

# Demobilization in Morocco: The Case of The February 20 Movement

By  
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## Abstract

This dissertation aims to understand why protests lessen when they do by investigating how and why social movements demobilize. I do this by questioning the causal link between consistent state policies (concessions or repression) and social movement demobilization. My interviews with the February 20 Movement, the main organizer of mass protests in Morocco during the Arab Spring, reveals how ideological differences between leftist and Islamist participants led to the group's eventual halt of protests. During my fieldwork, I conducted 46 semi-structured elite interviews with civil society activists, political party leaders, MPs, and independent activists throughout Morocco. My interviews demonstrate that the February 20 Movement was initially united, but that this incrementally changed following the King's mixed-policy of concessions and repression. The King's concessionary policies convinced society that demands were being met and therefore led to the perception that the February 20 Movement was no longer needed, while repression highlighted internal divides. The King's calculated mixed-policy approach killed this social movement by delegitimizing it, in addition to internally fracturing it. This dissertation will show how the February 20 Movement became a divided movement that could not uniformly respond to a series of concessions and repression.

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## Abbreviations

AMDH	Moroccan Association for Human Rights
CDT	Democratic Confederation of Labor
DWP	Democratic Way Party
F20	February 20 Movement
PJD	Justice and Development Party
JCO	Justice and Charity Organization
MALI	Alternative Movement for Personal Liberties
MP	Popular Movement
MPDC	Popular Democratic and Constitutional Movement
PAM	Authenticity and Modernity Party
UC	Constitutional Union
UGTT	Tunisian General Labor Union
UMT	Moroccan Workers Union
USFP	Socialist Democratic Vanguard Party
USP	United Socialist Party

## **Chapter One: The February 20 Movement and The Arab Spring**

On December 18, 2010, protests erupted one day after the self-immolation of Mohammed Bouazizi, a Tunisian street vendor who was mistreated by local police, and continued for 28 days until Tunisian President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali fled the country. Inspired by the events in Tunisia, Egyptians took to the streets on January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2011, and violent and non-violent demonstrations engulfed the nation until President Hosni Mubarak was forced from power. By February 2012, the leaders of Libya and Yemen were ousted following mass protests, while protests and major uprisings spread throughout Algeria, Morocco, Iraq, Kuwait, Bahrain, Jordan, and Sudan.

The Arab Spring engulfed some countries within the region, but many remained relatively unaffected. Some governments at the forefront of the Arab Spring, like those of Egypt and Tunisia, reacted overwhelmingly with repressive measures against protestors. Morocco responded differently by offering and implementing constitutional reforms in response to protests. Indeed, some have suggested that the Moroccan King learned that harsh repression could backfire after the ouster of both the Egyptian and Tunisian presidents (Khashoggi 2014). Nevertheless, the fact that protests ensued well after reforms were declared in Morocco casts doubt on explanations that causally link top-down reforms to the abatement of protests in Morocco, and elsewhere in the Arab world.

Like other countries in the region, Moroccans were inspired by the events in Tunisia and Egypt. Nine days after the ouster of Hosni Mubarak in Egypt, thousands of Moroccans began protesting in the capital of Rabat on February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2011. However, unlike other countries, Moroccans did not call for the ouster of the King or the regime and did not use the slogan heard

in other Middle East and North African (MENA) countries: ‘the people want to bring down the regime’ (Human Rights Watch 2011). Rather, Moroccan protestors initially demanded reforms to the constitution, and specifically, a transition from an executive monarchy to a democratic parliamentary monarchy (Mitiche 2017).

In explaining the Arab Spring events in Morocco, current scholarly approaches tend to overlook the protest movements themselves when attempting to explain (1) why protests abated in Morocco and (2) why protests did not engulf and destabilize the country. Studying protest movements is important since it sheds light on intimate internal details like discussions, disagreements, and relationships among activists (Davenport 2015). How these internal dynamics interact with state policies offers insights into the under-researched topic of why protests abate. I argue that the announcement of constitutional reforms by King Mohammed VI on March 9, 2011 did not independently demobilize the February 20 Movement (F20), which was the main organizer of mass protests from 2011-2012 in Morocco.<sup>1</sup> This project aims to understand why protests abate by investigating how and why social movements demobilize. I do this by questioning the causal link between consistent policies (concessions or repression) and social movement demobilization. To understand the abatement of protest activity, I develop a framework to better understand how internal social movement dynamics along with regime strategies led to successful, and relatively peaceful, demobilization.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Arab Spring started with the Tunisian Revolution in December 2010 and protests in the region began to die down in mid-2012; however, conflicts that were products of Arab Spring protests, like the Syrian Civil War, persist today.

<sup>2</sup> The term demobilization has been used by various social movement theorists, each with differing definitions (Edwards and Marullo 1995; Humphreys and Weinstein 2007; Davenport 2015). I partially adopt Davenport’s (2015) definition and label demobilization as the “termination of or significant reduction in dissident interventions” and the “departure of individuals (members) from relevant organizations” (2015, p. 21). I label demobilization as the departure of organizational support from a social movement, while I use the term *protest decline* to refer to the general abatement/ceasing of protest activity. To understand why protests abate and are less frequent, I investigate social movement demobilization.

## The February 20 Movement

At the height of F20's activity, 37,000-60,000 people protested in over 50 cities throughout the country (Naudé 2011). Others estimate hundreds of thousands took part in protests (Emiljanowicz 2017). The interaction between tech-savvy e-activists and street activists inspired by the events in Tunisia and Egypt are credited with founding F20 (Rachidi 2015). Before the movement started there were various online calls for protest by unconnected individuals. The first official and well-known call for protest by the F20 was a successful online video that promoted protests for a myriad of reasons, including calls for more freedoms and minority rights. The video first appeared on YouTube and begins with a woman telling viewers that "I am Moroccan, and I will march on February 20<sup>th</sup> because I want freedom and equality for all Moroccans."<sup>3</sup> The video is an amalgamation of men and women expressing why they will join the protest movement. The Moroccan Association of Human Rights<sup>4</sup> (AMDH) provided the space and filming equipment for the video and convinced young activists to create the video; moreover, AMDH invited all individuals and political organizations that were interested in change to join protests on February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2011.<sup>5</sup>

The founders were leftist-leaning and not religiously affiliated. Similarly, the movement's official webpage, *Mamfakinch*, makes it appear that the F20 is leftist and secular; opinion articles deride the privatization of industries and the incumbent Islamist ruling party.<sup>6</sup> However, Islamist, leftist, feminist, liberal, and Amazigh (Berber) elements all participated under its banner. Furthermore, although the F20 was a collective of various individual activists, it was

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<sup>3</sup> Video found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S0f6FSB7gxQ> Accessed {3/3/2016}.

<sup>4</sup> AMDH is the largest non-governmental human rights in Morocco and played a crucial role in organizing F20 protests.

<sup>5</sup> Interview with AMDH leader in Rabat on 10/05/16.

<sup>6</sup> See: <https://www.mamfakinch.com/> Accessed {3/3/2017}.

supported by many political parties and organizations. The main non-Islamic political parties that supported the movement were radical left-wing parties like the United Socialist Party (USP) and the Marxist Democratic Way Party (DWP). Other organizations like the Moroccan Association of Human Rights (AMDH) and the Amazigh Democracy Movement also supported F20.

The most notable political parties and organizations of F20 were the Islamist Justice and Spirituality Organization (JCO) along with the USP and the DWP. The JCO is officially an illegal organization, but it is largely tolerated within Morocco. Its late-founder, Abdessalam Yassin, infused the cult-like hierarchical structure of Sufism, with the goal of transforming Morocco into an Islamist state. Indeed, the JCO “operates like a social movement by providing services and assistance to the poorer sections of society and which is preoccupied with Islamizing society from below by promoting a sort of Sufi-infused utopianism” (Dalmaso, 2012, p. 222). The JCO was the largest Islamist organization to join F20; however, other smaller Islamist organizations did join as well, most notably *Hizb al-Umma* (The Party of the Nation), which situates its ideological identity between Islamism and liberalism. In the words of one member: “*Hizb al-Umma* was quite in the middle. It tried to unify the JCO’s quantity [foot power] and the leftist’s quality [ideology].”<sup>7</sup> The party was founded in 2007 and is inspired by Islamic principles while fighting against racial, religious, linguistic, and gender discrimination (Hespress 2017). It maintains good relationships with leftist parties, and, like the JCO, is an illegal but tolerated political organization.

Moroccan labor unions, most significantly the Moroccan Workers Union (UMT), ceased supporting the F20 in April 2011, a month after constitutional reforms were declared, since higher salaries for civil servants were implemented (Rachidi 2015). Nevertheless, unlike in

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<sup>7</sup> Interview with Hizb al-Umma member in Meknes on 11/15/16.

Tunisia where the *Union Generale Tunisienne du Travail* (UGTT) was very active in street protests, labor union involvement with the F20 was weak. In Morocco, unions like the UMT used the Arab Spring to enhance their material interests (Buehler, 2014). Initially, Moroccan labor unions supported street protests, but, following state-labor negotiations in April 2011, the state conceded to union demands, which included raising the private-sector minimum wage by 330 Dirhams (\$33) and public-sector wages by 600 Dirhams (\$60). Matt Buehler (2014) argues that Moroccan labor unions, therefore, utilized the Arab Spring for their own interests:

These concessions show that public employees—teachers, doctors, nurses, and government clerks—emerged as victors from Morocco’s Arab uprising of 2011. Afraid that sustained labour participation in protests could provoke urban riots, as it frequently had between the 1930s and 2000s, the regime acquiesced to calm syndicate anger (p.102).

Unlike the UMT, the political parties and human rights organizations involved with the F20 overwhelmingly rejected the announcement of constitutional reforms; however, the Socialist Union of Popular Forces (USFP) did decide to officially withdraw support from the F20 following constitutional reforms. This decision did not come as a surprise to many as the USFP was the only party within the F20 that had previously held a parliamentary plurality (1997; 2002) and also therefore a long history of fighting for change within government institutions. Although the F20 rejected the reforms announced on March 9, 2011, many Moroccan’s rejoiced. Following the speech, the F20 was confronted with a dilemma it could never adequately overcome: How does a movement convince a public that is overwhelmingly supportive of the King to join F20 protests?

As this dissertation demonstrates, the King’s calculated use of various concessions followed by repression convinced Moroccans that change through reforms and state institutions was a sufficient response to F20’s grievances. This dissertation will show how the F20 became a divided movement that could not uniformly respond to a series of concessions followed by

repression, and how the public became convinced that there was no longer a need for a social movement for change. The accepted wisdom from both the trajectory of Arab Spring in the monarchies of Jordan and Morocco is that reforms lead to a decline in protests. Sean Yom and Gregory Gause (2012) note that the leaders of Morocco along with Jordan have “reacted to growing unrest with political-liberalization initiatives that have satisfied some opposition demands and helped to stanch protests” (p. 79). This observation, however, has not been empirically supported or deeply analyzed.

### **The Case of Morocco**

On February 1, 2011, just seven days after demonstrators flooded Tahrir Square, President Hosni Mubarak announced that political reforms would be passed and that he would no longer run for elections. President Ali Abdullah Saleh of Yemen similarly announced he would not run for office and promised free elections (Al Jazeera English 2011). Syrian President, Bashar Al-Assad, offered political reforms and promised to release political prisoners and increased public-sector salaries (Al-Hatem 2011). With the exception of Tunisia and Libya, other leaders during the Arab Spring offered protestors concessions. The Moroccan case is unique since concessions were the initial response of the regime, while most other regimes during the Arab Spring responded with a mix of repressive measures followed by promises of concessionary measures. In Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya, repression was used within a week of protest-inception. The Moroccan regime’s initial response to F20 protests was to offer various concessions; however, as we will see, concessions alone did not independently quell protests in Morocco. Repression was less frequently used by the Moroccan regime and was, like

concessions, not sufficient to lead to demobilization alone. When direct repression<sup>8</sup> was used in Morocco, it occurred months after protests began in May 2011. During May, activists began changing tactics by protesting in ‘non-public areas’, like the popular neighborhoods (*al'ahya' al-shaebia*), which I discuss in more detail in Chapter Two.

Following three weeks of nationwide demonstrations, King Mohammed VI addressed Moroccans via televised broadcast on March 9, 2011. To the surprise of many, the King announced sweeping constitutional reforms that reduced the monarch’s power and called for early elections. Various scholars have posited that these reforms were the main factor leading to abatement of protests in Morocco (Yom and Gause 2012; Amar 2013; Lynch 2013). Without specifically mentioning F20, the King announced that he would appoint a commission to ensure a separation of powers between the monarch, the judiciary, and the legislature. Perhaps the most important proposal was permitting freer parliamentary elections. The King would no longer limit the number of seats allocated to a party, which allowed the Islamist Party of Justice and Development (PJD) to win a plurality of seats in the 2011 general election (Abend, 2011). As we will see in Chapter Three, activists quickly made it clear that the parliamentary victory of the PJD in 2011 played a major role in reducing protests, which is why the PJD victory is termed by interviewees as the regime’s ‘last card’. The PJD victory further convinced the public and some F20 activists that sufficient change had occurred and that street protests were no longer necessary.

In addition to the constitutional reforms, the King pardoned various human rights activists and ultraconservative Islamist-Salafists, some of whom were arrested following the 2003 Casablanca terrorist attacks (Arieff, 2013, p. 5). Following a popular referendum vote, the

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<sup>8</sup> Repression aimed at immediately dispersing protests.



sweeping reforms were passed in July 2011.<sup>9</sup> Table 1.1 chronologically outlines concessions made by the monarchy during 2011.

*Table 1.1: Arab Spring Concessions*

February 21, 2011	Ex-Prime Minister, Abbas el-Fassi, announces that negotiations between the state and labor organizations would be initiated
March 9, 2011	King announces the formation of a constitutional reform committee
April 9, 2011	Abbas el-Fassi drafts concessions for labor unions
April 14, 2011	King pardons 148 political prisoners
April 26, 2011	Unprecedented increases in minimum wage and retirement pensions are passed agreed to by labor unions
June 17, 2011	New constitution is presented to public
July 1, 2011	New constitution passes via referendum vote
November 25, 2011	Early free and fair elections were held, which resulted in a plurality for the Islamist PJD

King Mohamad VI has historically responded to grievances from civil society via reforms. The passing of the Moroccan Family Law Code known as *Mudawwana* in 2004, which was proposed to parliament by King Mohamad VI, was praised by the international community and was the result of more than “20 years of struggle by feminists and women’s NGOs” (Ennaji 2011: 85). Similarly, King Mohamad VI created a truth and reconciliation committee (*Instance Equité et Réconciliation*) in response to reports of human rights atrocities against dissidents throughout his father’s (King Hassan II) reign in the 1960s and 1980s, a period which is aptly referred to in Morocco as ‘The Years of Lead’. This reformist trend of the monarchy has “granted the regime a reputation of being on the road to democratization” (Dalmasso, 2012, p. 219).

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<sup>9</sup> The government claims that voter turnout was just over 70% and that 98% voted ‘Yes’ to passing the new constitution (National Democratic Institute 2011).

Although many activists portray the reforms of 2011 as merely cosmetic, the reforms were unprecedented. The reforms give more power to parliament and the prime minister, who is now appointed by the King from the largest party in the Moroccan parliament. Furthermore, the reforms give “more independence to the judiciary, more protection of human rights and recognition of the Moroccan cultural diversity as well as the Amazigh language as the second official language of the country” (Laachir 2012). Nevertheless, significant power remains with the King; for instance, he appointed the committee to draft a new constitution and the new constitution does not affect the King’s control of security and foreign policy issues.<sup>10</sup>

Despite the significance of the reforms, the F20’s protests increased following the initial declaration of reforms on March 9, 2011. On March 13, 2011, there were protests in Casablanca that were violently repressed and, one of the largest protests organized by the F20 occurred on March 20, 2011, when tens of thousands protested throughout Morocco in rejection of the King’s speech (Reuters 2011). In the words of one AMDH leader: “The Moroccan people want something that goes beyond the King’s speech.”<sup>11</sup> In the capital city of Rabat and in Casablanca, slogans turned more extreme with crowds chanting: “the people want to overthrow the tyranny” with 50,000 participating in Casablanca alone.<sup>12</sup> Protests were not limited to big cities, however. Cities like Taza, Safi, Al Hociema, Nador, and Ouarzazate all had major protests on March 20. The months of March and April continued to see weekly protests that were often met with repression. In essence, the F20’s rejection of the March 9 Speech was clear. Indeed, a leader within the JCO made it clear that the March 9 Speech may have even strengthened the movement: “The state thought that after the King’s speech, protests would stop or weaken and

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<sup>10</sup> IBID

<sup>11</sup> See: <http://www.maghress.com/arrifinu/38457> Accessed {3/3/2017}.

<sup>12</sup> IBID

recede, but the opposite occurred. The marches that occurred in April and May were the strongest marches.”<sup>13</sup> Other activists believed that the proposed constitutional referendum following the March 9 Speech created an opportunity for the F20 to unite behind the decision of boycotting the constitution.<sup>14</sup>

The events in Morocco question conventional wisdom that links concessions or repression, individually, to the lessening of protests. The Moroccan monarchy’s strategy of concessions and repression, together, helped quell protests in Morocco. I will show how this mixed-policy was incredibly effective in demobilizing the F20. In the next section, I outline the findings from the broader social movement literature concerning state policy and protest decline and what this dissertation adds to that literature.

### **Social Movement Theory and Demobilization**

Social movement and protest literature more generally has focused almost exclusively on the relationship between repression and protest (see Lichbach 1987; Whalen and Flacks 1989; Mason and Krane 1989; Francisco 1995; 2003; Gupta, Singh, and Sprague 1993; Annete and Klandermans 2006). A widely accepted finding concerning reforms and concessions<sup>15</sup> in relation to protest levels is Mark Lichbach’s (1987) finding that consistent concessions *or* reforms lead to protest abatement. Lichbach’s seminal analysis of the relationship between repression and dissent argued that dissent varies with the consistency of state-policy. In other words, consistent government repressive or accommodative policies (like reforms) will reduce dissent, while inconsistent policies will increase it. His inadvertent advice for governments was, “(d)on't

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<sup>13</sup> Interview on 10/31/16 with JCO Leader.

<sup>14</sup> Interview in 12/08/16 with a Talea member.

<sup>15</sup> Lichbach uses the term accommodative policies.

reward and punish the same tactic” (p.287). Said differently, accommodate *or* repress dissenters, don’t mix. The Moroccan case is one where reforms and other concessionary policies were the main policy of the regime in response to protests; however, after each concession, repression followed. The Moroccan case demonstrates that, despite consistent accommodative policies, protests did not immediately abate. It also demonstrates how a mixed governmental policy of concessions followed by repression led to demobilization.

Mark Lichbach’s question to answer was “how repression both escalates and deters dissent” (1987, p. 271). Similarly, I show that accommodative policies can similarly escalate or deter dissent. Overlooked and crucial determinants of this causal relationship are sequence, the agents involved (i.e. homogenous or heterogeneous movements), type of concession (i.e. unprecedented or familiar), and type and aim of repression (harsh crackdowns or targeted defamation campaigns). After initial concessions in March 2011, the Moroccan regime responded to protests with a mixed-policy of concessions and repression. This suggests that neither concessions nor repression were independently sufficient to quell protests. Rather, I argue reforms did not directly convince F20 activists to cease protests; rather, initial reforms initiated internal disputes and cleavages that incrementally divided a previously united movement. As I will discuss below and in the subsequent chapters, repressive tactics further divided the movement and convinced the public that the costs of protesting (while change was already occurring) were too high.

### Concessions and Repression: A Theory

Signals sent to a public about the legitimacy and necessity of the F20 affect whether bystanders will join or cease participation.<sup>16</sup> Timur Kuran's (1989;1991) theory of 'falsified preferences' contends that bystanders join protests when 'first movers' signal to society that they share their grievances. Depending on environmental factors, like how the regime reacts, then more or less of society will join.<sup>17</sup> For instance, if protestors are not repressed, then more bystanders who share the same grievances with first movers will begin to mobilize. Lohmann (1994) builds on Kuran's theory and shows that "people's incentives to participate depend on their expectations about how many others will turn out, and they revise their beliefs based on changes in turnout over time" (p. 50). Lohmann adds to the signaling model by showing that propensity for the public to protest depends on "informational cues from changes in size of the protest movement over time" (p. 49). Moreover, Lohmann finds that demonstrations will attract greater support when more moderates, and not solely extremists, makeup protests. As I argue in the following chapters, the signals sent to Moroccan society, through state propaganda campaigns (including a referendum and election campaign) and the F20 itself (primarily via slogans and banners), eventually led to the perception by society that that the F20 was (1) dominated by radical organizations, and (2) no longer needed since democratic changes were being implemented through a King that is widely accepted as legitimate.

I offer a theory that demonstrates how 'mixed-policy' (accommodation *followed* by repression) abates dissent when (1) there is a history of implementation of reforms, (2) there is a

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<sup>16</sup> I am not referring to only the size of protests but also if the movement aligns with public opinion on how to deal with grievances (i.e. perceived as moderate and not extremist).

<sup>17</sup> Kuran's theory of preference falsification distinguishes between private and public preferences. For example, within an authoritarian context private opinion about the regime will differ from public preferences because expressing negative opinions towards the regime may lead to punishment.

conveyance by power-holders (signals) of addressing grievances through unprecedented concessions, and (3) there is an increasing disunity between a public's and a social movement's perceived goals. Therefore, for accommodative/repressive policies to work, there need not be a consistency of sticking to one policy (reforms or repression). A calculated mixed-policy approach aims to kill a social movement by delegitimizing it, in addition to internally fracturing it. Therefore, one tactic undertaken by the regime is to convince the general public that F20's persistence is no longer needed. This is accomplished by systematically offering reforms that address specific social movement grievances. The other is highlighting internal cleavages within the F20, which, as this dissertation demonstrates, was successful. This was accomplished by smearing the F20 as composed of Islamist fundamentalists and labeling secular-leftists as anti-Islamic.<sup>18</sup> This smear campaign, as we will see in Chapter Two, highlighted differences between leftists and Islamists and caused internal conflicts.<sup>19</sup> In essence, concessionary policies convinced society that demands were being met and therefore led to the perception that the F20 was no longer needed, while repression highlighted internal divides.

This theoretical framework can better explain how state responses that use accommodative and repressive policies can abate protests. Rather than focus on whether policies (i.e. repression) leads to numerical protest decline, I investigate how state policies interact with internal social movement dynamics. This allows us to better understand how and why protest movements demobilize and protests decline. Building on Christian Davenport's work (2015), I do not treat internal and external factors that lead to demobilization and protest decline independently; rather, I implement an approach that analyzes how external policies (whether

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<sup>18</sup> In Morocco the role of Islam in politics is overwhelmingly controlled by the palace. The King is *Amir Almouminin* (Commander of the Faithful), which grants him complete guardianship and control over religion.

<sup>19</sup> Direct repression was used only after F20's grievances were met with concessions.

reforms or repression) interact with internal factors (ideological conflicts/movement fractalization). Davenport uses this approach by showing how movements respond to repression in order to counter potential demobilization.<sup>20</sup>

Finally, this dissertation incorporates overlooked factors, like ideological heterogeneity and social movement structure, into the study of social movements. In a context where leftists (often Marxists) are *Islamic*, but not *Islamist*, the role of Islamic symbols and chants becomes an especially contentious issue within social movements. As demonstrated in Chapter Two, how the F20 was framed both internally (by different Islamist, leftist, and Secularist organizations) and externally (by the state) had a profound impact on internal social movement dynamics and resonance with the public. Similarly, movement structure and composition can be an important factor in determining how movements are affected by reforms or repression. Some movements are inherently more prone to fracturing, which is exacerbated by the effect of reforms and repression. If a movement is composed of various loosely-connected organizations with low-trust levels, they will likely continue to deteriorate. Inversely, if a movement is highly homogenous and trust among members is high, then trust levels will more likely remain stable. As demonstrated in Chapter Two, how the F20 was framed to the general public was of constant concern to F20, and issues concerning how to strategically frame the movement became more frequent following concessions and repression by the state.

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<sup>20</sup> For example, Davenport argues that following repression, movements “assess the situation and evaluate the circumstances for the appropriate response,” build trust among social movement members, which theoretically leads to more unity and less chances of movement fractalization (2015, p. 44-45).

## Methodology

Christian Davenport (2015) correctly notes that prior research on social movement demobilization tends to ignore sequencing and timing of demobilization. Specifically, Davenport tells us they ignore that “specific sequences or events that happened earlier might have important influences on what takes place” (2015, p. 10). To better understand the casual relationship between repression and demobilization, Davenport believes “the best way to study the topic is to systematically evaluate discussions, actions, and relationships between members of social movement organizations” (p.10). Although I did not have access to ‘dissident gatherings’, which Davenport did, my interviews did reveal a trove of information about discussions that occurred within F20 committee meetings.

From September 2016 to May 2017, I conducted 46 semi-structured interviews with participants from F20. Apart from two journalists who participated and reported on the movement, all interviewees were activists within the F20 movement from various political parties and organizations. The information and range of topics I discuss during my interviews are wide; however, for this project, I examine themes related to abatement of F20 protests. My discussions include direct and indirect references to F20 protests, ideological conflicts and alliances following concessions and repression, and external regional factors that played a role in the movement’s momentum. Interviews were conducted with activists from various cities including Rabat, Casablanca, Tangiers, Agadir, Marrakech, Meknes, Tétouan, Mr’rit, and Berkane. The following chart outlines the different organizations and parties within the F20 I interviewed:



Table 1.2. Composition of Interviews

<b>Organizations</b>	<b>Number of Interviews</b>
<b>Independent Activists:</b> February 20 Activists (Three Co-founders)	10
<b>Islamists:</b> Al Adl Wal Ihsan (Islamist) Hizb Al-Umma (Liberal Islamist) The Justice and Development Party (Interviewed MP from ruling Islamist Party that participated in protests)	8 5 1
<b>Leftists:</b> United Socialist Party (Socialist /Marxist)	6
Democratic Way (Socialist /Marxist)	4
Moroccan Association for Human Rights (Human rights NGO closely affiliated with The Democratic Way)	4
Democratic Confederation of Labor (Socialist Labor Union)	3
Socialist Democratic Vanguard Party (Radical Socialist Party)	2
Radical Communist	1
The <i>Moroccan</i> Workers' Union	1
<b>Cultural Secular Movements:</b> Amazigh Democracy Movement (From various Berber civil rights organizations)	3
Le Mouvement alternatif pour les libertés individuelles (Defends personal liberties, LGBT and women's rights)	2
<b>Independent Journalists:</b> Participant Observers (Not affiliated with movement)	2

The interviews gathered descriptive information as well as information concerning participants' ideological beliefs, affiliations, and positions within various organizations. This basic information helped me decipher different ideological affiliations within the F20. My open-ended questions were aimed at letting interviewees elaborate on whether ideological divides existed and became highlighted at some point and how internal and external events (i.e. reforms/regional conflicts) affected the movement (See Kvale 2008; Taber 2010; Rubin & Rubin

2011). The interview questions were designed to gather data that would elucidate the reasons behind the breakup of the F20 and its abatement of contentious activity.

Although the F20 is a leaderless movement, organizations and parties operating within this movement do have organizational leaders and elites, and my interview sample included many of these leaders. Since the main ideological divide in the F20 was between Islamist and leftists, I interviewed a representative sample<sup>21</sup> of various members and party leaders of the JCO. Similarly, I conducted interviews with all the main leftist organizations that participated in the F20. Some groups do not fall into a leftist/Islamist dichotomy, like the Cultural (Berber) Amazigh Movement. I also interviewed elites from the Amazigh movement to better gain insights outside of the main leftist and Islamist camps within the movement. These interviews provide insights into the relationship between reforms and demobilization.

### **Significance of the Moroccan Case**

The Moroccan case has often been treated as an afterthought within studies specific to the Arab Spring. Some claim that there were only limited protests that did not lead to mass uprisings (i.e. Tunisia and Egypt) in Morocco during 2011-2012 (Brownlee, Masood, and Reynolds 2015). Others ephemerally mention Moroccan protests as an anomalous event, which was quickly quelled via the King's initiatives to implement reforms (Lynch 2013). Many studies do not include Morocco in their analyses of the Arab Spring (Lesch and Haas 2012; Noueihed and Warren 2012; Gelvin 2015; Culbertson 2016; Cakmak 2017). Any researcher that has spent time

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<sup>21</sup> My main method of gaining interviewees has been via chain-of-referral-method, where interviewees will identify other potential interviewees. A purposeful sample method was implemented based on organization type and within each organization I interviewed elites (general secretaries, executive directors, party figure-heads, F20 co-founders) and active members. I interviewed a proportional number of interviewees from each main organization (Islamists/leftists/independents) within the F20 until saturation was reached.

in Morocco will quickly realize how important the F20 protests of 2011-2012 were for Moroccans. Many interviewees express a sense that their country narrowly avoided following the violent paths of Yemen or Syria, had protests not subsided in 2012 (See Chapter Five).<sup>22</sup> Nearly everyone I interviewed expressed the sentiment that the F20 did not fundamentally change the organization of power in Morocco, but rather it changed Moroccans themselves. This refers to the new culture of ‘street politics’ that the Arab Spring helped spawn. At the time of writing, protests occurred frequently in Morocco and the potential for mass protests can occur at any instance. In the words of one F20 activist: “F20 left its spirit in Morocco. We see how people protest over water, electricity, and living conditions. Maybe the F20 is not physically present as a movement, but its spirit remains in Morocco.”<sup>23</sup>

It is safe to conclude that “state violence was the political fulcrum of the Arab Spring” (2015 p. 41). Within Morocco, repression did influence F20, but reforms and concessions were the first tools used by the state. Direct repression was utilized, and it increased after reforms were declared and after the constitutional committee was formed and following the terrorist attack on April 28, 2011 in Marrakech by Al-Qaeda affiliates (Molina 2011, p. 441). The increased repression, however, did not appear to deter the JCO or other organizations from attending protests as they continued to support the F20 for seven months after the terrorist attack. As we will see, direct repression did influence F20 and frightened off some citizens from attending certain protests; however, repression within Morocco was, compared to some other MENA countries, was less used.

The unprecedented dynamics of the cross-ideological alliances within Morocco are also unique and merit study since there was no significant pre-history of Islamic/leftist coalitions

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<sup>22</sup> Interview with independent Activist in Mohammedia on 9/22/16.

<sup>23</sup> Interview on 10/05/16 in Rabat with DWP member.

prior to F20 in Morocco. Rather, the Moroccan case demonstrates how organizations that used to violently engage with one another can, in a short period of time, unite under the banner of one social movement, which was unprecedented for Morocco. The monarchy realized that these historically-antagonistic groups united early on and, therefore, the campaign to demobilize the F20 targeted separate organizations, sometimes with clear success. For instance, the King's decision to pardon 146, mostly Islamist-Salafist, prisoners precipitated the end of organized Salafist involvement in F20 (Al-Jazeera 2011). Similarly, the early decision to talk with and concede with union demands also removed a large sector of the population from potentially joining the F20.

Therefore, this dissertation analyzes the case of Morocco in order to reveal: (1) how a case of state-reforms followed by repression, affects social movements, (2) how allowing (i.e. not changing electoral rules or redistricting) previously sidelined Islamists works in favor of regime persistence and stability, (3) how environmental changes via concessions and repression affected internal cross-ideological alliances, (4) how a movement's 'horizontal' structure facilitated demobilization. This project adds nuance to previous literature both specific to Morocco and, more broadly, social movement theory by analyzing the stories and opinions of those who participated in the F20.

### **Outline of Dissertation**

In Chapter Two, I detail a new theory that demonstrates how accommodation followed by repression may abate dissent and intersect with internal social movement dynamics. I use an alternative approach that analyzes how external policies interact with internal factors in order to demonstrate when demobilization will more likely occur. I demonstrate that when social

movements face a crisis, they focus on maintaining relevance and resonance with the public. In this stage, movements typically experiment with prognostic frames to test resonance with the public and state reactions; however, the F20 was not united in how to best resonate with the public. This resulted in a variance of prognostic frames ranging from reformist to revolutionary. The divide between what activists characterize as reformist-monarchists and more revolutionary-republicans became more visible following the King's speech on March 9, 2011 and especially leading up to the King's second major announcement concerning the new constitution in June 2011. For frames to resonate with a public, they need to be culturally compatible, consistent, and relevant to the target audience (Johnston and Noakes 2005, p. 15). The F20's message became inconsistent and less relevant when the King systematically responded to demands with reforms. Moreover, the F20 became viewed increasingly incompatible with Moroccans as the movement's image became framed as extreme and composed of fringe groups that hoped for radical/revolutionary change. In essence, this chapter demonstrates that changes in the political environment interact with social movement framing processes that may lead to their decline.

In Chapter Three, I demonstrate how the early parliamentary elections of 2011 affected the momentum of F20. Elections within authoritarian contexts and social movements have been thoroughly, yet separately, studied (Kadivar 2017). This chapter jointly analyzes these different phenomena in order to demonstrate how electoral results can affect protest demobilization. I begin with the premise that "an election is a public signal observed by a group of citizens before they decide whether to take anti-regime action" (Little 2015; p. 1144). This chapter argues that a parliamentary victory of a sidelined Islamist party, that had not previously held parliamentary plurality, played a major role in ending F20's protest activity. The ushering of Islamists into power following the Arab Spring is often viewed as a threat to the state. In Morocco, however,

the winning of the PJD in parliamentary elections signaled to the public that change had occurred and convinced many Moroccans that a social movement for change was no longer needed. Said differently, the state needed Islamists to win. This scenario explains why the PJD victory in the general elections of 2011 is termed by activists as the ‘regime’s last card’.

Chapter Four focuses on how movement structure and the level of inter-organizational trust affects movements. The history of ideologically-based violence within Moroccan universities demonstrates the long-standing ideologically-based contention between leftists and Islamists in Morocco. I use interview data to offer a theory of how movement structure matters and affects the decline of a movement. Cross-ideological cooperation between the JCO and the DWP was the most controversial alliance within F20 and left many leftists uncomfortable with joining forces with what they viewed as an enemy. This alliance caused controversy and internal fractures within the F20 throughout the country, but it also led to internal perceptions of movement cooptation by what many leftists viewed as extremists. The case of F20 suggests that within ideologically and politically heterogeneous movements, a lack of structure and hierarchy is a facilitator of movement decline. The lack of structure and hierarchy in decision-making allowed internal divides to occur and perceptions that ideological competitors were ‘hijacking the movement’ to permeate.

Chapter Five offers various implications for future research specific to Morocco and social movement theory in general. Considering recent waves of protest in the restive Rif region of Morocco, F20 members are mobilizing again throughout the country to support Riffians. Social movement scholars find that increased contact among different groups will increase the likelihood of increased cooperation and coalitions. Following F20’s demobilization, we see a new wave of issue-specific movements surrounding gender equality and the rights of minorities,

among others. According to interviewees, the F20 changed Moroccan politics and started a new ‘culture of street protests’, like the Hirak Movement in the northern Rif region and a new wave of feminist movements that are no longer tied to NGOs and state institutions. Finally, the demobilization of the F20 can inform policy suggestions for conflict resolution with future waves of uprisings. Consistency in state-policy does not necessarily lead to demobilization; rather, understudied internal dynamics of social movements and how they are framed in certain contexts determine how long resonance with the general public will last and if a social movement will die.

## Chapter Two: Reforms, Repression, and Frames

On March 9, 2011, King Mohammed VI responded to the February 20 Movement's (F20) demands. The March 9 Speech categorically addressed the core demands of the F20, including devolving some of the King's powers, ending corruption, and recognizing the Amazigh language. In the televised address, the King declared that for the first time in 15 years, the constitution would be reformed - another key demand of the F20. Within a context where the King is widely popular and has a history of declaring and implementing reforms, many Moroccans rejoiced and celebrated the speech. The F20, however, faced an existential crisis and rejected the speech as cosmetic. In the eyes of many in the public, the King offered the F20 precisely what they were demanding; so why continue protesting? In this chapter, I demonstrate that when social movements face an existential crisis, they focus on maintaining relevance and resonance with the public. In this stage, movements typically experiment with prognostic and diagnostic frames to test resonance with the public and state reactions; however, the F20 was not united in how to best resonate with the public. As we will see, this resulted in a variance of frames that shifted from being initially reformist to more revolutionary.

Framing concerns how organizations, individuals, and even governments socially construct and portray reality. For frames to resonate with a public, they need to be culturally compatible, consistent, and relevant to the target audience (Johnston and Noakes 2005, p. 15). I demonstrate how the F20's message became inconsistent and less relevant when the King responded to demands with a series of concessions.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, the regime was able to

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<sup>24</sup> Rather than focus on frame disputes between different social movements as Benford (1993) does, I focus on frame disputes within one social movement that eventually fractured and demobilized. This is important since frame disputes demonstrate how divergent frames transmitted from a single social movement may ultimately lead to a lack of resonance with the public.



successfully portray the F20 as an extreme movement composed of fringe groups that wanted radical and revolutionary change. The combination of the regime's efforts, as well as F20's inconsistent messaging, resulted in the F20 becoming viewed as increasingly incompatible with Moroccans.

The Moroccan regime's concerted policy of concessions followed by repression led to the F20's eventual demobilization. My interviews from September 2016 – May 2017 demonstrated that the F20 was initially united, but that this incrementally changed following the concessions that began in March 2011. The first major concession was the King's March 9 Speech, which triggered internal conflicts about how the F20 would remain relevant and resonate with the public. These concessions also coincided with varied repression campaigns. Smear campaigns targeting the F20's most visible activists began in February 2011 and continued throughout the movement's activity. For example, charismatic activist, Osama El-Khalifi, became the most visible figurehead of the movement and was the target of various smear campaigns.<sup>25</sup> The government-initiated smear campaign also took place online and portrayed F20 figureheads as atheists, "drinkers of alcohol, Christian converts," and sympathetic to the separatist Polisario Front (Desrues 2013, p. 418). Within the F20, this smear campaign led to conflicts, especially between Islamists and leftists.

In addition to offering concessions and engaging in smear campaigns, the regime also sought to prevent further mobilization through direct repression. Harsher nationwide repression that was aimed at dispersing or preventing protests began in May 2011 and intensified during the referendum period in July 2011 (Molina 2011, p. 441; Benchemsi 2014, p. 200). This repression campaign coincided with national media framing that the F20 had been hijacked by Islamist and

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<sup>25</sup> Mr. Khalifi's time with the F20 was marred with allegations of alcoholism and eventually 'sexual deviance', for which he served prison time for. Mr. Khalifi denies these allegations and views them as fabrications of the regime.

leftist radicals (Molina 2011, p. 441). For instance, in May 2011, government spokesmen publicly warned that the F20 did not truly want reform but served the agenda of extreme leftists and Islamists (Reuters 2011). This, in turn, led to internal conflicts about how to go forward as a social movement. These conflicts divided the social movement, which was also becoming increasingly alienated from the public. In other words, as more revolutionary demands began to permeate the F20, so did internal conflicts about diagnostic and prognostic frames. As we will see, the divide between ‘reformist-monarchists’ and more ‘revolutionary-republicans’, became visible after the March 9 Speech and continued to intensify and become more visible to the public leading up to the referendum campaign.<sup>26</sup>

In Chapter One, I outlined how previous literature focuses on repression in relation to demobilization and tends to analyze internal social movement dynamics separately from state policies. This chapter analyzes how government policies (concessions and repression) interact with internal factors (i.e. how to frame a movement and avoid movement decline) to demonstrate how demobilization occurs. The combination of concessions, smear campaigns, and direct repression campaigns led to a framing crisis within the F20. Specifically, diagnostic and prognostic framing of F20 were becoming common sources of contention within committee meetings, which manifested into a social movement with divergent messages and goals. This chapter will build on framing literature by using the case of the F20 to reveal how government concessions followed by repression and counter framing impacted the F20’s internal movement dynamics.

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<sup>26</sup> Reformist-monarchists want to maintain the monarchy and demand reforms to the existing monarchical system. For instance, they demand that the King devolves some of his power. Revolutionary-republicans want a regime without a King. They aspire to implement a democratic multiparty republic.

More specifically, this chapter will demonstrate that the King's concessionary March 9 Speech categorically addressed the F20's main demands, which convinced many in the public and some activists that the F20's demands were sufficiently met. This depletion of the F20's initial grievances sparked internal disputes and a 'framing crisis' within the movement. The F20, as I show, shifted from being a strictly reformist movement to a movement with mixed demands and frames, ranging from reformist to revolutionary. The lack of a unified frame and demands led to a movement that no longer connected with the Moroccan public. Moreover, direct and indirect repression was strategically implemented after unprecedented change through concessions was achieved. In essence, this chapter shows how concessions in conjunction with repression helped demobilize a social movement.

### **Framing and Problem Depletion**

Gamson (1990) believed movements start to decline when they overuse resources; while McAdam (1982) argues that a contraction of political opportunities and incremental lack of support for a social movement leads to its decline. Davenport (2015) departs from these structuralist theories by analyzing movements themselves and finds that when movement demands are met (or appear to be met) then fractalization and subsequent demobilization may occur:

A reduced sense of organizational support may provoke, exacerbate, or exist along with factionalization and polarization in an SMO [Social Movement Organization] as individuals attempt to address the threatening change in the environment, resulting in even greater dissention. In this context, it may become exhausting for participants to justify to themselves as well as others the reasonable nature of what they are doing, which results in demobilization (Davenport 2015, p. 40).

My case study of the F20 builds on this finding and theorizes that when there is a public perception of problem depletion (initial demands are sufficiently being met), then social

movements experiment with different frames to address and solve the perceived problem depletion. In cases where the leader has a credible history of declaring and implementing reforms, this stage of re-orienting demands within heterogenous movements following problem depletion may often lead to fractionalization of the movement and a subsequent disunity in frames. If the public views reforms as a sufficient response to protests and trust that a leader will implement<sup>27</sup> reforms, then internal framing disputes can occur, which focus on whether and how to change tactics or frames to attract public support.<sup>28</sup>

Internal frame disputes are disputes around the diagnostic and prognostic frames (Benford 1993). Benford (1993), found that frame disputes occur when differences within a movement arise about how to portray the movement in way that maximizes mobilization (p.691). Similarly, I argue that framing disputes can lead to a framing crisis, where social movements try to change diagnostic frames (who to blame) and prognostic frames (how to solve a problem), which subsequently leads to divergent motivational frames and messages.<sup>29</sup> In other words, there is no longer a united frame. I build on the premise, like Davenport (2015), that movements try to ensure survival, even if many of the initial demands are met. For F20, a framing crisis following the King's systematic concessions to demands led to fracturing when counter-framing by the government occurred. As we will see, F20 members disagreed on how to convince a conservative and monarchically-loyal public to support and join F20 protests. Moreover, pre-existing ideological cleavages facilitated increased conflict, as Islamists and secular-leftists

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<sup>27</sup> This chapter will offer examples of when authoritarian leaders declare, but do not implement, reforms.

<sup>28</sup> According to the 2013 Arab Barometer four-fifths of Moroccans opted for incremental change over change all at once, while over half believe the government is undertaking far-reaching reforms. Moreover, most (56%) of Moroccans say they did not participate in Arab Spring protests because it was not important/did not care to participate and 80% believe that the 2011 constitution played an important role in ensuring separation in powers between legislative and executive branches.

<sup>29</sup> As indicated above, the conditions for this to occur are that, (1) the social movement is heterogenous, and (2) the leader/regime in question has a history of declaring *and* implementing reforms.

disagreed on various issues, like the presence of religious symbols and slogans within protests. For instance, an Islamist F20 activist made it clear that differences in slogans were a contentious issue for the movement: “Ideologically speaking, the difference was clear at so many levels - namely slogans.”<sup>30</sup> Another prominent leftist and leader of an F20 support committee expressed how the movement’s “colors” changed from a united movement to a movement where ideological divides became more evident:

The JCO would have their beards and Islamic dress, and the DWP would have pictures of Che Guevara, and the Amazigh activists [would have] their flags, and the Salafists [would have] their clothes and slogans. So, the colors of the movement began to change and there was no longer that one color which existed on February 20, 2011 - which was the color of the youth. So, the movement began to decline.<sup>31</sup>

Activists across all ideologies similarly sensed that these differences became more evident and defined within the movement after the King’s March 9 Speech.

The study of framing processes allows researchers to better understand why, how, and when movements may or may not resonate with a public. Strategic framing processes are not limited to social movements. States and power holders, who have more material and cultural resources, often have an upper-hand in constructing effective frames – especially when power-holders are viewed as legitimate (Johnston and Noakes 2005, p. 105). Moreover, the “state and media control more cultural resources than your typical social movement” (2005, p. 17). As we will see in subsequent chapters, environmental structural changes, like the announcement and implementation of reforms, rise to power of certain political parties, and the referendum campaign and early legislative elections, also affect the relevance and compatibility of frames with the public. In essence, a secondary implication of this chapter for social movement studies is that changes in the political environment interact with social movement framing processes that

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<sup>30</sup> Interview on 11/15/16 with Hizb al-Umma Member in Meknes.

<sup>31</sup> Interview on 02/21/17 with a Majlis Dahm Leader in Rabat.

can in turn ultimately lead to a movement's decline. Johnston and Noakes (2005) note that "when political structures change, adaptations in framing can open new opportunities for movement development" (p.23). Here I show the converse: how changes in environmental political structures can lead to movement demobilization and decline.

Benford and Snow (2000) find that collective action frames can be schematized into diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational frames. Diagnostic framing moves beyond simply addressing a problem to framing problems in a way that resonate with people.<sup>32</sup> For instance, framing LGBT rights as a human rights issue in the U.S. was an effective way to attract support beyond the LGBT community to others that are concerned with defending human rights in general (Holzhacker 2014). After diagnosing the problem, prognostic framing is the "articulation of a proposed solution to the problem, or at least a plan of attack, and the strategies for carrying out the plan" (2000, p. 616). Finally, motivational framing is how mobilization occurs. Motivational framing can attract or deter bystanders from joining a social movement depending on how the issue is framed. These "socially constructed vocabularies" give adherents "compelling accounts for engaging in collective action and for sustaining their participation" (2000, p. 617). For instance, Benford (1993) finds that motivational vocabulary concerning severity, urgency, efficacy, and propriety emerged during the US disarmament movement. In the following table, based on Benford and Snow's (2000) outline of what frames do, I simplify the schematization of frames:

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<sup>32</sup> All social movements need to diagnose a problem or set of grievances.

*Table 2.1: Frames*<sup>33</sup>

Diagnostic Framing	What is the problem? Who do we blame?
Prognostic Framing	How to solve the problem? What should be the demand(s)?
Motivational Framing	How do we frame the movement and motivate people to join?

Benford and Snow call for more studies to research the relationship between “the conditions that affect the construction and adoption of various vocabularies of motive as well as assess their relative impact on social movement participation, collective identity processes, and other movement framing activities” (2000, p. 617-618). Said differently, we know that symbols and language need to resonate within the environment in which a social movement operates; however, how internal discussions around movement framing impact social movement participation and decline is understudied. Moreover, studies specifically addressing the relationship between achieving initial movement goals and social movement death are limited. In the next section, I outline how concessions and repression affected internal dynamics within the F20 and facilitated the movement’s demobilization.

### **Trajectories of Demobilization**

The well-studied causal relationship between repression and protest levels reveals that the level of repression matters; for instance, if repression is harsh, then it will likely reduce backlash protests and lead to eventual demobilization (Francisco 2004; Jan Pierskalla 2010). Sometimes, the transmission of images of harsh repression deters others from protesting. For example, Harris (2012) uses the case study of the 2009 Iranian Green Movement to argue that images of harsh

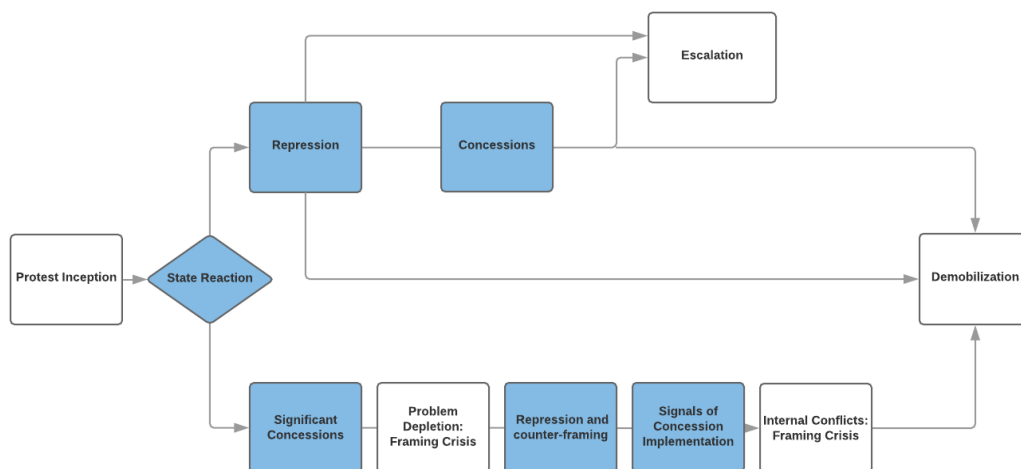
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<sup>33</sup> See: Benford & Snow (2000) p. 16-17.

repression shared online, in part, led to that movement's demobilization by convincing people the costs of protesting were too high. One of the most influential studies regarding the relationship between repression and dissent has been Mark Lichbach's (1987) finding that consistent repression or concessions will lead to demobilization. Said differently, it is a regime's consistent use of repression (or concessions) that will work in deterring dissent.<sup>34</sup>

What these studies have in common is that they tend to overlook social movement actors in their analyses, focusing instead on how repression affects the numerical abatement of protests (i.e., whether the number of protests declined in response to repression). In Figure 2.1, I propose that there are two trajectories to protest demobilization. The first, seen on upper pathway, is a familiar trajectory that most countries within the Arab Spring followed. The initial state reaction was usually repression, often followed by concessions and more cycles of repression.

*Figure 2.1: Relationship Between State Policy and Protests*



What I suggest is that the processes that lead to divergent paths to demobilization found in Figure 2.1 depend on the characteristics of the agents involved. For example, heterogeneous

<sup>34</sup> Lichbach's work on repression (1987;1995) is widely accepted as strong findings concerning how protests are affected by repression. Ron Francisco goes as far as claiming that Lichbach "solved the general problem of the relationship of protest and repression" (2005, p. 60).



social movements are more prone to fracture following government policies like repression. Moreover, renegeing on past promises of reform will likely not convince a public that new concessions will be implemented. For instance, the cases of Syria and Egypt demonstrate how repression followed by promises of concessions led to cycles of escalation and violence. As indicated in Figure 2.1, a history of declaring and implementing reforms is needed for concessions to demobilize a movement. This was not the case in Yemen. Although then President Saleh responded first with familiar concessions and then harsh repression, he also reneged on a 2006 promise to not seek re-election. Therefore, his concessions<sup>35</sup> following mass protests in 2011 did not deescalate protests and lead to demobilization (Lust 2014, p. 233). Said differently, a public will not likely believe a leader that has previously announced reforms but failed to go through with them. Like in Syria, the Yemeni President's previous bluff of announcing, but not implementing, reforms sent a clear signal to the public that announcements of concessions do not necessarily mean they will be implemented.

I argue that a popular leader that has a track record of declaring and implementing reforms will more likely find that the announcement of concessions will persuade the public and will not be viewed as bluffs. As outlined in the previous chapter, King Mohamad VI has been viewed as a reformist both nationally and internationally. Said differently, since the King has historically implemented reforms in response to grievances, the public had strong reasons to believe the promises of reform declared on March 9 2011 would be implemented.

The second, lower trajectory in Figure 2.1 outlines how Moroccan protests demobilized. The Moroccan regime's initial response to protests during the Arab Spring was to consistently and strategically offer and implement unprecedented concessionary policies, which signaled to

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<sup>35</sup> President Saleh promised economic reforms, early parliamentary and presidential elections, and not to run for reelection.

the public that significant change was occurring and that the social movement's demands were being met.<sup>36</sup> The regime's reforms are strategic since different concessions have been directed at specific groups' requests and grievances. For example, the Amazigh Cultural Movement's demand of cultural recognition was met with a constitutional amendment that made Tamazight, the Amazigh national language, an official language. The King took a similar approach with labor unions, which were hesitant to give their full support to F20. To ensure that labor unions would not become heavily involved with F20 protests, state-labor negotiations were announced a day after protests started on February 21, 2011. These extensive state-union negotiations led to concessions that heeded nearly all the demands of the labor unions. Similarly, on April 14, 2011 the King pardoned Salafist political prisoners, which was the main demand of Salafist supporters of the F20. The regime's strategy of granting certain groups precisely their demands in order to lessen the presence of some activists from the streets worked. In the view of many within the public, the King's concessionary policies were an indication that F20's demands would also be met.

The Moroccan case also shows how the timing of repression matters. As mentioned, repressing a movement when it is popular with the public may immediately quell protests, but can also lead to increased support for the social movement as well as increased long-term dissent. Nonetheless, repressing a movement that the public perceives as 'crossing red-lines' and/or as radical, will more likely be viewed as justified by the public (Koopmans 2005). Moreover, interviewees made clear that direct repression further disincentivized activists from continuing to protest. As we will see, this logic explains why in Morocco harsh repression was

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<sup>36</sup> Again, unlike in Syria or Yemen, the Moroccan King did not renege on past announcements of reform.

used roughly three months after protests began and when the movement was already becoming alienated from the public.

### **The ‘Reformist, Moderate, and United’ Movement**

To understand when a regime’s mixed-policy of concessions and repression convince activists to cease protesting, it is important to understand how the F20 became to be viewed as less reformist and more revolutionary in its demands. The F20 was able to unite previous enemies<sup>37</sup> into a social movement that was initially reformist in nature. Interviewees often reminded me that prior to F20, Islamists were accused of killing leftist student activists and that members of the Amazigh Cultural Movement also had recurring conflicts with both Islamists and leftists.<sup>38</sup> Nevertheless, the abstract ‘injustice frames’ in conjunction with the movement’s reformist demands resonated with an array of F20 members, uniting them around reforming, rather than overthrowing, the Moroccan regime. In its early days, the movement adopted the broad motivational frame of “Freedom, Dignity, and Social Justice.”<sup>39</sup> According to an F20 co-founder: “This is the first time in the history of Morocco that parties and powers from far ends are united. This is the first experience in Morocco. We have not lived it before.”<sup>40</sup> My fieldwork revealed that ideologically-based conflicts eventually occurred within the F20 and that F20’s united reformist goals eventually changed. The increased visibility of the F20’s more revolutionary activists helped further demobilize the movement by internally dividing groups within the movement, which led to a disunity in demands and frames.

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<sup>37</sup> Ideologically-based conflicts have a long history within Morocco, especially within universities, and many F20 activists were previous ideological enemies.

<sup>38</sup> Interview on 10/13/16 with DWP Member from Mr’rt.

<sup>39</sup> Injustice Frames allude to emotion to dramatize and blame power holders for a perceived injustice.

<sup>40</sup> Interview on 10/1/16 with F20 co-founder in Rabat.

Initially, all groups within the F20's umbrella tended to agree on what the main problems were and who was to blame, which gave rise to the broad yet effective slogans of the F20: "Freedom, Dignity, and Social Justice." Table 2.2 presents the diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational frames of F20 during the first two months of its activity.

*Table 2.2: F20's United Frames, February – March 2011*

F20's Diagnostic Framing ( <i>What is the problem? Who do we blame?</i> ).	<p><i>Main problems:</i> Monarchical Absolutism, Lack of Democracy, Corruption and Electoral Fraud, Unemployment, Police Brutality, Equality for Amazigh People.</p> <p><i>Attribution of Blame:</i> The <i>Makhzen</i>,<sup>41</sup> Prime Minister Fassi, Local Government Leaders</p>
F20's Prognostic Framing ( <i>How to solve the problem?</i> ).	<p><i>Solutions to the problem:</i> Reform the Constitution, Transition from Monarchical Absolutism to Constitutional Monarchy, End Corruption, Free and Fair Elections, Making Amazigh an Official Language. (Secondary Demands: More Economic Opportunities, Better Education and Health Care System.)</p>
F20's Motivational Framing ( <i>How do we frame the movement and motivate people to join?</i> ). <sup>42</sup>	<p><i>Frames:</i> "Freedom, Dignity, and Social Justice"          "The People Want to Change the Constitution"          "Down with Autocracy"</p>

It is not uncommon for social movements to have disagreements about prognostic frames and subsequently fracture (Haines 1996; Benford and Snow 2000). Movement members and organizations generally agree on the problem, but they may not agree on how to solve it.

Therefore, the root of the problem here is deciding how to solve a problem (i.e. what to demand).

<sup>41</sup> This term is used in Morocco to denote the traditional system of power and political authority, which includes the King and those advisers/government officials to him.

<sup>42</sup> These motivational frames tended to highlight the severity of regime corruption and lack of democracy, while also linking their causes to the events in Tunisia and Egypt in order to highlight the urgency to protest and 'take advantage' of achieving goals during the protest wave engulfing the Arab world.

The F20 initially framed itself as a reformist movement solely asking for institutional changes; however, many F20 members admitted that the true goal of some members (e.g. JCO, DWP, and some independent activists) within the movement was the overthrow of the regime. Since this would not have been popular with the public and would have led to massive repression by the government, such revolutionaries (especially members of political parties) within the F20 would rarely openly call for ousting of the King during F20 committee meetings and protests. For example, the largest Islamist component of the F20, the JCO, openly rejected the monarchy and the King's position in power (Cavatorta 2007). As noted by Francesco Cavatorta (2007), the JCO rejected participating in institutions and negotiating with the monarchy, but at the same time refused to call for a revolution within the F20. Like other components within the F20, a possible explanation for why the JCO avoids an openly revolutionary frame is because it is unpopular with the Moroccan public.<sup>43</sup>

The F20 strategically framed itself in reformist terms in order to resonate with the Moroccan general public. These strategic frames are common within social movements. As Benford and Snow (2000) demonstrate, framing processes are “deliberative, utilitarian, and goal directed,” like gaining more recruits or mobilizing current members of the social movement (p. 624). Therefore, movements are careful about the image they send to the public, and the F20 was especially strategic about the public role that Islamists played in the movement. Initially, Islamists were simultaneously present and invisible within the F20. For example, some leftist interviewees felt that the presence of women in burqas would scare bystanders from joining F20 protests since it would be perceived as a movement that accepted Salafist principals. A Moroccan journalist that covered the movement indicated that F20 was a movement with a

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<sup>43</sup> 86.7% of the population thinks that political reforms should incrementally occur (Abdel-Samad 2014).

leftist/progressive face but with an Islamic body.<sup>44</sup> This was clearly demonstrated by the agreement among both Islamists and leftists to limit Islamist media presence: “The Islamists did not talk with the media. It was the left and the cyber militants that did.”<sup>45</sup> Moreover, as indicated by a JCO Leader, the “The JCO composed a big part of the movement, but we would not lead the marches in the beginning, and we did not have a say in the press.”<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, in what would become a point of contention following the King’s concessions, the JCO initially agreed to refrain from chanting Islamic slogans or raising religious banners during protests and marches.

There was a concerted effort within the F20 to have secular and moderate groups at the forefront of protests.<sup>47</sup> This strategy was meant to portray the F20 as secular and inclusive of all ideologies and Moroccan society. Elaborating on why the JCO voluntarily agreed to stay out of the media and lead protests and marches, a JCO Leader and F20 activist claimed, “We did all of this to preserve the movement and its power to guarantee the ideological diversity of F20...We did not try to portray the movement with a specific identity. We believed that this movement was for all people.”<sup>48</sup> Another effect of this secular framing was that the F20 decided to hold weekly protests every Sunday and not following prayers on Friday, as is typical throughout the MENA region. Moreover, slogans and banners were strictly secular with no Islamic references. Leftist interviewees admitted that they tended to control which slogans and banners would be used in protests, despite the JCO’s power in numbers: “In terms of size, it was clear that the Islamists were powerful and their withdrawal in December 2012 was felt...But in terms of slogans, we were smart and agreed on the slogans. Most slogans were about freedom and democracy.”<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Interview on 01/12/17 with Journalist/Activist in Casablanca.

<sup>45</sup> Interview on 01/12/17 with Journalist/Activist in Casablanca.

<sup>46</sup> Interview on 10/04/16 with ex-political prisoner and F20 Activist from Rif Region.

<sup>47</sup> By moderate, I am mean not challenging the monarchical system and calling for reforms.

<sup>48</sup> Interview on 10/31/16 with JCO Leader in Rabat.

<sup>49</sup> Interview on 09/19/16 with F20 independent leftist.

Islamists, however, began to experiment in increasing their visibility (leading protests and speaking with media) and in using Islamist slogans/banners in March 2011. Reports noted that Islamists dominated protests in Casablanca on March 6, 2011, but not in other cities.<sup>50</sup> As we will see in the next section, beginning in March 2011, there was variance in collective action frames regarding how Islamic and more revolutionary frames would resonate with the public.

### **The King's Stick After Carrot Approach: March – May 2011**

#### ***Depleting Grievances Through Concessions***

Although problem depletion should seemingly satisfy a movement and lead to its demise, this is not always the case. When the King responded to the F20's demands with an announcement of reforms on March 9, 2011, the movement needed to convince the general public that there was still good reason to support the movement. After all, the F20 overwhelmingly rejected the reforms – it ultimately boycotted the July referendum – and planned major marches and protests in response to the proposed reforms. However, in the view of the public, the King's announcement initiated a series of concessions which convinced many within public, and eventually some F20 members, to no longer support protests. A journalist who covered the F20 protests in Casablanca made it clear that the general public's perception of the F20 changed after the King's concessionary speech: "People believed in the King's plan [March 9 Reforms] and no longer in F20's plan. So, they [General Public] stopped believing in the movement after the reforms, they viewed it as repetitious."<sup>51</sup> Another Journalist, who was fired from his position because of his activity with the F20, expressed a similar sentiment about what

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<sup>50</sup> See: <http://www.maghress.com/hibapress/24497> Accessed {4/15/2017}.

<sup>51</sup> Interview on 09/26/16 with Journalist Participant Observer in Casablanca.

the average Moroccan felt about reforms: “The average people saw the reforms...they saw that many demands were met with the constitution.”<sup>52</sup> This situation begs the question: What happens to a heterogeneous social movement when their main demands are seemingly granted by those in power? The following sections will shed light on this question.

F20 activists typically refer to reforms as *darabat*- literally blows – since, in the view of activists, there was a belief that reforms, like repression, would hurt the movement. In the words of one activist, “the regime decided to use a non-violent policy that led to the failure of the F20 movement.”<sup>53</sup> If we view concessions and reforms as potential threats to a movement’s survival, then viewing concessions as problem depletion is indeed a blow in the view of a social movement. Among F20 activists, concessions that aimed at systematically satisfying certain groups within the F20 were clearly viewed as threats:

The carrot was to buy off the unions by giving the public workers a pay increase. Also, they found work for young unemployed graduates-almost 4000. This never happened before. Until today they still pay them....He [the King] did these things to calm the streets a little. He also freed many political prisoners, like our general secretary [of *Hizb al-Umma*], along with some Salafist leaders in order to alleviate the tension in the street. We also wanted a democratic constitution, so he formed a committee to make a constitution, they [the members of this [committee] were picked by the King and they came up with the 2011 constitution, which was a complete failure. It did not respond to any of our demands.<sup>54</sup>

To be clear, reforms did not affect the movement directly, but rather “how the public saw the F20 movement.”<sup>55</sup> Therefore, the reforms affected internal discussions about the strategy and tactics the F20 would take post reforms. A director of AMDH notes how the presentation of constitutional reforms deceitfully convinced people that major changes were being undertaken:

There are various reasons [why protests lessened], the power of the state, I mean how the constitution of 2011 was presented. Even the educated people in the beginning were

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<sup>52</sup> Interview on 01/19/17 with F20 Participant and Journalist in Rabat.

<sup>53</sup> Interview on 11/15/16 with Hizb al-Umma Member in Meknes.

<sup>54</sup> Interview on 02/26/17 with Hizb al-Umma and UMT labor leader in Tangiers.

<sup>55</sup> Interview on 09/22/16 with independent activist in Mohammedia.



tricked and said that “this is a huge reform and there was never a constitution like it and we did not expect all of this.” However, the constitution had everything and nothing. It had nice general answers, but in content it does not answer the demands of human rights and law because the King still rules all, all the powers remain in his hand.<sup>56</sup>

The March 9 Speech surprised many with the reforms announced, but during the speech the King mentioned previously implemented reforms, like the creation of the Justice and Reconciliation Commission along with the advancement made in women’s rights.<sup>57</sup> The signal to the public was clear: The F20’s main grievances would be addressed through reforms, and the King asserted this was a legitimate promise by referencing his previous reforms. As demonstrated in Table 2.3, the King categorically responded to the F20’s demands through the March 9 Speech. Reforming the constitution, establishing measures to end corruption, recognizing the Amazigh language, and devolving some of the King’s powers were all core demands by the F20.

*Table 2.3: F20’s Demands and the March 9 Speech*

<p>F20’s Primary Initial Demands<sup>58</sup>:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Change the Constitution.</li> <li>2. End Corruption.</li> <li>3. Hold Free and Fair Elections.</li> <li>4. Make Amazigh an Official Language.</li> </ol>	<p>King’s Response in March 9 Reform Speech:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Form a committee to change the constitution.<sup>59</sup></li> <li>2. Establish more oversight and accountability of public office holders.</li> <li>3. Propose an independent judicial branch.</li> <li>4. Propose the PM become the head of the executive branch.</li> <li>5. Acknowledges the Amazigh language.</li> </ol>
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Given that the King has historically implemented the reforms that he has announced, the general public had good reason to believe that the March 9 Speech would lead to a similar outcome of implementation. F20 members, however, overwhelmingly viewed things differently and more

<sup>56</sup> Interview on 10/16/17 with AMDH leader in Rabat.

<sup>57</sup> The *Équité et Réconciliation* was a royal decree to investigate arrests, abuses, and disappearances during the reign of King Hassan II. Advancement in woman’s rights were gained through the reform of the family code, the *Mudawwana*.

<sup>58</sup> The F20 had an array of demands. Some secondary demands include more economic opportunities, better education and health care system.

<sup>59</sup> The Advisory Committee for Constitutional Reform colloquially known as the Mounini Committee.

revolutionary elements began to ‘show their teeth’ following the King’s concessions. The movement increasingly adopted a more revolutionary frame that went beyond the initial, strictly-reformist, frame. Mekuoar (2016) states that there was an “early moderate character” of the F20 that “increased the base of incoming supporters” (p. 97). Still, groups that were viewed as extreme and that did not accept working for change through existing institutions, like the JCO and the DWP, became more dominant and visible after the March 9 Speech. Their new prognostic frame was a rejection of the monarchy without a clear path for the future. Activists from more moderate (reformist) parties, like the USFP, became increasingly concerned with the visibility and perceived dominance of more revolutionary elements of the F20. For instance, a USFP leader in Casablanca noted that overthrowing the King always “existed in the hearts” of some activists, but became more visible after the March 9 Speech, which “devastated the movement.”<sup>60</sup> The presence of these revolutionaries and the JCO, and how they tried to frame the movement, became even more visible following state repression that followed the March 9 Reforms.

### *Smearing F20 and The Continued Framing Crisis*

As framing conflicts among reformists and revolutionaries ensued, the *Makhzen*<sup>61</sup> decided to selectively use direct repression. This selective repression tended to target Islamists and was followed by the concessionary March 9 Speech. Protests on March 13, 2011, rejecting the King’s proposed reforms, were violently dispersed by police. The police actions resulted in fractures, broken ribs, and concussions. The JCO suffered most of the repression on March 13, which led the group to issue a statement condemning the “cosmetic” reforms and the state of

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<sup>60</sup> Interview on 11/26/16 with USFP Leader in Casablanca.

<sup>61</sup> *Makhzen* is commonly used in Morocco to refer to the ‘deep state’. It refers to the King, specifically, and those around him like military leaders, royal notables, and other high-level government employees. I use the term *Makhzen* interchangeably with ‘regime’ as they refer to the same institution.

human rights in Morocco.<sup>62</sup> Why the JCO in particular was the target is not clear, but activists confirmed media reports that following the March 9 Speech, repression tended to target the JCO. Some activists claimed that targeting the JCO was a strategy by regime to divide the movement. Others claimed that the JCO suffered so much repression during this time since they simply outnumbered any other organization within the F20. Regardless of the reasons why the JCO suffered massive repression on March 13, 2011, the increased “price paid” by the JCO, led them to more openly “speak their minds.”<sup>63</sup> The enhanced visibility of JCO members, in turn, resulted in the perception of increasing Islamist domination of the F20 that forced many to either not join or leave F20 protests.<sup>64</sup> Similarly, on March 20, 2011, a massive march by the F20 was organized throughout the country, again in response to the March 9 Speech; however, the protests were for the most part peaceful. The restraint on behalf of the regime may be due to the international attention Morocco received following March 13, 2011. Amnesty International, for instance, urged Morocco to change its repressive tactics and expressed that Moroccans must be free to protest: “The unnecessary acts of violence witnessed last weekend are a disturbing regression and make a mockery of the Moroccan King’s promise a few days earlier to undertake fundamental reform and uphold human rights” (Amnesty International USA, 2011). Despite government restraint, the tone of some of the F20’s demands became more revolutionary across the nation. On March 20, 2011, the main chant in Rabat, for example, was “the people want to overthrow tyranny.”<sup>65</sup> In Guelmim, a small city in southern Morocco, F20 protests split with one

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<sup>62</sup> See: <https://www.maghress.com/sawtalhoriya/210> Accessed {4/15/2017}.

<sup>63</sup> Interview on 09/19/16 with independent leftist in Casablanca.

<sup>64</sup> Interview on 09/19/16 with independent leftist in Casablanca.

<sup>65</sup> See: <http://www.maghress.com/arrifinu/38457> Accessed {4/15/2017}.

group attempting to storm local state headquarters and clashing with security forces, while another group stayed in public areas and remained peaceful.<sup>66</sup>

Following the March 9 Speech, pro-regime websites along with the public media outlets intensified the smear campaign that started in February 2011. These campaigns targeted specific individuals. Due to familial and community pressure following smear campaigns, the campaigns had especially devastating effects on women-figureheads who often left the movement.<sup>67</sup> One F20 co-founder indicated how he and his girlfriend were attacked through the smear campaign after online sources revealed that they were unmarried and living together; the same activist was accused of not being born in Morocco.<sup>68</sup> The online videos would link leftists to Sahrawi separatists and often would portray them as Algerian operatives and as not compatible with typical Moroccans. An AMDH leader elaborated on the smear campaign against activists in Morocco: “We call them new forms of repression in Morocco...They are webpages that use known journalists - in order to have credibility- but specialize in stopping activism. They write false reports, whether in magazines or Facebook, and specialize in propaganda against activists.”<sup>69</sup> In general, there was consensus among interviewees that the smear campaigns played an especially big role in weakening support for the movement by convincing the public that it was not in-line with Moroccan culture and norms.<sup>70</sup> This was especially problematic for some members of the pro-individual liberties organization MALI.<sup>71</sup> For example, a self-proclaimed Universalist-Feminist leader of MALI,<sup>72</sup> found it difficult to have slogans for gender

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<sup>66</sup> See: <https://www.maghress.com/wadnon/1790> Accessed {4/15/2017}.

<sup>67</sup> Interview on 10/05/16 with AMDH Leader.

<sup>68</sup> Interview on 10/06/16 with F20 co-founder in Casablanca.

<sup>69</sup> Interview on 10/05/16 with AMDH Leader in Rabat.

<sup>70</sup> Interview on 10/31/16 with JCO Leader in Rabat.

<sup>71</sup> According the MALI, personal liberties include LGBT rights, freedom of religion (having a choice to believe in any or no religion), and gender equality.

<sup>72</sup> Universalism implies human rights should be same everywhere, regardless of the context. In other words, universalists do not believe in cultural or religious relativism.

equality, personal liberties, or freedom of religion within F20 protests, because the slogans would not resonate with Moroccan cultural norms.<sup>73</sup> The same co-founder indicated how “moderates” and not Islamists within the F20 were conscious about how the public would perceive them.<sup>74</sup> In one case, the MALI co-founder was confronted by leftists about how smoking (as a woman) within protests would hurt the movement’s image:

In Morocco it is complicated for women to smoke. You have women like me that say: “Fuck, I am a woman, and I smoke,” and we had a lot of activists that did not want women smoking during the demonstrations, because Moroccan society says we have to hide it because we are women - so that Moroccan people will like the movement and support it.

As we see, even leftist activists (who often demand gender equality) were careful to frame the movement in a way that did not contradict Moroccan norms and culture. F20 members attempted to make the movement compatible with average Moroccans to mobilize supporters, which is why activists did not want women to smoke during demonstrations. Counter framing of the F20 initially took aim at F20 figureheads and members of MALI, and the JCO. These smear campaigns tended to portray the F20 either as (1) dominated and influenced by Islamist fundamentalists or (2) by Western-inspired and anti-Islamic participants. The contradiction between simultaneously attacking Islamists for being religious-extremists and secular-liberals for not accepting Islamic norms is obvious, but the smear-campaign was effective in that it did heighten internal discussions about the strategic visibility of ‘extremist’ groups within the F20:

The penetration by the regime of the movement led to marginalized issues making their way inside the movement. We don’t have any problems with homosexuals or anyone. These are other issues. Moroccans are contradictory - some pray, some drink, and some drink before praying. To make the movement fail, these issues started to become important - like homosexuality. Therefore, the union among leftists and Islamists weakened.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Interview with a co-founder of MALI on 05/07/17 in Rabat.

<sup>74</sup> This specific interviewee’s use of the word ‘moderate’ refers to liberals and leftists.

<sup>75</sup> Interview on 11/05/16 with two Hizb al-Umma members in Rabat.

Even leftists believed that specifically discussing culturally sensitive topics, like LGBT rights, was a “trap” that the F20 fell into: “If you exclusively talk about individual freedoms, you’re empowering the authoritarianists in Morocco because you automatically turn against society and not against the regime.”<sup>76</sup> Most interviewees agree that explicitly demanding LGBT rights is not feasible in Morocco and therefore personal freedoms were seen as a subset under the broad frame of freedom. In other words, the F20’s broadly-construed justice frame of “Freedom, Dignity, and Social Justice” encompasses culturally-sensitive issues like gender equality and LGBT rights, without specifically mentioning them. In the words of one Islamist participant: “Since the first slogan includes ‘social justice’, this means that the issue of inheritance would be solved, so you don’t need to use those titles [referring to gender equality] to create conflict.”<sup>77</sup> The strategic exclusion of certain frames is what Lavine, Cobb, and Roussin (2017) refer to as label frame contraction. In the case of the F20, the group not only sought to excise frames concerning gender equality and LGBT rights, but also attempted to exclude revolutionary frames that went beyond the initial reformist demands of the movement. Some leftist members of the F20 not only feared internal divisions that resulted from the regime’s counter framing, but they also feared that the mere presence of the JCO within the F20 posed a threat to the movement. In their view, the F20 would no longer resonate with a public that was increasingly fearful of sectarian rife. The fear on behalf of some F20 activists was that continuing protests would ultimately empower Islamist-extremists.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Interview on 10/06/16 with F20 co-founder.

<sup>77</sup> Interview on 11/05/16 with two Hizb al-Umma members in Rabat. (The interviewee is referring to the demands by some F20 members that women have equal rights to land inheritance, which Islamists and many conservatives in Morocco are staunchly against.)

<sup>78</sup> Interview on 10/31/16 with JCO Leader in Rabat.

Therefore, many leftist activists felt a need to address the identity of the F20 and, more importantly, the presence of the JCO within the movement. After March 2011, the F20 also started discussing issues related to the identity of the movement, and these discussions initiated ideologically-based conflicts: “We never spoke about the identity (of F20). Therefore, after...we started to say, okay- who are we? We started these workshops of values; what values do we believe in? Here also the problems started.”<sup>79</sup> The F20 figureheads, like a founder of a committee responsible for financially supporting the movement, realized that Islamic framing of the movement would not resonate with all Moroccans.<sup>80</sup> This is why F20 members agreed to ban religious slogans and why the eventual increase in Islamic slogans became contentious:

In the beginning, the agreement [with JCO] was no religious slogans - No *Allah Akbar* or anything. And they followed this, but they abided by it until they became more dominant in the committees and contributed in the demonstrations...I will give you an example, in the first three days of F20, [JCO] did not stop protesting because of the *Adnan* [Islamic call to prayer]. When they heard the *Adnan*, some of them would pray here on the side, like 3-4 would get together and pray. After a while, they tried to have demonstrations begin before or after the *Adnan*. We then started hearing religious slogans like 'There is no God, but God' and etc. So, this scared people. A big part of the citizens came to see us but did not become involved [in protests]...The JCO's slogans would scare people, and this was the beginning of the weakening of F20.<sup>81</sup>

Concerns about the large Islamist presence within the F20 was repeatedly mentioned by leftist interviewees, especially in relation to how the public would perceive the F20 if Islamists were ‘too’ visible. For example, one F20 independent activist mentioned how inhabitants from Rabat, specifically, were not accustomed to a large Islamist presence on the streets: “The people in Rabat were not used to this sight. You might see them in the North or South [Salafists especially tend to be less popular in central Rabat], but not in Rabat. So, when they all came to Rabat, the

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<sup>79</sup> Interview on 09/22/16 with F20 independent Activist.

<sup>80</sup> The committee is known as the National Support Council for Support of the F20.

<sup>81</sup> Interview on 02/21/17 with a Majlis Dahm Leader in Rabat.

people were scared. They were not used to this sight.”<sup>82</sup> Islamist interviewees saw things differently. In their view, Morocco, an Islamic and Arab society, would naturally be attracted to such slogans. Therefore, in the view of the JCO, framing the movement in religious terms would culturally resonate with the public. Nevertheless, the JCO did not become more visible until after the King’s March 9 Speech and especially during and after one of the F20’s biggest marches on April 24, 2011, when, according to state estimates, 27,000 people protested throughout the country.<sup>83</sup> Following the April 2011 march, there was a perception among leftist members that the media started to focus on the presence of Islamists in the F20, and the JCO “stole the show.”<sup>84</sup> Moreover, during the April 24 protest, a large Salafist-Islamist presence was reported for the first time, especially within Rabat’s lower-income neighborhoods.<sup>85</sup> In essence, many leftists felt that there was a shift from framing the movement as secular and inclusive for all Moroccans. More importantly, they felt that this increased ‘religious framing’ would be detrimental to the movement and not attract bystanders to support the F20.

### ***Direct Repression***

The increased visibility and religious framing within the F20 made some within the general public fearful of continuing protests, and the King took advantage of this. As mentioned, regional conflicts, especially the Libyan Civil War, also had a profound effect on the F20. When King Mohammad gave his March 9 Speech, Libya was in the midst of a civil war. During this time NATO and the UN agreed to implement a no-fly zone over Libya. In Syria, mass protests did not start until early March 2011, and by 2012 Syria was in a full-fledged civil war. The conflicts also magnified the leftist belief that the visibility of organized Islamists in the F20

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<sup>82</sup> Interview on 01/19/17 with Ex Journalist and F20 independent in Rabat.

<sup>83</sup> See: <https://www.maghress.com/fr/mapfr/24351> Accessed {4/15/2017}.

<sup>84</sup> Interview on 9/19/16 with independent F20 activist in Casablanca.

<sup>85</sup> See: <https://www.maghress.com/hespress/30790> Accessed {4/15/2017}.



would hurt the movement and would lead to sectarian conflicts. The civil wars in Libya and Syria served as an opportunity for the *Makhzen* to convince the general public of the danger that continued street protests would cause. The images of conflict in both contexts made Moroccans especially fearful of sectarianism and the potential rise of Islamists into power, and the Moroccan regime took advantage of this situation:

People were more scared of sectarianism after what happened in Libya and began occurring in Syria. But people were against violence. It was not possible for people to arm themselves. So, what did the regime do? They would say that the JCO wanted the Caliphate and would be violent and the DWP is a revolutionary organization and wants the dictatorship of the proletariat. They had a big propaganda campaign, and many people believed this and did not go to the streets. So, people were scared, and also religious slogans began to be chanted, which contradicts the initial agreement.<sup>86</sup>

The regime's repressive measures against the F20 changed in May 2011, and the regime no longer targeted Islamists in select cities. The government took on a harsher and more universal approach and repressed all F20 protests. Specifically, violent nation-wide repression began to intensify in mid-May as massive protests throughout the country persisted (Benchesmi 2014). Direct repression within Morocco usually involved security forces brutally beating protestors with batons during demonstrations. Security forces also raided, for the first time, the USP's main headquarters in Casablanca where various activists were beaten by security forces.<sup>87</sup> In the city of Safi, on Morocco's Atlantic coast, a 30-year-old protestor succumbed to his wounds following harsh police repression.<sup>88</sup> Finally, the regime selectively arrested figureheads, often from the JCO or the extreme left (DWP), during protests- some of whom received death threats (Mekouar 2016). However, the most widespread use of direct repression occurred when F20 protests

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<sup>86</sup> Interview on 02/21/17 with a Majlis Dahm Leader in Rabat.

<sup>87</sup> Interview on 02/21/17 with a Majlis Dahm Leader in Rabat.

<sup>88</sup> See: <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2011/06/20116512125272326.html> Accessed {4/15/2017}.

moved into Morocco's densely populated, low-income neighborhoods, what Moroccans refer to as popular neighborhoods.<sup>89</sup>

Interviewees expressed that a rationale for the increased repression could be due to the fact that the more extreme elements of the F20 were becoming increasingly visible and because the F20 was protesting more and more in popular neighborhoods.<sup>90</sup> This, according to interviews, was dangerous for the regime, since the F20 mainly mobilized the middle-class, while the densely populated and lower-income areas (popular neighborhoods) were not initially drawn to protests. An F20 independent from Casablanca elaborates on why keeping the F20 out of these neighborhoods was so important to the regime:

It is the territory of INDH [National Initiative for Human Development],<sup>91</sup> which the state uses for its clientelism. They are also neighborhoods that have many Salafists, Islamists, and even [Islamist] radicals. So, in these neighborhoods, the Islamists are there, but the left is not present in general.<sup>92</sup>

Therefore, the F20's presence in these neighborhoods threatened the regime in two ways. Firstly, it could lead base supporters and voters of loyalist parties to side with the F20. Secondly, it threatened mobilizing Islamists (often anti-regime Salafists) in mass numbers. The same interviewee shed light on how a protest within an impoverished popular neighborhood of Casablanca, Sidi-Moumen,<sup>93</sup> surprised and perhaps changed perception of the F20:

The people in the neighborhood said “this is the first time that you come to our neighborhood” – it was interesting - the reception of the people in the poor neighborhoods where we would organize marches. Sometimes, we would have marches and some kids would say “when are you guys coming back?” [laughs].<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Referred to as *al'ahya' al-shaebia* in Arabic.

<sup>90</sup> The Al-Qaeda-linked terror attack on a Marrakech cafe frequented by tourists on April 28, 2011 was another possible reason why repression increased in May.

<sup>91</sup> The INDH is a World Bank funded programs to improve living conditions of low-income areas in Morocco.

<sup>92</sup> Interview on 10/26/17 with F20 independent in Casablanca.

<sup>93</sup> Sidi Moumen is infamous for its poverty and support for Islamists, including those responsible for the 2003 and 2007 Casablanca terrorist attacks.

<sup>94</sup> Interview on 10/26/16 with F20 independent in Casablanca.

During the same time that the F20 was experimenting with entering popular neighborhoods, slogans during F20 marches continued taking an increasingly more revolutionary frame. During nation-wide protests on May 22, 2011, slogans in Rabat included “*Makhzen* get out. Down with despotism,” and protests started in the lower-income popular neighborhood of Akkari-the first time this had occurred (Reuters. 2011). Reuters also reported that on May 22 2011, some protesters were “becoming more outspoken about criticizing King Mohammed.” (Reuters 2011).

During May 2011, the F20 decided to hold protests in popular neighborhoods, which are typically lower-income (sometimes impoverished) and densely populated residential areas, in Rabat, Casablanca, Marrakech, and Tangiers. The regime responded with harsh and violent repression throughout the country during the May 22 protests, especially when the F20 held (or attempted to hold) protests in popular neighborhoods.<sup>95</sup>

The regime clearly did not want the F20 attracting citizens from these densely populated, lower-income areas. In an attempt to limit the growth of mass-protests, the regime blocked off alleys and main squares within the popular neighborhoods of Rabat, Tangiers, Fez, Tetouan, Agadir, and Casablanca, with police and national security forces using batons to beat and disperse protestors.<sup>96</sup> In Mohammedia, water cannons were used to disperse protestors while five busses full of security forces came to the medium-sized city in an attempt to prevent protests.<sup>97</sup> In the popular neighborhood of Sebta (Casablanca), a video shows security forces surrounded bleeding demonstrators, one of which appears unconscious and profusely bleeding from the head.<sup>98</sup> International news sources widely reported on the repression that occurred during May

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<sup>95</sup> In Rabat, for instance, protests of all types usually occur in front of the Parliament building or the Bab-al-Had Square.

<sup>96</sup> See: <https://www.maghress.com/hespress/31925> Accessed {4/16/2017}.

<sup>97</sup> See: <https://www.maghress.com/lakome/4959> Accessed {4/16/2017}.

<sup>98</sup> See: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=43&v=Z6pe5sOZsJk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=43&v=Z6pe5sOZsJk) Accessed {4/16/2017}.

2011. France 24, for instance, labeled the regime response as brutal, and reported that protesters, including women, were violently beaten in alleys where the media was not allowed to film.<sup>99</sup>

On May 29, 2011, dozens were injured in an F20 march by security forces, and one protestor was killed (Boukhars and Hamid 2011). During that same week, the Minister of Communication and leaders in the police force continued to publicly discredit the F20 by declaring that the movement had been taken over by Islamists and the far left.<sup>100</sup> The Moroccan Communications Minister framed the movement as extremist group fighting against reforms that are the “people’s will” and declared that, “Islamist and leftists (of F20) have nothing to do with these democratic reforms.”<sup>101</sup> The Minister went on to single out the JCO as “exploiting the movement for its own ends.”<sup>102</sup> Similarly, Moncef Belkhatat, an ex-government minister claimed on national TV that, “the concessions have so far been more than enough,” and that “there is an institutional process in progress and they [F20] have to comply” (Idrissi 2012). In essence, the message sent by government loyalists online, and now on national television, was that the F20 was not respecting the democratic process by continuing protests.

A co-founder of the F20 argued that reforms, specifically the constitutional reforms, and the repression experienced in May weakened the movement. He notes:

In February, March, and April, the street was powerful and always full of masses. But there was repression in May, and when the movement got back to the streets it was weaker than before. The discussions [in F20 Committee meetings] were regarding how to re-make the rules of the game deal with the new constitution. Therefore, the passing of the new constitution [July 1<sup>st</sup>] weakened the movement because the basic purpose of the movement had been hijacked and not clear.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> See: <http://observers.france24.com/fr/20110530-manifestants-casablanca-brutalite-policiers-repression-maroc> Accessed {4/16/2017}.

<sup>100</sup> See: <https://www.maghress.com/marayapress/7025> Accessed {4/16/2017}.

<sup>101</sup> See: <https://www.maghress.com/chaabpress/3477> Accessed {4/16/2017}.

<sup>102</sup> See: <https://www.maghress.com/chaabpress/3477> Accessed {4/16/2017}.

<sup>103</sup> Interview on 10/25/16 with F20 co-founder in Casablanca.

My interviews revealed that many journalists and F20 activists confirmed the common sentiment that the regime's decision to violently repress protests in popular neighborhoods was strategic, due to fear that lower classes would join the F20:

When the protestors go to popular neighborhoods, Akib al Mansoor or Akkari, the state increases repression for two reasons. The first reason is that they are far away from the media outlets and the state channels, and, secondly, the state does not want protests to enter and mix with popular neighborhoods because they don't want the poor people to know that there is a social movement that wants better living conditions, health, and social justice. So, it means that this part [of society], which does not know about the F20 other than through the state media outlets, which portray the movement as foreign agents and sexual deviants, they will see other types of youth which do not fit in this picture the state portrays. It would lead to an alliance between the movement and these people, and the state sees that this unification would lead to the state losing.

Similarly, F20 activists viewed the imprisonment of Mouad Belaghout (Known as *El-Haqed* or 'The Enraged'), a rap artist and outspoken critic of the King that was heavily involved in the F20, as a message to the lower classes:

There were people put in jail, like the rapper *El-Haqed*-three times [laughs]. I asked myself why they [the regime] chose *El-Haqed* as an example of repression. It is because he comes from a poor neighborhood where he really made the whole neighborhood sympathize with the movement and with the ideas of the left...So, it was dangerous for the state. I live in a higher-class neighborhood, and I am therefore not a danger for the regime. They [the regime] know that I can talk a lot [laughs] for hours. There are red lines, but it is not as risky as for a kid who comes from a poor neighborhood and that has a lot of charisma and can make a whole neighborhood rise up. This is what they [the regime] are scared of.

It is clear that the state used selective and nationwide repression, but less is known about the heated internal discussions within the F20 that resulted from repression. Conflicts erupted between reformists and more revolutionary elements about where protests should be held. Leading up to the protests in May 2011, discussions and conflicts ensued about whether to go into popular neighborhoods. The divide was among members that wanted more extreme change (e.g. DWP, JCO), and those that remained reformist in their demands (e.g. USP,

independents).<sup>104</sup> In Agadir, a major coastal tourist destination, reformists feared that going into popular neighborhoods would result in repression and make the movement look violent; however, the JCO and the DWP, who wanted even more radical changes, did move protests into Agadir's popular neighborhoods and were indeed met with state violence in May 2011.<sup>105</sup> Similarly, in Marrakech only independent F20 activists along with the JCO and the DWP went into the lower-class Ben Youssef Al-Ali neighborhood to protest high electric and water prices and were met with heavy repression.<sup>106</sup> The divide between what activists characterize as reformist-monarchists and more revolutionary-republicans, became more visible after March 2011 and especially leading up to the King's second major announcement concerning the new constitution.

While the King's reforms convinced many that a social movement was no longer needed and gave rise to internal disagreements about how to resonate with the public; harsher repression along with more revolutionary frames permeating the F20 made the public, and some activists, less likely to continue protesting. My interviews revealed that the repression, starting in May 2011, further hurt the movement's momentum.

The movement's momentum and internal problems were exacerbated by regional events that left many Moroccans fearful of the potential for instability and violence to reach their borders as well. Moreover, some within the F20 were worried about the impact of regional events on the nature of interaction with the regime going forward. In the words of an F20 co-founder, the Libyan and Syrian civil wars "planted a kind of fear in Moroccans since those revolutions failed and those countries burnt down. The people here [Morocco] became thirsty for

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<sup>104</sup> Interview on 10/06/16 with F20 co-founder in Casablanca.

<sup>105</sup> Interview on 12/13/16 with USFP leader in Agadir.

<sup>106</sup> Interview on 01/04/17 with F20 leader in Marrakech.

security and safety.”<sup>107</sup> A member from the Amazigh Cultural Movement indicated how repression in conjunction with the images of violence from the Syrian and Libyan Civil Wars were affecting protest participation:

In the beginning, everything was peaceful, and the regime was peaceful. But when things happened in Libya and Syria the regime started to become more violent. When they became violent and, the F20 saw what was happening in the region, there was a type of fear among F20 leaders. Some would stop going to F20 committee meetings in Tangiers. So, this was a reason for F20's death. The regime became more violent, and it was successful.<sup>108</sup>

Interviewees again and again suggested that the wave of repression in May 2011 was successful, not in ending the movement, but shrinking the size of the movement by scarring away bystanders and activists from attending protests that the regime framed as against Moroccan interests. In the words of an activist in Agadir, after May, “the movement continued, but there was a lot of repression, and a big lessening in protesters too.”<sup>109</sup> Unlike the approach taken by other leaders in the region, however, nationwide repression occurred after concessions were offered and public dialogue about a new constitution was occurring throughout the country. In the eyes of the public and some activists, there was less incentive to continue protests that were increasingly being met with violent repression since reforms were already being implemented. Therefore, keeping in mind that the F20 was undergoing a ‘framing crisis’ with some members sticking to reformist frames and others adopting more revolutionary frames, the scenes of violence that ensued during May 2011 did scare the public about where Morocco was heading. As we will see in the next section, the backdrop of regional violence also convinced Moroccans that change through voting booths and not via protests was the most prudent option for the Moroccan public.

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<sup>107</sup>Interview on 10/01/16 with F20 co-founder in Rabat.

<sup>108</sup>Interview on 12/08/16 with Amazigh Leader in Tangiers.

<sup>109</sup> Interview on 12/12/16 with ‘Radical Communist’ F20 Member in Agadir.

### **The Referendum Campaign: F20 Without a Unified Frame: June - July 2011**

On June 17, 2011, after months of deliberations among members of the constitutional committee, the King presented the details of the constitutional reforms announced on March 9, 2011.<sup>110</sup> The speech starts by referencing the “historical” March 9 Speech that “received unanimous national support” and was based on suggestions from political parties, civil society groups, and unions.<sup>111</sup> The speech outlines a draft constitution that calls for an elected PM from the largest party in parliament and grants the government more executive powers, including granting the PM the power to appoint ministers and ambassadors, and letting the PM dissolve the lower house of parliament in consultation with the King. Amazigh activists rejoiced that Tamazight, an indigenous Amazigh language, would become an official language alongside Arabic. Furthermore, the draft constitution called for an independent judicial branch, the establishment of a council to fight corruption, and promoted gender equality. The speech concluded very much like the March 9 Speech by reassuring Moroccans that change will occur with their votes. The King made a plea that he will vote ‘yes’ in the July 1<sup>st</sup> referendum and that the implementation of the reforms depend on the people’s vote.

Two weeks prior to the speech, President Saleh of Yemen, narrowly escaped an assassination attempt and sporadic violence was occurring throughout Yemen. Moreover, violence and sectarianism were growing in Syria, while Libya was entering a civil war. The speech reminds the public of this regional reality and urges them to vote “yes” on July 1<sup>st</sup>:

I therefore call on political parties, trade unions and civil society organizations, which participated freely, from beginning to end, and with a keen sense of commitment, in developing this draft Constitution, to seek to mobilize the Moroccan people, not only for

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<sup>110</sup> Full Transcript found here: <http://www.moroccotomorrow.org/full-transcript-of-king-mohammed-vis-speech-june-17-2011/> Accessed {4/16/2017}.

<sup>111</sup> Civil society organizations and unions were allowed to submit requests during the three-month long drafting of the constitution . Although most organizations involved in the F20 refused to take part in the process, many activists did admit that allowing civil society and unions to participate in the process was a big change.



the purpose of voting the draft Constitution, but also to see to it that it is implemented. Indeed, it constitutes the best means for the accomplishment of the legitimate aspirations of our responsible, vigilant young people, and of all Moroccans, who aspire to achieve our shared ambition of building our nation on the solid foundation of tranquility, unity, stability, democracy, development, prosperity, justice, dignity, the rule of law and the institutions-based state. I shall be at the forefront, seeking an optimal implementation of this sophisticated constitutional project which strengthens the foundations of a constitutional, democratic, parliamentary and social monarchy, once the draft Constitution has, by the Grace of the Almighty, been approved by referendum, next July 1st.<sup>112</sup>

Following the concessionary speech, repression was again used. Throughout the Arab world, *baltagiya* (government-paid thugs and gangs) have been used by regimes to violently repress opposition. Perhaps the most widely viewed use of *baltagiya* was on the eighth day of the Egyptian Uprising in 2011, when men on camels charged through crowds of anti-Mubarak protestors beating them with sticks. Morocco was no exception to this trend and deployed pro-regime *baltagiya* following the June 17 Speech (Boumouch 2011). Three days after the speech, the F20 held a demonstration to reject the referendum and police along with pro-government *baltagiya* chased, beat, and dispersed protestors. The pro-monarchy *baltagiya* held signs praising the King and chanted “The people say 'Yes' to the constitution” (Lazare 2011). The Pro-monarchy *baltagiya* came from impoverished areas and were reportedly paid 100 Moroccan Dirhams each (10 U.S. Dollars) to drive throughout Rabat in large vans, sometimes visibly armed with knives and machetes, and chant slogans supportive of the King, the new constitution, and the referendum (Boumouch 2011).<sup>113</sup> Unlike *baltagiya* in many of MENA countries, however, in Morocco the message was to vote “yes” for change, and not simply to praise the leader in power and immediately force opposition protestors off the streets.

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<sup>112</sup> IBID

<sup>113</sup> See: Nadir Boumouch’s 2011 documentary, “My Makhzen and Me”.

The repression that followed concessions led to a movement that was becoming internally divided and increasingly disconnected from average Moroccans. The F20's lack of a clear and united message would prove to be especially damaging for the movement. Merouan Mekouar (2016) notes that since June 2011, "for average citizens, the February 20 Movement was no longer a movement of "normal citizens", but a rather strange alliance between the country's far-left parties and non-loyalist Islamists" (p. 105). This perception was also felt by F20 members and triggered the experimentation of frames and subsequently internal conflicts we see begin in March and April 2011. An independent-leftist activist and theatre organizer and actor noted that in Casablanca, the F20 eventually became a spectacle for Moroccans:

I come from the world of theatre and spectacles; we became a spectacle for the people. Every week we would go out and every time in fewer numbers, we go on the street and say the same things and the same slogans, and the people watch us as they pass by, we were a spectacle and the objective was not to be the spectacle.<sup>114</sup>

Some suggested that the lack of clarity in framing demands led to a lack of support from the middle and upper classes,<sup>115</sup> which depend on a stable country under the King.<sup>116</sup> For example, demanding reforms of the constitutions, without specifying what those reforms ought to be was a weakness that many interviewees expressed. A USP member in Tangiers attributes the movement's death, in part, to the lack of clarity in demands caused by the JCO and the DWP, while claiming that the USP had a clear and consistent demand for a future with a monarch from the beginning.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Interview with independent Activist in Mohammedia on 9/22/16.

<sup>115</sup> The middle-class was represented in the F20, especially since most figureheads were from the middle-class. Although the F20 was not largely represented by the upper-class, there was hope that they could attract some within the upper-class. For example, a number of prominent activists, journalists, politicians, and professionals (i.e. doctors union) began supporting the movement.

<sup>116</sup> Interview on 02/26/16 with UMT and Hizb al-Umma member in Tangiers.

<sup>117</sup> Interview on 02/25/16 with USP Member in Tangiers.

The F20 was initially self-framed as a strictly reformist movement; however, following the King's speeches and especially during the referendum period beginning in June 2011, the F20 struggled to resonate with the public and this pushed some to change their demands from calling for reforms to more extreme demands short of regime overthrow. Changes in the political structure through state policies (March and June Reform Speeches, July referendum vote, and 2011 early elections), in addition to repression and increased violence in Libya and Syria sparked debates and arguments that affected internal framing processes of the F20.

Interviewees across all ideologies revealed that arguments concerning the 'ceiling' of demands, *Saqf al-mutalib*, pervaded F20 meetings. *Saqf al-mutalib* refers to discussions concerning the type of regime the F20 should demand. The literal translation in English is the 'ceiling of the demands'; however, discussions surrounding *Saqf al-mutalib* concern 'how far demands can go' with the ceiling being the often unsaid: toppling the King and his regime. Although this sentiment may have always existed within certain political organizations, like the Marxist DWP or the Islamist JCO, dialogue concerning pushing demands closer to a revolutionary ceiling started to appear following the regime's concessions and selective repression. The F20 actively tried to silence the voices that openly demanded toppling a King who was popular throughout Morocco. Some believed that this was the ulterior motive of many within the F20 and, following discussions concerning *Saqf al-mutalib*, they were more visible to the public. For instance, a USFP leader in Casablanca indicated how this view was prevalent even as the F20 tried to self-censor those that called for overthrow:

Most of them wanted this [overthrow of regime] even though they hid it. For example, during a general assembly, a leader of the Pioneers Party was talking about the way to protest, but soon and by mistake, he started to say we have to topple the regime loudly. Then people who were against this issue rose up and they tried to mend this by saying it

was an electronic blunder....We said that this is not our demand and it is not a reform, but this is what devastated the movement.<sup>118</sup>

Suspicion about the extremist nature of the F20 made many reformist members uncomfortable with the increasingly revolutionary tones conveyed in protests and meetings. An Ex-President of AMDH noted that all F20 factions agreed that there were problems in Morocco, especially concerning corruption and wealth distribution, but how to solve those problem became a point of contention: “Maybe there was a general agreement on the negative things that we wanted to change, but there was not agreement on what we wanted to replace the system with, 'what is the alternative we wanted'. This question concerning the future of the movement theoretically created new problems.”<sup>119</sup>

Therefore, some in the F20 did not accept reformist demands and either called for regime change or leaving the future of the regime-type open for discussion. Nevertheless, the JCO and the DWP did not officially call for overthrowing the regime, rather they simply framed their demands as “letting the people decide” and leaving the ceiling of demands open.<sup>120</sup> This strategy of leaving open the ceiling of demands is not unusual. Movements use abstract and highly subjective frames to maximize resonance with the public, but, in the context of the Arab Spring during which calls for overthrowing the regime elsewhere had led to sectarian strife and violence, vagueness in demands created conflicts within the F20. A co-founder of the F20 clearly demonstrates how political organizations that wanted a republic, or a future without a King, could not directly call for a republic:

Republicans never said [that] ‘we want a republic’. They just said ‘we don’t want to put a ceiling on our demands’. We let people decide but we don’t want to say that we want a parliamentary monarchy. If we are enough people on the streets [then] we can ask for

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<sup>118</sup> Interview on 11/24/16 with USFP Leader in Casablanca.

<sup>119</sup> Interview on 10/05/16 with ex-AMDH President.

<sup>120</sup> There were individual members from these organizations that did call for the overthrow of the regime, but the leaders of the JCO and the DWP maintained that this was not their demand.

more than a parliamentary monarchy and others said no we need to be clear and we need this [to demand a parliamentary monarchy] for the time being.<sup>121</sup>

This play on words obscured the redline of questioning the King's sanctity in Morocco, but to the public the message was clear: members in the F20 wanted radical change (regime change), which most in society did not want. Moreover, previously reticent 'republicans' were becoming more open about their revolutionary intentions. Table 2.4 shows the frames adopted by the 'revolutionary-republicans' within the F20 following the King's March 9 speech. As we can see, those adopted by revolutionary republicans differed greatly from the initially reformist frames of the F20 shown in Table 2.2.

*Table 2.4: F20's 'Revolutionary-Republican' Frames, After March 2011*

F20's Diagnostic Framing ( <i>What is the problem? Who do we blame?</i> ).	<i>Main problems:</i> State type: The Monarchy <i>Attribution of Blame:</i> The King / <i>Makhzen</i>
F20's Prognostic Framing ( <i>How to solve the problem?</i> ).	<i>Solutions to the problem:</i> Replace the Monarchy with a Democratic Republic. Remove the King
F20's Motivational Framing ( <i>How do we frame the movement and motivate people to join?</i> ). <sup>122</sup>	<i>Frames:</i> "The people want to overthrow tyranny," " <i>Makhzen</i> get out. Down with despotism," "The people want to overthrow the dictatorship," "People want the downfall of the regime"

The change in diagnostic frames shifted blame towards the King and the solution (prognostic framing) was the overthrow of the regime and by extension the King. Although only the more revolutionary elements of the F20 adopted these frames, in the eyes of reformist F20 activists,

<sup>121</sup> Interview on 10/01/16 with F20 co-founder in Rabat.

<sup>122</sup> These motivational frames tended to highlight the severity of regime corruption and lack of democracy, while also linking their causes to the events in Tunisia and Egypt in order to highlight the urgency to protest and 'take advantage' of achieving goals during the protest wave engulfing the Arab world.

the damage was done. By June, the press often covered the F20's internal arguments about the ceiling of demands and frequently speculated about the extremist nature of the JCO. The June issue of the widely-read magazine, *Tel Qel*, covers the internal "radicalization" of the F20 and shows a picture of an activist's sign reading: "I want the overthrow of the regime."<sup>123</sup> An interview in June 2011 with the JCO's Deputy Secretary General, Omar Amkasu, questions whether the JCO's ulterior motive was to overthrow the regime, to which Amkasu vaguely responded that the groups wants to "overthrow corruption and tyranny."<sup>124</sup> Amkasu is also asked to address extreme statements by some JCO members, including a JCO member caught on video stating that "the streets will be cleansed by the blood of the protesters."<sup>125</sup>

The F20's goals and the JCO's motives even sparked talks within the PJD, an Islamist political party. The PJD's General Secretary and MP, Abdelali Hamidine, who in February 2011 did support the F20 and participated in its protests, expressed concern that members in his party along with the general public had about the ulterior motives of the F20: "We began to ask, what do these people [F20] want? Do they want reforms of the King's regime and become more democratic? Or, do these people want a different political regime?"<sup>126</sup> In the view of many interviewees, this lack of a unified frame along with the conflicts they caused was one of main reasons for the F20's demobilization. Leftist co-founders of the F20 attempted to quell people's fears about the extremist elements within the F20 by holding press conferences that declared the ceiling of the movement's demands were for reforms and a parliamentary monarchy (a future with a King).<sup>127</sup> However, when leftists spoke on behalf of the F20 in early June 2011, and

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<sup>123</sup> Tel Qel, Issue 477, published June 2011.

<sup>124</sup> See: <https://www.maghress.com/hibapress/48761> Accessed {4/17/2017}.

<sup>125</sup> IBID

<sup>126</sup> Interview on 02/23/17 with PJD MP Abdelali Hamidine in Rabat.

<sup>127</sup> See: <https://www.hespress.com/politique/32431.html> Accessed {4/16/2017}.

limited demands to reforms, some members of the JCO became convinced that the movement no longer represented them: “The problem increased after some of the statements of the leaders from the left, there were public media statements on the roof of demands should be a parliamentary monarchy. This is the point that I said we should end our participation.”<sup>128</sup> Similar accounts were found among members of the DWP: “I personally thought that demanding a parliamentary monarchy was a political signal because it limited our demands.”<sup>129</sup> USFP represented one of the only parties in the F20 that had previously participated in parliament and worked for change through the system or existing institutions. Naturally, calls to not limit demands to reforms or a future with a King made the USFP question its future in the movement and eventually led to its decision to leave the F20 in April 2011, and encourage its members to vote ‘yes’ in the July referendum. A party leader in Casablanca made it clear that his party was not comfortable with the new prognostic frame experiment surrounding the ceiling of demands:

There was within the movement those who called for toppling the regime, and this was not among the F20’s demands. Rather the demand was a parliamentary monarchy, which means that the powers are not centered to the King, not an absolute executive monarchy. If you [referring to JCO and DWP] want to topple the regime then you should protest within a certain political party or organization away from the movement of people [F20]....if you do such protest on behalf of the rest of the F20 movement, it means you crossed the redline.<sup>130</sup>

Another USFP leader, similarly thought that, in spite of the vagueness of the JCO’s demands, their real intentions were clear: “...as the moderate left, we just want to change the constitution, stop corruption, and change some corrupted leaders. The JCO, you know, they want different things – [they want] revolution.”<sup>131</sup> A member of parliament from the Democratic Confederation of Labor (CDT), a labor union that is close to the DWP, also expressed concern

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<sup>128</sup> Interview on 11/16/16 with JCO member in Meknes.

<sup>129</sup> Interview on 10/13/16 with Al Naj Member in Rabat.

<sup>130</sup> Interview on 11/24/16 with USFP member in Casablanca.

<sup>131</sup> Interview on 12/13/17 with USFP leader in Agadir.

that extending demands too far would not resonate with Moroccans: “We clashed with them [DWP] about the constitution we wanted. Almost all of the leftist parties agreed on fighting for a parliamentary monarchy, because the monarchy in Morocco has a history and there are Moroccans who believe that the monarchy is very important for the continuation of life.”<sup>132</sup> The same MP expressed concerns about how Islamists felt empowered after the regional rise of Islamists to position of power in Tunisia and Egypt in October 2011 and January 2011, respectively: “After what happened in Tunisia and Egypt, we understood that they wanted everyone to go to the streets and overthrow the regime, and afterwards they would gain from that since they were the most organized group.”<sup>133</sup> The USP also felt that the JCO, especially, had an ulterior motive to overthrow the monarchy and establish an Islamist Caliphate, perhaps one reason the JCO insisted on having vague demands.<sup>134</sup>

The vagueness in the JCO and the DWP’s new prognostic frame as simply ‘not limiting the F20’s demands’ created conflicts within the movement. The alliance between a far-left party (DWP) and an illegal Islamist party (JCO) also opened old wounds for many leftist activists within the F20, as well as members of the PJD. Various interviewees indicated that a divide within the F20 occurred between April and May 2011, when an alliance between the JCO and the DWP was formed. To understand this division and why it was so contentious, it is imperative to understand that the alliance between the JCO (Islamist) and the DWP (Marxist) did not sit easily with many leftists because, in their view, Islamists are innately incompatible with liberal democratic ideals. One leftist F20 member, for example, could not understand why the DWP would align itself with an Islamist group that would oppress leftists: “How is it possible that it

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<sup>132</sup> Interview on 01/13/17 with CDT MP in Rabat.

<sup>133</sup> IBID.

<sup>134</sup> Interview on 02/25/17 with USP member in Tangiers.



cooperates with a group that is unjust. If the JCO came into power tomorrow, they would start the killing and repression and oppressing leftist activists. I mean, at a specific point, this contradiction created an ideological problem for many activists.”<sup>135</sup> Although the discussions concerning desired regime type were not necessarily ideologically based, the alliance between Islamists (JCO) and radical leftists (DWP) made many leftists uncomfortable with the alliance. Furthermore, these ideological divisions seemed to seep into the F20’s organizational structure, with certain groups dominating certain councils and committees. As we will see in Chapter Four, this led to perceptions by leftists that Islamists were attempting to control the movement by coopting F20 committees.

### **Conclusion**

Frames are created via discursive processes (i.e. slogans, interviews, writings, speeches). For a frame to resonate with the public, congruence between societal belief systems and frames is necessary. Following the March 9 Speech, the repression that began in May, and the June 17 Speech, discussions about the visibility and mere presence of Islamists in the F20 persisted. Discussions about what type of movement the F20 is and how it can respond to the consistent mix of concessions by the *Makhzen* also weakened the F20. Concessions caused problem depletion and internal disputes and changed the initial political opportunities that the Arab Spring provided the F20. Repression, however, timed to occur after a perceived sense of true change was happening in Morocco led to a lessening in protests and caused the public to become scared of increasing violence that was exemplified by the civil war in Libya. By June 2011, the options for Moroccans wanting change was binary: (1) Accept the Kings concessions and

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<sup>135</sup> Interview on 12/08/16 with Talea member in Rabat.

continuation of the King's record of incremental reforms through existing institutions, or (2) continue to participate in street protests that were increasingly turning violent and risk destabilizing the country. Ultimately, with the F20 unable to agree on new ways to mobilize supporters, the regime's increasing harsh response to protests, and the movement's revolutionary-extremist tone becoming increasingly visible, Moroccans chose the former.

A secondary finding of this chapter is that the timing and aim of repression matters. Repression against protests is typically aimed at immediately dispersing protests. In Morocco, however, the primary goal of repression was to delegitimize and fracture a social movement. and direct repression was thus timed to occur when the movement "exhausted its purpose."<sup>136</sup> Again, repression by security forces was used to disperse and, at times, deter demonstrations from occurring in certain areas. The initial smear campaigns, that began days after the F20's initial call to protest in February 2011, along with the calculated use of *baltagiya*, following the March 9 Speech, were aimed at sending signals to a public that was all too aware of the regional uprisings and the potential for instability and violence.

Benford and Snow (2000) tell us that "movement actors are viewed as signifying agents actively engaged in the production and maintenance of meaning for constituents, antagonists, and bystanders or observers" (p. 613). The F20 was aware of the importance of their role and following concessions and then repression in April and May, the F20 found it difficult to recuperate and maintain a unified and effective message. More importantly, for many in Morocco change was already occurring via the King's concessions and, therefore, the F20 exhausted its purpose. Ahmed Benchesmi (2014), the founder of the Moroccan magazine, *Tel Qel*, summarizes what by mid-May was the common perception of the F20 in Morocco:

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<sup>136</sup> Interview on 10/31/16 with JCO Leader in Rabat.

“Moroccans were getting used to protests – and perhaps bored by their apparent pointlessness – after all, the Constitution was being reformed, wasn’t it?” (220).

The next chapter will cover the final phase of the constitutional referendum and general elections (July – November 2011). This chapter will show how consistent signaling of change to the public via the referendum and the victory of Islamists in parliament elections would have a devastating effect on F20’s momentum and internal cleavages.

### Chapter Three: Signaling Change Through Elections

Elections within authoritarian contexts and social movements have been thoroughly, yet separately, studied (Ali Kadivar 2017). This chapter jointly analyzes these different phenomena to demonstrate how electoral results can affect protest demobilization. I begin with the premise that “an election is a public signal observed by a group of citizens before they decide whether to take anti-regime action” (Little 2015; p. 1144). I argue that the 2011 victory of an opposition Islamist party, which had not previously been allowed to win a plurality of parliamentary seats, played a major role in quelling protests.

This chapter covers how the parliamentary victory of an Islamist party, the Party of Justice and Development (PJD), facilitated F20’s demobilization.<sup>137</sup> The ushering of Islamists into power following the Arab Spring is often viewed as a threat to the state (Bradley 2012; Prashad 2012; Dawisha 2013; Israeli 2017). In Morocco, however, following the reforms outlined in Chapter Two, the victory of the PJD in the 2011 parliamentary elections signaled to the public that change had occurred and signaled to activists and the public that the F20 was no longer needed. More specifically, interviewees asserted that the unprecedented PJD parliamentary win in 2011, in conjunction with the March 9 Speech and the 2011 Referendum Campaign, signaled to Moroccans that major reforms were being carried out and that street politics via a social movement was no longer necessary. Indeed, the “the elections were the first under the new constitution and came to be perceived as a critical test of public confidence in the reform agenda” (Arieff 2012, p. 2).

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<sup>137</sup> The Justice and Development Party (PJD) is an opposition party that, prior to the Arab Spring, the Moroccan regime has attempted to keep out of important positions of power (i.e. allowing them to form a government and win plurality/majority in general elections).

In the social movement literature, problem depletion is referred to as the removal of the perceived “relevance of the claims-making effort within the relevant population” (Davenport 2015 p. 26). Social movement theorists tend to classify repression and problem depletion as ‘killing from the outside’; in other words, they are tactics, often implemented by the state, which deplete social movements (Davenport 2015, p. 37). This dissertation demonstrates that problem depletion facilitated F20’s demobilization. As discussed in Chapter Two, the King’s March 9 Speech categorically addressed F20’s initial grievances. The King initiated a series of concessions that convinced activists and bystanders to no longer support the movement. In this chapter, I show that the results of the 2011 general election formed part of the regime’s concessionary strategy, and further depleted the F20’s *raison d’être*. On March 9, 2011, the King announced early elections, and the November 2011 elections demonstrated that the government had implemented reforms. More importantly, the victory of an opposition Islamist party depleted the F20’s key demand of greater democracy, including free and fair elections.

In Chapter Two, I analyze conflict among different ideologically-contentious factions and the problem depletion that followed the King’s announcement of reforms. In this chapter, I outline how the results of the 2011 parliamentary elections furthered the perception that F20’s demands had been met and that there was no longer a need for protests. Said differently, following ideological divides and framing conflicts, the 2011 election results further demobilized an already fractured movement.

Morocco offers a unique look into how elections within a semi-authoritarian context can be used to quell protests.<sup>138</sup> According to my interviews, the PJD parliamentary win convinced

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<sup>138</sup> I use the term semi-authoritarianism since Morocco allows opposition parties to operate relatively freely and compete in elections even though (prior to 2011) they are usually not permitted to form governments or win parliamentary pluralities. See Ward (2009) and Olcott and Ottaway (1999).

some activists to abandon street protests and changed the incentives of Moroccans to join protests. The outcome of the elections contributed to demobilization because of two important conditions: (1) the PJD had not been “given” a chance to govern prior to the Arab Spring, and (2) the PJD was perceived as the only uncorrupted party among all other competing political parties.<sup>139</sup>

This chapter will demonstrate that the PJD victory affected the F20’s momentum, firstly, by changing activists’ and bystanders’ incentives to participate in protests. More specifically, the PJD victory depleted the necessity for street protests since it signaled to the public that the reform process initiated on March 9, 2011 was culminating in unprecedented change. Importantly, it was the fact that the PJD won a parliamentary plurality, and not that early elections were held, that convinced activists to stop protesting. Secondly, the PJD victory had a divisive effect within the F20. Activists that were supportive of the election results were accused of being coopted by the regime. Finally, the JCO officially stopped supporting F20 protests just two weeks after the PJD won the 2011 general elections. Both the PJD victory and the JCO departure are viewed by activists as the most palpable blows to the movement. It was only after these events that we saw an immediate halt in all major F20 protest activity.<sup>140</sup>

### **The Signaling Role of Authoritarian Elections**

When opposition parties within authoritarian contexts win pluralities or majorities in parliament, then ongoing protests often demobilize. The electoral victories signal to the public

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<sup>139</sup> The PJD has always brought the issue of corruption to the forefront of its agenda and has focused on transparency and anticorruption policies (Mekouar 2010, p. 7).

<sup>140</sup> Leftists accuse the JCO of withdrawing from the F20 since fellow Islamists (PJD) were in power. JCO members ardently reject this assertion and attribute their decision to leave the F20 to internal conflicts. The next chapter will cover the JCO withdrawal from the F20 in detail and demonstrate how the F20’s structure may have also pushed the JCO towards withdrawing from the movement.

that an authoritarian regime is devolving some powers and heeding a movement's calls for reforms. Past scholarship studying the informational role of elections have focused on how authoritarian elections function to ensure regime strength, control, and popularity. This section will outline how a semi-authoritarian regime, during times of social unrest, can use elections not to demonstrate regime strength but rather a devolution of power.<sup>141</sup> Devolution of power can signal to the public that power holders are listening to a protest movement's demands. This is accomplished not solely by holding elections but by allowing certain opposition parties to take control of parliaments – thus signaling unprecedented change. Within the MENA region before the Arab Spring, governments allowed Islamist parties to run for local and national elections, but they never allowed them to take control of parliament (Wegner 2011). The case of Morocco demonstrates how the *Makhzen* successfully used early elections and, more importantly the victory of the PJD, to demobilize protests.

The relationship between the PJD victory and the F20's protest momentum is due to the signals that this parliamentary victory sent to Moroccans. Elections play an informational role, which affect activists' and bystanders' propensity to protest. As Little, Tucker, and LaGatta (2015) note, "public signals (like an election result) could serve as a focal point determining whether citizens protest or not" (p. 1144). According to Little (2012), "elections generate public information about the relative strength and popularity of the incumbent leaders, which affects the behavior of the leaders as well as other elites and the general population" (p. 250). Therefore, since elections, according to Little, can affect whether citizens protest or not, incumbents that do poorly in elections are more likely to offer concessions that lessen the chance of protests

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<sup>141</sup> This need not imply that an actual devolution of power is occurring. Rather, if a party that is not controlled or closely aligned with the regime forms a government, this signals to the public that power-sharing is occurring with the ruling regime.

(Little 2012). On the other hand, if an incumbent does well in an election, then they will try to consolidate power (Little 2012).

Scholars have theorized that elections within authoritarian contexts play a variety of functions, “including as survival mechanisms for incumbents, as patronage distribution networks between candidates and constituents, and as performances broadcasting state might” (Brownlee 2012, p. 808).<sup>142</sup> For example, Blaydes (2010) argues that former Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak used elections to allocate rents to elites by revealing information concerning the loyalty of bureaucratic officials and party cadre, which in turn allowed authoritarian leaders to make decisions about appointments. Other scholars find that authoritarian elections help power-holders know where to allocate public goods and services (Baldwin 2005; Lust-Okar 2006; Magaloni 2006; Ortega and Penfold-Becerra 2008).

Some scholars focus on the signals that electoral fraud sends to a public during elections. Simpson (2013) shows that electoral fraud signals the repressive capacity of the state. Electoral fraud can also push individuals to overcome the collective action problem to work together for change (Tucker 2007). Simpson also argues that blatant manipulation can “discourage opposition supporters from turning out to vote or to protest” (2013, p. 3). Similarly, certain types of visible electoral fraud, like nullifying ballots, does have a signaling effect that makes incumbents look stronger (Little 2011, 2014). According to Little (2014), within a context where fraud is expected, the corrupt incumbent looks stronger when fraud is exposed by international monitors. Thus, not engaging in fraud is a signal of weakness within non-competitive elections where citizens expect some level of fraud to take place. In another study, Little, Tucker, and LaGatta

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<sup>142</sup> Some researchers find that elections are intended to signal the incumbent’s popularity (Cox 2009; Little 2012; Rozenas 2012; Little 2015).



(2015) conclude that public reports of election fraud will lead to higher probabilities and levels of protests because if an incumbent needs massive fraud to win an election, then this signals that “enough citizens dislike the regime,” which can incentivize protesters (p. 1143).

Finally, other conventional findings contend that when all political parties perceive that they have an opportunity to win elections, civil conflicts will be less likely to occur (Przeworski 1991; Weingast 1997). In relation to Morocco, this wisdom may explain why an opposition party, like the PJD, has consistently decided to compete in elections but did not officially partake in F20 demonstrations. Although the PJD, like other Islamists in the region, participated in elections without winning pluralities, the formal inclusion of the PJD in elections “has enabled the PJD to increase its organizational capacities, to broaden its support remarkably, and to impact directly on the agenda setting of existing political organizations” (Albrecht & Wegner 2006: p.136). Since the PJD’s inception, the specter of state repression loomed over the party; therefore, the PJD carefully gained parliamentary seats since 1997 and pushed for policy changes through institutions. The same fear of repression persisted under the current King’s reign. For example, the party was fearful that the King would use the 2003 Casablanca Terrorist Attack as an excuse to ban it altogether (Willis 2014, p.148). Since 1997, the PJD has attempted to re-frame itself as a moderate Islamist party that could cooperate with other parties and ideologies within parliament (Wegner 2011). In essence, prior to the Arab Spring, the PJD was making incremental gains within the existing political system.

The literature has yet to explain why protests lessen when previously sidelined parties win elections in authoritarian contexts. More specifically, existing theories do not explain why the victory of certain opposition political parties would convince activists to cease protesting. Some scholars emphasize a link between social unrest and a change in the character of political

parties. Londregan & Vindigni (2006) argue that free elections can forestall conflict by revealing the strength of factions and therefore discourage violent civil war. In general, however, the link between authoritarian elections and demobilization is underdeveloped. Current studies focus on how authoritarian elections affect opposition parties, while they overlook how elections affect the momentum of existing protests. Moreover, studies concerning authoritarian elections and protests have focused on the role that the fraud plays in affecting the likelihood of protests, but not in decreasing/demobilizing ongoing protests. My research departs from these studies by shifting focus from political parties to existing protest movements. I do not seek to explain why a political party rationally chooses to partake in elections or street politics, but rather I am examining why the electoral victory of certain opposition parties may quell existing protest movements.

Therefore, this chapter focuses on the relationship between ongoing protest movements and elections, while also shedding light on when authoritarian regimes may want to signal that they are devolving their power. As Brown (2012) notes, authoritarian regimes use elections to manage opposition and ensure favorable electoral outcomes. This is done, according to Brown, “through drawing and redrawing the rules, district boundaries, access to media, and other features of the electoral process” (p. 23). Authoritarian regimes allow opposition groups to run in elections, but they successfully limit them from winning and forming governments. During times of social unrest, however, authoritarians may do just the opposite: allow opposition parties to win. Heeding a protest movement’s demands for democratic reform, specifically by allowing the unprecedented election of opposition parties, can directly affect a protest movement’s momentum. For movements that are reformist in nature, electoral success by the opposition

signals to activists and the public that: (1) power holders are listening to demands and going through with reforms, and (2) they no longer need a social movement for change.

For an opposition party's parliamentary victory to lessen ongoing protests, the party needs to be independent of authoritarian rulers, perceived by the public to be uncorrupted, and never held a parliamentary plurality or majority. Demonstrating to the public that true change is occurring sends important signals that contentious politics are no longer needed. The election of opposition parties is not always a signal of true changes, specifically when the political party is perceived to be an extension of the regime. Authoritarian regimes usually use the electoral victories of loyalist parties to avoid opposition majorities/pluralities within the national legislature. In the case of Morocco, not all electoral outcomes would have had the same effect on the F20. For one, some political parties are inherently coopted since they were created by the *Makhzen* (e.g. PAM), while other parties have been coopted overtime by the regime (e.g. Istiqlal). Neither the electoral victory of regime loyalist or coopted parties would be able to credibly signal to the public, and to the protest movement itself, that true change was underway.

Thus, even if the government holds early elections and announces reforms, the election of royalist parties will not curb on-going street protests. If, for example, a royalist party held a parliamentary majority in the past, and is re-elected during times of social protest, this will not lessen protests.<sup>143</sup> This lack of perceived change, in turn, will not curb a social movement's incentive to continue protests.

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<sup>143</sup> Deprivation theory claims that some movements occur when people feel that they are deprived of goods, services, resources, or rights (Gurr 1970, McAdam, McCarthy, & Zald, 1988). If we accept deprivation theory and assume that social movements occur when groups of people feel deprived of something they feel entitled to (in this case more democracy), then the election of royalist parties will not likely signal to a public that democratic change has occurred.

Finally, the public needs to believe that the political parties are not cooptated by the regime. As mentioned, various opposition parties within the MENA eventually became coopted by authoritarian regimes. In contrast, my interviewees believed the PJD was clean and uncorrupted. The perception that an opposition party will remain un-coopted, signals to the public that power-holders are committing to reforms. Furthermore, the public is less likely to trust an opposition party that has been marred by corruption scandals, because it may be easily coopted by the regime. In the words of one interviewee, some F20 leftists voted for the PJD during the 2011 parliamentary elections precisely because they were a “transparent and moral party,” which “did not take the path of previous corrupt parties.”<sup>144</sup> The PJD was the only party during the 2011 elections that fulfilled the three aforementioned conditions.

In relation to the MENA region, Islamists have been the leading opposition parties. In spite of this, when Islamist parties in the past have garnered many seats (or a majority), regimes have cancelled elections (1991/1992 Algerian Legislative Election), used increased repression (Egyptian Presidential Elections of 2005), and used electoral laws to ensure Islamists do not win pluralities or majorities (Morocco and Jordan) (Wegner 2011). In the words of Brown (2012): “Elections are freer because they include more serious contestants. But they are not fair, because only incumbents can win” (p. 2). Quite simply, as Brown (2012) notes, the MENA regimes allowed Islamists to run, but they never allowed them win positions of power:

In many Arab countries, the most reliable and stable electoral rule is that the opposition cannot win. But Islamists run even though losing is foreordained. Actually, they go further: they generally do not even contest a majority of seats. Islamist leaders turn the necessity of losing into a virtue, citing the slogan “participation not domination” (2012, p. 6).

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<sup>144</sup> Interview on 11/23/16 with F20 Journalist Participant in Rabat.

Like other Islamists within the MENA, the PJD did not expect to win elections, but they participated nonetheless to expand the party's organizational capacities and support base. Albrecht and Wegner (2006) note that the PJD was "anticipatorily obedient" to the palace for not contesting election results or contentious legislation (p. 133). The PJD was an opposition party that avoided crossing red lines drawn by the palace. For instance, after the 2003 Casablanca Terrorist Attack by Islamist militants, the PJD decided to no longer criticize a proposed law that would equate 'public disturbance' with terrorism (Wegner 2006, p. 133). Besides fearing repression, the PJD did not cross red lines (i.e. challenge the King's authority) since they achieved their goal of "strengthening their political base" by taking in supporters from other (illegal) Islamist organizations, like the JCO (Boukhars 2011, p. 129). Whether the PJD would support F20 protests during the Arab Spring was, naturally, a question many Moroccans asked.

The King, argues Abdel-Samad (2014), could only use limited repression during the Arab Spring in order to maintain its close relations with the U.S. and Europe, as well as its image of a democratizing nation and, therefore, "decided that the main tool to contain the demands it faced would be to increase access to the political system in order to institutionalize them [demands for reform]" (p. 804). Abdel-Samad believes that reforms and the ratification of the new constitution on July 1, 2011 lessened F20's momentum, not the PJD's electoral victory. Although this is an important factor in mitigating dissent, it did not end the F20's activity. Rather, as I argue here, the 2011 election results sent signals to the public that the reforms outlined in previous chapters were being implemented, which resulted in declining protest activity. The Moroccan case shows that winning parliamentary elections can be mutually beneficial for regimes and Islamist parties: Islamist parties win control of parliaments, while regimes assuage pressure from the streets.

In Morocco, the 2011 ‘Vote Yes’ referendum campaign and, more importantly, the unprecedented victory of a non-royalist opposition party - the PJD - in parliamentary elections signaled to the public that the King was (1) devolving his powers with a new constitution, and (2) reforms had been implemented. My interviews reveal that these signals, in turn, facilitated the F20’s death by changing the incentives of ordinary citizens to join protests. The election results further affected the F20 because the results convinced some movement activists to abandon their protests because the public stopped supporting the movement. My interviews revealed that when un-corrupted and non-royalist parties win elections, this signals to the public that the government is implementing their previously declared reforms and taking steps toward democratic change, thus invalidating the necessity of a social movement.

### **Opposition Islamists and Royalist Parties**

In 1962, King Hassan II allowed Morocco to become a multiparty system while also granting himself and future Kings the title, *Amir Almouminin* (Commander of the Faithful), a position that grants the King guardianship and control over religion in Morocco (Hissouf 2016, p. 46). Today, much like under Hassan II’s rule, an array of political parties co-exists with a powerful monarch that uses his position to promote, limit, or outright ban certain parties that do not accept the King’s title as *Amir Almouminin*. John Waterbury’s formative analysis of Moroccan segmented politics (1970) elaborated on the system of multiparty control that persists today:

Once having assumed the arbiter function, a few simple principles have guided monarchical conduct. First, no group may be permitted to become too strong, and to counter hegemonic tendencies life is breathed into rival groups. On the other hand, no group (and this includes the opposition parties) may be permitted to die utterly (p. 148).

The Authenticity and Modernity Party (PAM) was controversially created in 2008 by a close advisor and former classmate of the King, Fouad Ali al-Himma.<sup>145</sup> Widely perceived as a pro-palace party, PAM was formed in response to the increasing Islamist PJD representation in parliament and to counter the general public's disillusionment with party politics and elections. PAM quickly dominated Moroccan politics through what is known in Morocco as transhumance or changing party allegiance.<sup>146</sup> By 2011, PAM was the newest and most powerful royalist party that was expected to win a plurality of seats.<sup>147</sup> In 2009, PAM merged together five parties and subsequently swept the June 2009 local elections. Although only two years old, PAM controlled 17% of the deputies in the lower house and 27% in the upper house by October 2010 (Köhler 2010, p. 11).

During the 2007 parliamentary elections, only 37% of the populace voted since, according to Willis (2004), there was “widespread resentments towards the corrupt and self-serving nature of many party politicians” (p. 148). PJD Member of Parliament, Abdelali Hammidine, echoed this resentment leading up to February 20, 2011: “PAM represented a big blow to democracy in Morocco, and it was supported by the administration and created a type of frustration among many citizens.”<sup>148</sup> This resentment helped the Islamist and seemingly less-corrupt PJD increase its representation in parliament.

The F20 was clearly against the creation and subsequent rise of PAM within parliament. In Tangiers, for instance, F20 protests were aimed specifically at PAM figureheads, which led PAM leaders to flee the country for France.<sup>149</sup> Another F20 activist links the protests of 2011 to

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<sup>145</sup> See: [https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09RABAT877\\_a.html](https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09RABAT877_a.html). Accessed {4/15/2017}.

<sup>146</sup> Eva Wegner (2011) notes that in Morocco changing party membership for MPs is a very common phenomenon and that parliament is an arena for cooptation and “self-interested actors” to rise within elite ranks (p. 18).

<sup>147</sup> PAM was expected to win a plurality in 2012 general elections (before protests led to early elections in 2011).

<sup>148</sup> Interview on 02/23/17 with PJD MP in Rabat.

<sup>149</sup> Interview on 02/25/2017 with USP member in Tangiers.

the rise of PAM and notes that some protestors called for the ouster of corrupt PAM's secretary general.<sup>150</sup> The wave of anger toward PAM culminated in al-Himma's (PAM's founder) resignation from the party. Some speculate that, following palace visits shortly before his departure, al-Himma was forced to resign from politics by the King (Buehler 2013, p. 20). Manar Sulaimi, a political scientist at the Mohammed V University in Rabat, claims that the F20 inadvertently helped the PJD win since it targeted PAM during protests and "made part of public opinion go in another direction [towards the PJD]."<sup>151</sup> Therefore, following increased pressure from the streets and the subsequent resignation of their founder, PAM was greatly weakened. The damage inflicted on PAM during F20 protests helped pave the way for a PJD win on November 25, 2011. Leading up to the 2011 elections, it was clear that a parliamentary victory for PAM would have not demobilized the F20. Voter apathy during parliamentary elections was a common occurrence in Morocco, and this was largely because royalist and coopted parties traditionally won pluralities.<sup>152</sup> As we will see, with exception to the PJD, all notable competing political parties during 2011 were either royalist or coopted by the palace. Due to the unprecedented nature of an PJD parliamentary victory, there was a large lessening in protests. In the words of one activist, "the activity of F20 became frozen after the PJD came into power."<sup>153</sup>

It is safe to conclude – as John Waterbury did in his analysis of Moroccan politics – that political parties and elections are used by the Moroccan regime to maintain its grip on power. Indeed, 'safety-valve' elections within authoritarian contexts do provide institutional outlets for the opposition to 'blow off steam' (Lust-Okar and Jamal 2002). Within the Middle East and

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<sup>150</sup> Interview on 11/05/16 with Hizb al-Umma Member.

<sup>151</sup> See: <http://www.aljazeera.net/news/reportsandinterviews/2011/11/28/أسباب-صعود-العدالة-والتنمية-بالمغرب> Accessed {4/15/2017}.

<sup>152</sup> A 2010 survey by the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies found that only 24% of Moroccans were satisfied with their country's political conditions at the time. See: The Arab Opinion Project: The Arab Opinion Index, Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies.

<sup>153</sup> Interview on 10/04/16 with Amazigh activist in Rif.



North Africa, authoritarian leaders have successfully tamed Islamists by allowing them to compete in local and general elections where, through changing electoral rules or redistricting, their power can be manipulated (Brumberg 2005; Brownlee 2012; Buehler 2013). Morocco is no exception to this trend. The predecessor of the PJD, *al-shabiya al-islamiya al-maghrebiya* (the Moroccan Islamic Youth), was founded as a legal association in 1972 in order to counter leftists in Morocco (Willis 2014, p. 162). The organization was eventually banned after its members were accused of murdering a senior leftist of the USFP. In 1975, the group became more militant and engaged in assassinations and weapons smuggling; however, by the late 1980s, under the command of Abdelilah Benkirane, the group began cooperating with the monarchy (Buehler 2013, p. 142). In 1992, “Benkirane’s Islamist activists” were integrated “into a small secular political party, the Popular Democratic and Constitutional Movement [MPDC],” which eventually changed their name to the PJD in 1998 (2013, p. 142). Eventually, Islamist activists took over the MPDC “until it made up the organization’s governing council, which subsequently voted to change the MPDC’s name to the PJD in 1998” (p. 142).

The PJD was careful not to criticize the political system and voluntarily limited the seats it would run for in the 1997 national elections because of King Hassan II’s harsh repression. As Wegner (2011) notes, the PJD’s fear of repression led the group to aim for “consolidation of inclusion” and this fear was amplified by the regional repression Islamists faced in Algeria, Tunisia, and Egypt (p. 93). After the 2001 elections, the PJD became the third largest party in parliament (Willis 2014, p. 182). During the 2007 elections, it was clear that the PJD would do well and continue its upward trend in gaining parliamentary seats; however, “the party achieved only a modest increase in its representation, leaving it the second largest party in parliament” (Willis 2014, p. 183). Willis (2014) argues this was the result of low turnout due to the PJD’s

failure to distinguish itself from the political system and other parties, which the public had discredited. Nevertheless, the public perception was that the PJD was cheated. Wegner (2011) succinctly summarizes the sentiment following the election results:

Even leading pragmatists were convinced that the PJD had been cheated – not only by vote buying, but by some form of regime intervention. The PJD was convinced that it had been denied some seats “here and there” because ultimately the regime would not tolerate a PJD prime minister. As one party leader put it, the King would have been “embarrassed” by a PJD prime minister (p. 92).

Following the 1997 elections, “most independent observers concluded that the election results were heavily influenced, if not predetermined, by the government” (Wegner 2011, p. 75). A similar sentiment persisted following the 2009 local elections, where PJD representation declined from previous years. This decline in PJD representation partly occurred due to the rise of PAM, a change in formal electoral rules that disadvantaged the PJD, and the selective application of corruption laws aimed at smearing the PJD’s image (Buehler 2013, p.140). The PJD was successful, however, in portraying an image of being an alternative to other parties by offering more educated candidates that were not tied to local elites or perceived as corrupt. Pellicer and Wegner (2015) found that 61% of PJD candidates “were university-educated compared to only 23% of candidates generally” (p. 39). The authors also found that the PJD’s “promises in local elections can be summarized as a higher level of ‘proximity’ to the voters (being responsive to their demands), to ‘moralize the management of public affairs’ (less corruption), and to provide improved access to government services” (p. 38). Indeed, where the PJD did gain high support, there was “a substantial increase in investment upon the arrival of the PJD,” which suggests that the PJD made good on their promise of improving government services (p. 50). Intissar Fakir (2017) echoes some of these reasons why the PJD resonated with Moroccans and adds that the wave of protests started by the F20 helped lead the PJD to victory:

The PJD maintained a degree of comparative credibility that translated into more votes in the polls. Although the party had distanced itself from the February 20 Movement protests, the political openings allowed it to take advantage of its reputation as a relatively less corrupt political actor. Its clear platform, more democratic internal organization, strong grassroots connections, and reputation for relative independence appealed to the populace. Also, its limited government experience was an advantage in this case, given the public's skepticism about traditional political forces (p. 5).

By 2011, “the PJD was the only political party which at that time enjoyed a considerable degree of legitimacy vis-à-vis Moroccan voters” (Dalmaso 2012, p. 219). The PJD was able to leverage F20 protests to its advantage and did threaten to engage in protests (Buehler 2013). Buehler (2013) argues that this ultimatum forced the regime to concede to its demands during the 2011 Referendum Campaign, like freeing one of its political prisoners and even forcing al-Himma to leave PAM.<sup>154</sup>

Following the constitutional reforms covered in Chapter Two, the general referendum gave the public an outlet to vote for change while also granting the King a chance to deflect attention away from protests. The public was less optimistic about the 2011 general elections, and the PJD's surprise victory of 107 seats demonstrated that there was a clear plurality in parliament by a party that was previously sidelined. Abdelilah Benkirane, who was once a militant that rejected participating in the Moroccan electoral process, became Prime Minister on November 29, 2011. Both the PJD and the regime benefited from this outcome. Benchesmi (2014) notes that the PJD's free riding of the F20's wave of protests toward a parliamentary victory meant that “the Islamist party ended up as 2011's ultimate winner – alongside the *Makhzen*, of course” (p. 229). Simply put, although the PJD did not invest energy into F20

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<sup>154</sup> Buehler (2013) notes how the PJD used F20 protests as a leverage, including threatening to bring “the PJD's parliamentary members into the streets with the February 20th movement protesters if the Interior Ministry implemented new revisions to the electoral rules, which the Islamists saw as making the system more undemocratic” (p. 150). The PJD also threatened to join F20 protests in PAM won the 2011 parliamentary elections.

protests during 2011, they did exploit the benefits of early elections and increased powers to the prime minister.

The role of the PJD within the F20 is also a nebulous subject. While the official stance of the party was not to join protests, some members did participate as individuals. Furthermore, the youth section of the PJD, *Baraka*, did initially participate in the movement allowing the PJD to have leverage in the streets before controlling state institutions.<sup>155</sup> An interview with Abdelali Hamieddine, the current PJD General Secretary and MP, revealed how the party viewed potential PJD involvement with the F20:

There were discussions within the PJD. Of course the political culture of the PJD is a culture of working within the institutions and not through pressure from the street. Historically, that is how it works. However, this did not forbid some of its people from going to the streets as individuals and not through the party's decision. Of course those who went to the streets to protest demanded reforms and those that did not protest also demanded reforms through social dialogues or statements or books. Prime Minister Benkirane had organized big discussions during that time and demanded approximately those same things that F20 was demanding. But, not through the path of the streets [protests]. Later there was a general fear that affected these protests through the determination of the political regime and the threat to stability. Therefore, this was considered a type of adventure and a path to the unknown, so this was what Benkirane would say.<sup>156</sup>

However, following the King's March 9 Speech, Abdelilah Benkirane's reaction embodied the PJD's clear break from the F20's policy to boycott the elections: "The PJD is satisfied. This development looks more like a revolution and the concerned parties are asked to work seriously to make the contents of the speech become a reality" (Quoted in Alianak 2014, p. 113).

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<sup>155</sup> Interview on 11/23/16 with former Journalist and F20 independent.

<sup>156</sup> Interview on 02/23/17 with Abdelali Hamieddine in Rabat.

### The 2011 General Election Results: Signaling Change

On July 8, 2011, the cover of the widely-read Moroccan magazine, *Tel Qel*, reflected a common sentiment throughout the nation: change was occurring, but it was not enough. The magazine cover displayed a middle-aged woman in a hijab ominously casting a ballot for the 2011 referendum. The title reads: “Referendum YES, but...,” followed by the subtitle that reads, “Excessive propaganda and insufficient democratic advances: the constitution of Mohamed VI passes with a very disappointing – yes.”<sup>157</sup> The sentiment that democratic advances were occurring was clear, but so too was the sentiment that they were not enough to diminish national discontent. Nevertheless, many citizens were satisfied with the incremental changes taking place, which explains why voter turnout for the referendum vote was just over 72% (National Democratic Institute 2011).

In 2011 there was an expectation by many activists that history would repeat itself and the PJD would not come in first place. Rather, activists believed that a pro-palace party, like PAM, would win and lead to a fractured parliament susceptible to cooptation by the *Makhzen*:

We waited for them [the regime] to continue with this strategy [electing a royalist party], and then we would have a true democratic revolution. But, what happened was that the PJD won first place, but they did not just win 60 seats with the second party following with 58 seats. The regime could have managed and manipulated that [result]. Rather, when they came in first place with such a large number of seats, it became clear to the public that there was a big change in the country. It meant that, according to public opinion, there was no need for a social movement like the F20. Therefore, we, the independents of the movement along with the JCO, had the same exact analysis of the situation: We had to end the movement and try different forms of activism in order to change the country. Afterwards, the movement was only composed of the extreme-left.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> Tel Qel, Issue 480, published July 2011.

<sup>158</sup> Interview on 10/26/16 with F20 Co-founder in Casablanca.

In other words, activists were surprised and pleased that the regime did not redraw districts or manipulate elections so that a royalist party could win.<sup>159</sup> One F20 activist expressed this sentiment during a protest that occurred a month before the 2011 elections: “It is obvious that the polls will bring to power the same figures who have for years been plundering the wealth of the country and holding hostage the future of the Moroccan population.”<sup>160</sup> Considering the public outcry against PAM, it is clear that that the victory of PAM would have likely increased contention on the streets.

The early parliamentary elections of November 25, 2011 had an official low turnout of 45.4%, with 20% of ballots being invalid and/or protest ballots.<sup>161</sup> Turnout in 2011 was higher than the 2007 elections (37% turnout with 19% spoiled ballots), but this slight increase was likely due to “revisions to the voters’ register,” where voter cards were not issued; rather only a national ID card was needed to vote (National Democratic Institute 2011, p. 7). Therefore, even in 2011 “few Moroccans believed that the elections would usher in a fundamental transformation of the regime” (Lust, 2012 p. 112). Contrasting the high turnout for the referendum vote (72.56% of eligible voters) and the low turnout in the general parliamentary elections (45.4%) suggests that the public wanted change but perhaps had less faith in parliamentary elections. Although there was faith that the constitution would be reformed, there was perhaps more skepticism about whether the PJD would be allowed to win first place. Keeping in mind that throughout the region, including Morocco, Islamists were allowed to participate in elections but never win majorities and pluralities, a PJD win was a signal that real change had occurred. In other words,

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<sup>159</sup> During the 2002 elections, the PJD-dominated districts were “extensively gerrymandered to its great disadvantage” (Boukhars 2011, p. 107). The 1997 general elections were marred by allegations of vote buying and international observers claimed that the results were manipulated and even pre-determined by the state (Wegner 2011, p. 75).

<sup>160</sup> See: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-morocco-protests/moroccans-protest-polls-violence-in-the-capital-idUSTRE79M3ZU20111023> Accessed {4/15/2017}.

<sup>161</sup> See: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-15884484> Accessed {4/15/2017}.

relatively free and fair elections have occurred in Morocco prior to 2011, but what was different this time was that Islamists could win.

Despite public indifference and a boycott of the elections by the F20, the results of these elections proved to have a very damaging effect on the future of the F20. The PJD came in first place and won a plurality of 107 out of 395 within the lower house of parliament, and the pro-monarchist party, Istiqlal (Independence Party), came in a distant second with 60 seats. The remaining parties that competed, including Istiqlal, were generally viewed as already having an opportunity to govern, plagued with corruption and/or as extensions of the regime's rule. Perhaps the most controversial of these parties was PAM. Similarly, Istiqlal is a monarchist party that had been marred by controversies. So much so that activists during 2011 carried banners demanding the ouster of the previous Istiqlal Prime Minister, Abbas El Fassi.<sup>162</sup> In the words of a F20 figurehead in Marrakech, "If Istiqlal won [during the 2011 elections], things would have changed because people [Activists and ordinary Moroccans] would say that the elections were corrupted."<sup>163</sup> The National Party of Independents (RNI), which won 52 seats in 2011, also has close ties to the monarchy and was formed (like PAM) by the brother-in-law of the late King Hassan II. The Socialist Union of Popular Forces (USFP) has headed the government in the past and formed coalitions with various parties perceived as corrupt - most notably the Abbas El Fassi government in 2007 (Boukhars 2011). Finally, the Popular Movement (MP) and the Constitutional Union (UC) won 24 and 17 seats, respectively. Both MP and UC are royalist parties that and closely allied with the King. In the following table, I outline the percentage of seats won by each party.

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<sup>162</sup> See: <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-morocco-protests-idUSTRE71I3VY20110220> Accessed {4/15/2017}.

<sup>163</sup> Interview on 01/04/17 with F20 leader in Marrakech.

Table 3.2: 2011 Elections Results

<i>Political Party</i> <sup>164</sup>	<i>Percent of Seats</i>
Justice and Development Party (PJD)	27.1
Istiqlal	15.2
National Rally of Independents (RNI)	13.2
Authenticity and Modernity Party (PAM)	11.9
Socialist Union of Popular Forces (USFP)	9.9
Popular Movement (MP)	8.1
Constitutional Union (UC)	5.8

Interviewees believed there was a unanimous sentiment among both activists and ordinary citizens that the PJD was the only competing party that could have curbed protests.<sup>165</sup> As noted by a researcher from Qadi Ayyad University in Marrakech, “wary of the sweeping change the F20 movement proposed, Moroccans saw in the PJD the most credible political alternative to respond to their claims” (Radi 2017, p. 12). In the words of a JCO member and F20 activist: “The PJD was the regime’s last card,” which implied that a PJD win was the only way the King could have peacefully ended protests.<sup>166</sup> Although the F20 was suffering internal conflicts and protest decline, a hard core of activists - mainly the JCO, the far left (most notably DWP), and independent activists - continued protests. It was only after the PJD victory that major protests stopped and the largest power within the F20, the JCO, withdrew from the streets and the movement.

A leader from the leftist-oriented union, the CDT, went as far as to claim that the results of the 2011 elections “broke the movement.”<sup>167</sup> Even in Tangiers, which had the largest F20

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<sup>164</sup> The remaining parties represented in parliament tend to be less-influential parties that garnered 5% or less of seats.

<sup>165</sup> To be clear, F20 activists I interviewed were not supportive of the PJD; however, they expressed the common sentiment that only a PJD win during 2011 would have convinced most Moroccans that change was occurring and subsequently quelled protests.

<sup>166</sup> Interview on 01/05/17 with JCO member in Marrakech.

<sup>167</sup> Interview on 01/19/17 with CDT member at CDT main offices in Casablanca.



demonstrations, protests became smaller “directly after the results of the elections” were announced.<sup>168</sup> When asked what would have occurred had the PJD not won, one F20 activist from Casablanca did not hesitate to respond: “Revolution. Revolution. The PJD was the only party that did not participate in government. It was the only way to exit this political crisis.”<sup>169</sup> In essence, although the clear majority of F20 activists I interviewed were not supportive of the PJD, many knew that only a PJD win would have led to a lessening of protests.

The reasons behind why there was so much public confidence for change through a PJD win are varied. As mentioned, it was the only opposition party with no direct link to widespread corruption or the *Makhzen*. Therefore, the PJD’s ‘clean’, independent, and non-royalist position tended to bolster the party’s place as a driver of real change. A prominent human rights attorney who helped draft the new constitution of 2011, made it clear that, despite reforms, the “regime needed the PJD to win” and that the “PJD was the only party to not have a shot in government, so it was important that they won, and people wanted to give them a chance.”<sup>170</sup> Leftists, which have had an extremely contentious relationship with the PJD, unanimously admitted that this ‘clean and reformist’ image was common among Moroccans:

Most of Moroccans thought that the PJD would save them from corruption and so on, and it would reconsider the status of the government institutions. Therefore, people voted for this party....The laymen believed that the PJD would make interesting reforms that it promised during the election campaign and that it would make reforms and re-establish the state of law and justice.<sup>171</sup>

Similarly, an Islamist member from *Hizb al-Umma* believed that “the PJD benefited from the idea that ‘we are new, so give us a chance.’ So, the people thought ‘why not try the PJD,’ and

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<sup>168</sup> Interview on 02/25/17 with USP member in Tangiers.

<sup>169</sup> Interview on 10/26/16 with independent F20 Co-Founder in Casablanca.

<sup>170</sup> Interview on 03/16/17 with Elite Attorney in Rabat.

<sup>171</sup> Interview on 12/2/16 with Talea Member from Berkane.

they gave them a chance.”<sup>172</sup> Others noted that the PJD’s Islamic ideology along with their image as an untested and uncorrupted party played a role in public satisfaction with the election results. In other words, “the PJD had a popular discourse, a discourse that played with the imaginations and minds of Moroccans.”<sup>173</sup>

Even leftist F20 activists that had personal ideological differences with the PJD did not deny that the popularity of the PJD in 2011.<sup>174</sup> My interviews revealed that USFP members (a party that competed against the PJD in the 2011 elections), admitted that the PJD win satisfied USFP activists within the F20: “We thought that the winning of the PJD was the start of a new era in Morocco, we thought that this is democracy, at least we have a party, which was really elected, by the people.”<sup>175</sup> JCO members, who also have a contentious relationship with the PJD, unanimously made clear that a PJD win facilitated the F20’s demobilization. A JCO member in Marrakech stated that “if another party won, the protest would have continued.”<sup>176</sup> An independent F20 activist implied that, had the PJD not won the elections, protests could have increased: “Yes, it was a big blow. The regime knew what to do. They knew that if another party other than the PJD won, the movement would have grown. If that would have happened, then the regime would have toppled itself.”<sup>177</sup>

Other interviewees adamantly suggested that the regime not only had a vested interest in a PJD win but that there were covert plans between the *Makhzen* and the PJD to ensure its 2011 electoral victory. A MALI member in Rabat shared a similar opinion about a PJD-palace pact: “the palace used the PJD to calm the streets down.”<sup>178</sup> Instead of saying the ‘PJD won the

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<sup>172</sup> Interview on 11/12/16 with Hizb al-Umma member in Rabat.

<sup>173</sup> Interview on 12/08/16 with Talea member in Rabat.

<sup>174</sup> Interview on 12/02/17 with Talea Member from Berkane.

<sup>175</sup> Interview on 12/13/16 with USFP Regional Leader in Agadir.

<sup>176</sup> Interview on 01/05/17 with JCO member in Marrakech.

<sup>177</sup> Interview on 02/22/17 with independent F20 activist in Rabat.

<sup>178</sup> Interview on 03/13/17 with MALI member in Rabat.

2011 elections’, one JCO member referred to their success as “the King allowing them to win.”<sup>179</sup>

A member from the Islamist party, *Hizb al-Umma*, believed that the PJD did enjoy the people’s support and “thought that we should give Islamists a chance to govern,” but he believed that “the *Makhzen* also helped [the PJD win]. It was like a pact between the PJD and the regime; ‘you guys [PJD] quiet down the protests, and we [*Makhzen*] will give you the government.”<sup>180</sup> Even current MP’s believe that a PJD-*Makhzen* pact existed. A CDT MP from the lower house of parliament suggests that the regime let the PJD win in order to demobilize protests and expresses the sentiment that the leftists who initiated the F20 were becoming increasingly frustrated with the PJD:

They [PJD] benefited the regime. They saw what was happening in the other countries and said 'so you want change and Islamists' [the regime said], Okay here- take your Islamists (laughs). The regime in Morocco is much smarter than others in the region. I mean Benkirane worked for the regime before. They know who he is. They know the Islamists and where they will end up. It is clear in the past five years that the regime’s plan was good... At some point Benkirane thought that he was loved by everyone, but the Islamists - starting with Khamenei’s 1979 Revolution in Iran - betray the leftists that supported the revolution, and now in Tunisia and Egypt they might be betrayed at any time. They are not trustworthy. The Islamists are ready to do anything for their organization’s benefit, regardless of the others. This is known, and the Islamists work within this framework.<sup>181</sup>

To be clear, there is no evidence of any cooperation between the PJD and the *Makhzen* to ensure a parliamentary victory during 2011. However, the fact that many interviewees felt that there was covert cooperation between the palace and the PJD suggests a consensus among activists that the regime indeed needed the PJD victory to lessen protests. As discussed, it was the view of many F20 activists that only a PJD victory during the 2011 elections could have killed the F20’s

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<sup>179</sup> Interview on 01/05/17 with JCO member in Marrakech.

<sup>180</sup> Interview on 11/05/16 with Hizb al-Umma member in Rabat.

<sup>181</sup> Interview on 01/13/17 with an MP (CDT) in Rabat.

protest momentum. Put simply, the palace had a vested interest in a PJD win, even if it did not make this publicly known.

### **After the PJD Victory: Internal Divides**

The 2011 elections and their results served as signals that the government was implementing reforms and that the F20's main demands were being met. The elections also worked against the F20 by exacerbating rifts between activists. While some activists were supportive of the election results, others were not, and this divide caused some activists to leave the F20. Members of the F20 who supported the election results found themselves shunned or accused of working with the *Makhzen*: "We were attacked as being part of the state we were accused of being *Makhzen*, just because we said we should not attack Benkirane in that moment, because he didn't do anything yet. [I thought] let's give him time. Attacking him would be attacking the people's choice."<sup>182</sup> In other words, some activists who were satisfied with the election results believed that they ought to respect the people's will, even if they did not identify ideologically with the Islamist framework of the PJD. This caused further divisions within the F20 with revolutionary activists accusing fellow F20 reformist-members of being coopted by the regime.

The withdrawal of some F20 independents and the JCO, following the elections had a palpable effect on the F20. A F20 co-founder and figurehead claimed that "after the 2011 elections there was a split [within F20], the retreat of the JCO, and, therefore, the F20 movement started to fade away."<sup>183</sup> This same activist suggested that after the elections there was a "crisis"

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<sup>182</sup> Interview on 9/22/16 with F20 activist in Mohammedia.

<sup>183</sup> Interview on 10/01/16 with F20 Co-founder in Rabat.

within the F20 around whether change would be attempted via voting and no longer in the streets. The split between those that were supportive of the elections and those opposed had a divisive impact on the movement, but it was the withdrawal of the JCO shortly after the PJD's victory that was perhaps the most significant blow to the movement.

Following the elections, the F20 found itself at a critical point, which was amplified when the JCO, the largest component of the F20, unexpectedly withdrew support from the F20 on December 18, 2011, just two weeks after election results were announced. Interviewees often expressed the belief that the JCO withdrew following the PJD parliamentary win since Islamists were finally in a position of power, while, as discussed in the next chapter, Islamists I interviewed reject this theory. In the words of the JCO spokesman, Fathallah Arsalane: "Going on protesting in the streets every Sunday with repetitive slogans is pointless and leads nowhere. The movement is a victim of its internal blockages [conflicts] therefore, we don't see any more margin of progress within it" (Quoted in Benchesmi 2014, p. 229). An F20 independent activist summarizes the events that followed the elections and the surprise that the JCO withdrawal had on the F20: "After the elections, protests became much smaller, but when the JCO withdrew there was just one more big march. It was like the left was saying that it is not possible that the JCO would leave the F20."<sup>184</sup> A leftist co-founder of the F20 revealed how both independent-leftists and the Islamists became immediately convinced that the F20 had no future following the PJD win:

It was clear that there was a big change in the country. It meant that, according to public opinion, there was no need for a social movement like the F20. Therefore, we, the independents of the movement along with the JCO, had the same exact analysis of the situation, which is that we had to end the movement and try different forms of activism to change the country.<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> Interview on 02/22/17 with independent F20 activist in Rabat.

<sup>185</sup> Interview on 10/26/16 with independent F20 Co-Founder in Casablanca.

The same interviewee explains that the JCO withdrawal from the F20 was not a surprise to some within the F20, since continued protests following a PJD win would have been futile:

The departure of the JCO from the F20 movement was not a surprise. Because they had the same analysis of the situation like us, and we knew that we had to end the movement. The only difference was that we decided to celebrate with Champaign (laughs) as a symbolic gesture of saying we fought for one year and enough...For me there is no point to protest just for the sake of protest, without an objective. It was more important for us to fight for democracy, and we couldn't do that within the F20 movement.

Therefore, JCO interviewees seemed to agree with other F20 members that a PJD win was enough to effectively kill the F20. Continuing protests after the PJD win would have ran against public will. Many activists expressed a link between the PJD victory and the JCO's decision to withdraw from movement: "The activity of F20 became frozen after the PJD came into power, and at that point it is understood that the conflicts that the JCO fabricated froze the F20's activities in order to give the PJD an opportunity in the government."<sup>186</sup> This sentiment was common among leftists from the F20 and led to speculation about the behind-the-scene relationship between these two rival Islamist groups: "They [JCO] boycotted the constitution<sup>187</sup> and the elections, but we are sure that some of them voted for the PJD. So, when the PJD won, they [JCO] thought to give their friends a chance and they withdrew [from F20]."<sup>188</sup>

As my interviews demonstrate, a PJD win convinced many F20 activists that the movement had no future. This sentiment was present even among historical rivals with the PJD, like the JCO. A JCO leader admitted that, following the elections, the movement "exhausted its purpose" and that the JCO withdrew, in part, to avoid a scenario of having 'Islamists vs Islamists', which implies that this scenario would have weakened both the PJD and the JCO.<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> Interview on 10/04/16 with Rif-Region Amazigh Leader.

<sup>187</sup> The JCO boycotted the constitutional referendum.

<sup>188</sup> Interview on 01/13/17 with an MP (CDT) in Rabat.

<sup>189</sup> Interview on 10/31/16 with JCO Leader in Rabat.

Very few F20 activists decided to stop protesting because they were convinced that the PJD would reform the country and further the F20's goals. Rather, they stopped protests because a continuance would have run contrary to the public will. A member of *Talea*, a leftist component of the F20, expressed that the PJD victory was the main reason why F20 protests ended; but he also believed that this abatement of protests by F20 activists was due to hope on behalf of the Moroccan public and not F20 activists:

The average-simple Moroccan thought that this Islamist party [PJD] would do what the regime's [royalist] parties would not do. So, the regime played the Islamist-card, and it was the last card it could use. That card gave simple Moroccans hope that it will be a democratic government, and since people voted for Islamists then we had to allow them to go into the government and work. The PJD had a popular discourse, a discourse that played with the imaginations and minds of Moroccans.<sup>190</sup>

This implies that the public agreed with many F20 activists that the PJD victory was a credible signal that reforms were being implemented. My interviews also revealed a nearly unanimous feeling by F20 activists that the PJD exploited the movement and was the true winner of the uprisings. Many felt that the PJD took advantage of the F20 by using its slogan of “fighting corruption and tyranny” during the 2011 electoral campaign – two of the F20's main contentions with the *Makhzen*. This sentiment hints at the fact that the PJD promised to fulfill the goals that the F20 initiated. An Islamist F20 member in Rabat elaborated on why some activists felt that the PJD took advantage of the F20: “They [PJD] stole one of F20's slogans about battling corruption and made it their main slogan in the 2011 elections. If it was not for the F20 there would be no elections. So, they exploited the movement, and said to the people that ‘we’ [PJD] would fight corruption and tyranny.”<sup>191</sup> Even JCO members expressed the same sentiment about the PJD: “The PJD is already in the *Makhzen*'s circle. Before they never dreamed of being

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<sup>190</sup> Interview on 12/08/16 with Talea member in Rabat.

<sup>191</sup> Interview on 11/05/17 with Hizb al-Umma Member in Rabat.

involved in the government, but with the Arab Spring they could. They benefited from the movement, they were biggest beneficiaries from the movement.”<sup>192</sup>

As shown in Chapter Two, following the elections in November, there was a perception that the F20 was composed solely of fringe or extremist groups. Moroccan economist Fouad Abdelmoumni notes that the middle class, especially, became alienated from the F20 after people heard “that part of the movement is made up of Islamist fanatics and fanatical communists.”<sup>193</sup> The alienation of the middle class from the F20 was especially damaging, since the F20 was largely a middle class movement that only began attracting lower classes later on when it went into popular neighborhoods.<sup>194</sup> More important than the F20’s class composition, however, was the perception that groups with more revolutionary beliefs were coopting the movement. In essence, a disconnect between the public and the F20 continued to ensue following the PJD victory of 2011.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter reveals that a PJD victory in the first Arab Spring parliamentary elections signaled to the public that real change (reforms) was occurring. This, in turn, convinced some F20 activists to stop protesting while also changing bystanders’ perceptions about the necessity of continuing F20 protests. Moreover, the PJD victory also had a divisive effect within the F20 since supporters of the election results were accused of being coopted by the regime. Finally, the withdrawal of the JCO shortly after the PJD victory essentially precipitated the end of all major

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<sup>192</sup> Interview on 11/04/16 with JCO Member in Ain Sba.

<sup>193</sup> See: <http://english.ahram.org.eg/News/27372.aspx> Accessed {4/15/2017}.

<sup>194</sup> The F20 movement was never a movement largely represented by the upper-class; but, the middle class was always visible within the movement. F20 figureheads, especially, were often university educated activists from middle-class families (Rahman 2011). Fakim and Verghese (2014) also note that the F20 was initially a movement of middle-class youth.



F20 protest activity. As many F20 members indicated, although activists may have had little faith in achieving their goals via a PJD win, the popularity of the PJD at the time was undeniable and a continuance of F20 protests following the PJD surprise victory would have likely resulted in accusations of not respecting the will of the Moroccan people.

As demonstrated in the chapter, having the PJD in government validated the legitimacy of the reform process initiated on March 9, 2011, while simultaneously de-legitimizing the F20. Brown's (2012) analysis correctly pointed out that "Islamist movements in the Arab world only rarely enter an election to win it" (p. 6). In this case, Islamists needed to win elections to quell street protests. An implication of this chapter is that authoritarian regimes may need to go beyond allowing some opposition parties to merely participate in elections. Rather, not manipulating elections may lessen protests. Said differently, the election of some opposition parties can serve the interests of regimes and prolong authoritarian rule.

An interview with a member of the Constitutional Advisory Committee, which was appointed by the King, claimed that power sharing with Islamists will be "painful" for the King and that the monarchy "needs to adapt" to the PJD victory.<sup>195</sup> The signal that this scenario sends to the public is that the King is forced to devolve some of his powers. In times of social unrest, a regime may want to signal a devolution of power and take real steps toward unprecedented change. The election of certain opposition parties sends a message to the public that authoritarian leaders are compromising and listening to the public's grievances. Within Morocco, one of the most contentious grievances leading up to the Arab Spring was the creation and electoral rise of PAM. PAM's, Fouad Ali al-Himma, and the previous Istiqlal Prime Minister, Abbas El Fassi, were symbols of corruption in Morocco and targets of F20 demonstrations. According to my

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<sup>195</sup> See: <https://www.hespress.com/interviews/42687.html> Accessed {4/15/2017}.

interviews, a win of either of these parties would have resulted in an increase of protests.<sup>196</sup> A PJD win prior to 2011 would have been viewed as a threat to the King and the regime. However, following the social unrest of 2011, signaling a devolution of power – via reforms and the PJD electoral victory – invalidated the need of a social movement for change. This chapter fills an important gap in the authoritarian elections literature by showing how authoritarian regimes can use election results to kill social movements, and ultimately prolong their rule. As we will see in the next chapter, the JCO 's withdrawal had an especially devastating blow on the F20 and ended any significant protest activity by the F20.

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<sup>196</sup> PAM was projected to win the 2011 elections prior to Arab Spring.

## Chapter Four: Structure and Coalitions: The Tactical Standstill of F20

*“One of the problems with the F20 is its leaderless structure. It’s a strength and a weakness.”*  
*– F20 Activist*

This chapter demonstrates how the F20’s horizontally-organized nature fostered an Islamist-Marxist coalition, which exacerbated internal conflicts between some leftists and Islamists and ultimately led to the F20’s tactical standstill. This means that, rather than hold an array of different protest tactics, the F20 held predictable weekly protests in public spaces.<sup>197</sup> The consequences of this tactical standstill were that the F20 failed to attract attention and supporters to their cause, especially since their initial demands were met through the King’s reforms.

The F20 was not a movement solely composed of independent activists; rather, most F20 activists were members of political parties. Political parties directed their followers about when and where to protest. My interviews reveal that the JCO was the main source of protestors within the F20, which was, in the words of one activist, “as organized as an army.”<sup>198</sup> The JCO was the most hierarchically organized group in the F20 - as JCO activists obeyed decisions made directly by their leader.<sup>199</sup> The effectiveness of the JCO is most visible in their leader’s ability to mobilize tens of thousands of its adherents to the street and, in turn, remove them from the streets.<sup>200</sup> As we will see, the JCO was able to exploit the F20’s structureless nature in order to increase the JCO’s influence and control of the movement.<sup>201</sup> The JCO accomplished this by

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<sup>197</sup> In Rabat protests would typically occur in front of parliament every Sunday for 3-4 hours.

<sup>198</sup> Interview on 10/26/16 with F20 Activist in Casablanca.

<sup>199</sup> At the time, the JCO was led by its founder, Sheikh Abdulsalam Yassine. Internal intolerance to Yassine was not tolerated, but since his death in 2012, the JCO has been more internally democratic. The JCO is still highly hierarchical with the higher council (now two people) making final decisions (like whether or not to protest) (Sakthivel 2014).

<sup>200</sup> Hierarchy is the “right that some have to oblige others to comply with central decisions” (Ahrne and Brunsson 2011, p. 86).

<sup>201</sup> The F20 is not a vertically-organized group with clear membership numbers and leaders. I use the term structureless to refer to a lack of formal leadership structures.

allying with influential leftists (DWP) and becoming more influential within the F20.

Specifically, I contend that the F20's structure and ideologically diverse composition facilitated, (1) internal cooptation of the F20 by the JCO, and (2) an inability of the movement to change its tactics beyond predictable weekly protests. As we will see, these factors generated internal conflicts and led to the eventual withdrawal of the JCO from the F20.<sup>202</sup> F20 protests immediately declined with the withdrawal of the JCO.

As discussed throughout this dissertation, ideological heterogeneity was a defining feature of the F20, and a shared identity among F20 activists was lacking. According to Thierry Desrues (2013), "ideological incompatibility" between leftist and Islamist activists may explain why the F20 never had official leaders or figureheads (p. 415). This lack of official leadership within the F20 has had various consequences for movement. The F20 is an example of what Zeynep Tufekci (2017) calls networked and horizontalist social movements. This denotes the leaderless and structureless nature of movements, which are usually products of online activism. Tufekci correctly notes how modern movements use "digital tools to rapidly amass large numbers protesters with a common goal," but due to a lack of "leadership structures" and "collective decision-making capabilities," the movement will likely falter (2017, p. xxiii). Said differently, structureless movements, like the F20, are often more susceptible to internal movement fracture.

The F20's lack of leadership structures facilitated the movement's tactical rigidity.<sup>203</sup> A core finding of social movement studies is that "activists who are able to adopt new tactics in the

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<sup>202</sup> According to JCO members I interviewed the main reasons for their withdrawal from the F20 was that the F20, in their view, was no longer effective and because the JCO was repeatedly targeted and attacked by some leftists within the F20.

<sup>203</sup> A prime example of tactical innovation (as opposed to rigidity) can be seen during the U.S. Civil Rights Movement where a combination of marches, sit-ins, economic boycotts, and blockages pressured the U.S. government to change policies.

face of their opponents' responses are also more likely to experience protest success" (Wang and Soule 2016, p. 518). By November 2011, the F20's predictable weekly protests in public spaces<sup>204</sup> could not adequately respond to the regime's varied campaign of concessions and repression. Conflicts concerning whether to move protest beyond public spaces and to popular neighborhoods<sup>205</sup> essentially led to the tactical rigidity that would characterize the F20. In the words of a USP member in Tangiers: "The F20 did not try to develop new methods-it became boring for people-every week we would meet on Sunday and go to a march for 3-4 hours. Therefore, citizens saw that the same thing happened every week, and they started to get bored [with F20]."<sup>206</sup>

This chapter will begin by outlining the structural weakness of the F20 movement. Then I will cover how the F20 was able to initially unite different political organizations by ignoring ideological differences between leftists and Islamists. The chapter then moves into an analysis of how the JCO formed a contentious alliance with the DWP. The JCO-DWP coalition not only gave rise to more ideological conflicts within the movement, but it also allowed the JCO to be more influential within the F20. I then demonstrate how the JCO-DWP coalition attempted to move protests into popular neighborhoods and how this increased internal conflicts within the F20. I conclude by outlining how the F20's structure facilitated internal conflicts and led to the JCO's withdrawal from the F20 and the subsequent end of all major F20 protests.

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<sup>204</sup> Public spaces imply traditional areas for protest activity. For example, in Rabat this would be in front of the parliament.

<sup>205</sup> Popular neighborhoods are lower-income and densely populated suburbs of large cities. These areas were not initially drawn to protests by the F20.

<sup>206</sup> Interview on 02/25/17 with USP Member in Tangiers.

### F20's (Lack of) Structure

The F20 is not a vertically-organized group with clear membership numbers and leaders, but the movement attempted to establish more united collective decision-making structures. A core group of activists, often referred to in French as *Noyau du* (The Hard Core), was formed in the early days of movement and acted as a small advising committee that proposed times and places for demonstrations to be held. Protestors were not ‘members’ but an amalgamation of various young individuals convinced by the F20’s simple message of ‘Freedom, Dignity, and Social Justice.’ One independent activist made this clear: “I don’t say that I am a February 20 [Member]- I am [Name Omitted]. The February 20 Movement is made up of individuals. It is a movement for different groups to achieve a common goal.”<sup>207</sup> following the initial call to protest, political parties and elite figureheads began assisting the movement, eventually becoming integral to the F20.<sup>208</sup> Political parties and organizations were central to the F20’s committees.<sup>209</sup>

Over twenty organizations supported the F20, but the main participants can be seen in Figure 4.1.

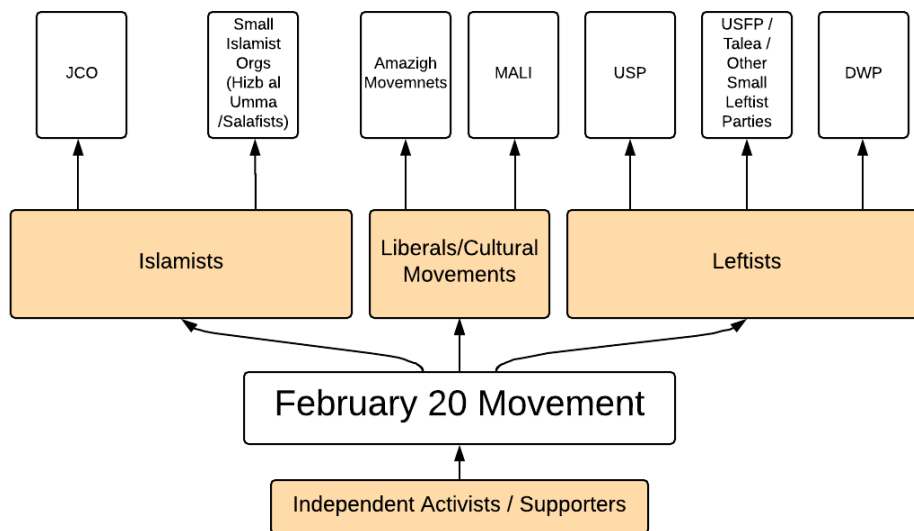
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<sup>207</sup> Interview on 09/19/16 with F20 independent in Casablanca.

<sup>208</sup> Interview on 02/21/17 with The National Support Committee Leader in Rabat.

<sup>209</sup> These committees are known as *Tansaqiat* in Morocco and were created at the beginning of the movement in February 2011.

Figure 4.1: F20's Composition



Decision making within the F20 was inspired by the participatory democracy model and a rejection of formal leaders.<sup>210</sup> Very much like the Occupy Wall Street Movement, the F20 had ‘General Assemblies’ that occurred in Rabat or Casablanca.<sup>211</sup> These assemblies attracted hundreds of participants, each who could speak for an unlimited amount of time. Some tasks were delegated to groups of activists within committees. The decisions within the national assembly would, usually, spread to local committees (*tansaqiat mahalia*) that existed in each city where the F20 was active. Within F20 General Assemblies, activists could vote on measures concerning where and when to protest. Local committees, however, had no power other than organizing F20 members together for discussions. One activist noted how, “In general, the demands in Rabat would spread to other local committees” and that the F20’s organizational “ambiguity” led to a movement that was not united on basic decisions, like when to protest.<sup>212</sup>

<sup>210</sup> Participatory democracy implies making decisions based on a general consensus without formal leaders.

<sup>211</sup> The first General Assembly was held in USP offices in Casablanca. Within General Assemblies, which were open to the public, activists would vote on proposals usually concerning where and when to protest along with demands.

<sup>212</sup> Interview on 10/04/16 with Amazigh Activist in the Rif.

The Media Committee would set up interviews with news outlets and help create propaganda videos, while the Support Committee would attempt to secure funding for the movement. However, interviewees often expressed that committees were chaotic and had few decision-making capabilities.<sup>213</sup> This was in large part due to the fact that political organizations (like JCO and USP) had their own leaders and decision-makers that would direct their members (i.e. when and where to protest). Other F20 activists felt that these committees were just extensions of political parties. For instance, one independent activist claimed that the F20 Support Committee (*Majlis Dahm*) “was an extension of a party” since the founder was a member of the USP.<sup>214</sup> In essence, the formation of different committees would often be dominated by political organizations. This caused conflicts with independents and smaller parties that felt their voices were being drowned out by political parties and other organizations.

Ahmed Benchemsi (2015) believes that the leaderless structure of the F20 was “a guarantee of its inclusivity because it allowed large numbers of people with different opinions and ideologies to coexist in the same environment without having to compete for control” (p. 219). However, Benchemsi also recognizes that “not electing representatives condemned F20 to strategic paralysis, since no one could make decisions in the movement’s name and no clear group decision could be made by the unwieldy general assemblies” (p. 219). However, even within leader-less movements, “hierarchy and power reappear” (Benkler 2013, p. 216).<sup>215</sup> This

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<sup>213</sup> Ahmed Benchesmi (2014) notes that during the “chaotic” General Assemblies, “everyone spoke in turn without a time limit” and that “this system was unable to produce any agenda” (p. 219-220).

<sup>214</sup> Interview on 02/22/17 with F20 independent.

<sup>215</sup> Various social movement theorists have claimed that un-official leaders come out of leader-less movements. Den Hond, Bakker, and Smith (2015) note, even in anti-hierarchical social movements, “stratification of power within a movement is likely to occur” (p. 297). Jo Freeman (1972) makes a similar observation about the 1960s women’s liberation movement. She concludes that there is no such thing as structureless movements since informal leaders rise to power within movements.



implies that even for horizontalist movements, like the F20, certain groups will be more powerful than others and have more control of the movement.

Mohamad Masbah (2015), a researcher at the Carnegie Middle East Center, notes that the F20's lack of structure killed the movement because members were unable to manage differences among themselves.<sup>216</sup> Abdelaziz Radi (2017) similarly suggests that “the lack of stable, coherent and strong leadership made it permeable to any tactical infiltration” (p. 53). Radi essentially claims that the F20's lack of unity exposed it to targeted online-smearing. The regime was able to screen the F20's online activity and know how to attack the movement's weaknesses by exploiting pre-existing divides among participants (i.e. Islamists and secular-leftist). The regime was able to disseminate propaganda concerning contentious issues that leftists and Islamists disagree on, and without a leadership structure, the F20 could not mediate conflicts concerning such issues. What Radi and Masbah suggest is that leadership and a hierarchical movement structure are needed to successfully manage such an ideologically diverse social movement. As we will see, this same lack of structure led to the F20's tactical rigidity, internal cooptation, and eventually the withdrawal of the JCO.

### **F20's Initial Tactic: Brushing Ideology Under the Rug**

*“In the beginning it was a very beautiful experience, especially in relation to the [political] organizations. They turned a blind eye to the ideological differences.”<sup>217</sup>*  
 – Leftist F20 Activist

During the initial months of protests and F20 committee gatherings, Islamists and leftists learned more about one another. In the words of one Islamist activist: “The F20 movement was

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<sup>216</sup> See: <http://carnegie-mec.org/2015/02/23/ar-pub-59186> Accessed {4/20/2017}.

<sup>217</sup> Interview on 01/13/17 with CDT Union MP in Rabat.

an opportunity to meet and get to know some of the leftists.”<sup>218</sup> Another JCO activist illustrates how preconceptions and stereotypes about opposing ideological groups were broken when leftists and Islamist worked together during the inception of the F20:

Leftists used to think that Islamists were terrorists. That we oppress and hit our wives, that we don't give women their rights. When we got closer [with leftists], we became very surprised. I remember...It was my wife's birthday, and I told them that today is a special day, and I will not be present to attend a meeting, and some leftists were surprised that I celebrate my wife's birthday. I told them, on the contrary, if you practice true political Islam then women's rights will be more protected than within progressive leftism. We are not Salafists, which means we are not extreme.<sup>219</sup>

The cooperative and chaotic space that the F20 provided was also where the battle over the F20's identity took place.<sup>220</sup> For instance, whether to hold protests on religious holidays and allow the use religious slogans and banners, like Islamic slogans in solidarity with Syrian protestors, were among the disagreements that eventually arose within the F20.<sup>221</sup> There were also disagreements over how best to convince the public of the movement's legitimacy. As shown in Chapter Two, Islamists viewed religious symbolism (public prayers during protests, religious chants, and gender segregation) as culturally resonant to the Moroccan public. Leftists often viewed religious symbols as strategic threats to potential recruits especially considering the violent outcomes that Islamists were blamed for in Syria and Iraq. These pragmatic reasons concerning the Islamic presence within the F20 eventually turned into ethical discussions about participating in a movement with a group that many leftists felt were their ideological enemies.

Initially, ideology was put aside so that a broad coalition of groups could work under the umbrella of the F20. There was a consensus that previous ideological enemies needed each other

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<sup>218</sup> Interview on 10/20/16 with JCO Student in Rabat.

<sup>219</sup> Interview on 12/28/16 with JCO Member in Casablanca.

<sup>220</sup> Committee meetings, according to interviewees, were completely open to public (including anti-movement spies) and members expressed an array of opinions in an unstructured manner (that covered various issues at once), while only logistical decisions were made.

<sup>221</sup> Interview on 11/05/16 with Hizb al-Umma Member in Rabat.

to hold large demonstrations and ultimately pressure the regime for change. However, this broad coalition came at the expense of ignoring ideological cleavages and delaying discussions about various issues like freedom of religion, gender equality, and LGBT rights, among other things. The structure of the F20 facilitated the mobilization of movement since it was a movement open to all. It allowed the movement to quickly organize a diverse array of activists. Despite early success, as Zeynep Tufekci (2017) emphasize, without a clear and united strategy, maintaining the movement was/would be substantially more difficult. The lack of a united decision-making body within the F20 led to a movement that was free to have an array of diverse slogans and messages. Revolutionaries and reformists worked within the same movement but had divergent demands (See Chapter Two). As demonstrated by Benford and Snow (2000), a movement needs a united frame and message to be successful, which the F20 lacked. A JCO leader noted that the F20 was successful in mobilizing masses due to an initial strategy of ‘delaying’ discussions that would highlight ideological differences:

The points of difference were initially clear. In practice, we tried to not to highlight these strong divides and work toward the goal that the F20 decided on, which is focused on democracy, human rights, and change in the political system. These are ideas that generally had differing views initially. It is true that there were many differences, but at the beginning we decided to delay these discussions until a later stage, because if we would have discussed these things in the early stages of the movement, it would have threatened the movement and ended it in the beginning. It [the movement] needed the power of many groups so that it would have the power to pressure the political system and achieve the demanded changes.<sup>222</sup>

Therefore, the JCO, an organization that is clear about its ambitions of establishing an Islamic state without a monarch, “withdrew principles” and “were very tolerant of all sides” so that the F20 movement could be successful in pressuring the state.<sup>223</sup> The JCO strategically ignored ideological contradictions within the F20. According to many leftists and independents I

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<sup>222</sup> Interview on 10/31/16 with JCO Leader in Rabat.

<sup>223</sup> IBID

interviewed, the JCO made many “concessions” to other leftist organizations and independents: “During Ramadan [July-August 2011] we had meetings and the JCO would stay with us [in the meetings]. They are extremists and very religious, and they were not bothered when we ate, drank, and smoked in front of them during Ramadan. Even though, this contradicts their rules and ideological beliefs.”<sup>224</sup> This was even evident within the committees of the F20: “They [JCO] went to the committees, but not in large numbers. They wanted to avoid conflict within F20.....Their numbers were in the streets.”<sup>225</sup> The JCO was restrained even regarding ‘Ramadan eat-ins’ staged by the pro-personal liberties organization, MALI. In 2009, MALI organized a protest against a law criminalizing public eating during Ramadan by staging a public eat in at the train station in Mohammedia, a port city between Casablanca and Rabat. They continued to stage ‘eat-ins’ within the F20 during the month of Ramadan (July-August 2011). JCO members were restrained when this occurred and did not attack MALI members. This was true for LGBT activists as well: “In regard to Islamists, there was an actual respect between them and others. Homosexuals were in the movement too. They were few, and no one attacked them or rejected them, even the Islamists.”<sup>226</sup>

Similar to the JCO, MALI members initially avoided discussions important to them, like issues pertaining to personal liberties and gender equality in February 2011 – at the start of the Arab Spring in Morocco. In the words of one MALI activist, “in the beginning, we did not want to discuss things that could divide the movement. We focused on the things that gathered people and not the things that divide.”<sup>227</sup> Nonetheless, issues concerning gender equality and what some perceived as direct provocations of Islamists within the F20 started in March, yet the JCO

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<sup>224</sup> Interview on 12/08/16 with Talea member in Rabat.

<sup>225</sup> Interview on 01/12/17 with Journalist F20 Participant.

<sup>226</sup> Interview on 11/30/16 with AMDH Director in Rabat.

<sup>227</sup> Interview on 03/13/17 with MALI Member in Rabat.

seemed to make concessions by joining protests that called for gender equality.<sup>228</sup> The strategic decision by organizations, like MALI and the JCO, to delay discussions concerning ideology, focusing instead on broad and reformist demands, resulted in the movement being able to attract the support of previously apolitical members of society. Mekouar (2015) notes that during the first “ascending phase” of the F20 (roughly February to April 2011), “normal people” were visible in the movement along with political organizations (p. 102). Before conflicts concerning framing, and subsequently ideology, began to pervade F20 discussions in March 2011, JCO members were granted full ‘membership’ within the F20, which meant the group participated in planning and coordinating protests. The key to maintaining the fragile cooperation between competing ideological groups was avoiding discussion about the details of each group’s view of what ‘a democratic state’ should be:

I remember on Friday, February 19th, in the first time in my life, I entered the offices of the USP in Casablanca. I and others from the JCO went in their offices, and we were surprised that we were with other youth that did not have the same political or cultural or ideological ideas, but we all agreed that Morocco should become a democratic state. What is democracy and how we should understand it? It was not the time and place to discuss that; rather, it was the time and place to prepare how we would go out to the streets [to protest].<sup>229</sup>

Therefore, although leftists and Islamists united around broad demands of democracy, specific discussion about what a democratic state is was initially avoided, and such issues would eventually be contentiously discussed within the F20. Despite initial restraint on behalf of the JCO, ideological conflict became an increasing problem for the F20 following the announcement of reforms by the King in March 2011. This conflict was deepened after a contentious alliance between the JCO and the DWP formed. Said differently, brushing contentious topics ‘under the rug’ could only last so long. Conversations discussed in Chapter Two about political demands

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<sup>228</sup> Interview on 10/26/16 in Rabat with F20 independent.

<sup>229</sup> Interview on 12/28/16 with JCO Member in Casablanca.

became ideologically-based divisions. At that point, various leftists, especially the USP, began to attack the JCO and accuse the organization of being incompatible with the democratic ideals of the F20. However, the increasingly ideologically-based contentions were facilitated by F20's open and horizontal structure. F20's lack of structure essentially allowed one movement to employ divergent tactics with divergent methods. The next section will demonstrate how F20's structure facilitated internal cooptation by the JCO and how the movement eventually became dependent on the foot-power of the JCO. In essence, the next section outlines how "hierarchy and power reappear" within horizontalist and structureless movements (Benkler 2013, p. 216).

### **Contentious Alliances and the Formation of Factions within F20**

Following the referendum campaign and general elections (See Chapter Three), the F20 began to lose public support and became dependent on the JCO for its survival.<sup>230</sup> Although the JCO, was the largest organization in the movement, it lacked internal legitimacy within the F20.<sup>231</sup> The lack of internal legitimacy implied that groups and independents within the F20 respected and worked with the DWP, the JCO's new ally, but not with the JCO.<sup>232</sup> According to activists, the JCO, which is perceived by most F20 members as an extremist Islamist organization, should not represent or lead the movement. The JCO's decision to ally itself with one of the smallest and more radical Marxist organizations, the DWP, may seem baffling *prima facie*.<sup>233</sup> However, the DWP did have the internal legitimacy that the JCO lacked among leftists

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<sup>230</sup> Some estimate that the JCO composed 50-60% of demonstrators in big cities and around 90% in small ones (Mekouar 2015, p. 99).

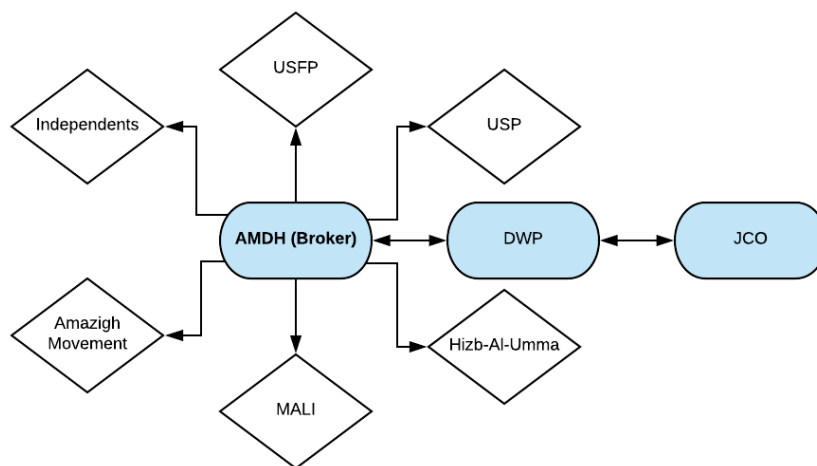
<sup>231</sup> The JCO has anywhere from 200,000 to 500,000 members and is the largest and most organized non-governmental political organization in the country (Sakthivel 2014).

<sup>232</sup> During interviews, leftists often referred to DWP members as 'brothers' and allies, while Islamists were described as incompatible with the F20's democratic and secular ideals.

<sup>233</sup> As mentioned in Chapter One, the DWP is a Marxist party that is ardently secular, while the JCO seeks to incorporate Islam throughout Moroccan society based on its interpretation of Islamic Shariah.

within the F20. Moreover, the DWP's close ties with Moroccan Association of Human Rights (AMDH) makes the JCO-DWP coalition more logical.<sup>234</sup> AMDH is the largest and most influential human rights organization in Morocco and an organization that played a pivotal role in popularizing the F20.<sup>235</sup> Although leaders and figureheads of the AMDH tend to be DWP members, some members of the human rights organization were Islamists, independents, Amazigh activists, and other leftist parties. Furthermore, AMDH served as a broker between different ideological currents.<sup>236</sup> Figure 4.2 illustrates that as a broker that connected various groups, AMDH, was an asset to a JCO-DWP coalition mainly due to the close ties between AMDH and the DWP. Again, AMDH and the DWP are often viewed as united organizations.<sup>237</sup>

*Figure 4.2: JCO-DWP Coalition*



<sup>234</sup> All members and directors of AMDH I interviewed were also DWP members.

<sup>235</sup> AMDH not only provided space for meetings in their offices and filming equipment for F20 propaganda videos, but also the support of widely-respected human rights activists that were leaders/members of AMDH.

<sup>236</sup> Tarrow and Tilly's (2006) concept of *brokerage*, that is, the production of a new connection between previously unconnected or weakly connected social sites in relation to the spread of mobilizations can help us better conceive *how* the political phenomena(s) of revolutions, protests, and social movements disseminate.

<sup>237</sup> It is important to reiterate that AMDH is a human rights organization, while the DWP is a political party. All AMDH elites I interviewed were active members of the DWP.

As shown in Figure 4.2, an alliance with the DWP is essentially an alliance with AMDH, which was an easy way for the JCO to gain influential allies, and, more importantly, increase control within the F20. AMDH was the only organization that had experience connecting Islamists and leftist activists together. For instance, the F20's coordination-committee structure was created initially by AMDH in 2008 to link various leftists into committees that would combat the high cost of living (Monjib 2011; Benchesmi 2014). The F20 adopted this same structure to link different activists together in 2011. Bennani-Chraïbi and Jeggllaly (2016) note the central role that AMDH played in the F20:

From the beginning, the AMDH's support was crucial. Drawing on its pioneering role at the heart of multiple networks, the AMDH acted as both a transmission channel and a reservoir of human resources and logistical know-how. Moreover, it contributed to the socialization and generational renewal of the radical left (p. 114).

After the JCO-DWP alliance formed, Islamists became more influential within the F20 and the ad-hoc coordination-committees. One Amazigh activist from the Rif region felt that Islamist control of the F20 led the movement to ignore formally addressing important issues like personal liberties (LGBT) rights:

When I wrote [an online blog] about the topic of individual rights, it was discussed in the local committees, in Rabat and other cities, but the JCO did not [discuss it]. So, they [F20] refused! They refused to discuss it. This shows that the group that won was the Islamists.<sup>238</sup>

The highly organized JCO was easily able to influence the movement and attempted to control F20's objectives and tactics. The increasingly religious and more revolutionary tone of F20 protests was due to the JCO-DWP stance on raising the 'ceiling of demands' (see Chapter Two). Similarly, the JCO and the DWP were united in attempting to move protests into some popular

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<sup>238</sup> Interview on 10/04/16 with Amazigh Activist in the Rif.



neighborhoods. This is why an independent activist felt that the JCO's dominance of the logistics committee<sup>239</sup> was especially damaging to the movement:

The danger with them [JCO] is that they were part of the logistics committee, so it was them that organized the protests, that had the cars and loud speakers, they [JCO] had the heart of the movement. The failure is that the movement has been clear that it is loosely organized.<sup>240</sup>

The same activist explains that the JCO's influence within the General Assembly and its decision to go into some popular neighborhoods was the last straw for many leftists, especially moderates and those from the middle classes:

After the General Assembly of F20 concluded to take the protests from downtowns [public spaces] to the popular neighborhoods in the outskirts of the city, it was noticed that many components withdrew from the movement due to the domination of the JCO [within the General Assembly]...so many people, especially those that belonged to the middle class, refused this [JCO] domination and left the movement, and when days passed the presence of activists became very weak.<sup>241</sup>

Leftist activists also felt that the JCO began influencing the 'Hard Core' (*Noyau du*) group of F20 figureheads. This led to an inter-committee divide:<sup>242</sup> "The JCO entered [controlled F20 committees] and divided [F20]. They created a new divide within the F20. One side was with the *Noyau du* [Hard Core Committee of Figureheads] and the other was against the *Noyau du*."<sup>243</sup>

Although the 'Hard Core' had little decision-making power, the perception by leftists that Islamists were coopting and taking over this important (initially leftist) committee had a real impact on internal conflicts and divides. Kleber Ghimire (2011) notes that within social movements, "actors may not only be able to attain important organizational power, but also possess the capacity to plainly justify their legitimacy through diverse means even when their

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<sup>239</sup> This committee has been described as the "heart of the movement" in some cities. See: <https://www.bidayatmag.com/node/290> Accessed {4/20/2017}.

<sup>240</sup> Interview on 09/22/16 with F20 independent in Mohammedia.

<sup>241</sup> Interview on 09/19/16 with F20 independent in Casablanca.

<sup>242</sup> This refers to a divide between different committees (i.e. logistics committee vs support committee).

<sup>243</sup> Interview on 09/19/16 with F20 independent in Casablanca.

actions are contradictory or designed primarily to suit their narrow interests” (Ghimire 2011, p. 7). The JCO attempted to do just this through an alliance with the DWP. Therefore, the JCO’s alliance with the DWP, may seem contradictory since these two groups have competing ideologies, but this alliance was instrumental in allowing the JCO to increase its power within the movement. The open structure of the F20 essentially allowed the movement to be internally coopted, which implies that some organizations began increasing their influence within the F20 committees. Said differently, the JCO’s alliance with the DWP, which happens to be the most influential group within AMDH (the largest human rights organization within Morocco), is no coincidence. In the words of one independent, the JCO started an “internal insurgency” and elaborates on why this alliance occurs:

The DWP is the smallest party by numbers in Morocco. They have no power in the streets. They can’t have a protest in Rabat with more than 50 people. Therefore, the JCO has the numbers. The DWP wanted to take advantage of the JCO, and the JCO wanted to have an ally within the F20. The JCO could not stay isolated among three leftist parties. Those were the [mutually beneficial] interests that they each had in each other.<sup>244</sup>

My interviews revealed that political conflicts concerning the F20’s demands<sup>245</sup> eventually turned into ideologically-based conflicts “when the DWP started coordinating with the JCO.”<sup>246</sup> Some leftists believed that the JCO-DWP agreement to no longer limit the F20’s demands to reforms was a blow against the secular and democratic goals of other leftists.”<sup>247</sup> According to the JCO members, their alliance with the DWP functioned because both parties have similar goals of establishing a state without a monarch. In the words of one JCO member, “their [DWP] goals for a state are similar to the society and political system that the JCO

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<sup>244</sup> Interview on 02/22/17 with independent F20 Activist in Rabat.

<sup>245</sup> This implies conflicts concerning *Saqf al-mutalib* covered in Chapter Two and refers to discussions concerning the type of regime the F20 should demand.

<sup>246</sup> Interview on 02/22/17 with independent F20 Activist in Rabat.

<sup>247</sup> IBID

wants.”<sup>248</sup> Therefore, the JCO and the DWP agreed on important stances, like going into popular neighborhoods and taking a more revolutionary tone in slogans. Other leftists were highly skeptical of the alliance since Islamists, and especially the JCO’s interpretation of Islamism, was incompatible with the democratic ideals of leftists. A member of *Talea* who attended various F20 meetings in Rabat and Casablanca believed that ideologically-based conflicts were largely overlooked within the F20 until the JCO began working with the DWP:

In the beginning of the movement, the ideological differences were not clear and not very big. It was buried and not evident. After a period of time there was unification between the JCO, a group that is Islamist, extremist, with extreme ideas, and that does not believe in a democratic state, but an Islamic state, and the DWP. This weird alliance was evident during an F20 meeting. Since this meeting the ideological differences within the F20 started.<sup>249</sup>

Other independent leftists thought that the JCO’s and the DWP’s proposition to keep the ceiling of demands open and let people decide on the type of state they wanted was “too democratic,” especially since Moroccans tend to support the King.<sup>250</sup> An ex-journalist who was very active within the F20 revealed that letting the people decide on what type of state the F20 should demand was not prudent, since most Moroccans would opt for a monarchy:

The JCO and the DWP wanted to let the choice [of what government type to demand] to be open to the people, but Moroccans are not educated enough to have a democratic choice. They need some leaders to show them the road. If people want a country with a King, then what are they going to say? The majority of Moroccans say that the government does nothing, and the King does everything. So, if you leave the choice for the people, we are going to have a disaster.<sup>251</sup>

Some members questioned the policies that the JCO and the DWP wanted to impose on the F20, while others raised concerns about how decisions were being made within the General Assemblies. For example, leftist interviewees lamented that some F20 protests were divided by

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<sup>248</sup> Interview on 10/31/16 with JCO Leader in Rabat.

<sup>249</sup> Interview on 12/08/16 with Talea Member in Rabat.

<sup>250</sup> Interview on 01/19/17 with Ex-Journalist in Rabat.

<sup>251</sup> Interview on 01/19/17 with Ex-Journalist in Rabat.

gender and that increased religious slogans and symbols were visible within the movement.<sup>252</sup>

Others decried that the JCO imposed more revolutionary goals on the F20 (See Chapter Two).

Still, other leftists expressed that they could not directly address specific ideological issues with the JCO:

In a General Assembly there are 200-300 participants, and we make decisions with votes, and they [JCO and DWP] are the majority. We [independent leftists] were 60-70 people. They were 200. So, they made decisions on things before they came and voted. Therefore, we began speaking with them about what is democracy. Is democracy the right to vote or not? So here we started discussing democracy and values, and, when we started to talk about these things, they got very angry, very angry. To the point where they verbally attacked [us], and they decided to stop communicating with us.<sup>253</sup>

The fact that the JCO and the DWP dominated General Assemblies is clear. However, when independent leftists questioned how decisions were being made within these assemblies, JCO members stopped communicating with them altogether. Leftists from the USP, *Talea*, and independents started questioning the presence of the JCO within the F20 and considered banning the JCO from F20 meetings. The figurehead of the influential Support Committee of the F20 revealed that, in the view of the committee and the USP, the JCO-DWP coalition “inflated” the regime’s propaganda that the F20 was composed only of radicals and that this weakened the movement.<sup>254</sup> Other leftists had a less pragmatic view of the Marxist-Islamist alliance and felt that their leftist allies betrayed them for Islamists.<sup>255</sup> Most leftist interviewees, however, agreed that the JCO was essentially using the F20 for its political agenda, and saw, the alliance with the DWP as facilitating that goal. Interestingly, JCO members felt that the USP was using the F20 for its own purposes and “took advantage of the movement for its own goals” to further its

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<sup>252</sup> Interview on 11/24/16 with USFP member in Casablanca.

<sup>253</sup> Interview on 09/22/16 with independent F20 Activist in Mohammedia.

<sup>254</sup> Interview on 02/21/17 with a Leader of Majlis Dahm.

<sup>255</sup> Interview on 12/12/16 with F20 Communist-independent in Agadir.

“political agenda.”<sup>256</sup> These conflicts not only divided the F20’s stances on issues but also affected the group’s ability to organize protests in response to the regimes’ coordinated campaign of concessions and repression.

### **F20’s Divided Strategy and Fracture**

McCammon and Moon (2010) find that diverse coalitions are more likely to endure “when they acknowledge threats to cooperation and resolve internal conflicts” and develop a joint identity (p. 334). Furthermore, Jones et. al. (2001) find that coalitions are more effective at mobilizing people when a united movement “leads the planning and decision making while drawing on other organizations to assist” (McCammon and Moon 2010, p. 332). These findings have important implications for the F20. The committees within the F20 were created to make decisions about funding, planning protest-events, and banners/slogans. However, the F20 lacked a joint identity and message, and many leftists believed that the movement and these committee were overrun by Islamists.<sup>257</sup> Essentially, the F20 failed to develop the key elements of a united strategy. The movement could not resolve internal conflicts or develop a united identity precisely because the F20 did not have a united decision-making apparatus. As such, the movement could not move beyond their most predictable tactic of holding weekly protests and marches. This was detrimental for the F20 because movements need to have a variety of protest tactics to (1) attract attention to their grievances and (2) gain more protestors (McAdam 1983). In the case of the F20, the King’s unprecedented reforms took attention away from the movement and made the F20’s existence appear increasingly unnecessary. As we will see in the next section, an

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<sup>256</sup> Interview on 10/20/16 with JCO Student Leader.

<sup>257</sup> This was in large part due to the smear campaign discussed in Chapter Two and Three.

influential political organization within the F20, the JCO, effectively exploited the F20's structureless nature. Independents and less-influential parties used to control General Assemblies, but this changed when the JCO coopted them, and attempted to alter the movement's strategy and tactics.

### ***Internal JCO Cooptation***

Independent activists were responsible for bringing the F20 movement to life. The first calls to protest were from independent activists, and F20 committees were initially well-represented by independents. Influential political parties eventually dominated committees and General Assemblies that F20 independents helped create. Kleber Ghimire's (2011) study of the loosely-organized, transnational Alternative Globalization Movement (AGM) finds that the "blurry hierarchal structure and decision-making procedure made internal decision-making 'precarious'" (p. 107). Ghimire raises the question about who has the right to speak for loosely organized movements and why. Asked differently, "where did the political legitimacy come from for exercising important organizational power" (p. 107)? As Ghimire observes, the question of who speaks for a movement is important, since even loosely-organized movements need to have a unified message and strategy to resonate with bystanders, which structureless movements often lack.

F20 members expressed frustration with the informal hierarchies forming within the horizontally-organized movement. During the first months of the movement, the F20's first-movers were recognized figureheads. First movers refer to the few individual activists who called for protest under the banner of the F20. These figureheads were not deliberately selected through some internal decision-making process (i.e. elections). Instead, they became the face of the movement because of their charisma and visibility in the media. These figureheads, however,

had no extra-ordinary legitimacy and no power over the decision-making processes within the F20.

Well-organized groups did overcome the horizontal-structure of the F20 and created informal hierarchies, especially within the decision-making process. These informal hierarchies helped split the movement. Independent F20 members expressed frustration with the influence that political organizations like the JCO and the DWP had on committees. Independent members were also concerned that logistical decisions concerning the time and place of protests were predetermined prior to the F20 General Assembly meetings.<sup>258</sup> Similarly, members of the Amazigh activist's felt that they had little influence and presence within the F20 committees.<sup>259</sup> USFP members from the F20 also complained that decisions were increasingly being made "behind the curtains" and that the General Assembly was "symbolic" because decisions were already made.<sup>260</sup> This sentiment was especially pervasive among independents and less influential parties. In the words of one *Hizb al-Umma* member in Rabat: "Afterwards the groups got together and tried to control the movement, and here is where the conflicts and clashes began about how to build up this movement."<sup>261</sup> One independent F20 activist became disillusioned with the decision-making process within the F20 and decided to no longer attend meetings he found to be, in his words, pointless; "I understood that in the meetings people would just decide on when they would go and protest. So, what's the point? People are making decisions outside of the meetings so why are we losing time fighting?"<sup>262</sup> Another independent F20 activist spoke to

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<sup>258</sup> Interview on 01/17/19 in Rabat with F20 independent and Ex-TV Journalist.

<sup>259</sup> Interview on 12/08/16 with Amazigh Movement Leader.

<sup>260</sup> Interview on 11/24/16 with USFP Leader in Casablanca.

<sup>261</sup> Interview on 11/05/16 with Two Hizb al-Umma members in Rabat.

<sup>262</sup> Interview on 01/19/17 with independent F20 Activist.

me about being in an F20 General Assembly, and his story shed light on just how much power politically-affiliated members of the F20 had within the movement:

One day, I confronted an activist [within a F20 General Assembly] because he came to the meetings to just reiterate what his party already decided on. I asked him why? He said that I am in a party, and the party made this decision. [He asked] ‘Do you think that I would go to the [F20] meetings and say something that contradicts my party?’ I understood that this was natural, but this was one of the problems. The biggest problem was that the youth of the JCO were 100% controlled by their organization and other party-members were too. This does not mean that all of the youth were part of a party. On the contrary, there were perhaps more independents [than people affiliated with parties] in the movement. However, when there is an independent individual that is not affiliated with a party, he will be attacked by other political groups. Like what happened to [name omitted of F20 independent].<sup>263</sup>

Benchesmi (2014) claims that the F20 lacked a “unified and consistent strategy to counter the *Makhzen*” and that this was due to a lack of structure and “decision making process” (p. 225).

Benchesmi concludes that “the haphazard nature” of the F20 led to its collapse and that a lack of structure and leadership led F20 “to be hijacked by their most radical members” (p. 226). More importantly, decisions within General Assembly meetings never moved beyond “lets demonstrate” (p. 219). Regardless of how much power these committees had, the perception that political parties were hijacking the movement was a common sentiment. For example, another independent F20 activist elaborated on how he believed that the JCO and AMDH used certain committees to control the movement:

A problem was that some people made decisions outside of the F20, like some people in AMDH and JCO let youth play in the rooms [General Assemblies] but made decisions for them. That was one of the big problems. They created what we called the Support Committee of F20. That was a big disaster. There was no support really. They just tried to influence the youth, and they tried to make decisions for them.<sup>264</sup>

In essence, the F20 was a movement that was founded by independent activists; however, the presence of organized political organizations drowned out the voices of less-organized

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<sup>263</sup> Interview on 02/22/17 with F20 independent in Rabat.

<sup>264</sup> Interview on 01/19/17 with F20 independent in Rabat.



independent activists, along with less-influential parties. Many interviewees felt that the JCO, along with other more revolutionary elements like the DWP, became more dominant within the F20 by exploiting the movement's horizontal structure. The lack of unification within meetings also led to a tactical standstill for a movement desperately needing to respond to the regime's concessions and repression campaigns.

### *F20's Tactical Rigidity*

Tactical innovation<sup>265</sup> is important for movement survival. Movement's that adopt multiple tactics are more likely to be successful in achieving their demands (Wang and Soule 2016, p. 519). Social movement scholars have also found that tactical innovation is more likely to occur when movements are united in their demands (McAdam 1983; Staggenborg 1988; Wang and Soule 2016).<sup>266</sup> McAdam (1982) shows how the U.S. Civil Rights Movement deployed an array of tactics including protests, freedom-rides, and bus boycotts, which were effective and "very distinct in what they target and how" (Tufekci 2017, p. xiii). However, horizontalist movements tend to be underprepared and "unable to sustain and organize in the long term in a manner proportional to the energy they had been able to attract initially and the legitimacy they enjoyed in their demands" (2017, p. xiii).

Tactical innovation was more common during the first three months of protests (i.e. protesting in different areas and holding sit-ins in front of parliament). It was, however, limited to moving protests into some popular neighborhoods and holding one protest in front of the secret Temara Detention Center (a suspected CIA 'black site' torture facility), which the

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<sup>265</sup> Tactical innovation refers to a diversity of protest tactics employed by social movements. Social movement studies have found that tactical innovation occurs in response to external environmental changes (like repression) or internal changes in a movement (change in actors) (Wang and Soule 2016).

<sup>266</sup> Social movements that change protest tactics tend to attract more attention to their cause and increase new protestors (McAdam 1983).

government repressed. Moreover, a lack of unity regarding where to demonstrate sometimes led to small protests. For instance, during a protest on May 22, 2011, some F20 activists demonstrated in front of parliament, while others that protested in the popular neighborhood of Akkari where groups of protestors were dispersed by security forces.<sup>267</sup> Repression, therefore, was successful in dispersing protests and in convincing bystanders to avoid protests in popular neighborhoods. In other words, only parts of the F20 (typically JCO, DWP, and radical independents) protested in popular neighborhoods. A divide between the goals among ‘reformist-monarchists’ and the ‘revolutionary-republicans’ also led to a divide regarding whether to push the movement beyond weekly protests in public areas.<sup>268</sup> While more revolutionary members wanted to move protests beyond public spaces to popular neighborhoods, reformists suggested that this would lead to unnecessary violence.<sup>269</sup> This led to a movement divided not only in demands but also in tactics.

An Islamist activist felt that the F20’s lack of unity since March 2011 was essentially what killed the movement: “In my opinion, what made the F20 weak and die was disagreement in the demands. For example, we saw how it split and how some members within committee would work separately from others.”<sup>270</sup> The same interviewee revealed how the F20’s momentum was weakening in Tangier due to these structural issues: “Before the JCO left the F20, the movement was already weakening. There were structural reasons for this: lack of a

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<sup>267</sup> See: <http://www.maghress.com/ksarsouk/4533>; <http://www.maghress.com/lakome/4959> Accessed {5/5/2017}.

<sup>268</sup> As outlined in Chapter Two and Three, reformist-monarchists want to maintain the monarchy and demand reforms. Revolutionary-republicans want a democratic republic without a King and have more revolutionary demands.

<sup>269</sup> As demonstrated in Chapter Two, direct and harsh repression tended to occur when the F20 experimented with entering popular neighborhoods.

<sup>270</sup> Interview on 02/26/17 with Hizb al-Umma and UMT member in Tangiers.

united national organization, lack of clarity (of demands), and the lack of a plan. A movement that is confronting the state should have a plan A, B, and C. This made us lose our initiative.”<sup>271</sup>

While independents, the USP, and the Amazigh Movement adhered to the F20’s initial reformist agenda and tactics, the JCO and the DWP worked together to change the F20’s direction. This alliance attempted to change protest strategies by moving protests into popular neighborhoods, which were viewed as a “red-line” by the state.<sup>272</sup> As mentioned in Chapter Two, mobilizing masses within popular neighborhoods was especially threatening to the regime since inhabitants from these areas tend to either support Islamists or the King.<sup>273</sup> Indeed, this is where the *baltagiya* (government-paid thugs and gangs) were most active (Boumouch 2011). The attempt by the JCO and the DWP to mobilize masses within these neighborhoods failed. Without the full support of the F20, these protests were more easily dispersed through repression. Moreover, there is little incentive for bystanders to join protests when concessions are implemented (See Chapters Two and Three) and direct repression is more widely used. Indeed, the JCO’s official ‘Statement of Withdrawal’ mentions the heavy repression that the JCO faced and laments that some F20 members (referring to reformists) limited the movements’ demands and avoided pressuring the regime for “real change.”<sup>274</sup>

Divides between the JCO-DWP coalition and the rest of the F20 fractured the movement since it could no longer form united decisions concerning where and how to protest. The participatory democracy structure of decision-making through General Assemblies was

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<sup>271</sup> IBID

<sup>272</sup> Interview on 10/26/17 with F20 independent in Casablanca.

<sup>273</sup> Islamists have been historically popular in these neighborhoods; however, with the creation of National Initiative for Human Development (INDH) in 2005, there has been more support for the King. The INDH is intended to improve living conditions in low-income areas. Interviewees along with some scholars see it as a form of clientelism, where residents get public services in exchange for supporting the King and pro-palace parties. See Bergh (2012).

<sup>274</sup> See: <https://www.aljamaa.net/ar/2011/12/19/جماعة-العدل-والإحسان-تقرر-توقيف-مشارك/> Accessed {4/30/2017}.

susceptible to organizational cooptation. Similar to multiparty coalitions that form in parliaments, General Assemblies became a space for coalitions to form and control decision-making of the whole movement. The JCO and the DWP were able to work together and predetermine decisions about where to protest.<sup>275</sup> Since the JCO and the DWP (together) had the largest share of votes within the General Assembly, they would pass decisions the two parties already agreed on outside of the assembly.<sup>276</sup> When other F20 activists realized that decisions were made “behind the curtains,” ideological conflicts increased.<sup>277</sup> In the words of a leftist activist, when decisions were predetermined by the JCO and the DWP, he realized that the F20 no longer “practiced what we preached, which means we were not democratic in the decision-making process and the planning of the protests.”<sup>278</sup> Leftists from the USP also realized that the committees they once controlled were becoming obsolete, since the JCO and the DWP would coordinate decisions outside of the committees and General Assemblies. For instance, the JCO and the DWP, against the will of USP members, decided to hold weekly protests in Yacub-Al-Mansour neighborhood of Rabat:

My point of view was that the space (in front of parliament) was important, but they [JCO and DWP] said no. So, this facilitated divides among F20 by going to the popular neighborhoods. They also tried to change [tactics] from protests to sit-ins. I was against sit-ins... Others within the National Support Committee said we should only [work with] groups that we consider democratic [referring to not working with JCO].

These conflicts not only fractured a previously united movement but also hindered the F20’s ability to respond with united protest-tactics. By June 2011, the F20 split into two separate movements in Agadir; the JCO and the DWP protested in popular neighborhoods, while the

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<sup>275</sup> Interview on 09/22/16 with independent F20 Activist in Mohammedia.

<sup>276</sup> IBID

<sup>277</sup> Interview on 11/24/16 with USFP Leader in Casablanca.

<sup>278</sup> IBID

remaining parties stayed in public areas.<sup>279</sup> Although the F20 did not officially split in Rabat and Casablanca, some activists refused to partake in protests with the JCO, while others continued to protest with them. As mentioned by activists across all ideologies; the lack of a united strategy weakened the movement. This was especially apparent after the JCO left the F20.

### ***JCO's Withdrawal and F20's 'End'***

The F20's tactical rigidity and inability to unite led to dwindling support for the movement and influenced the JCO's decision to leave the F20 on December 18, 2011. JCO members made it clear to me that by December 2011, the F20 had "exhausted its purpose."<sup>280</sup> Moreover, JCO members felt that they were unfairly excluded from meetings and attacked for their ideological beliefs. The JCO had little incentive to support a movement that was losing supporters and public support. A live-streamed online statement by Abdel Samad Obeid, a leader from the JCO Higher Council, is telling. A week after the JCO's withdrawal, Obeid informs viewers that, "there are three options for any [social movement] organization... escalation, continuation, and to stop [participation in protests]."<sup>281</sup> Obeid mentions that the JCO hoped to continue protesting, but the "sufficient conditions" to "escalate and continue" protests within the F20 were missing.<sup>282</sup> Obeid also comments on the tactical failure of the F20 to pressure the regime, since weekly protests did little to pressure the *Makhzen*.<sup>283</sup> Obeid's statement reveals that the JCO indeed wanted to pressure the *Makhzen* through new protest tactics, but it lacked the internal unity to do so.

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<sup>279</sup> Interview on 12/13/16 with USFP Leader in Agadir.

<sup>280</sup> Interview on 10/20/16 with JCO student activist in Rabat.

<sup>281</sup> See: <https://www.maghress.com/almassae/147214> Accessed {4/30/2017}.

<sup>282</sup> IBID

<sup>283</sup> IBID

The JCO's withdrawal on December 18, 2011 dealt a palpable blow to the F20. In the words of a JCO student activist, "The JCO was the spinal core of the F20 movement, and the proof was that, when the JCO left the movement, the F20 immediately died."<sup>284</sup> It is important to note that the JCO's decision to withdraw from the F20 shocked not only leftists but also JCO members who did not have a say in the organization's decisions made 'at the top'. One DWP member from the rural village of Mr'rt describes the shock that he and JCO members felt when they read the announcement online:

I remember seeing the JCO announcement ceasing participation with the F20. In the room that I used to live in, I had guests that were JCO members. I was a leftist and would disagree with them, but they were also from Mr'rt, and they visited me. So, when they read the statement, they were shocked. What I realized from this was that it was not a democratic decision by the JCO. This decision was from JCO leaders, because it was a decision no one expected. Even the youth of JCO did not expect it.<sup>285</sup>

Most interviewees suggested that the JCO's withdrawal was a surprise decision by the group's leaders that led to an immediate weakening of the F20. The JCO's official and vague online statement of withdrawal from the F20 was highly critical of the King's reforms and directly labeled the government as corrupt, as despotic, and as "monopolizing wealth and power;" moreover, the statement criticized the international community's support of the regime.<sup>286</sup>

Although the specific reasons behind the JCO withdrawal are nebulous, interviewees made it clear that ideological conflicts certainly played a big role in the decision. A report in the Moroccan Newspaper, *Hespress*, notes that tensions between the USP and the JCO were very clear by mid-August 2011, and that the JCO realized its goals differed from many in the F20, while the USP believed that the JCO was "using the movement to overthrow the regime."<sup>287</sup>

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<sup>284</sup> Interview on 10/20/16 with JCO Student Activist.

<sup>285</sup> Interview on 10/13/16 with Al Naj Leader from Mr'rt.

<sup>286</sup> Statement found here: <http://www.aljamaa.net/fr/document/4134.shtml> Accessed {4/15/2017}.

<sup>287</sup> See: <https://www.hespress.com/writers/44159.html> Accessed {4/15/2017}.

Another report claims that in October 2011, there were cases of physical harassment and fights between JCO members and independent leftists since the JCO began chanting religious slogans.<sup>288</sup> According to a JCO member from Casablanca, conflicts about the demands of the movement led to the “departure of the JCO and therefore the destruction and weakening of the F20.”<sup>289</sup>

Interviewees across the ideological spectrum expressed that the JCO’s withdrawal was the final and most direct blow to the movement, and that the F20 disappeared after the JCO withdrew. Furthermore, the JCO’s withdrawal was especially surprising in cities where Islamists had a considerably large presence. For instance, the largest protests occurred in Tangiers, and this was due to the historically large presence of Islamists in Tangiers and the marginalized popular neighborhood of Beni Mekada. In other cities, where ideological cleavages were more palpable, the JCO’s withdrawal was welcomed by some leftists.<sup>290</sup>

The JCO’s withdrawal depleted the F20’s power on the street, and ideological divides among ‘leftist’ and ‘Islamic’ camps were becoming increasingly contentious within the F20 prior to their withdrawal. Fundamental and historical distrust of Islamists by many leftists isolated the JCO. A prominent JCO leader emphasized to me that the group did indeed feel marginalized and isolated by leftists.<sup>291</sup> As demonstrated, many leftists felt that the JCO began to take control of the movement and were especially displeased with the JCO’s increasingly gender-divided protests and religious slogans.<sup>292</sup> Moreover, the F20’s initial decision to delay conversations about ideology allowed the regime to easily exploit divisions within the F20. A USFP member

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<sup>288</sup> See: <https://www.hespress.com/politique/39934.html> Accessed {4/15/2017}.

<sup>289</sup> Interview on 11/04/16 with JCO member in Ain Sba.

<sup>290</sup> Interview on 12/13/16 in Agadir with USFP Member.

<sup>291</sup> Interview on 10/31/16 with JCO Leader in Rabat.

<sup>292</sup> Interview on 11/24/16 with USFP Leader in Casablanca.

claims his party knew the internal ideological contradictions would not be solved, which is partly why the USFP was one of the first parties to depart from the F20:

We concluded that the reason for not guaranteeing its sustainability was the ideological clash, the different groups did not use the same compass: some wanted to head for the North and others South. In other words, they did not have the same vision. So, there were essential differences that could not guarantee the sustainability of the movement.<sup>293</sup>

The internal cooptation of the movement by the JCO was a product of the F20's structureless organization and vulnerability to cooptation. Internal conflicts were initially political in nature - between revolutionary elements (JCO and DWP) and reformists (USP, USFP, and some independents) regarding the F20's strategy and demands. As this chapter has shown, conflicts became increasingly ideologically-based, with some leftists arguing for the removal of the JCO from the movement altogether. The JCO-DWP coalition was a political alliance that led to these highly contentious ideologically-based conflicts and culminated in the withdrawal of the JCO.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter shows that the F20's structure facilitated internal cooptation, tactical rigidity, and the departure of the JCO. The JCO's alliance with the DWP essentially allowed both organizations to affect the F20's agenda and tactics. The JCO and the DWP attempted, unsuccessfully, to unite F20 activists and move protests into volatile popular neighborhoods. The movement was essentially unable to change its predictable tactics, while protests that did occur outside of public spaces were quickly dispersed via repression.<sup>294</sup> All of these events heightened internal conflicts and culminated in the JCO's withdrawal from the F20.

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<sup>293</sup> IBID

<sup>294</sup> Independent, USP, and Amazigh activists tended to stand firm with the F20's initial reformist agenda and strategy. The JCO and the DWP adopted more revolutionary demands and attempted to change protest tactics.



A secondary finding of this chapter is that mutual interests can unite parties with competing ideological outlooks. The JCO and the DWP each have their own ideological frameworks, but they are also both illegal organizations that reject formal institutions and seek a future without a monarchy. The revolutionary demands of the JCO and the DWP put them at-odds with the reformist orientation of the F20, making their cooperation possible. Marxist-Islamist cooperation was made possible by avoiding discussions about sensitive topics. Discussions about the place of religion within society or women's rights were not discussed between JCO and DWP members. When I asked my interviewees about the decision to table contentious issues, interviewees offered the vague response that the 'people should decide.' This implies that interviewees agreed on democratic ideals, but also reveals an understanding between the JCO and the DWP that their coalition was made possible by not discussing ideology.

The F20 was already declining in numbers before the JCO's withdrawal. However, by December 2011, the F20 had little support by independent<sup>295</sup> activists. This is demonstrated by the fact that the F20 essentially disappeared following the JCO's withdrawal. After the JCO withdrew from the F20, the movement ceased weekly protests, and when protests did occur, they tended to be composed of radical leftists. When I asked about the size of protests following the JCO withdrawal, an F20 co-founder responded with the English idiom, "peanuts."<sup>296</sup> After the JCO withdrew, some independent activists attempted to give the F20 a "new start".<sup>297</sup> This time, however, independents held an anonymous "closed meeting" in late January 2012; nevertheless, the movement never recovered from the mixed-policies of the *Makhzen* and the devastating effects that they had on the F20.<sup>298</sup>

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<sup>295</sup> By independent support I mean support by activists not affiliated with an organized political party.

<sup>296</sup> Interview on 10/06/16 with F20 Co-founder in Casablanca.

<sup>297</sup> See: <https://www.hespress.com/24-heures/44802.html> Accessed {4/20/2017}.

<sup>298</sup> See: <https://www.hespress.com/24-heures/44802.html> Accessed {4/20/2017}.

## Chapter Five: The Future of Contention

My dissertation demonstrates that the Moroccan regime's use of a mixed policy - offering concessions followed by repression - lessened protests. It further shows that such a strategy is successful because of three main conditions. First, the Moroccan regime had a history of declaring and implementing reforms. Second, a sequence of concessions signaled that F20's grievances were being addressed. Third, the regime's repression against the F20 led to a perceived disunity between the goals of movement and the general public. The mixed-policy used by the regime during the Arab Spring caused F20 to demobilize through a lack of public support and by highlighting internal ideological cleavages. This resulted in the movement's demobilization and alienation from society. With the movement internally fractured and perceived as more revolutionary and radical in tone, the public was no longer convinced of the need for a social movement, especially since a series of unprecedented reforms were already being implemented.

The main goal of this dissertation has been to understand how these mixed policies affect the internal dynamics of a social movement, resulting in the movement's demobilization. King Mohammed VI's consistent accommodative policies led to F20's demobilization; however, concessions were also followed by repression. The mixing of concessions with repression, and its consequences, is understudied. As shown in Chapter Two, the March 9 Speech initiated a framing conflict between 'reformist-monarchists' and more 'revolutionary-republicans' within the F20. As F20's tone became more revolutionary, the regime strategically smeared the F20 as radical and disconnected with average Moroccans. The Moroccan state consistently conveyed that unprecedented concessions would be implemented, while the F20 was perceived as (1)

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extremist and internally coopted, and (2) unnecessary since reforms were being implemented. Accommodative and repressive policies worked in this case because the regime signaled to the public that grievances were being met. These signals included addressing grievances in March 2011, implementing proposed reforms in June 2011, creating a referendum vote where over 70% of the populace voted ‘yes’ in July 2011, and finally allowing sidelined and popular Islamists to win a parliamentary plurality by not meddling in elections in August 2011. The victory of the PJD, as shown in Chapter Three, had an especially palpable effect on the movement. Even hardline opponents of the PJD, admitted that its victory killed the F20’s protest momentum.

Following each of these concessions, the F20 became increasingly delegitimized by the public and internal fracturing persisted. As shown in Chapter Four, the movement was tactically stationary since effective decision-making structures were missing and since political organizations, like the JCO, became increasingly influential. The JCO partnership with the DWP led to increased ideological conflicts – with some leftists calling for the removal of the JCO from the F20. This Islamist-Marxist alliance also allowed the JCO to dominate F20 committees and General Assemblies. This finding demonstrates that influential political organizations can coopt and control horizontalist movements. The F20 was initially a movement controlled by independent activists, but influential political organizations eventually dominated the movement. Essentially, the F20 could never overcome its internal fracturing, a fracturing that became especially visible after the March 9 Speech and the 2011 general elections.

Scholars have claimed that strong historical-religious claims to legitimacy allow a monarchy to remain stable during protests (Bank, Richter, and Sunik 2013). Although there is merit to this argument, which is most clearly evidenced by the fact that most demands by protest movements were reformist (reforming the constitution) and not revolutionary (regime

overthrow), the case of F20 demonstrates how the line between reformist and revolutionary can be crossed. Indeed, slogan's like, "the monarchy is rotten, Listen Mohamed VI, soon it's your turn," and even "The people want the downfall of the regime," were chanted during the F20 protests (Hoffman and Konig 2013, p. 1). Similarly, King Hassan II, like other Arab presidents, has survived various military coup attempts (Yom and Gause 2012). Historical-religious legitimacy alone cannot ensure that future movements in Morocco are strictly reformists in nature. The King's decision to offer and implement reforms, to use calculated and limited repression, and to allow the PJD to win elections were all necessary factors that helped maintain the stability of the monarch. His monarchical legitimacy alone was not sufficient to prevent mass contention and, in some cases, calls for his ouster.

The remainder of this chapter will cover three important avenues for future research. Interviewees expressed how the F20 changed Moroccan politics by initiating a new 'culture of street protests,' evidenced in part by the on-going *Hirak* movement in the northern Rif region of Morocco. Women activists expressed similar sentiment regarding how feminist movements have changed due to discussions within the F20. A new wave of feminist movements spurred by brokerage within the F20 have led to many movements, such as *Women Choufouch* and *AL-Femme*, that are not tied to existing NGOs or state institutions. Finally, interviewees overwhelmingly expressed that regional events had important consequences on protest dynamics in Morocco. As we will see, the civil wars in Libya and Syria forced F20 activists to question whether protests should continue in Morocco.

## New Culture of Street Politics

*F20 left its spirit in Morocco. People now protest over water, electricity, and living conditions.*<sup>299</sup> - *Leftist Activist*

*Corruption and the power dynamics of the regime persist, but the spirit of F20 continues.*<sup>300</sup>  
- *Islamist Activist*

The recent *Hirak* movement in the northern Riffian region of Morocco started with the gruesome death of Mouchine Fikri, a fish monger who was crushed to death inside a garbage truck while trying to salvage fish seized and disposed of by local authorities. The *Hirak* movement has adopted the F20 slogan of “freedom, dignity, and social justice” and, again, led to solidarity protests by Islamists (most notably the JCO), leftists, and the Amazigh Cultural Movement (Omlil 2017). Many interviews I conducted in Morocco concluded the same way: the interviewee expressing that the F20 did not die and that its spirit lives on. In the words of one interviewee who is highly pessimistic of any reforms put forth by the *Makhzen*: “The F20 movement did not change Morocco. It changed Moroccans.”<sup>301</sup>

The culture of protests that followed the Arab Spring in Morocco is defended as the biggest accomplishment of the F20. This includes small-scale micro rebellions (i.e. standing up to police) and large-scale movements (i.e. the *Hirak* Movement). A director of the AMDH was optimistic about how individual citizens changed following the F20: “The simple citizen is no longer scared of administrators, guards, and police, they now can stand up and face the system. The movement does not remain in the form of protests, but it created ideas and changed ways of thinking and expressing anger.”<sup>302</sup> Similarly, a JCO student leader expressed optimism about how there is no longer fear to confront authorities and point out injustices:

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<sup>299</sup> Interview on 10/05/16 with Democratic Way Activist.

<sup>300</sup> Interview on 11/04/16 with JCO member in Ain Sba.

<sup>301</sup> Interview on 10/05/16 with previous Director of AMDH.

<sup>302</sup> Interview on 10/05/16 with previous Director of AMDH.

Moroccans used to fear police brutality if they protest, but now the F20 movement has given the Moroccan people the strength to protest and demonstrate. We can say that breaking the wall of fear is the biggest victory in the history of Morocco. That people nowadays can say NO and express their opinions and thoughts.<sup>303</sup>

Another JCO member agreed that this was the biggest accomplishment of the movement:

“Within the JCO, we think that the biggest accomplishment the F20 had was that it broke the barrier of fear among Moroccans....the F20 did not die, it may have changed, but its spirit continues.”<sup>304</sup> Others even expressed the sentiment that the relationship between authorities and the people improved due to the F20. For instance, an F20 independent activist felt that the F20 and the advent of social media have helped create an environment where the regime listens and acts on grievances by the people:

I think the spirit of the F20 movement is still here. The point is not to go out and have thousands of people in the street. People now are monitoring public politics through the internet and Facebook and Twitter and the press. Even the authorities are smarter-today. They follow what happens on social media. They try to solve everything that can create problems before people go out on the streets. Like what happened in Al-Hociema with fish mongers death. Morocco can explode at any moment, but the police try to pay attention to these things before they occur. This is nice. This happens in America too. It's nice that the authorities care about what the youth write on social media. This is a good thing.<sup>305</sup>

During my fieldwork, I quickly learned that using the term ‘death’ in describing what happened to the F20 often led to emotional responses about how the movement never “died” but changed into other movements with different names and goals. I learned to use the subtler term of ‘decline’ regarding the movement. With the qualitative and quantitative decline of the F20, a plethora of cultural, women’s, and even LGBT movements were born. A regional woman activist in Marrakech offers a look into how the F20 still ‘lives’ in Morocco today:

I consider F20 a dynamic, and this dynamic will change itself and its name. Its soul and its demands will continue, and this movement will live in a different way through

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<sup>303</sup> Interview on 10/20/16 with JCO Student Leader.

<sup>304</sup> Interview on 12/28/16 with JCO member in Casablanca.

<sup>305</sup> Interview on 01/13/17 with Ex-TV Journalist and independent F20 Activist.

different organizations. For example, the movement called the Student Movement to Change the Education System in Morocco is a movement born out of the F20, and it will develop and grow, and we will build it up. The cultural movements are numerous too, which differs from classical cultural movements, which just fight for democracy. There was another movement called Art in the Street, Philosophy in The Street, and the Theater of the Oppressed. So, the movement spurred cultural movements too. There is also a group called ASWAT that defends religious and sexual minorities. There are many movements like these.<sup>306</sup>

### **New Wave Feminist-Movements in Morocco?**

*Badran: "Did you accept gender-divided protests"? Interviewee: "No! Never! I was with the men. It was my revolution." -Feminist F20 Member*

In relation to feminist movements, there was a split between ‘old wave’ woman’s rights groups that did not participate in the F20 and younger-independent feminists that did participate.<sup>307</sup> These feminists became increasingly more visible in the F20 movement. An independent feminist activist from Marrakech elaborated on how women eventually began explicitly demanding gender equality: “we would say freedom, dignity, and social justice, and the women would say *and* gender equality. But this was not an official demand.”<sup>308</sup> Some women I interviewed lamented the fact that old wave feminists were absent; the most surprising was the absence of internationally prominent feminists, like Fatima Mernissi: “She was never in the movement; can you imagine that? A feminist who is very known internationally speaking-she was never in the movement, she was never in the streets.”<sup>309</sup> A MALI member and abortion-rights activist expressed sentiment that the ‘old wave’ feminists were too institutionalized and no longer effective: “The old school, in the beginning they were dynamic and changed a lot of

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<sup>306</sup> Interview on 01/04/17 with F20 Leader in Marrakech.

<sup>307</sup> By ‘old-wave’, I’m referring strictly to the Moroccan context. This refers to women’s rights associations and NGOs that have (successfully) fought for change through existing institutions, like successfully reforming the Family Law Code (*Mudawwana*) in 2004.

<sup>308</sup> Interview on 01/04/17 with independent F20 Activist in Marrakech.

<sup>309</sup> Interview on 03/13/17 with MALI member.

things-this is true. You cannot deny it. But it's like the trade unions here in Morocco. Most of them are dependent on political parties and feminist organizations are dependent on them too.”<sup>310</sup>

However, the absence of old wave and reformist-oriented woman's rights groups paved the way for new feminist movements that were not tied to local or international institutions, like political parties or international-NGOs. Rather, they looked to change things from the street-level:

Due to their [old-wave woman's rights groups] absence, the F20 movement allowed networks of radical feminists to become active. For example, there was a group called, The Arriving Women [*Al Nisah Al-Kademat*]. There was now a network that called *AL-Femme* or *Red-Femme* which are emerging in Rabat and Marrakech too. There is another initiative called *Be Haly Be Halek* [Like me, like you] that defends women's rights to be in public spaces and to push back against the violence against women and discriminative behaviors based on social gender. So, there were many initiatives that were born after F20. There were new woman's movements with a new style. Not the woman's movements that were dependent on NGO's. That's 'NGO-Cide' [suicide].<sup>311</sup>

After the F20 ceased major protest activity in 2012, a shift from fighting for woman's rights within existing institutions toward changing societal norms occurred. In 2012, demonstrations erupted following the suicide of 16-year-old Amina al Filani, who ingested rat poison when her rapist invoked article 475- a law that allows the rapist to marry his victim. The girl's father reported the rape, but court officials suggested that they marry their daughter off to the rapist.<sup>312</sup> Amina's actions triggered demonstrations by women demanding a repeal of article 475 (Flock 2012). Another example is *Woman Choufouch*, a grass-roots Moroccan off-shoot of the Canadian based movement SlutWalk, which was created in 2012. Like its Canadian counterpart, *Woman Choufouch* fights against blaming victims for rape. *Women Choufouch* has successfully

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<sup>310</sup> IBID

<sup>311</sup> Interview on 01/04/17 with F20 Leader in Marrakech.

<sup>312</sup> See: <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2012/03/2012315134325471675.html> Accessed {3/3/2017}.



mobilized women around issues stemming from a new body politic that has focused on combating normalized societal views and actions toward all women.

A self-proclaimed Secularist-Feminist from Agadir spoke about how mobilizations surrounding issues ranging from women's attire to sex tourism followed the F20's demise:

There was a problem last year because two women were wearing mini-skirts, and they were arrested for being immoral because others were upset that they were wearing mini-skirts. We said that women in Morocco should wear what they want. In reality, there is an open market for sex to foreigners from the Gulf. Now a mother can go out and say [that she] is against sex tourism, or [she can] defend the right of women to wear what they want. This [is possible] because of what F20 started in 2011.<sup>313</sup>

Besides increased and different mobilizations sparked by the F20, the movement also created cultural changes among activists. For instance, during my interviews I was surprised that most activists (Islamists included) used the masculine and feminine variants of the word 'protestor' during interviews – which is traditionally uncommon. A MALI co-founder shed light on how the F20 helped spark this grammatical change in activists' gender-inclusive language:

Now we feminized the names. I and other feminists educated activists, male and female, to say *Monathel* [Masculine variant of protestor] and *Monathela* [feminine variant of protestor], because we exist. A lot of slogans were just for men. In French and English, we have these things too, because language is patriarchal, so we changed these things. It was like a victory and now a lot of people feminize their words.<sup>314</sup>

Future research into how social movements continue to 'live on' and change society is needed. In the case of Morocco, how woman's rights activists have changed after the Arab Spring merits further investigation. More specifically, the shift from reformist and institutionalized women's movements to an independent wave of feminist-activists merits deeper investigation, especially regarding the direction that these movements are taking and whether they serve as a bellwether for regional feminist movements.

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<sup>313</sup> Interview on 12/12/16 in Agadir.

<sup>314</sup> Interview on 05/07/17 with MALI Co-Founder.

## Regionality

*“I personally called for the overthrow of the regime within F20, but today I would say no [to revolution]. If we actually overthrew the regime and took up arms, then our situation would be like Libya’s today.”<sup>315</sup> – F20 Activist*

A dynamic and inter-connected series of events facilitated the decrease of protests in Morocco. The increased repression against the F20 in May 2011; the passing of the constitutional referendum in July 2011; the early general elections on November 25<sup>th</sup>, 2011; and the election results announced two weeks later all facilitated protest-abatement. These events signaled that change was being implemented and that certain ‘red lines’ should not be crossed. These events created new discussions within the F20 and among the public concerning the future of the movement. However, activists very often expressed how regional events, especially in Libya and Syria, affected internal discussions within the F20 and affected how the public perceived the movement. Every interviewee mentioned the events in the region and their potential effects within Morocco. The violence from the civil wars engulfing Syria and Libya instigated fear among activists that a continuation in protests may lead to violent conflict. In the words of a current member of parliament that participated in the F20 movement: “What occurred in Syria and Libya had a huge effect on the movement. Al-Jazeera played a big role. People would say I don’t have all of my rights, but at least I live with security and I can eat and drink.”<sup>316</sup> Said differently, the violence from the civil wars in Syria and Libya forced many to fear that a continuation in protest activity may lead to the violence transmitted on TV and computer screens throughout Morocco.

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<sup>315</sup> Interview on 12/12/16 in Agadir.

<sup>316</sup> Interview on 01/13/17 with an MP (CDT) in Rabat.

Activists across ideologies informed me that the regime took advantage of the regional violence by contrasting Morocco's stability and reformist stances to the violent approaches taken by leaders in Syria and Libya. In the words of one Democratic Way Party activist, "This was propagated by the state. That 'we are stable' and that 'we should not go down that path.' People got scared that things would get violent and that things would go down the path of Syria, Libya, and Yemen."<sup>317</sup> This sentiment even convinced F20 activists that "it would be better to take what we have (reforms) and see how things work out."<sup>318</sup> Islamist interviewees often felt that regional events had an especially big effect on how leftists treated them within the F20. For example, a JCO leader directly linked electoral victories by Islamists in Tunisia and Egypt to ideologically based conflicts within the F20:

The elections in Tunisia and Egypt paved the way for Islamic parties. So, leftists became afraid of participation in a protest movement that they would not benefit from. So, they [leftists] started to raise questions that led to conflict, and they insisted on giving a sense of a 'leftist identity' to the movement by demonizing some Islamic groups and banners and discussions began the general assemblies that would preparing the marches.

Another F20 independent activist felt that regional conflicts had an especially big effect on the middle class, which decided to vote over protest, in large part due to their fear that Morocco could digress into violence:

I think the biggest blow to the movement was the fear that pervaded Moroccans after what they saw in the Syrian and Yemeni scenarios. Some Moroccans started to say that 'at least we achieved a new constitution and elections where a new party won first place and we have some sort of freedoms, so we should preserve what we accomplished and continue. So, lawyers, engineers, doctors, and teachers started going to the ballot boxes, and they voted for the PJD, even though they do not agree with the opinion of the party - even though they have bottles of wine at the dinner table - but they confided in the PJD's honesty and that they would lead to stability. Stability for this class within society is important since they have houses and cars with bank loans, a child studying abroad that takes a trip to Spain or France once a year.<sup>319</sup>

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<sup>317</sup> Interview on 10/05/16 with DWP Activist.

<sup>318</sup> Interview on 10/05/16 with an AMDH Executive Director.

<sup>319</sup> Interview on 11/23/16 with F20 independent.

An Amazigh activist had a similar analysis of the situation and linked F20's death to regional violence: "If Syria's and Libya's paths were different then maybe the F20 would have continued, because the path over there affected Morocco's path too."<sup>320</sup> Another activist felt that the JCO withdrew from the F20 because of the bloodshed in Syria: "I think that the JCO decided to leave after seeing what was happening because of what was happening in Syria. I don't think they wanted that."<sup>321</sup> Another theory some activists had was that the Moroccan regime became more repressive following violence in Syria and Libya: "In the beginning, everything was peaceful, and the regime was peaceful too. But when things happened in Libya and Syria the regime started to become more violent. When they became violent and the F20 movement saw what was happening in other countries, there was a type of fear among leaders."<sup>322</sup> Regional events did have a big effect on internal social movement dynamics in Morocco. It is unclear how the movement was specifically affected and if regional violence indeed helped demobilize the F20.

### **Future of Social Movement Studies**

Since the 1980s, there has been a shift in the study of contentious politics away from the classical social-psychological approach, which tends to focus more on how frustration and aggression lead to mobilization (Gurr 1970; Gurney & Tierney 1982).<sup>323</sup> Instead, structural perspectives, like resource mobilization and political process theories, focus more on the environmental drivers that facilitate or suppress social movements (Aminzade & McAdam 2001, p. 14). In other words, advantageous or disadvantageous political environments (openness or

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<sup>320</sup> Interview on 12/08/16 with Amazigh Leader in Tangiers.

<sup>321</sup> Interview on 01/04/17 with F20 Leader in Marrakech.

<sup>322</sup> Interview on 12/08/16 with Amazigh leader in Tangiers.

<sup>323</sup> Relative deprivation theory, for example, argues that protests can occur when people are deprived of something they feel entitled to.

closure of political system, presence of elite allies, or a state's capacity for repression) along with organizational strength are better predictors of successful social movements (McAdam 1982; Tarrow 1994; Meyer & Minkoff 2004). Scholars from this tradition tended to focus on the rise of movements as the result of variations in structural opportunities (Tarrow and Tilly 2009).

In the 1990s, scholars began to incorporate culture into their theories; however, these scholars tended to limit culture to the effects of framing<sup>324</sup> techniques on social movements (Snow and Benford 1988; Snow and Benford 1992). The literature has only recently recognized that internal movement dynamics are important: "We have come to think of interpersonal networks, interpersonal communication, and various forms of continuous negotiation—including the negotiation of identities—as figuring centrally in the dynamics of contention" (Tarrow and Tilly 2009, p. 9). Social movement theorists (across all approaches) have long analyzed why movements occur, but less attention has been paid to deterrence and de-escalation, or what some term demobilization of social movements (Davenport 2015). McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald (1988) claimed that social movement theorists have "underdeveloped knowledge about the dynamics of collective action past the emergence of a movement" and that this is a "glaring deficiency in the literature" (p. 728).

This dissertation has combined structural and cultural approaches by looking at how changes in structure (concessions and repression) affect internal movement framing, discussions, and tactics. In other words, the structural is tied to internal movement dynamics and, by considering both, we can better understand why movements mobilize and demobilize. Moreover, this dissertation has focused exclusively on this under-researched line of study that focuses on movement death, decline, and demobilization. To be clear, there is an area of study that

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<sup>324</sup> Frames "are the interpretive packages that activists develop to mobilize potential adherents and constituents" (Polleta and Jasper 2001, p. 291).

specifically analyzes demobilization. However, studies specific to the demobilization of social movements are usually limited to cases where only repression is studied. This dissertation demonstrates that concessions can trigger mechanisms which lead to movement demobilization. Using concessions as a first response to mass protests has implications for how effective repression is as well.

More research concerning the relationship between concessions, repression and protest demobilization are needed. How the structure of movements interacts with these factors matters too. As outlined in Chapter Four, the recent trend of less-structured, horizontally-organized, and leaderless movements is by no means limited to the MENA region. Rather, similar movements are occurring throughout the world and this is important because the relationship between state policies and social movements are changing (Tufekci 2017). How state policies demobilize movements without clear leadership structure, merits more study. In Morocco, for example, the regime's decision to repress the JCO during March 2011 led to increased internal conflicts about the 'invisibility' of Islamists within the F20.<sup>325</sup> Tufekci (2017) argues that, since horizontalist movements lack structure, they will likely falter and die down quickly, but she does not explain why some movements demobilize after initial goals are achieved (i.e. the overthrow of Presidents in Tunisia and Egypt) and others are successfully defeated through concessions or repression before they realize all of their goals (the case of F20). Essentially, more studies need to focus on why and how social movements demobilize.

The theoretical contribution of this dissertation assists future studies of demobilization by helping demonstrate how accommodative and repressive policies can abate protests and

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<sup>325</sup> Following the JCO's targeting by the regime in March 2011, the JCO became more visible within the media, chanted religious slogans, and raised religious banners – a break from the F20's initial agreement (See Chapter Two).

demobilize movements. My theory demonstrates how reformist leaders, which respond to social unrest by initially addressing demands, can convince the public that demands are sufficiently met and that there is no longer a need for a social movement. Internally, social movements are affected by such policies as well. My theoretical framework demonstrates how social movements attempt to overcome the perception of ‘problem depletion’ by changing frames, which eventually led to internal cleavages and disputes. Future scholars need to incorporate a similar logic that considers how similar policies have an important effect both among the public (which a social movement needs for support) and internally among different members of a social movement. After a public perception that initial demands are being met, then repression aimed at smearing the movement can also demobilize a movement. Smear campaigns, for example, can lead to a disunity between a social movement’s and the public’s goals. The revolutionary tone that many F20 activists took after the concessions were offered and implemented was not widely accepted within Morocco, where the monarchy is usually seen as legitimate.

Needless to say, mixed policies of concessions and repression can have various outcomes. Contrary to Mark Lichbach’s (1987) seminal finding, there need not be a consistency of adhering to one policy (concessions or repression) for protest decline and demobilization to occur. Indeed, as movements become increasingly horizontalist in nature,<sup>326</sup> diverse, often ideologically contentious, groups must find ways to work together within leaderless structures. Movements without traditional leaders and collective decision-making bodies will likely need to find alternate ways to respond to a state’s calculated mixed-policy approach. Going forward, I foresee this means of ‘social control’ through mixed-policy becoming more prevalent, and this

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<sup>326</sup> This implies, as Zeynep Tufekci (2017) notes, that movements lack of leadership structures and collective decision-making capabilities.

work offers a theory regarding when concessions and repression can demobilize a social movement.



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