



Reform in Morocco

The role of political Islamists

By Alex Glennie and David Mepham

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Abbreviations and definitions

AKP	Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (Turkish Justice and Development Party)
CCDH	Conseil Consultatif des Droits de l'Homme (Consultative Council for Human Rights)
ENP	European Neighbourhood Policy
EU	European Union
IER	Instance Equité et Reconciliation (Equity and Reconciliation Commission)
ISF	Islamic Salvation Front (Algeria)
MPDC	Mouvement Populaire Démocratique et Constitutionnel (Popular Democratic and Constitutional Movement)
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
PJD	Party of Justice and Development (Morocco)
UNFP	Union Nationale des Forces Populaires (National Union of Popular Forces)
USFP	Union Socialiste des Forces Populaires (Socialist Union of Popular Forces)
Amir al Mu-minin:	Usually translated as 'Commander of the Faithful', and refers to leaders who draw their legitimacy from a community of Muslims. At present, King Mohammed VI of Morocco is the only Muslim leader permitted to bear this title.
Makhzan:	A fluid term, often used to describe the web of political institutions and social alliances that has coalesced around the Moroccan monarchy.
Mudawana:	The social code in Morocco, which governs many aspects of family life. It is particularly concerned with the duties (and, more recently, the rights) of women.
Shari'a:	The body of Islamic law that governs public life and certain aspects of private life for all Muslims. Rather than a set of codified laws, Shari'a law is based on the interpretation of a number of sources, including the Qur'an, the Hadith (sayings and conduct of the prophet Mohammed) and fatwas (the rulings of Islamic scholars).
Ulema:	The highest class of Muslim legal scholars. The ulema engage in many fields of Islamic study and are usually referred to as the arbiters of shari'a law.

1. Introduction

While the term ‘political Islam’ is now widely used in the western media and among western policymakers, there is still fairly limited formal engagement with political Islamist parties and movements in areas like the Middle East and North Africa on the part of European and North American governments. There are exceptions to this. For example, western governments have normal diplomatic relations with the political Islamist AKP government in Turkey. As a consequence of security and political developments within Iraq following the invasion of 2003, the United States, United Kingdom and others have also been drawn into extensive dealings with political Islamist movements there, particularly the Shia parties, who now represent the largest bloc of elected representatives in Iraq’s Parliament. There are some contacts, too, between western governments and political Islamist movements in Asia.

But in the Middle East and North Africa, formal engagement remains very much the exception rather than the rule. There appear to be two principal reasons for this. First, western governments have well established relationships with many of the regimes in the region, and these tend to be strongly opposed to foreign governments dealing directly with their Islamist opposition movements. In discussions with their western counterparts, Arab rulers frequently invoke the threat of an Islamist takeover, particularly when they are being pressed by western governments to undertake political liberalisation and reform. You may have problems with us, they say, but the alternative would be far worse. Second, many western governments are instinctively wary of political Islamist movements, concerned about their ‘illiberal’ social agenda and what an increase in their influence might mean for the future direction of the countries of the region and for western economic and strategic interests (Springborg 2007).

These factors are compounded by a considerable lack of knowledge and understanding among some western policymakers about political Islam. There has been a tendency to treat political Islam as a monolithic and uniformly negative phenomenon rather than acknowledging its diversity. The reality, however, is that ‘Islamists cover a wide spectrum: radical and moderate, violent and peaceful, traditional and modern, democratic and anti-democratic’ (Fuller 2005: 38).

This report forms part of a wider ippr research project which has the explicit purpose of deepening understanding of political Islam in its various manifestations, countering common misperceptions, and, by so doing, helping to generate more thoughtful, differentiated and constructive policy responses towards it. We approach this subject in the context of the debate about political reform in the Middle East and North Africa. While the Arab world is enormously diverse, and while some of its countries are making important progress, as a region it performs poorly on many international indicators of democracy, governance and human rights, and it suffers from widespread and deeply entrenched authoritarianism (Posusney and Angrist 2005).

Although the recent efforts of the Bush administration to promote political change in the region have been disastrous, particularly in Iraq, the conclusion that we reach from this is not that external

actors should give up completely on any attempt to support better governance, democracy or human rights (Mephram 2006, 2007). The case for reform is still a compelling one. The political stagnation that characterises much of the region is failing millions of its people and contributing to huge social tensions. Widespread repression, a lack of political voice, a sense of alienation and disempowerment: these are the very conditions that are breeding anger, extremism and violence. This anger is directed mainly at local rulers, but it can also impact outside the region, including through anti-western Islamic terrorism.

But western governments need to learn from recent failures and to think far more intelligently and creatively, and with a much greater degree of humility, about how human rights and democratic freedoms can best be supported from the outside. It is clearly important to be realistic about what can be achieved in particular countries and over particular timescales. In some cases, support for political reform might involve pushing hard now for genuinely free elections. In other cases, a higher short-term priority for political reform might be encouraging the enlargement of a political space in which opposition groups or civil society can function, greater freedom for the press, fairer legal processes, adherence to universal human rights standards and support for educational reforms and cultural exchanges.

None of this means weakening the commitment to democracy in the Middle East. But it does mean thinking more pragmatically about the policy options available in specific contexts, the obstacles to reform, and about the formal and informal ways of effecting change. This has implications for the relationship between western governments and the region’s political Islamists.

Our focus on political Islamist movements should not be misinterpreted as implicit support for their agendas. Although we favour deeper dialogue and engagement with mainstream Islamist parties, we disagree strongly with various aspects of the political approach of some of these movements, in particular dominant attitudes towards women’s rights, the rights of minorities and freedom of expression. We also believe that there is a considerable degree of ambiguity about where some of the Islamist movements stand on particular issues (Brown *et al* 2006).

What is clear, however, is that political Islamists have deep roots in many countries in the Middle East and North Africa and will constitute an important political and social force in these societies for the foreseeable future. In these circumstances it is simply not tenable to suppose that western policy towards the region can or should ignore them.

Our approach in this research project has been to analyse the ‘mainstream’ political Islamist movements in three countries in the Middle East: the Party of Justice and Development (PJD) in Morocco, the Islamic Action Front in Jordan and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. By mainstream we mean movements that engage and seek to engage in the legal political processes of their countries *and* that have publicly eschewed violence to help realise their political objectives at the national level.

These mainstream movements should be differentiated from ‘missionary’ Islamist movements like the Tablighi and the Salafiyya, whose purpose is not the gaining of political power, but rather the

preservation of Muslim identity and the Islamic faith. They are also very different to the Jihadi movements, those who advocate Islamic armed struggle (al-Jihad), whether, as the International Crisis Group describes, 'internal (combating nominally Muslim regimes considered impious), irredentist (fighting to redeem land ruled by non-Muslims or under occupation), or global (combating the West)' (International Crisis Group 2005: 14).

The PJD, the Islamic Action Front and the Muslim Brotherhood all fall into the category of mainstream political Islamist movements. They have an additional defining characteristic: they are all reasonably popular. Because Morocco, Jordan and Egypt are not democracies and because freedom of expression and organisation are curtailed in each of them, it is difficult to measure with precision the popularity of these movements. Nevertheless, it seems clear that they represent the best organised element of the opposition to the existing regimes in each country. This raises an obvious question for western policymakers who are calling, publicly at least, for the regimes in the region to move towards greater political pluralism, democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights: what would be the effect on the domestic and foreign policies of these countries were the mainstream political Islamists to obtain a greater share of political power and a larger say over the governance of their societies?

There are other reasons why a deeper understanding of political Islam and greater engagement with its mainstream elements is necessary. If these Islamist movements continue to be ostracised by western governments and repressed by Middle Eastern rulers, this could easily enhance their popular support instead of reducing it. Additionally, those political Islamist movements that have embraced participation in formal politics (however much those formal political rules may be flawed and undemocratic), and that are seen to deliver very little to their supporters as a result, could see their popular base seep away, not to secular or liberal parties, but to more extreme Islamist forces that advocate violence and confrontation.

Engagement with mainstream Islamists is also important to further political reform. Given their level of popular support, and the weakness of many of the secular parties, it is hardly conceivable that political transformation in these countries can occur without the involvement of the Islamists. And drawing them into a debate about reform can also potentially reinforce trends towards moderation and pragmatism. As one leading analyst of political Islam puts it:

'Mainstream Islamists have moved a considerable step forward by revising their understanding of politics and prioritising gradual reforms as the only viable roadmap to change Arab reality... Integrating Islamists in the political sphere and confronting them with the challenges of managing contemporary societies creates a better setting for modern perceptions about the public role of women and the status of minorities to unfold within their spectrum... Exclusion and repression never lead to a sustainable momentum for moderate trends; rather it pushes those who are forced to be

voiceless to uncompromisingly reassert their distinct identity by refusing to change.' (Hamzawy 2005)

Methodology and report structure

The methodological approach for this research project has included a series of semi-structured interviews with key individuals in the three parties, as well as those policy analysts who observe them closely, high-level seminars in the countries concerned, reviews of the English, French and Arabic literature, and interviews with western policymakers and commentators.

This first paper focuses on Morocco and the PJD. The PJD is one of the strongest political Islamist movements in the Arab world, it has been represented in the Moroccan Parliament since 2002, and it will be a serious contender in Morocco's forthcoming parliamentary elections in September 2007. Western policymakers therefore have a clear interest in better understanding its policy positions, viewed within the context of Morocco's recent history and the current political situation (the focus of Section 2), and the party's own history and recent development, as well as its relationship with Morocco's other Islamist movements (the focus of Section 3). Section 4 looks specifically at what the PJD stands for, in areas such as human rights, political reform and foreign relations. A concluding section suggests how western policymakers might attempt to engage with political Islam in Morocco, in the context of support for a wider process of political reform.

2. Recent political history of Morocco

To understand the current political challenges facing Morocco, and the rise in support for political Islamist movements like the PJD, it is important to look briefly at recent Moroccan history.

The modern Moroccan political system was established in 1956, following the collapse of French colonial rule in North Africa. Resistance to the colonial protectorate began several decades earlier as violent but uncoordinated tribal uprisings, before eventually coalescing into a movement of political opposition. The first organised group to emerge in the 1930s was the National Party, which reformed itself in 1944 as the secular nationalist Istiqlal (Independence) party.

While this movement commanded a substantial popular following, royal support was ultimately crucial to the success of the nationalists in achieving independence from France. The sultan, Mohammed V, came under strong pressure from the colonial authorities to collaborate and reach a political deal short of independence, but he chose instead to publicly advocate the demand for full independence made by Istiqlal and other parties. He was forced into exile by the protectorate government in 1953, but this only served to increase his popularity and further strengthened the nationalist opposition forces (Howe 2005).

Such was the pressure from the Moroccan public that the French were compelled to allow Mohammed V to return from exile, upon which he was greeted as a national hero by much of Moroccan society. But at the same time, he was keenly aware that the palace would need to make changes to the existing political order if it

wanted to retain public support and legitimacy after independence. To this end, Mohammed V transformed the sultanate into a monarchy, and assembled a government of national unity, including the Istiqlal and the left-wing Union Nationale des Forces Populaires (UNFP), which had split from the Istiqlal and later emerged as the victor in Morocco's first post-independence elections.

However these constitutional reforms were more cosmetic than real, and they did not prove to be the first steps towards a more modern constitutional system. On the contrary, Mohammed V proved adroit at marginalising the political parties that opposed him and at exercising largely untrammelled power. In 1960 he dismissed the UNFP cabinet and created his own, assuming the role of Prime Minister. He further consolidated his influence across the country through extensive use of patronage, by forging close links with the rural notables and by developing a strong security apparatus.

Les années de plomb

On the death of Mohammed V in 1961, his son, Hassan II, inherited a system that was highly centralised, based around direct monarchical control, and with a weak and fragmented party political system. Hassan's political power was enhanced by two other factors: religion and patronage. The Moroccan King is considered to be a descendant of the prophet and, as *Amir al Mu-minin* (Commander of the Faithful), the supreme religious authority in the country. Hassan also exerted influence and power through a network of traditional monarchical institutions called the *Makhzan*: Ottaway and Riley define this as 'an imprecise term originally denoting an elite of palace retainers, regional and provincial administrators, and military officers, connected to it by entrenched patronage networks' (Ottaway and Riley 2006: 4).

Hassan II went much further than his father in centralising political control and suppressing opposition, to the extent that the first 30 years of his rule are commonly referred to in Morocco as the 'années de plomb' or the 'years of lead'. Elections were held and independent political parties were allowed to exist, but only on the condition that they refrain from questioning the king's authority. This was also a period characterised by large-scale human rights violations, including abductions, disappearances and torture. The new constitution of 1962 set the tone for this era, giving the monarch the power to nominate and dismiss the Prime Minister and Cabinet at his discretion without taking into account election results, to dissolve parliament, and to assume unlimited emergency powers.

The beginnings of reform

It was not until the 1990s that Morocco's stagnant political situation began to change. A new global context, following the end of the Cold War, led some of Morocco's external partners to put a stronger emphasis on better governance. In 1992, for example, the European Parliament refused to grant Morocco a substantial aid package, primarily because of its poor performance on human rights. Also mindful of the violent civil war that had engulfed neighbouring Algeria when its government refused to accept the election victory of the Islamic Salvation Front (ISF), Hassan II recognised that Morocco needed a degree of reform if it was to avoid a similar fate. Domestic unrest in Morocco was already on the rise at this time, fuelled by prolonged droughts, a rapid rate of urbanisation and high levels of unemployment. The king's age and increasingly poor health

further convinced him to take steps towards reform while he was still able to control the process. These reforms focused on three broad issues: human rights, parliamentary power, and political inclusion.

In 1990, Hassan established the Consultative Council on Human Rights (the Conseil Consultatif des Droits de l'Homme – CCDH) to advise him on human rights issues. The infamous Tazmamart jail was closed in 1991, following the publication of a devastating exposé by Amnesty International of the acts of torture that had been committed there. A few years later, in 1993, Morocco ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, or Inhuman or Degrading Treatment, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of Migrants.

While these measures were an encouraging sign of openness on the part of the government, they were far from adequate in terms of providing redress to the victims of repression. Rather, they were an easy way for the King to pay lip service to human rights without having to make more substantive changes to the political system in Morocco. Thousands of political prisoners remained incarcerated until after the death of Hassan. Meanwhile, in 1998, the US State Department Country Report on Morocco expressed continuing concern about extremely poor prison conditions, the fact that security forces were still torturing and abusing detainees, flawed and impartial criminal trials, censorship and limitations on freedom of speech, and discrimination against women (Campbell 2003).

The most significant political reform enacted by Hassan during this period was the implementation of the *alternance*: an attempt to bring opposition parties into the government. After the 1997 parliamentary elections, the king did not select his government from the palace parties, as he had always done previously. He instead asked Abdel Rahman Youssoufi, the leader of the Union Socialiste des Forces Populaires (USFP), to become prime minister.

This increase in political participation by opposition parties was an important step, but these reforms were imposed from above rather than being the result of political pressure from below. The *alternance* may have brought the Kutla parties (a bloc that included the USFP, Istiqlal and a number of smaller parties on the political left) in from the cold, but it did not fundamentally alter the balance of power in Morocco. The King remained the decisive arbiter of Moroccan politics. Indeed, by co-opting the major political parties, he was able to consolidate and further strengthen his grip over Moroccan society.

Mohammed VI: the moderniser

After the death of Hassan II in 1999, Mohammed VI succeeded to the throne. This transition was initially greeted with considerable optimism, both inside and outside the country. His early statements suggested that he was intent on far-reaching reforms, even hinting that he favoured Morocco's transformation into a full-blown democracy.

Mohammed VI has certainly introduced some significant changes over the last eight years. On human rights, for example, he released a large number of political prisoners, strengthened the Consultative Council on Human Rights and amended the penal code to formally abolish torture. He has also taken the unusual step of acknowledging the government's responsibility for forced

disappearances and torture that took place under his father and grandfather. Some of the specific details of these abuses came out during the proceedings of the Equity and Reconciliation Commission (Instance Équité et Réconciliation – IER).

While the IER has been criticised for being insufficiently comprehensive and rigorous – overlooking certain past crimes and not investigating any abuses that have taken place since 1999 – there is no precedent for this kind of initiative elsewhere in the Arab world. Evidence hearings were conducted in public, under the scrutiny of national and international media and NGOs, and they gave victims the opportunity to describe their experiences of disappearances, arbitrary detention and torture (Freedom House 2006).

Mohammed VI has also pushed forward the reform agenda around women's rights, including making significant changes to the *Mudawana* (family code). Although proposed amendments to this were initially resisted fiercely, particularly by the Islamist parties, the changes were authorised by the king in February 2004. The new Code has raised the marriage age from 15 to 18, permits women to divorce by mutual consent, curbs polygamy, limits the ability of men to ask for divorce unilaterally, and substitutes a wife's duty of obedience with the concept of joint responsibility (Ottaway and Riley 2006).

The long-term impact of these reforms will of course depend on the determination of the government to enforce them effectively. A comprehensive system of family courts has not yet been established, and there is concern that implementation of the new code is moving too slowly, particularly in rural areas. The practical impact of the changes is also limited by there being a small number of trained judges and by many women's lack of information about their rights. Yet the alterations to the *Mudawana* have been greeted with enthusiasm by domestic women's rights activists and international governments and NGOs alike.

Under Mohammed VI, a number of steps have also been taken in respect of freedom of expression. Restrictions on the press have been eased by the passage of a revision to the press law in 2002. This amendment diminished jail terms and fines that could be imposed on journalists and publications, required the state security forces to justify suspension or closure of publications and made it easier for new publications to be created (CSIS 2006). Another welcome development was the decision in January 2003 to end the state's monopoly on audiovisual media.

These measures have encouraged a degree of openness in Moroccan public debate, especially on previously taboo subjects such as Western Sahara, human rights abuses, corruption and the rise of Islamism. However, as with other reforms introduced by Mohammed VI, there are clear limits on the extent of this freedom. Criticisms of the king, the monarchy, territorial integrity, God or Islam are still frequently met with repressive measures.

For example, at the end of 2006, the popular publication *Nichane* was banned for two months by the government for printing an article that repeated some jokes about religion, sex and politics commonly heard in Morocco. *Nichane's* editor Driss Ksikes and journalist Sanaa al-Aji were charged in court with insulting Islam and offending public morality. In January 2007 both journalists were

fined US\$8,000, given three-year suspended prison sentences and banned from working for two months. This incident is a stark reminder of the limits to free expression in Morocco.

In short, while there are modernising impulses at work in Moroccan society, these should not be equated with genuine democratisation. At present, there is little indication that Morocco is moving towards a democracy, where real power rests with the elected representatives of the people. The measures of political reform introduced by Mohammed VI have made Morocco more open and less authoritarian, but they have not touched the essential structures of power. In 2002, for example, he reverted to the old practice of naming a Prime Minister without any reference to the election results, choosing a premier not from the largest party, but rather a technocrat without any political affiliation. Political and religious authority and power remain firmly in the hands of Mohammed VI.

3. Islamist parties and movements in Morocco

Morocco is distinctive in the Arab world in that it has a long history of multi-party politics, dating back to the 1940s. In the years since independence the palace has often cracked down on political parties, but unlike other authoritarian governments in the region, it has never banned them outright or attempted to create a single party system (Ottaway and Hamzawy 2007). However, although a number of Morocco's parties are well-established, notably the *Istiqlal* independence party and the socialist USFP, few of these currently offer a well-organised challenge to the regime.

The *alternance* policy that Hassan II implemented in the late 1990s to co-opt the opposition parties worked spectacularly well, transforming the USFP and *Istiqlal* into government parties that now oppose the PJD instead of the regime. By aligning themselves with the monarchy, these parties have guaranteed their continued inclusion in government. But the trade-off has been a significant loss of popular legitimacy and support to the Islamist parties, which are widely acknowledged as having greater credibility as opposition movements and as being much more effective at delivering social services on a local level.

Elsewhere, excellent reports from the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace have discussed the challenges facing these 'secular' opposition parties in Morocco and the wider Arab world (see Ottaway and Riley 2006, Ottaway and Hamzawy 2007). Rather than adding to that body of work, this section will instead provide a succinct history of the two major political Islamist movements in the country: the Party of Justice and Development (PJD) and *Al Adl wal Ihsan* (the Association of Justice and Charity). It will also touch briefly on some of Morocco's other Islamist movements, including those extremist elements that advocate and practise violence.

As in other Arab states, political Islamist movements gained support in Morocco from the late 1960s onwards, as an alternative to nationalist, leftist and secular parties and in response to the failures of the existing regime to deliver development, jobs and justice for ordinary people. This environment created a favourable recruiting ground for those espousing more overtly religious rather than secular solutions to the country's problems. To shore up his own position and to weaken his secular opponents, the growth of

political Islamist movements was actually encouraged by King Hassan in the 1960s.

Like other rulers in the Arab world, he judged – erroneously as it turned out – that Islamist forces would be easier to co-opt and that they would serve as a useful counterweight to the Nasserites and the leftist parties. To this end, Hassan allowed Saudi Arabia to promote Wahhabism in Morocco, through preachers, publications, audio cassettes and financial contributions (Howe 2005). These combined factors have contributed to the growth of political Islam in Morocco over the last few decades, though some of the implications of these developments were not fully manifest until the 1990s.

Party of Justice and Development (PJD)

The first organised political Islamist group in Morocco – and the forerunner to the modern PJD – was the al-Shabiba al-Islamiyya (Islamic Youth Association), founded in 1969 by Abdelkrim Moutti, a leader of the National Teachers Union. This movement attracted a large following in the early 1970s, particularly from high school and university teachers and students. The group's stated aims included the 'moralisation' of society, the Arabisation of education and the implementation of Islamic law (Howe 2005). But in the mid-1970s the movement split after its leader was implicated in the assassination of a high-profile politician, Omar Benjelloun. Moutti fled abroad, accusing the Moroccan security services of trying to frame him for the killing in order to discredit him and the Islamic Youth Association.

Weakened by Moutti's departure, by a regime clampdown and by internal conflicts, the Association broke up into several factions. From the early 1980s, the main successor group chose to adopt a less confrontational approach towards the government. This group, the Al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya, sought to become a legitimate participant in Moroccan politics. However, it took a further ten years and a change in name that omitted any reference to Islam (Al Islah wal Tajdid) before the King chose to recognise the group as a legitimate association.

The movement tried a variety of ways to engage in the political process, including an unsuccessful attempt to join the Istiqlal party. In 1996, Al Islah wal Tajdid joined a small party, the Mouvement Populaire Démocratique et Constitutionnel (MPDC). Through this, Al Islah was able to take over the party and put forward candidates in the 1997 elections, attaining nine seats in the Parliament.

In 1998, the MPDC changed its name, becoming the Party of Justice and Development. Al Islah, following a merger with another smaller Islamist party, also changed its name to Al Tawhid wal Islah (Unity and Reform). Today, these names and the formal separation persist: the PJD as a political party that stands in local and national elections, and Al Tawhid as the religious movement that engages in broader social and proselytising activities (Tamam 2007).

The PJD has been careful to emphasise its commitment to democratic procedures, even when these might appear to conflict with its values as an Islamic movement. For example, the PJD initially opposed the changes to the Mudawana that were put forward in 2004, and party activists campaigned strongly against their adoption. However, it eventually accepted the revisions to the social code on the grounds that they were the outcome of a

democratic process.

Over recent years, the PJD has built up a strong organisational base and considerable popular support across the country, under the leadership of Saad Eddine Othmani (the party's secretary general since 2004). It has accomplished this by adopting a pragmatic approach to political involvement, and by positioning itself as a constructive critic of the new *alternance* government, while at the same time stressing that it accepts the legitimacy of the monarchy as the supreme political and religious authority in the country. The value of this strategy was apparent during the 2002 parliamentary elections, when the PJD limited the number of districts in which it stood (a decision that the party was pressured to make by the palace), but where it still managed to win 42 of the 325 seats, establishing itself as the third largest national party after Istiqlal and the USFP.

This paper is written in advance of parliamentary elections in Morocco in September, and it remains to be seen whether the PJD will make significant gains, as the nature of the Moroccan electoral system and the large number of political parties makes it extremely difficult for any one party to acquire an outright majority of seats. It is uncertain how the PJD might respond to an offer from the King to participate in the government in some form, or what use it would make of an increase in its power. Given the PJD's acceptance of the political and religious authority of the King, and its willingness to operate within the existing rules of the Moroccan political system, such an outcome is not impossible. However, it will clearly depend on whether the King judges that the country's political stability is best served by having it inside the Moroccan political tent rather than outside it. If the PJD does well in the elections, it is also unclear how the secular parties might respond. Would they work with the PJD to promote political reform or with the King to thwart the prospects of the Islamists?

More direct involvement in the government would also involve certain risks for the PJD. To a greater extent than for some of the other Moroccan political parties, the PJD has a constituency of supporters who would expect to see concrete changes as a result of the party's participation in government. Being co-opted into the government – 'the Makhzanisation of the PJD', as one commentator put it to us – could actually weaken its authority and influence, with some of its grassroots supporters being lost to more radical Islamist movements like Al Adl wal Ihsan (the Justice and Charity Association), led by the charismatic Sheikh Abdessalam Yassine.

Al Adl wal Ihsan

Al Adl is thought to have around 30,000 registered members and a further 140,000 followers, but despite its popularity it is still formally banned as a political party. Yassine launched Al Adl wal Ihsan in 1974 by sending an open letter to Hassan II that condemned his arrogation of religious authority in Morocco. Since this time, he has preached a message of non-violent opposition to the king, undeterred by prolonged periods of imprisonment and house arrest. While Yassine was freed by Mohammed VI in 2000, he continues to criticise the King and to call for far-reaching changes in Moroccan society.

Although Al Adl wal Ihsan and the PJD are often grouped together under the label of 'Islamist opposition' in Morocco, the two

movements are organisationally and ideologically distinct in a number of important ways. First, while the PJD has accepted the king's authority as the spiritual and temporal head of the country as a precondition for gaining access to the political process, al Adl rejects this position. Sheikh Yassine has consistently argued that Islam should define the powers and prerogatives of the monarch and as such has refused to participate in elections or the government. The movement has also strongly censured the King for using Islam to serve his own interests and maintain monarchical control rather than for the benefit of Morocco's people.

Second, as noted in the context of reforms to the Mudawana, the PJD has demonstrated a willingness to compromise when faced with political issues that might appear to conflict with its interpretation of Islamic values. By contrast, al Adl condemns any secular initiative aimed at separating religion and politics, and advocates the creation of an 'Islamic democracy' (Entelis 2002).

Third, while the PJD has adopted the characteristics and language of a modern political party, al Adl is built around the central figure of Sheikh Yassine and its doctrine draws heavily on mystical Sufist influences. This often makes it difficult for outsiders to get a clear sense of what Al Adl stands for and what it hopes to achieve.

Analysts close to the movement suggest that the opaque nature of Al Adl wal Ihsan reflects a fundamental uncertainty within the organisation about whether it should attempt to work inside or outside existing political structures to promote change in Morocco. Until the movement resolves these internal debates, it is unlikely that Al Adl will choose to compete for electoral power. Younger and more politically motivated individuals rising through the ranks of Al Adl wal Ihsan may decide to follow the PJD's example in the future by creating an organised political group although, given the movement's historically antagonistic relationship with the regime, it seems unlikely that such a party would be permitted to stand for elections.

The PJD's success in establishing a viable political party has also encouraged other Islamists with political ambitions. In 2005, two new parties with an Islamic frame of reference – the Al-Badil Al-Hadari (Civilized Alternative) and the New Leftist Islamic Party – were licensed. However, these have yet to attract a large following, and are unlikely to make much headway in the 2007 parliamentary elections.

The radical fringe

Of course, there are other politicised Islamic forces in Morocco. These are radical Islamists that advocate and practise violence and terror. For many years, Moroccans felt themselves to be immune to this kind of extremism; but bombings in Casablanca in 2003 and then in Madrid in 2004 showed that this was no longer the case.

In the 1990s, a number of radical imams took advantage of the more liberal atmosphere in the country to espouse hard-line and often anti-semitic views. A particularly aggressive fatwa was issued just one week after the attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. In this period, a number of violent attacks were also linked to religious extremists. The Moroccan Women Centre of Information and Observation accused the authorities of 'ignoring the acts of violence by religious extremists and allowing fatwas justifying assassination' (Howe 2005: 140)

In 2002, the Moroccan security forces uncovered an Al-Qaeda network in Casablanca. This group was alleged to have been planning attacks against American and naval vessels in the Strait of Gibraltar, as well as attacks on popular Moroccan tourist destinations. A few weeks later, the authorities also made public their discovery of a clandestine network of Salafiya Jihadia Islamic extremists who were implicated in violence and killings.

But it was the events of 16 May 2003 that really shattered the notion that Morocco was immune from the violence that affects other parts of the region: 14 Moroccan suicide bombers attacked foreign and Jewish targets in Casablanca, killing 45 people. This experience was profoundly shocking for most ordinary Moroccans. It was compounded a year later when a major terrorist attack took place in Madrid, killing 191 people and wounding 1,800. The investigation by the Spanish police and intelligence agencies revealed that it was primarily Moroccans that were implicated in the planning and execution of the bombings (Howe 2005: ix).

Despite the government crackdown that followed these events, radical Islam and violence continues to find an outlet in Morocco. In March 2007, a suicide bomber blew himself up in a Casablanca Internet café in what appeared to be an isolated incident. Yet investigations uncovered a larger alleged terrorist operation to target tourist sites across the country. In April, four suspects in this plot were confronted by the police. One was shot dead, and the remaining three detonated explosive belts to avoid capture, killing a policeman and injuring 21. A fortnight later, another two individuals blew themselves up outside the US Consulate and Language Center in Casablanca.

The threat posed by these movements is a very real one. It will require effective policing and intelligence cooperation to thwart further atrocities, as well as a range of policy responses to undercut the appeal of these groups to ordinary Moroccans. In this context, it would be a serious risk to lump all Islamists together and to fail to acknowledge the diversity of opinion that exists among political Islamists. As the International Crisis Group has wisely argued:

'By adopting a sledge-hammer approach which refuses to differentiate between modernist and fundamentalist varieties of Islamism, American and European policy-makers risk provoking one of two equally undesirable outcomes: either inducing the different strands of Islamic activism to band together in reaction, attenuating differences that might otherwise be fruitfully developed, or causing the non-violent and modernist tendencies to be eclipsed by the jihadis.' (International Crisis Group 2005: ii)

4. What does the PJD believe in?

In this section we look specifically at the PJD's attitude towards recent political and social reforms, and we consider its policy and political agenda. As noted in the Introduction to this report, the PJD is one of the best organised political Islamist movements in the Arab

world. It has been represented in the Moroccan Parliament since 2002, and it is likely to do well in Morocco's forthcoming parliamentary elections. Western policymakers have a clear interest, therefore, in better understanding its political intentions.

Our assessment of the PJD's position on key issues is derived from detailed interviews we conducted with members of the movement and with Moroccan analysts who know the movement well. It is also drawn from the PJD's formal policy statements, speeches by PJD representatives at public forums, including the ippr symposium in April 2007 in Rabat, a review of the existing English, French and Arabic literature on the movement, and from an assessment of the policy stances taken by the PJD's elected representatives in the Moroccan Parliament over the last decade.

The PJD describes itself as a national political party with an Islamic frame of reference. It does not call for the creation of an Islamic state since it accepts the doctrinal and constitutional legitimacy of the monarchy's religious authority. The party's stated objective is to contribute to the creation of a modern, democratic, prosperous and united Morocco. We have grouped our analysis of the PJD's policy positions into three broad categories of issues – human rights, political reform, and foreign relations.

Human rights

Our assessment of the PJD's stance on human rights will consider four distinct but related issues:

- 1) The position of women in Moroccan society, including the country's reformed family code, the *Mudawana*
- 2) The death penalty
- 3) Freedom of the press
- 4) The role of the Moroccan Equity and Reconciliation Commission.

The position of women

In formal policy papers and statements, the PJD is very critical of the unfavourable conditions experienced by many women in Moroccan society. For example, one important policy document says that 'the life of Moroccan women is characterised by illiteracy, they suffer from roughness and legal injustice. They are also subject to social and economic exploitation, in addition to a weak presence in relation to decision-making processes' (PJD 2007). Almost without exception, the representatives of the PJD interviewed for this report emphasised that the position of women in Moroccan society needs to be significantly improved. As noted in the last section, while initially hostile, the PJD ultimately supported the 2004 reforms to the *Mudawana*.

However, the measures that the PJD advocates for enhancing the position of women in Moroccan society are not particularly well defined. And the party's original stance towards reform of the *Mudawana* raises real scepticism in many quarters about the depth of its commitment to enhancing Moroccan women's political, social and legal status in a manner consistent with the UN Declaration on Human Rights and other international human rights covenants.

The PJD campaigned strongly against the adoption of the revised family code, including organising large demonstrations against it (Tozy 1999). After several previous attempts to change the code over a number of years, the alterations were only accepted by the

Moroccan Parliament under pressure from the King, who effectively forced them through in the aftermath of the Casablanca bombings of 2003. This might suggest that the PJD's formal acceptance of the changes was a reflection of the political circumstances of the moment (and its inability to continue blocking it) rather than a genuine conversion to the merits of the case. It might also be seen as a reflection of the PJD's weakness at that point. The party suffered a severe popular backlash following the Casablanca attacks and was accused by its critics of duplicity because some of its more radical members had issued violent fatwas. The PJD could thus be seen as attempting to appease its more ardent critics by softening its hard-line positions on the *Mudawana* and moderating its views on other issues.

That said, the PJD argued at the time and has reiterated subsequently that it accepted the changes because they were the outcome of a democratic process. One of the PJD's elected Deputies, Abdellah Baha, has also argued that the new Family Code is a step in the right direction, by helping to protect the family, and creating favourable conditions for children and the achievement of greater equity for women (Malki 2007). Most of the PJD representatives interviewed for this paper said that they supported the recent changes to the *Mudawana*, though often with unspecified reservations.

A minority of those members of the PJD interviewed were clearly unhappy with the changes, arguing that the revisions had been imposed according to a 'European' or 'western liberal view', were damaging to family life, that the revised code had brought no real improvement in the position of Moroccan women, and that it was 'unnecessary', because women's circumstances should be improved in other, non-legal ways.

The use of the death penalty

In comparison to other states in the region, Morocco takes a fairly moderate approach to capital punishment. It has not applied the death penalty since 1993, although a number of individuals have been sentenced to death in recent years, notably following the Casablanca bombings in 2003. Among PJD representatives interviewed, there was a lack of consensus on the use of the death penalty. A small minority said that they opposed the death penalty unreservedly. However, the majority supported the use of the death penalty, but in a smaller number of cases and subject to tighter legal safeguards, with a longer time period for appeal and with greater consideration given to alternatives, for example financial compensation. In the view of most respondents, the crimes judged appropriate for the use of the death penalty were 'intentional death crimes'.

Freedom of the press

PJD representatives provided a variety of responses to the question about press freedom. They were specifically asked whether there should continue to be certain taboo subjects that are beyond criticism in the press, for example the role of the King, the army, the issue of Western Sahara and religion. Most argued that there was more freedom for the press in Morocco than previously. Morocco's press was seen as increasingly able to address sensitive issues and this was something they supported, as long as it was done in a 'responsible' manner. However, the responses suggest a continuing ambiguity about what precisely responsible means in this context.

Equity and Reconciliation Commission

The PJD does not appear to have a common position on the Equity and Reconciliation Commission. Some of those PJD representatives that we interviewed were very critical of it, arguing that it had failed to fully investigate thousands of cases of serious human rights abuse that took place over several decades. They also suggested that there were particular cases implicating individuals in the Moroccan ruling elite that were deliberately overlooked or sidelined. However the majority of respondents felt, albeit with reservations, that the Commission had been positive. They said that it was symbolic and an important advance that the Moroccan state had acknowledged its responsibility for past abuses.

In terms of reservations, however, it was argued that the proposals made for improving Morocco's record on human rights have not been implemented adequately and that human rights abuses were continuing. Political Islamists were felt to be particularly vulnerable to mistreatment following the Casablanca bombings of 2003, when the authorities had rounded up large numbers of people and detained them for long periods, sometimes on quite flimsy evidence.

Political reform

Our assessment of the PJD's stance on political reform will consider five issues:

- 1) The relationship between the PJD and Islam
- 2) The role of non-Muslims in the PJD
- 3) The PJD's specific attitude towards the role of Shari'a law
- 4) The PJD's position on making the Moroccan political system more representative and accountable
- 5) The PJD's views on extremism in Morocco and how it might best be countered.

The relationship between the PJD and Islam

The PJD has a clear line on this. It defines itself as a political party with an Islamic frame of reference. This appears on the PJD website; it was also the response provided consistently by PJD representatives we interviewed. Two of these respondents elaborated slightly, to say that the PJD is 'not a religious party', and that the party does not claim to 'speak on behalf of Islam' or suggest that it has 'the absolute truth'. Other respondents argued that Islam is the dominant but not the only reference for the party and that it is also open to 'human and universal principles'.

The role of non-Muslims in the PJD

Article 4 of the party political law of Morocco prohibits the creation of religious parties. Legally, therefore, the PJD, and other parties, would not officially be able to prevent those of a different religious faith becoming members of the party. However, we were interested to gauge the attitude and practical receptiveness of the PJD to the involvement and participation of non-Muslims.

The vast majority of those PJD members interviewed for this report said that they had no objection to non-Muslims becoming members of the PJD. Several stressed the constitutional point that their exclusion would be illegal. Others argued that membership of the PJD is conditional on citizenship, not religious faith, and that a non-Muslim would be welcomed into the party provided that he accepts the party's programme and principles, in addition to other legal

conditions. Several interviewees stressed that competence, not religion, would determine whether a member acquired a position of authority in the party. Other members of the PJD pointed out that very few non-Muslims would be likely to join the party, given that the vast majority of Moroccan citizens are Muslims (and hence that there are few non-Muslims from which party members could be drawn), and also given the Islamic reference point for the PJD.

The role of Shari'a law

PJD representatives were asked whether there were additional aspects of Shari'a law that should be incorporated into the Moroccan legal system and if so, which ones? Almost all of the interviewees answered the first part of the question in the affirmative. A typical response was to suggest that 'Shari'a is the moral basis for fighting corruption, moralising public life, reinforcing justice and for achieving development and liberty'. However, the PJD respondents were non-specific and sometimes ambiguous concerning those additional aspects of the Shari'a that should actually be incorporated into the Moroccan legal code. Some argued that this change could be facilitated through the integration of the Ulema (Muslim legal scholars) into the legislation process. There was no acknowledgement by the respondents of any tension – real or potential – between civil law and religious law, and what the extension of Shari'a law might mean, for example, for non-Muslims living in Morocco.

Representation and accountability

In its official policy statements, the PJD says that 'the peaceful, ballot-based alternation of powers is the best and soundest way of solving the problem of authority and access to it, and of securing the nation's stability and security, as well as safeguarding its autonomy and integrity.' It also argues that 'the right of the nation to choose its rulers is one of the fundamental principles upon which the ruler's legitimacy is founded in an Islamic regime. Power rotation is then an expression of this Islamic principle' (PJD 2007).

In their interview responses, PJD representatives were also consistent in their calls for far-reaching political and constitutional reform in Morocco. Four proposals for reform featured strongly in the responses. First, there was support for giving parliament a bigger say on issues of legislation and audit. Second, it was argued that there should be a more formal separation of powers between the monarchy, parliament and the courts. Third, it was suggested that there should be more transparent elections and a new law on political parties. Fourth, there was support for reforming the role of the King, so that he acts 'as a referee and not as a part of the political game'.

Extremism in Morocco

PJD representatives were asked whether they thought there was growing support for terrorist groups in Morocco, and, if so, why. They were also asked what the government should do about groups or individuals who use terrorist violence to achieve their goals. Although there have been a number of terrorist incidents in Morocco in recent years, most of our PJD respondents were very reluctant to acknowledge that support for terrorism and extremism was on the increase. The nature of the responses to this question suggests that PJD representatives are acutely sensitive to the charge – made by some of their opponents – that they are tacit sympathisers with violent action. This sensitivity persists despite a

clear condemnation by the PJD of the Casablanca bombings and other terrorist incidents. In terms of responding to the terrorist threat, most of the PJD representatives that we interviewed argued that the government should focus its efforts on tackling alienation, poverty and injustice, and ensuring that anti-terrorist action is not arbitrary but operates within a just legal framework.

Foreign relations

PJD representatives were questioned on their attitudes to Europe and North America.

Europe

Respondents were asked on which issues the European Union and Morocco should cooperate. A diverse set of issues were identified, including development and economic reform, scientific research, cultural exchanges, security, and immigration. Of these, the one issue highlighted most frequently was economic cooperation, including investment, trade and development assistance. They were asked about the Euro Mediterranean Partnership (the Barcelona Process), which is the framework that governs political, economic and social relations between EU states and partners of the Southern Mediterranean. They were also questioned about the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), which negotiates specific action plans for reform in selected states that border Europe. Respondents had relatively little to say about either of these initiatives, suggesting that not much was known about them. Those who did have views were not particularly favourable, arguing that the Barcelona Process and the new ENP had not and would not benefit Moroccans. The idea that Europe was exploiting Morocco and the peoples of North Africa more generally was a strong theme in the responses.

North America

Most of the PJD respondents were highly critical of the United States's role in Morocco and the broader Middle East. While they acknowledged the US's power and prominence in world affairs, almost all of the respondents viewed the US as pursuing 'unfair' policies on Palestine and Iraq. The US's existing relations with the Moroccan government were also seen to be governed by its own economic and strategic interests in the region. For example, PJD respondents viewed the US-Moroccan free trade agreement as heavily weighted in favour of the US.

A number of those interviewed drew a clear distinction between the American people and the policies of the Bush administration. The latter was viewed very negatively, but the American people were spoken of in positive terms. A number of respondents spoke favourably of Canada. With a large number of Moroccan immigrants living in Canada, there are extensive ties between the two countries. Canada was also viewed by some respondents as a model for emulation: 'a state of diversity, and a federal system which has experience with a self-government system in Quebec, from which Morocco can benefit'.

5. The role of international partners

Morocco has been described as 'an island, surrounded by the Atlantic and the Mediterranean and isolated from the rest of the continent by a hostile Algeria on the east and the disputed territory of Western Sahara to the south' (Howe 2005: 316). Yet Morocco in

fact has extensive international relations. Its proximity to Europe and inclusion in the European Neighbourhood Policy has established the country as a link between Europe, Africa and the Arab world. For several decades now, there have also been strong ties between the US and the Moroccan monarchy.

This concluding section considers how external actors, and particularly North American and European governments, should relate to the changing political situation in Morocco. What are their interests in Morocco and what values and strategies should guide their attempts to support reform in the country? Finally, what form of engagement, if any, is appropriate with Morocco's mainstream Islamist movement, the PJD?

North American partners

The Moroccan regime is one of the US's strongest allies in the Middle East, supportive of US interests on issues like international terrorism. Although Morocco is not a democracy, is responsible for some ongoing human rights violations, and continues to occupy Western Sahara, the US has preferred to highlight Morocco's successes rather than criticise its shortcomings. At a time when the US has few allies left in the Middle East, the current Bush administration sees little value in unnecessarily antagonising the regime of Mohammed VI, and it has 'rewarded' Morocco for its progress on human rights and political reform by establishing a free trade agreement. In 2004, the US designated Morocco 'a major non-NATO ally', which led to an easing of restrictions on arms sales.

The US has also been willing to deal with Morocco's political parties, including the PJD, often more directly than many European governments. PJD leaders have contacts with US embassy officials, are invited along with other leaders to embassy receptions, and have no trouble obtaining visas to the United States (Ottaway and Riley 2007). In March 2006, the PJD organised a conference in Rabat on American decision-making and its impact on Moroccan-American relations, to which American government and academic representatives were invited.

However, the relationship between the US and the PJD has cooled in recent months. This is largely due to the increasingly negative perceptions of American efforts to promote democracy in the Middle East, which have resulted from the US occupation of Iraq, and its support for Israel during the war in Lebanon in the summer of 2006. While the PJD has traditionally taken part in aid programmes sponsored by the United States Agency for International Development and other democracy promotion bodies such as the International Republican Institute, it now makes a point of refusing to participate in US-funded political party training sessions and consultations (Liddell 2007).

European partners

Morocco is the leading recipient of EU funds under the MEDA programme, the EU's main aid programme for its Mediterranean partners. Morocco has received some €1.25 billion in EU grants over the past decade. Morocco is also viewed by the European Union as a 'privileged partner'. A recent EU strategy paper on Morocco notes that:

'the EU is Morocco's most important export market, its leading public and private external investor and its most

important tourist market. Morocco also contributes to the EU's energy security as a strategic transit country for Algerian gas and as an exporter of electricity to Spain. Human exchanges are constantly expanding: the EU is the main destination of Moroccan migrant workers and an increasing number of Europeans choose Morocco as a place for holidays or even residence.' (European Union 2007: 3)

Political and economic relations between the EU and Morocco are governed by two frameworks. Since it entered into force in 2000, there has been an Association Agreement between the EU and Morocco. This provides for cooperation on political, economic, social, scientific and cultural matters, as well as moves towards the creation of a free trade area. This Agreement forms part of the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation process (commonly referred to as the Barcelona Process).

Since 2004, the EU has also set up a European Neighbourhood Policy, focused on promoting stability, security and sustainable development on its southern and eastern flanks. The Neighbourhood Policy introduces two elements missing from Barcelona: a stronger emphasis on bilateral relations and the concept of positive differentiation. Both allow the EU to reward countries that move faster with political reform. Another difference between the ENP and Barcelona is that the former would provide participating states with a concrete stake in the institutions of the EU, in particular the single market, providing a further potential incentive for reform.

Morocco was one of the first countries of the Mediterranean to sign a Neighbourhood Action Plan with the EU, setting out a programme of cooperation on a range of economic, political and security issues. While the text of this plan focuses heavily on economic issues and on issues of governance, it is clear that the European Union, particularly its southern member states, is very concerned about the issue of migration, as well as cooperation with the Moroccan authorities on counter-terrorism matters. But the latter concerns are not necessarily inconsistent with the former. Creating better economic opportunities for ordinary Moroccans can help to reduce the 'push factors' that lead so many of them to seek a new life in Europe. Greater progress towards political reform in Morocco could also help to make the country more stable and prosperous and to reduce the appeal of extremist groups.

Given Morocco's strategic importance to Europe, the EU's lack of a clear framework governing relations with the country's mainstream political Islamist movements is therefore surprising. In comparison to the United States, the EU has been extremely reluctant to engage in dialogue with the PJD and al Adl wal Ihsan at an institutional level, either through the Barcelona Process or the ENP. Any exchange that does take place has instead tended to be on an ad hoc and state-to-state basis. Some analysts suggest that this reflects the EU's preoccupation with preserving political stability in its Mediterranean partner states, and its tendency to 'support Arab regimes threatened by the rise of terrorism, even when those regimes are authoritarian' (Amghar 2007: 7).

As we discovered through our own interviews with representatives of the PJD, the failure to formally involve the Islamists in discussions about cooperation efforts between the EU and Morocco has given these movements an unfavourable opinion of the former, and a sense that Europe is less interested in supporting genuine democratisation in Morocco than in imposing its own culture and ideals on the country. A re-evaluation of the EU's approach towards engaging with mainstream political Islamists in Morocco and the region as a whole is therefore essential.

Conclusions and recommendations

As stated in the introduction, the overarching aim of this ipp project is to deepen understanding of political Islamist movements in the Middle East and North Africa on the part of western governments, and to help generate some more thoughtful and constructive policy responses towards them, in the broader context of support for political reform in the region. This will be the theme of a longer, final report. However, this first case study has allowed us to draw some initial conclusions, and below we set out recommendations for how European and North American governments could strengthen their current efforts to support reform processes in Morocco.

Encourage the Moroccan regime to undertake further political reform

Although King Mohammed VI has introduced a degree of political liberalisation since coming to power in 1999, this process has largely stalled. While the pressure for political change will need to come primarily from within, and while external pressure needs to be applied extremely sensitively, European and North American governments do have forms of leverage – like development cooperation and trade and investment ties – that could be used more imaginatively to press the case for political change. In the context of September's elections, it is worth noting that although parliamentary elections are sometimes monitored by domestic observers, non-partisan election monitoring in Morocco is still not a legal requirement and rests entirely at the discretion of the Ministry of Interior (DRI 2007). It would be a small but useful step for European and North American governments to call more insistently for the practice of accepting international election monitors to be brought into formal legislation.

Work with Morocco to combat poverty and economic injustice

Morocco performs very poorly on many human development indicators. Female illiteracy stands at 64 per cent, and in some rural areas may be as high as 90 per cent (UNDP 2007). Addressing this will require a range of interventions, led by the government and people of Morocco, but supported from outside. A promising example is Morocco's National Human Development Initiative (INDH): a programme set up in 2005 to facilitate partnerships between the central government, local authorities, NGOs and community groups with the power to tackle poverty and social exclusion through job creation, sponsorship of cultural and recreational activities and expansion of local infrastructure. The EU already makes a modest financial contribution to this initiative.

But the scale of the problem requires more concerted effort. For example, it has been estimated that at least €2.8bn will be required

to clear more than 350,000 slum dwellings, and a further €800m per year will be needed to support housing construction projects (Martin 2006). External actors have a moral and self-interested case for supporting economic reforms. Illiberal and extremist forces thrive in situations of economic marginalisation, poverty, unemployment and falling living standards. Broad-based economic development, job creation and action against poverty are certainly not a guarantee of political moderation and democratisation. But over the medium term at least, they can help create conditions in which these developments become more likely.

Be assertive and consistent in their support for human rights in Morocco

While Morocco's human rights record under Mohammed VI is significantly better than it was under his father, there are still a number of important areas of concern, including the use of repressive legislation to occasionally punish peaceful opponents, unfair trials and the excessive use of force by police. Since the Casablanca bombings of 2003, Islamists have frequently been on the receiving end of human rights abuses. Western governments, however, have very rarely raised concerns about this with Moroccan officials, although they do occasionally raise concerns about rights abuses against non-Islamists, for example those who support independence for Western Sahara. This lack of consistency over human rights abuses weakens the credibility of western governments.

Western credibility is also severely tarnished by policies like extraordinary rendition and the illegal detention of terrorist suspects at Guantanamo and other camps. Western governments should end these policies immediately and ensure that their future actions to counter terrorism are fully consistent with international human rights law.

Deepen dialogue with Moroccan civil society and political parties, including mainstream Islamist movements like the PJD

There is a particular role here for the European Union. EU policies towards the Middle East and North Africa have largely been negotiated between governments. However, as we discovered

from our interviews with representatives of the PJD, there is a widespread lack of awareness about these agreements and what they mean for Moroccan citizens at lower levels of society. The EU should look for opportunities to engage with Moroccan civil society in the context of the Barcelona process and the European Neighbourhood Policy. A focus on exchanges between young people may be particularly fruitful. According to recent calculations, just over 50 per cent of Moroccans are under the age of 25, and it is this generation that will hugely determine the country's future (UN Population Division 2006).

Provide practical support for Moroccan political parties and parliamentarians

Further political reform in Morocco is heavily dependent on the revitalisation of Morocco's political parties. At present, many of these parties are organisationally weak and lack a clear sense of how Morocco should change. Through bodies like the UK-based Westminster Foundation for Democracy or the US National Endowment for Democracy, European and North American governments should be helping to strengthen the capacity of political parties to organise locally and nationally and to develop a policy and legislative agenda. While there will clearly need to be criteria for working out which parties are eligible for such support and which are not, in our judgement the PJD should be included in these kinds of capacity building programmes on a much more regular basis, alongside Morocco's secular parties like the Istiqlal, the USFP and others.

This does not mean that the PJD should be treated preferentially. Nor does it mean that the crossbar should be set higher for the PJD than for other parties. It simply reflects the fact that political reform will go nowhere if the mainstream Islamists are left out. Western governments committed to supporting democratisation in the region should therefore be more willing to engage directly with these actors themselves, especially on contentious issues relating to gender equality, freedom of expression and the relationship between state and religion. They should also be encouraging the Moroccan government to involve all the key players in Moroccan society, including the political Islamists, in the reform process.

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