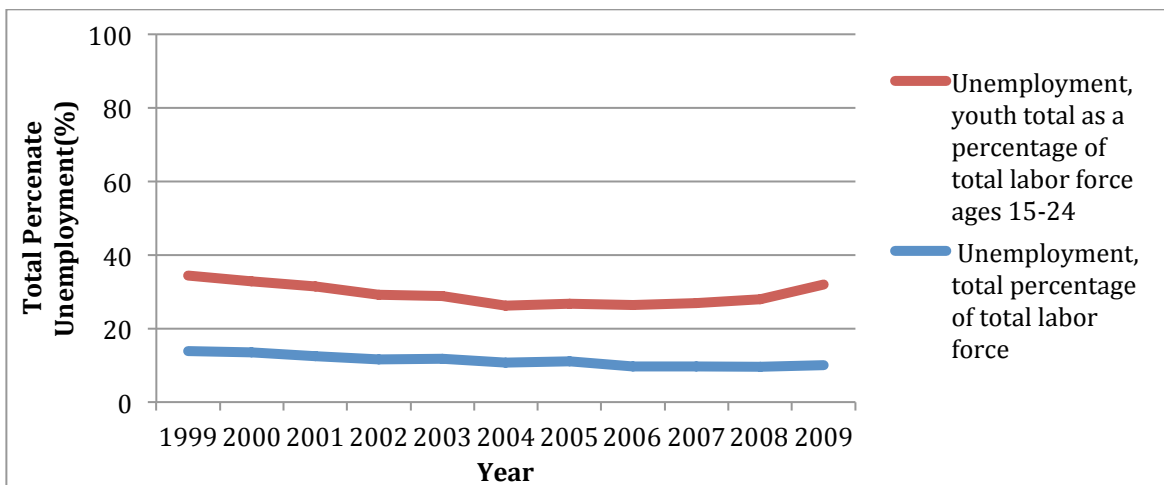


Figure 2: Total and Youth Unemployment in Morocco, 1999-2000³⁵

³⁴ World Bank Databank, Poverty headcount ratio at \$2 a day (% of population): Morocco, 1990-2010.

³⁵ World Bank Databank, *Unemployment, total percentage of total labor force: Morocco, 1990-2010.*; World Bank Databank, *Unemployment, youth total as a percentage of total labor force ages 15-24: Morocco, 1990-2010.*

Other issues like the quality of education remain problematic. Morocco began the new millennium with an adult literacy rate of approximately 50%, which in 2002 prompted the Moroccan government to commit itself to cutting this number in half by 2010.³⁶ One year before this deadline, adult literacy rates in Morocco hovered around 56%, a far cry from the ambitious desire to achieve 75% literacy in merely eight years.³⁷ Children's enrollment in primary school went up over the past decade, but since education expenditures remained constant, we should question whether the quality of education kept apace.³⁸ Even despite marginal growth in many areas of society the regime of Mohammad VI has consistently improved the lot of the Moroccan populace. All boats rose, though perhaps unequally. In this way, the regime placated the opposition, offering social improvements in place of political reform and minimized the threat of any serious challenge to the regime's longevity. In so doing, it created a relatively stable environment for the conducting of international business.

In the absence of leverage, liberal social and economic reform has far outpaced attempts at creating a more liberal democratic political environment in Morocco. Instead, the monarchy and the *Makhzen*, the monarchical elite, moved to

³⁶ World Bank. "Promoting Adult Literacy in Morocco." <http://go.worldbank.org/YVBF1T9I50>. Accessed April 23, 2013.

³⁷ World Bank Databank, Literacy rate, adult total (% of people ages 15 and above): Morocco, 1990-2010.

³⁸ World Bank Databank, *Public spending on education, total (% of government expenditure): Morocco, 1990-2010.*; World Bank Databank, Labor force with primary education (% of total): Morocco.; 1990-2010.

ensure their own survival by limiting political participation and increasing the costs of opposing or criticizing the regime or its practices. Mohammad VI echoed this commitment to the monarchy's longevity in his speech to Moroccans on March 9, 2011 following the outbreak of countrywide protests and demonstrations calling for political reform. In this speech he listed the "imarat al-Muminin (commandership of the faithful)" and "the monarchy" as part of the "sacred character of [Moroccans'] immutable values, which are unanimously supported by the nation."³⁹ Clearly, the king perceives the monarchy as a fixed institution within the realm of Moroccan politics.

This inclination gets reflected in the lack of domestic political reform within Morocco since the death of Hassan II. Attempts at creating openings for greater political pluralism in regards to the media and civil society led "to the adoption of laws that are broadly permissive but lack effective safeguards against arbitrary application of the law."⁴⁰ This creates an environment in which opposition to the regime can voice their dissent, and in which the government can eliminate potential threats to regime stability and integrity, seemingly without infringing on human or civil rights.

Another tactic of the regime has been to increase the power of parliament

³⁹ "King Mohamed VI Speech 3/9/11 (full text) #Feb20 #khitab." *Moroccans for Change*, March 9, 2011. <http://moroccansforchange.com/2011/03/09/king-mohamed-vi-speech-3911-full-text-feb20-khitab/>. Accessed April 23, 2013.

⁴⁰ Kristina Kausch, *Morocco: Smart Authoritarianism Refined*.

and its elected officials while maintaining the authority and integrity of the *Makhzen*. This group consistently enjoyed power and privilege within the Moroccan regime and sought to coopt members of other groups and parties who pose a threat to their singular grip on power. They control the purse strings at the governmental level, and often at the societal level. As a result, these elites bankroll and control many civil society actors like NGOs and the media, leading to the furtherance of their own interests over the interests of broader society. Cooptation of opposition party notables undermines their legitimacy and prevents interparty cooperation against the power of the *Makhzen*.⁴¹

CONCLUSION

As we have seen, Moroccan commitments to democracy regressed in many ways during the period from 1999 to 2011 as compared to the decade preceding it. During the 1990s, Hassan II attempted to allow for political openings and to scale back on the repressive treatment of journalists and other critics of the regime. Before the Arab Spring, the reign of Mohammad VI witnessed a shift away from such practices, focusing more on the liberalization of society and the economy. As a result, opponents of the regime from all political inclinations faced serious consequences for mounting challenges to the power of the palace. Despite

⁴¹ Ellen Lust-Okar, *Divided They Rule*.

increased linkage with the West and the continued potential of the west to leverage the monarchy, Mohammad faced little pressure to democratize. In international terms, democratic reform would threaten or even disrupt US interests in the region. By ensuring the fulfillment of Western desires, Morocco leveraged itself against external pressure. In domestic terms, liberal social and economic reform combined with relatively free and fair elections gave the regime a modicum of credit with the opposition. In short, instead of fostering the growth of democracy, increased linkage helped Mohammad VI and his regime to sow the seeds of authoritarianism.

The impact and implications of increased linkage allowed the Moroccan monarchy to weather the storm of the Arab Spring and subsequent domestic uprisings quite well. In response to protests in February 2011, King Mohammad VI delivered a speech to the country's citizens promising democratic reform. Making little direct reference to the protest movement that developed in Morocco, the king committed himself to "giving strong momentum to the substantial reforms under way, of which a democratic constitution is both the basis and the essence."⁴² On July 1, 2011, the King's promises resulted in a Constitutional referendum and a moderate political opening. In the eyes of Western observers, Morocco quickly became a model for region-wide democratic reform. Following a conversation with Morocco's

⁴² "King Mohamed VI Speech 3/9/11 (full text) #Feb20 #khitab." *Moroccans for Change*, March 9, 2011.

Minister of Foreign Affairs in 2012, former US Secretary of State Hilary Clinton

praised the reform process, stating that

Morocco stands as an example, as a model of what can be achieved. Moroccans are strengthening their own democracy. Young people are having a say in their own future. His Majesty King Mohammed VI has begun the process of reform. We see women's rights protected and expanded, a more transparent and accountable government, establishing the Arab world's very first truth commission on human rights.⁴³

Yet the Moroccan model does not stem from the promises made by Mohammad VI in his speech to the Moroccan people on March 9, 2011. Instead, the success of this speech and the minimal reforms that followed result from the liberal social and economic reform of the previous ten years. Mohammad VI entered the Arab Spring with a decent record of accomplishment on reform outside of politics. Human Development within the country improved, in the years since he came to power. For the most part women and minorities enjoyed better treatment. The press experienced periods of increased freedom. Morocco emerged from the global financial crisis in 2007 virtually unscathed. Though Mohammad VI's record was not consistent, his record was not consistently poor, either. Thus, his strategy to modernize and liberalize while simultaneously increasing the regime's durability through authoritarian practices paid off.

⁴³ "Morocco; Secretary Clinton, Moroccan FM Al-Othmani After Their Meeting." *Africa News*, February 26, 2012.

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