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Left–Islamist Opposition Cooperation in Morocco

EVA WEGNER* and MIQUEL PELLICER**

ABSTRACT *This contribution studies the different preferences of Moroccan Islamists and leftists for cooperating with each other. The Islamist Party of Justice and Development (PJD) has been actively seeking an alliance with the leftist Socialist Union of Popular Forces (USFP) since 2007. The USFP’s national leadership has avoided any form of cooperation with the Islamists at the national level, but had to tolerate government coalitions at the local level. We find that the most important driver behind the USFP’s reluctance to ally with the Islamists is its co-optation. The asymmetry in electoral strength and differences in the type of electoral support the two parties enjoy also appear to be important reasons behind the different party preferences. For the PJD, its superior electoral support and the higher degree of programmatic support it enjoys suggest that it expects to be successful in democratic elections, while the opposite seems to be the case for the USFP. Ideology, by contrast, was found to be of little importance in determining the positions of the national PJD or USFP leadership towards cross-party cooperation. The analysis is based on original field research conducted in Morocco and on data from the World Values Survey.*

Introduction

Opposition unity is often portrayed as important, or even as the ‘watershed’ moment, in democratisation processes. In turn, a divided opposition is widely considered to be a key reason behind stalled democratisation processes, as even unpopular rulers can stay in power by using patronage and repression if no strong political alternative exists.¹ Indeed, Morocco appears to be a case in point. Since independence, Moroccan rulers have successfully employed ‘divide and rule’ tactics in dealing with the country’s political opposition,

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¹ N. Van de Walle, ‘Tipping Games: When Do Opposition Parties Coalesce?’, in A. Schedler (ed.), *Electoral Authoritarianism: The Dynamics of Unfree Competition* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2006), pp. 77–92. Crook and Osaghae, for instance, also blame stalled democratisation processes on a divided opposition. See R.C. Crook, ‘Winning Coalitions and Ethno-Regional Politics: The Failure of the Opposition in the 1990 and 1995 Elections in Côte d’Ivoire’, *African Affairs*, 96(383) (1997), pp. 215–242; and E. Osaghae, ‘Democratization in Sub-Saharan Africa: Faltering Prospects, New Hopes’, *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 17(1) (1999), pp. 5–28.

and have thereby survived periods of economic and social crises and even popular protest.²

Since independence, efforts at opposition cooperation in Morocco have revolved primarily around the leftist Socialist Union of Popular Forces (USFP) and the Istiqlal (independence) party. This (on and off) ‘alliance for democratisation’ between the USFP and Istiqlal has often lacked cohesion at key moments, however, and rivalries between party leaders have made them miss relevant opportunities to drive forward political reform.³ The most significant opportunity to push through important constitutional reforms occurred in the 1990s, when King Hassan II needed the two parties’ cooperation to increase his reform credentials, and ultimately included them in the so-called *alternance* government from 1998–2002. Although some of the opposition’s reform demands had been implemented, the power of the monarchy to rule and to govern remained untouched. In fact, the association between the USFP and Istiqlal continues to date in government with no meaningful constitutional reforms on the agenda. Whilst Istiqlal appears largely content with this situation, the USFP’s party base has challenged the viability of remaining in powerless governments subjugated to a ruling monarch.

Since 2007, the Islamist Party of Justice and Development (PJD), a relative newcomer on the Moroccan party political scene, has been attempting to pursue closer cooperation with the USFP. The Islamists’ desire for rapprochement with its former foe arose from a re-evaluation of reform prospects in Morocco. For a decade, the PJD had been focusing on achieving reforms through the ballot box. Up to 2007, the party had been confident that it could gain sufficient electoral strength to push through democratic reforms as the leader of a reform-oriented government. Having failed to win the necessary seats in parliament in the 2007 elections, the party revised its approach towards elections and democratic reforms in Morocco. Whereas the PJD had previously focused almost exclusively on the electoral contest, seeing it as a vehicle for reforms from within, this perception changed after its electoral ‘failure’. Party leaders increasingly perceived that regime interference in electoral mobilisation, and in politics more generally, was ultimately too strong to allow an opposition party to neglect extra-parliamentary pressures for reform, that is, to play the ‘regime game’.⁴ In this context, the Islamists approached the USFP, the party that they perceived as the only other electorally relevant force in Morocco whose agenda includes calls for significant democratic reforms. From the Islamists’ point of view, cooperation with the left, for instance in the form of joint calls for constitutional reforms or protests against

² See J. Waterbury, *The Commander of the Faithful: The Moroccan Political Elite. A Study of Segmented Politics* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1970); I.W. Zartman, ‘Opposition as Support of the State’, in A. Dawisha and I.W. Zartman (eds), *Beyond Coercion: The Durability of the Arab State* (London: Croom Helm, 1988), pp. 61–87; J.-C. Santucci, *Les partis politiques marocains à l’épreuve du pouvoir. Analyse diachronique et socio-politique d’un pluralisme sous contrôle* (Rabat: REMALD Collections Manuels et Travaux Universitaires, 2001); E. Lust-Okar, *Structuring Contestation in the Arab World: Incumbents, Opponents, and Institutions* (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

³ The latest explicit pro-democracy alliance between Istiqlal and the USFP dates back to 1989, when the two political parties formed Kutla al-Democratiyya (democratic block), which also included some smaller parties. In 1992, they published the ‘Memorandum’, which called for far-reaching constitutional reforms. For this and previous cooperation between Istiqlal and the USFP, see L. Storm, *Democratization in Morocco* (London: Routledge, 2007).

⁴ E. Wegner, *Islamist Opposition in Authoritarian Regimes: The Moroccan Party of Justice and Development* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2011).

civil and political rights abuses, is mainly intended to embarrass the Moroccan regime, which has hitherto been able to cultivate a relatively successful image as a democratising regime while remaining inherently autocratic. The credibility of this image at home, and of course abroad, depends strongly on the absence of a strong opposition denouncing authoritarian rule in Morocco.⁵ Cooperation between the most powerful leftist party and the largest legal Islamist force that would take on autocratic rules and practices could thus put meaningful pressure on the regime. As part of its drive to forge closer ties with the USFP, the PJD leadership has promoted the formation of local government coalitions between the PJD and the USFP, following the 2009 municipal elections.⁶

The USFP's response to the PJD's overtures has been mixed. While the national party leadership has so far rejected any form of cooperation with the PJD, local USFP councillors decided in 2009 to enter into governing coalitions with their PJD counterparts in a number of towns across the country, both as senior and junior partners. Thus forged against the will of the USFP leadership, these local government coalitions also alerted the Moroccan regime which, weary of any rapprochement between the two parties, has sought to prevent their establishment.⁷

This contribution explores the position of the USFP and PJD leadership towards cross-party cooperation. More precisely, it seeks to understand the difference in their attitudes towards any such cooperation. Why have PJD leaders actively sought to pursue closer cooperation with the USFP at the national level and advanced the formation of local government coalitions between the two parties at the local level? And why has the USFP leadership rejected PJD offers to cooperate in any form, while local USFP activists forged local government coalitions with the PJD after the 2009 elections? To answer these questions, this analysis will proceed as follows. First, it provides some background on the two political parties and examines how their views towards each other have evolved since the emergence of the PJD on the electoral scene in the late 1990s. Second, it identifies key factors influencing opposition cooperation from the literature on leftist-Islamist cooperation that will serve as a heuristic tool for the study of USFP-PJD cooperation in Morocco. These factors are: (1) ideological differences; (2) expectations of electoral strength; and (3) regime strategies towards the opposition in the form of co-optation and repression. Third, it explores to what extent these factors can explain the differences in the USFP and PJD leadership's attitudes towards cross-party cooperation.

⁵ See E. Wegner, 'Authoritarian King and Democratic Islamists in Morocco', in D. Brumberg and M. Asseburg (eds), *The Challenge of Islamists for EU and US Policies: Conflict, Stability, and Reform* (Washington & Berlin: USIP/SWP, 2007), pp. 53–58.

⁶ In this contribution, *cooperation* will be used as the most abstract term to denote any form of joint activities of Morocco's political parties. *Reform coalition* will be used to denote the type of pro-democracy cooperation sought by the PJD. The term *coalition* in turn will solely denote government coalitions either at the local or national level.

⁷ A USFP councillor in such a local government coalition gave a detailed account of regime attempts to prevent him from forming a coalition with the PJD. These attempts included calls and threats from the governor not only to him—as the leader of the electoral list—but also to other councillors of his party, deemed more 'impressionable' and thus hoped to be incited to either leave the USFP or vote against the coalition. A first attempt of voting the new USFP/PJD city government into office then failed as regime-incited or at least tolerated thugs stormed the city hall and broke the ballot box. After this, the PJD and the USFP agreed on the need to bring the Istiqlal party in—even if they did not need its votes—to secure a broader base for their coalition. As the USFP councillor put it, 'one cannot put pressure on everybody'. Authors' interviews with PJD and USFP councillors, 28–29 June 2009.

Overall, we find little evidence in support of the USFP leadership's claim that it objects to cooperation with the PJD on ideological grounds. Instead, we argue that differences in USFP/PJD attitudes towards cooperation appear to be driven, first, by differences in their respective electoral strength, with the PJD expecting to fare well in democratic elections, while the electoral prospects of the USFP appear far less certain. A second important factor is that the USFP would have to sacrifice its current participation in national government and the related spoils of co-optation for pro-democracy cooperation with the PJD. This also helps explain the difference between the national and local leadership's attitudes toward cooperation, as the USFP's activists on the ground have much less to gain from clinging onto office in unpopular and unsuccessful municipal government coalitions.

The analysis is based on two types of data. First, it draws on several in-depth interviews conducted with USFP and PJD leaders, local activists and councillors during field research in Morocco in 2007, 2008 and 2009. This qualitative evidence is mainly used to trace the evolution of USFP/PJD attitudes towards cross-party cooperation. Second, the analysis draws on quantitative data from the 2001/2002 and 2007 World Values Survey on the attitudes of USFP and PJD supporters on gender roles and the role of religion in politics. The survey data are used as a proxy for the ideological distance that exists between the two political parties. Additionally, we draw on secondary sources to discuss differences in the strength and type of the two parties' electoral support.

USFP, PJD and Their Positions towards Cross-party Cooperation

The USFP's metamorphosis: from opposition to government party

The USFP has metamorphosed over the past four decades from a party of the opposition to a party of government. Until the mid-1970s, the USFP—then operating under the name of the National Union of Popular Forces—stood in direct opposition to a highly repressive regime and at the forefront of demands for greater civil and political liberties.⁸ In these first two decades after independence, the monarchy governed with the help of the military and a vast clientelist network. It was only after the appropriation of the Western Sahara in 1975—providing overwhelming public support to the monarchy and, in this way, making talks with the opposition parties possible—that the USFP became more of a 'loyal' opposition. Whereas it explicitly forsook revolutionary ambitions, the party still attempted to put pressure on the regime for broader political reforms.⁹ The party tried to maintain a close alliance with Istiqlal to that effect, but was often betrayed by the latter, for example after the 1977 elections when Istiqlal joined a government of 'national unity' composed of regime-supportive parties.¹⁰

In the early 1990s, Istiqlal and the USFP renewed their efforts at cross-party cooperation, forming a new alliance and publishing a common memorandum with

⁸ In the 1960s and early 1970s, UNFP leaders and activists were frequently arrested and tortured. In 1965, the UNFP's exiled leader, Mehdi Ben Barka, was kidnapped and assassinated in France. See Santucci, *Les partis politiques marocains à l'épreuve du pouvoir*.

⁹ The USFP split from the UNFP over the issue of the degree of opposition to the regime. The more revolutionary-minded activists, a small minority, remained within the UNFP.

¹⁰ A detailed analysis of the history of USFP–Istiqlal cooperation is beyond the scope of this contribution. Further discussion of this alliance can be found in Storm, *Democratization in Morocco*.

their reform demands, the most important of which called for the direct election of all members of parliament.¹¹ This demand, as well as demands for some other constitutional reforms that upgraded the prerogatives of parliament, was finally met by the regime in 1996.¹² While effectively creating a much more liberal political environment, these reforms did not constitute a substantial change of power relations in Morocco, and the monarchy remained the most powerful institution.¹³ An important part of the liberalisation process was the inclusion of the opposition into the so-called *alternance* government of 1998 and the appointment of then USFP leader Abderrahmane Youssoufi as Prime Minister (1998–2002). While symbolically important, this and subsequent governments in which the USFP took part have not achieved any significant further gains in political reforms.¹⁴ The ensuing electoral decline faced by the USFP has generated recurrent debates within the party about abandoning its cabinet positions and returning to the opposition benches.¹⁵ To date, however, none of these debates has had any consequences and it appears that the current USFP leadership remains committed to its place in the Moroccan government.

The USFP's position towards the PJD has been hostile ever since the latter first participated in elections in 1997. Resentments further increased when the PJD contributed to sabotaging an important social reform promoted by the USFP, the reform of the personal status code in 1999 and, probably more importantly, when the PJD performed very well in the parliamentary elections of 2002.¹⁶ Although the USFP had still won eight seats more than the PJD, it had lost a total of seven seats since the previous elections, while the PJD had gained another 33. The USFP's hostility towards the PJD became very clear after the terrorist attacks of 16 May 2003, for which the USFP tried to blame the PJD. In fact, USFP leader Mohammed El-Yazghi demanded an apology from the PJD to the Moroccan people, and accused it of complicity in the attacks.¹⁷ The USFP's newspaper, *Libération*, ran a campaign against the PJD, with articles alleging the implication of PJD activists in the attacks.¹⁸

¹¹ Published in *L'Opinion*, 8 July 1992. Until 1997, one third of parliament was indirectly elected, serving as a regime tool to 'correct' the results of direct elections.

¹² Other political liberalisation measures introduced by the regime at the time included the release of political prisoners and an increase in press freedoms. The 1996 constitutional reforms also introduced a new indirectly elected upper house of parliament, with significant prerogatives and an essentially pro-regime composition to balance the increased powers of the elected lower house of parliament.

¹³ A. Layachi, 'Economic Reform and Elusive Political Change in Morocco', in Y. Zoubir (ed.), *North Africa in Transition: State, Society and Economic Transformation in the 1990s* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1999), pp. 43–60.

¹⁴ All coalition governments since 1998 have included both the USFP and Istiqlal. For a critical assessment of the *alternance* government, see for instance A. Hidass, 'La liberté d'opinion et d'expression au Maroc: normes contingentes et transition démocratique', *Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord*, 39 (2001), pp. 255–278; and J.-N. Ferrié, 'Fin De Partie: L'échec politique de l'alternance et la transition prolongée', *Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord*, 40 (2002), pp. 308–324.

¹⁵ Istiqlal, by contrast, has not faced a similar electoral decline. This is most likely due to the fact that, unlike the USFP, Istiqlal has never been a strongly programmatic party but has had important support in the countryside. As government participation has increased its patronage capabilities, it has probably contributed positively to its electoral support.

¹⁶ The reform of the personal status code was ultimately implemented as a royal initiative in 2003, earning King Mohamed VI a reputation as a social reformer in the West.

¹⁷ See Wegner, *Islamist Opposition in Authoritarian Regimes*; and E. Wegner and M. Pellicer, 'Islamist Moderation without Democratization: The Coming of Age of the Moroccan Party of Justice and Development?', *Democratization*, 16(1) (2009), pp. 157–175.

¹⁸ These allegations appear to have been false as no PJD activist has ever been formally implicated in the attacks.

Since 2003, however, the USFP has gradually changed its position towards the PJD and considers it a legitimate Moroccan party.¹⁹ It argues that the PJD has ‘opened up’ and moderated its positions.²⁰ Nevertheless, the USFP leadership has so far declined to join forces with the PJD in any way at the national level, although this decision is not entirely consensual.²¹

At the local level, there has been an even more profound change. After the 2003 municipal elections, the USFP national leadership explicitly forbade its councillors to forge local government coalitions with the PJD.²² After the 2009 elections, by contrast, no explicit instructions were given by the USFP leadership regarding local government coalitions in general, and coalitions between the USFP and the PJD were in fact forged in several towns across the country.²³

The characteristics of the coalition-building process do, however, show that this is not a change of the national leadership’s position towards cooperation with the PJD. Most importantly, these local government coalitions were purely initiatives by local activists, wanting to opt out of previous coalitions with other parties that they viewed as unsuccessful—or disastrous—in their performance.²⁴ The USFP leadership considered these government coalitions an accident of the decentralisation of decision-making regarding local government coalitions, not as a conscious decision in favour of political cooperation with the PJD. Although USFP leaders acknowledged that the two parties share some commonalities, for instance in the fight against corruption and in their demands for political reforms, they retained a strong preference for their local government coalitions to comprise the same parties as the national government coalition, in particular the National Rally of Independents (RNI) and Istiqlal.²⁵ Drawing on a previous party congress decision to decentralise government coalition-building at the local level, however, the activists went ahead with their PJD coalitions. In sum, the USFP’s current position is that it is against a pro-democracy alliance with the PJD at the national level, but has to tolerate local cross-party coalitions at the municipal level.

¹⁹ As early as 2004, the USFP sent a delegation to the PJD’s national party congress. See Wegner, *Islamist Opposition in Authoritarian Regimes*.

²⁰ Authors’ interview with a member of the USFP’s political bureau, 29 September 2009. For many, the PJD’s moderation was shown in its vote for a reform of the personal status code that upgraded the rights of women in the autumn of 2003, a reform it had vigorously opposed in 1999. However, the PJD’s vote is better explained as a pragmatic step to display a modern image in the context of the 2003 terrorist attacks. See Wegner, *Islamist Opposition in Authoritarian Regimes*.

²¹ As of yet, the most public expression in favour of a ‘rapprochement’ with the PJD has come from Driss Lachghar, a member of the USFP’s political bureau, shortly after the 2009 elections in a joint interview with PJD leader Mustapha Ramid. See O. Brouksy and A. Tafnout, ‘Le Face-à-Face USFP-PJD’, *Le Journal Hebdomadaire*, 18–24 July 2009.

²² Authors’ interview with a USFP municipal councillor, 25 November 2008.

²³ Towns with USFP-supported PJD mayors include Chefchaouen, Larache, Tétouan and Kasbat Tadla. Towns with PJD-supported USFP mayors include Agadir, Rabat and Ourzazate.

²⁴ Authors’ interview with USFP activists, 29 June 2009 and 23 September 2009.

²⁵ Authors’ interview with a member of the USFP’s political bureau, 29 September 2009. Rather candidly, this USFP leader explained that the respective national leaders had already agreed on coalitions in several towns. Three middle-sized towns in the North, for example, Tétouan, Chefchaouen and Larache, were supposed to be governed by the RNI, Istiqlal and the USFP, respectively, following such a deal.

The PJD: looking for friends

The PJD emerged in the 1990s out of the Movement for Unity and Reform, itself a fusion of Islamist organisations.²⁶ After an antagonistic start with the regime in the 1970s, these Islamist organisations had pursued a reformist approach since the 1980s and been striving for electoral participation since the early 1990s. Eventually, the Islamists first ran in parliamentary elections in 1997. Following a demand by King Hassan II, they initially participated in the *alternance* government (without portfolio), a position they called ‘critical support’, but left that government after the succession of Mohamed VI to the throne in 1999.²⁷ Even before officially leaving the government, the Islamists had mobilised against two key government projects, namely the aforementioned reform of the personal status code and the introduction of micro-credits in Morocco, which they viewed as projects of the ‘secular Westernized elites’.²⁸

To its own surprise, the PJD won the third largest number of seats in the 2002 elections, which led to an internal debate on the participation in the next government. Although the eventual choice for remaining in opposition was predominantly the result of political support considerations—easier gained and maintained in opposition—there also existed a current inside the PJD that opposed joining a USFP-dominated government for ideological reasons. In fact, the USFP’s participation in government in 2002 was given as the official reason for the PJD’s decision to remain in opposition.²⁹ The USFP and the PJD had also clashed during the electoral campaign of 2002, with the PJD engaging in a polemic about the USFP allowing a representative of the Israeli Labour Party to attend the Socialist International in Morocco, and the USFP accusing the PJD in turn of using the mosques for electoral purposes.³⁰

After the 16 May 2003 Islamist terrorist attacks, the PJD came to realise that its political isolation and lack of allies were a threat to the party, as the attacks were used by the party’s opponents to mobilise against the PJD. With the threat of a party ban lingering over its head, the PJD leadership embarked on an image campaign that included the endorsement of policies it had previously opposed. It also adopted a highly pragmatic approach towards the building of local government coalitions after the 2003 municipal elections, and would have indeed formed such coalitions with the USFP, had the latter accepted them. Whereas in 2003 the PJD tried to open up more generally to other political parties, it started to seek out closer ties with the USFP from 2007 onwards. Following the 2007 parliamentary elections, in which the PJD had expected, but failed, to win the largest share of seats, the party concluded that it would not be able, independently, to reform the political system from within. Since then, the party has multiplied its ‘gestures of courtesy’ towards the USFP, as one of its party leaders put it.³¹ Considering the USFP the only other relevant programmatic party in the Moroccan party system, the PJD has been striving to build a pro-democracy

²⁶ For a detailed background analysis on the emergence of the PJD and the Islamist movement organisation behind it, see Wegner, *Islamist Opposition in Authoritarian Regimes*.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ See M.J. Willis, ‘Morocco’s Islamists and the Legislative Elections of 2002: The Strange Case of the Party That Did Not Want to Win’, *Mediterranean Politics*, 9(1) (2004), pp. 53–81.

³¹ Authors’ interview with a member of the PJD’s General Secretariat, 20 June 2009.

coalition with the USFP, a quest which has been largely frustrated by the USFP's reluctance to join forces with the Islamists.

Determinants of Opposition Cooperation in Non-democracies

The literature on opposition cooperation in non-democracies is vast, and includes, but is not limited to, analyses of the formation and success of pre-electoral alliances, as well as the formation of broader reform coalitions and/or single-issue coalitions.³² Following the definition provided by Kraetzschmar in the introductory contribution to this issue, we denote opposition cooperation here as any type of collective action undertaken by two or more distinct political and/or civil society forces that is made public (that is, evident to the broader public), yet falls short of a full merger of the groups in question.

When it comes to the Middle East and North Africa, the key focus in the coalition literature has thus far been on patterns of Islamist–leftist cooperation, followed by a number of studies on pre-electoral alliances in authoritarian elections.³³ While electoral alliances are not of particular interest here—largely because it is very difficult to forge such alliances under the current PR-based system and because the PJD is advocating the formation of a far broader reform coalition—the literature on Islamist–leftist cooperation certainly is. Cooperation between Islamists and leftists/secularists in other Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) countries, especially in Jordan and Egypt, has been the topic of several studies. The larger part of this literature focuses on the potential consequences of this cooperation regarding democratisation and the moderation of the Islamists, not on the factors influencing the emergence of cross-party cooperation.³⁴ Some of these studies also use the depth of cooperation of Islamists with leftists or secularists as an indicator of Islamist moderation.³⁵ In contrast, this study is not concerned with the systemic or behavioural consequences of such cooperation, but with the factors that shape the propensity of party leaders to pursue or reject closer cooperation with organisations across the ideological divide. In other words, we are interested in factors that can explain the divergent preferences of PJD and USFP leaders regarding cross-ideological cooperation.

In this respect, the literature on Islamist–leftist cooperation is more scarce. Nevertheless, a few factors can be extracted from the literature in the field and will be evaluated below. The first of these factors is the *depth of the ideological divide*. Cavatorta, for instance, concludes in his study of opposition politics in Morocco that ‘the ideological divide between the two sectors of society [leftist and Islamist] is so

³² For a definition and more detailed discussion of these concepts, see the introductory contribution to this issue by H. Kraetzschmar, ‘Mapping Opposition Cooperation in the Arab World: From Single-Issue Coalitions to Transnational Networks’.

³³ For contributions on the electoral alliance literature in the Arab world, see for instance H.J. Kraetzschmar, ‘Electoral Rules, Voter Mobilization and the Islamist Landslide in the Saudi Municipal Elections of 2005’, *Contemporary Arab Affairs*, 3(4) (2010), pp. 485–502; H.J. Kraetzschmar, ‘Opposition Cooperation in Electoral Autocracies: The United National Front for Change in Egypt’s 2005 Parliamentary Elections’, in H. Albrecht (ed.), *Contentious Politics in the Middle East* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2010).

³⁴ See J.A. Clark, ‘The Conditions of Islamist Moderation: Unpacking Cross-Ideological Cooperation in Jordan’, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 38(4) (2006), pp. 539–560; J. Schwedler, *Faith in Moderation: Islamist Parties in Jordan and Yemen* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); C. Wickham, ‘The Path to Moderation. Strategy and Learning in the Formation of Egypt’s Wasat Party’, *Comparative Politics*, 36(2) (2004), pp. 205–228. For Yemen, see M. Browsers, ‘Origins and Architects of Yemen’s Joint Meeting Parties’, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 39(4) (2007), pp. 565–586.

³⁵ Clark, ‘The Conditions of Islamist Moderation’; Wickham, ‘The Path to Moderation’.

significant that they fear each other more than they fear the continuation of authoritarian rule' and that this was a key factor explaining the 'absence of formal coalitions between the two sectors'.³⁶ Differences may range from the role and rights of women in society and politics to the type of democracy envisioned (liberal vs. organic). Indeed, USFP leaders themselves argue that it is the religious underpinning of the PJD's ideology, standing in stark contrast to the secularist background of the USFP, which renders any cooperation between the two parties impossible. However, it remains unclear whether it is the present-day ideological adversity that would lead the two parties to discard cooperation, or broader fears regarding the future implementation of policies reflecting the other's ideology, once full democracy has been attained.

A second possible factor shaping the prospects for Islamist-leftist cooperation, and more generally opposition cooperation in non-democracies, is concerns regarding a party's expected *electoral performance in a democracy*. According to Przeworski, the dilemma that anti-authoritarian forces face in non-democracies is that they must unite to bring about democracy, but struggle against each other 'for the best place' in a future democratic system.³⁷ Political parties with weak programmatic support might thus fear democratisation the most, because they would perform badly in a genuine electoral contest. Note that this factor cannot be disentangled easily from ideological concerns. A weak political party could abstain from an alliance with an ideologically opposed, stronger party because it fears that it is the other party's programme that will be implemented after democratisation, or because it fears that it will vanish in a democracy. In any case, strong ideological opposition should increase the fears of the weaker party and thus its dislike of cooperation.

Finally, scholars working on opposition cooperation have emphasised the importance of political opportunity structures, mostly the extent of state repression and co-optation.³⁸ Regarding repression, scholars diverge in their findings concerning its impact on cross-ideological cooperation. Shehata, for instance, argues in her study of more than a dozen successful and failed alliance attempts that repression has prevented cooperation between the Muslim Brotherhood and other opposition forces in Egypt. In contrast, cooperation had flourished in moments of political liberalisation.³⁹ Schwedler also finds that the fear to 'antagonize the regime' post 9/11 had made the Jordanian Islamists less inclined to join forces with other opposition forces.⁴⁰ At the same time, repression can also work in the opposite direction and encourage cooperation in two ways. First, it can encourage cooperation in cases where all opposition groups are excluded or equally subjugated to regime repression.⁴¹ For example, Clark mentions the 1993

³⁶ F. Cavatorta, "'Divided They Stand, Divided They Fail": Opposition Politics in Morocco', p. 151. *Democratization*, 16(1) (2009), pp. 137–156; D. Shehata, *Islamists and Secularists in Egypt: Opposition, Conflict and Cooperation* (London: Routledge, 2009). For a similar argument regarding ideology, see again Shehata, *Islamists and Secularists in Egypt*.

³⁷ A. Przeworski, *Democracy and the Market: Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991). See also S.N. Golder, *The Logic of Pre-Electoral Coalition Formation* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2006). Golder finds that asymmetries in electoral strength influence a party's willingness to enter an electoral coalition. See also Cavatorta, "'Divided They Stand, Divided They Fail'".

³⁸ Van de Walle, 'Tipping Games'.

³⁹ Shehata, *Islamists and Secularists in Egypt*. For the role of political opportunity structures, see also J. Schwedler, 'Islamists, Protests, and Cross-Ideological Cooperation in Jordan: Common Interest or Collective Identity?', paper presented at the Fifth Mediterranean Research Meeting, Florence and Montecatini Terme, 24–28 March 2004.

⁴⁰ Schwedler, 'Islamists, Protests, and Cross-Ideological Cooperation in Jordan'.

⁴¹ Lust-Okar, *Structuring Contestation in the Arab World*.

electoral law in Jordan, designed to reduce the share of seats of opposition parties—not only of the Islamists—as a key factor in the creation of the Higher Committee for the Coordination of National Opposition Parties, a broad reform coalition that includes Islamists and various secular parties.⁴² Second, repression can lead to cooperation in cases where a particularly repressed group, usually the Islamists, seeks protection from the state by allying itself to a legalised political party/group. Abdelrahman, for instance, argues that the harsh repression of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt increased their preferences for cooperation, because they felt ‘the need to work in the shadow of other groups’.⁴³

In contrast to repression, co-optation unambiguously works to prevent cooperation. It is a regime strategy to split the political opposition, by offering state resources to a part of the opposition in exchange for quiescence.⁴⁴ A political party that is, for instance, included in a government which may be powerless but yields dividends from office and access to state funds, might prefer the certainty of present gains to an unclear future in a democracy. A co-opted political party might be less inclined to join a pro-democracy coalition or, more generally, to cooperate with opposition parties for fear of losing the spoils of co-optation.

Following from the above, the remainder of this contribution will explore three factors that are likely to have shaped the PJD’s and USFP’s preferences regarding cross-ideological cooperation. These concern: (1) ideological distance; (2) electoral strength; and (3) the regime’s divide and rule tactics (co-optation and repression). These factors are, of course, not mutually exclusive. Moreover, given the data available, the aim is not to isolate the effect of any of these factors, but rather to use them as a heuristic tool for a study of the PJD’s and USFP’s views of the costs and benefits of cross-party cooperation.

Making Sense of the PJD’s and USFP’s Preferences for (Non)-Cooperation

This section discusses the diverging preferences of the USFP and PJD regarding the formation of broader reform coalitions at the national and local levels. It examines why the PJD leadership has, since 2007, actively sought closer cooperation with the USFP, while the USFP leadership in turn has shown a persistent reluctance. In this context, this section also seeks to explore why the USFP’s local councillors have, in defiance of headquarter directives, cooperated with the PJD in numerous municipalities across the country after the 2009 municipal elections. The subsequent discussion is structured around the factors influencing cross-party cooperation spelled out above.

The PJD’s calculus: yes to cooperation with the USFP

The PJD’s declared aim to build a broader reform coalition with the USFP since 2007 is relatively straightforward to understand. In fact, as far as the PJD is

⁴² Clark, ‘The Conditions of Islamist Moderation’.

⁴³ M. Abdelrahman, ‘From Rivals to Allies? The Left and Political Islam in Egypt’, paper presented at the Fifth Mediterranean Research Meeting, Florence and Montecatini Terme, 24–28 March 2004, p. 18.

⁴⁴ L.R. Arriola, ‘Patronage and Political Stability in Africa’, *Comparative Political Studies*, 42(10) (2009), pp. 1339–1362; Lust-Okar, *Structuring Contestation in the Arab World*; J. Ghandi and A. Przeworski, ‘Cooperation, Co-optation, and Rebellion under Dictatorships’, *Economics & Politics*, 18(1) (2006), pp. 1–26.

concerned, it is likely to benefit strongly from the pressure for democratisation that it believes would flow from cooperation with the USFP, while nothing really stands in the way of closer cooperation. At present, the PJD can count on having the strongest programmatic electoral support; that is, of voters who are even more likely to support the party the more their votes matter. Pellicer and Wegner show that in 2002 and 2007 the PJD was strongest in districts that have a larger share of educated voters.⁴⁵ In 2007, in fact, it was the only party whose votes were positively correlated with literacy, while all other political parties, including the USFP, were stronger in districts with higher levels of illiteracy.⁴⁶ The PJD was also the most successful party in urban areas in the 2009 municipal elections. Additionally, a large segment of educated voters are currently abstaining. Given that these are likely to be the most politically conscious, their abstention might be related to awareness that they are voting for a meaningless parliament. In a democratic Morocco, these voters would probably re-exert their voting rights. In view of the PJD's voter profile, the party would expect to win a large share of these educated abstentionists.⁴⁷ In short, the PJD has nothing to fear—and much to win—from elections in a democratic system that could flow from a successful political reform coalition.

Second, whilst the PJD is an officially sanctioned player on the Moroccan party political scene and adheres to the rules pertaining to this inclusion (not to criticise the monarchy, Islam, or territorial integrity and to generally be moderate in their advocacy for reforms), it is not co-opted. In contrast to other 'opposition' parties in Morocco (such as the USFP and Istiqlal), the PJD is neither part of the current government, nor has it been part of previous governments.⁴⁸ Thus, no spoils from office would be lost by increasing its opposition visibility in a pro-democracy coalition with the USFP.

Third, of the included political players in the Moroccan party system, the PJD has by and large been the recipient of the harshest treatment by the regime.⁴⁹ Specifically, many efforts have been made to decrease the PJD's electoral strength. Until the 2007 elections, the party was forced by the regime to significantly reduce the number of candidates put forward in elections; in 2003 to as little as 16 per cent of all available seats following the 16 May terrorist attacks.⁵⁰ The regime has also used the gerrymandering of district boundaries to the disadvantage of the PJD, mainly by adding rural villages to towns in which the party was expected to do well. In 2009, the formation of the Authenticity and Modernity Party (PAM) was announced as an explicit anti-PJD initiative by the regime and clearly perceived by PJD leaders and local

⁴⁵ M. Pellicer and E. Wegner, 'Socio-Economic Voter Profile and Motives for Islamist Support in Morocco', *Party Politics*, forthcoming.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ This idea is also underscored by the famous poll conducted in 2006 by the International Republican Institute in Morocco. The poll found a 47 per cent vote intention for the PJD, in contrast to only 14 per cent of registered voters that eventually voted for the party one year later. The finding suggests that Moroccans had a strong preference for the PJD compared to all other Moroccan parties but ultimately preferred to abstain in the elections, possibly because they were aware that election results do not matter for policy.

⁴⁸ The only exception was the period from 1998–1999, when the PJD was part of the *alternance* government, following the wishes of King Hassan II. See Wegner, *Islamist Opposition in Authoritarian Regimes*.

⁴⁹ The Justice and Charity Organization, which rejects political participation under the current conditions and refuses to endorse the monarchy's claim to religious legitimacy, is much more repressed than the PJD. In contrast to the latter, leaders and members of Justice and Charity are periodically arrested and have allegedly been tortured in recent arrests.

⁵⁰ See Wegner, *Islamist Opposition in Authoritarian Regimes*.

activists as such.⁵¹ Although non-existent in the 2007 elections, the PAM has become the strongest force in parliament as a result of illegal, but in the case of the PAM, unprosecuted, floor-crossing.⁵² From the PJD's perspective, explicit cooperation with the USFP to denounce such regime interventions in elections could offer the party greater protection from state repression. This is also illustrated by the fact that the PJD does not seek formal cooperation with the banned Islamist Justice and Charity Organization, an alliance that would most likely make the PJD the target of further repression.⁵³

What, then, about ideology and the extant ideological differences between the PJD and the USFP? There is indeed a long history of Islamist–leftist clashes in Morocco, and Islamists have persistently focused on the secular left as their key political foe. The university campuses of the 1970s and 1980s, where most of the current PJD elite have been politically socialised, were marked by confrontations between Islamists and leftists. Indeed, as mentioned above, an important faction within the PJD did object to joining a government coalition in 2002 which included the USFP on ideological grounds.

How, then, is it possible that the PJD leadership has recently taken a far more positive approach to cross-ideological cooperation, as manifest in its eagerness to ally with the leftist USFP in a broader reform coalition from 2007 onwards? Essentially, the national party leadership considers the benefits of cooperating with the USFP to override any potential ideological costs. The PJD leadership certainly acknowledges that key ideological differences exist between the two parties and is uncomfortable with the fact that some USFP leaders are 'very much to the left'.⁵⁴ By the same token, however, they also seem to believe that in an authoritarian system, where programmes cannot be implemented anyhow, ideology matters far less than in a fully fl-edged democracy. In their view, ideology is a post-democratisation luxury that should not stand in the way of opposition cooperation under autocracy to increase pressures for democratic reforms. As party leader Mustapha Ramid put it in an interview with the Moroccan newspaper *Le Journal*:

If Morocco were a democracy, the USFP would have been the USFP, the PJD the PJD. We have our differences that one cannot deny. [...] But today, can one say that the parties implement their programmes [in Morocco]? [...] Before we can explore issues relating to our ideological differences, we have to tackle questions relating to our institutions.⁵⁵

While the position of the PJD leadership towards cooperation with the USFP has been publicly expressed, no information is available as to how grassroots activists and their electoral base view such cooperation. Indeed, seeking such cooperation with the USFP has been a policy of the national PJD leadership, possibly overriding complaints from local activists. The picture on the ground seems to suggest, however, that such cooperation is perceived as unproblematic by local activists and councillors, given that they have formed local government

⁵¹ Authors' interviews with PJD leaders, 20 and 25 June 2009. A PJD activist in Larache also mentioned the PAM as an explicit motivation to join forces with the USFP.

⁵² K. Koehler, 'All the King's Men: The Emergence of the Authenticity and Modernity Party (PAM) in Morocco', *IPRIS Maghreb Review*, October/November 2010, pp. 1–2.

⁵³ For the difficulties of alliances between actors with different inclusion status, see Lust-Okar, *Structuring Contestation in the Arab World*.

⁵⁴ Authors' interview with a member of the PJD's General Secretariat, 1 November 2007.

⁵⁵ Brouksy and Tafnout, 'Le Face-à-Face USFP-PJD'. Authors' translation from French.

coalitions with the USFP without complaining publicly about it. Perhaps more importantly, and as will be discussed below, the opinions of PJD and USFP supporters regarding gender roles or the relationship between religion and politics turn out to diverge only a little, suggesting that PJD supporters might not even view cooperation with the USFP as an Islamist sell-out.

In sum, the PJD has a lot to gain and almost nothing to lose by forming a broader reform coalition with the USFP. It can expect to fare well, if not best, in democratic elections. In the process, it could overcome its domestic and international isolation and would cease being the sole target of regime repression if allied to the USFP. Perhaps the party's explicit calls for closer cooperation with the USFP and the actual formation of local coalition governments in numerous towns since 2009 has cost the PJD a few supporters, disgruntled about allying with the secularists. But clearly this is considered worth the cost from the leadership's point of view.

The USFP's calculus: no to cooperation with the PJD

This reasoning is clearly not shared by the USFP, whose leadership remains opposed to cooperation with the PJD, and whose leaders have made every effort in the past to persuade activists and local councillors on the ground to forge local government coalitions with parties other than the PJD. According to the USFP leadership itself, ideological differences are at the heart of its reluctance to cooperate at any level with the PJD. While the USFP presents itself as the party of modernity, gender equality and secularism, it considers the PJD as diametrically opposed to these policy positions.⁵⁶

Given the importance of ideology in the leadership's reasoning, this section begins by analysing the breadth of the ideological divide between the two parties. It is of course impossible to evaluate precisely how 'genuine' the USFP leadership's personal distaste of the Islamists' ideology is, or if it 'truly' believes that cooperation with the Islamists would be impossible to swallow for its supporters. One can, however, examine the actual breadth of the ideological divide between supporters of the two parties by comparing their views on sensitive issues, such as gender roles and the role of religion in politics. Based on the assumption that the USFP leadership has some knowledge of the attitudes of its supporters, the breadth of the ideological divide between USFP and PJD supporters allows one to make inferences of how important their ideological opposition is in the leadership's cooperation decisions. To do so, this study draws on the 1999–2004 and 2005–2008 rounds of the World Values Survey (WVS). The WVS examines political, social and cultural attitudes around the world since the 1980s.⁵⁷ In Morocco, the survey was carried out in 2001–2002 and in 2007. The sample sizes for 2001–2002 and 2007 are 2264 and 1200 respondents respectively, and include individuals over 18 years of age. Questions of the WVS relating to the role of women in society, the influence religious leaders should have on politics, and whether it was important that politicians believe in God, can address the typical ideological disagreements that exist between Islamists and secularists/leftists.

⁵⁶ Authors' interviews with USFP leaders, Rabat, 20 and 25 November 2008, and 28–29 September 2009. See also A. Hamzawy, 'Interview with Khalid Al-Hariry, Moroccan MP, Socialist Union for Popular Forces (USFP)', *Arab Reform Bulletin*, 18 July 2007.

⁵⁷ The World Values Survey is available online at <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org>.

A question of the WVS that asks which party respondents would vote for if there were elections tomorrow allows us to gauge levels of party political support.

The questions about attitudes considered here were probed for strength of opinion, offering the following categories of answers: 'agree strongly', 'agree', 'disagree' and 'disagree strongly'. We have merged these categories into a simple dichotomy of 'agree' vs. 'disagree'.⁵⁸ As our concern is ideological opposition, we are not interested in mild differences between USFP and PJD supporters, relating to 'agreeing strongly' vs. 'agreeing', but in more substantial differences, as represented by the categories of 'agree' vs. 'disagree'.

Before proceeding any further, it is important to note that support for the USFP and PJD changed quite dramatically between these two WVS surveys, so that we have only 19 PJD supporters in 2001/2002 but 243 in 2007. For the USFP, meanwhile, we encounter the reverse, with 198 supporters in the 2001/2002 survey, but only 40 in 2007. In spite of this imbalance in the number of respondents, we have chosen to analyse the 2001/2002 and the 2007 data separately because the attitudes of Moroccans have changed considerably in the time between the two surveys.⁵⁹ The 2001/2002 respondents are more conservative on many, although not all, issues. For instance, 70 per cent of the respondents in the 2001/2002 survey agreed strongly that 'politicians who don't believe in God are unfit for office', whereas this opinion is held by only 35 per cent of the respondents in 2007. Given that the USFP has many more supporters in the earlier survey, it would appear in a merged dataset that USFP supporters are consistently more conservative than PJD supporters. Compared to this, having a very imbalanced number of PJD and USFP supporters in the two datasets is less problematic. Moreover, there is an advantage resulting from these changing patterns of support. The few PJD supporters in the earlier survey are likely to correspond to more ideological, early supporters, before the PJD gained broader support, possibly even from former USFP voters protesting against the party's sell-out in government. Therefore, ideological differences are more likely to become apparent in the 2001/2002 WVS dataset.⁶⁰ Lastly, we also examine the attitudes of Istiqlal supporters in both surveys and compare them to those of USFP and PJD supporters. As this party has been the long-term ally of the USFP, the views of Istiqlal supporters are a good way of testing how much ideological convergence there has to be for the USFP to form an alliance. For Istiqlal, there are 132 observations in 2001/2002 and 124 in 2007.

Figure 1 illustrates how supporters of the three parties view atheist politicians in 2001/2002 and 2007 respectively. The vertical axis in this and the following figures shows the percentage of supporters of USFP, Istiqlal, PJD, or 'others' (this includes respondents supporting other Moroccan parties as well as those indicating that they would abstain) holding a particular opinion. As mentioned above, there is a striking difference between the two surveys on how Moroccans view atheist politicians, marked by a significant drop in those agreeing with the statement from overall 70 to a mere 25 per cent. In spite of this overall drop, USFP and PJD

⁵⁸ Two of the considered questions also allow for 'neither agree nor disagree'. We have left this category as it is.

⁵⁹ To explore the reasons behind the value changes is beyond the scope of this study but would make a fascinating topic for further investigation.

⁶⁰ Who the 2007 USFP supporters are is much less clear. They could have been both core supporters who follow their party even through difficult stretches, and voters who do not care much about the party's programme and support it for other reasons, such as clientelist ones.

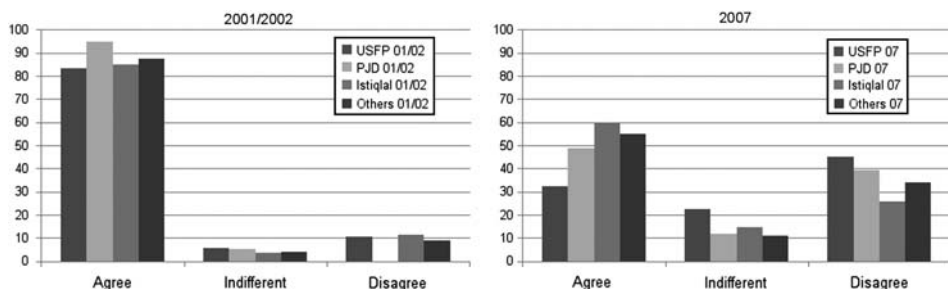


Figure 1. Politicians Who Do Not Believe in God are Unfit for Office. *Source:* The World Values Survey, available online at <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org>

supporters *in the same survey* hold rather similar opinions on this point. Having said so, of the two groups of respondents, USFP supporters appear overall more tolerant towards atheist politicians than PJD supporters. ‘Only’ 85 per cent of USFP supporters believe that such politicians are unfit for office in 2001/2002, compared to 95 per cent of PJD supporters. In 2007, this figure dropped significantly for supporters of both parties. However, the decrease is larger for USFP supporters (to 32 per cent) compared to almost 50 per cent of PJD supporters. These differences are, however, not large enough to point at a polarised pool of supporters for the two parties, given that 40 per cent of PJD supporters also disagree with the statement. It is also noteworthy that even more Istiqlal supporters (around 60 per cent) than PJD supporters agree in 2007 that politicians who do not believe in God should not hold office.

Figure 2 displays the views of Moroccans regarding the influence of religious leaders on voting choices. In this case, respondents in 2007 have become overall more permissive. Less than 40 per cent agree with the statement that ‘religious leaders should not influence how people vote’, compared to around 75 per cent in 2001/2002. Again, in both surveys there is virtually no difference between USFP and PJD respondents when it comes to allowing (i.e., ‘disagree’) religious leaders an influence on voting choices (12 per cent USFP and 12.5 per cent PJD in 2001/2002; 29 per cent USFP and 31.5 per cent PJD in 2007). It is also noteworthy

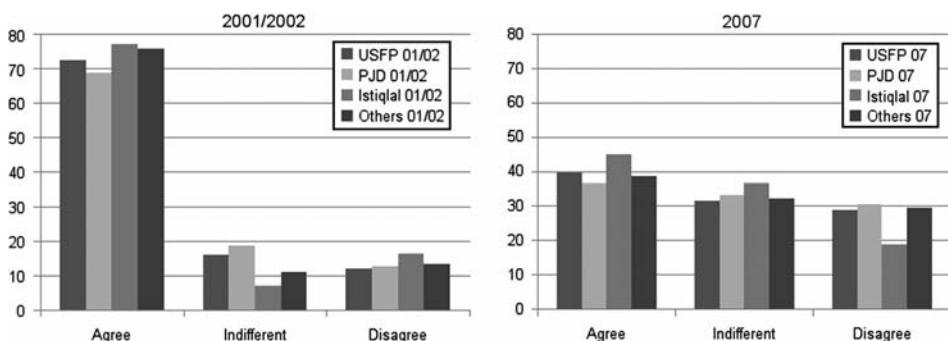


Figure 2. Religious Leaders Should Not Influence How People Vote. *Source:* The World Values Survey, available online at <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org>

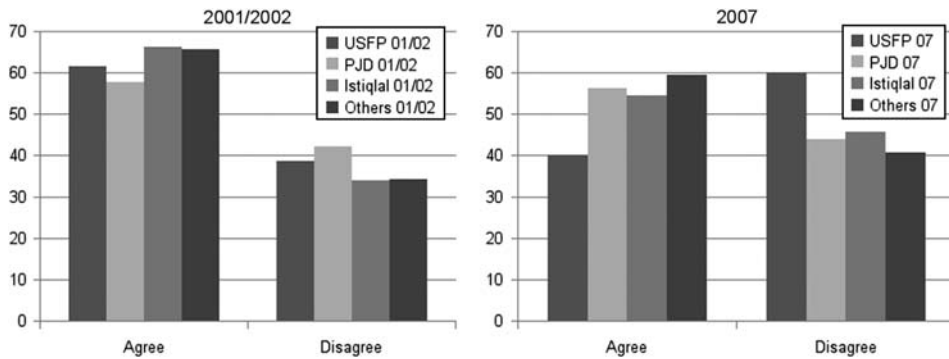


Figure 3. Being a Housewife Is Fulfilling. *Source:* The World Values Survey, available online at <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org>

that in both surveys a majority of both parties' supporters feel that religious leaders should not influence voting.⁶¹ In short, according to these survey data there does not appear to be any significant discrepancy between supporters of the two parties regarding the impact religious leaders should have on a crucial aspect of political rights.

On the issue of gender roles, the survey data highlight respondent positions on the following three issues: (1) whether being a housewife is fulfilling for a woman; (2) whether men make better political leaders; and (3) whether university education is more important for a boy than a girl. All three positions indicate to what extent respondents see an equal role for women in public life, a topic that should be—and is, according to the USFP leadership—a key issue dividing Islamists and leftists.

Figure 3 shows the views of Moroccans on whether being a housewife is fulfilling. In 2001/2002, around 65 per cent agreed that being a housewife was fulfilling, while in 2007 this figure stands at 58 per cent. Again, the differences between USFP and PJD supporters are negligible. In 2001/2002, there is almost no difference between the two, with 62 per cent of USFP supporters and 58 per cent of PJD supporters agreeing that the life of a housewife was fulfilling. Istiqlal supporters and those of other parties appear slightly more conservative on this issue. In 2007, PJD supporters appear by contrast clearly more conservative than USFP supporters, with around 56 per cent viewing the life of a housewife as fulfilling, compared to only 40 per cent of USFP supporters. However, the views of PJD supporters are similar to those of supporters of Istiqlal and other parties. Also noteworthy is the fact that 40 per cent of PJD supporters do not agree with the statement. In short, the views of PJD supporters appear to be rather standard Moroccan views on this issue.

Figure 4 details the respondents' views regarding leadership abilities relating to gender. Again, there is virtually no difference between USFP and PJD supporters in the 2001/2002 survey, with around 63 per cent of both sets of respondents agreeing that men make better political leaders. According to the 2007 survey data, the views of USFP supporters have changed on this topic, with the figure of

⁶¹ This also applies to Istiqlal supporters in both surveys, and even more strongly so than is the case for USFP and PJD supporters.

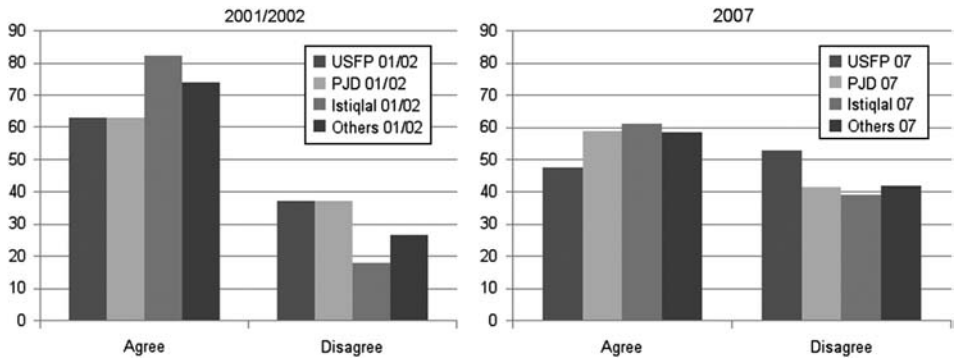


Figure 4. Men Make Better Political Leaders. *Source:* The World Values Survey, available online at <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org>

those agreeing with the statement dropping to less than 50 per cent, while the views of PJD supporters remain almost unchanged. Nevertheless, their views are still more aligned than not. It is also noteworthy that in both surveys the most conservative of all respondents are Istiqlal supporters, of whom in 2001/2002 more than 80 per cent believed in the superior leadership abilities of men.

Figure 5, lastly, highlights whether respondents consider university education to be more important for boys than for girls. While USFP supporters consistently disagree to a larger extent with this statement than PJD supporters in both 2001/2002 and 2007 (75 per cent compared to 62 per cent, and 82 per cent compared to 79 per cent, respectively), the differences are not overwhelming. Moreover, although PJD supporters hold more conservative views than USFP supporters on this issue, it is noteworthy that they are more progressive than the supporters of other parties in both surveys, and especially compared to those views held by Istiqlal supporters.

In sum, the WVS survey data for Morocco do not reveal any major ideological polarisation between supporters of Islamists and leftists. Overall, PJD supporters appear more conservative than USFP supporters, but to a relatively small degree;

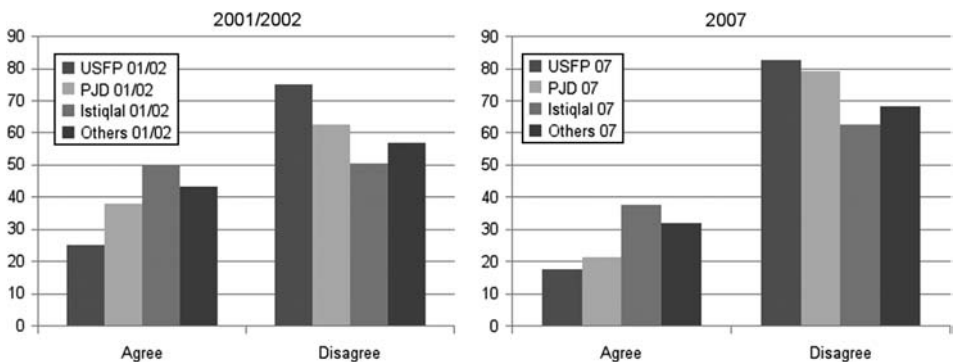


Figure 5. University Education Is More Important for Boys than Girls. *Source:* The World Values Survey, available online at <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org>

for the most part the difference is less than 10 per cent. In fact, the views of USFP supporters do not appear to be as 'secular' and 'gender equal' as posited by the USFP leadership in the first place. Additionally, both types of supporters are often more progressive than those of other political parties and, importantly, those of Istiqlal, the USFP's longstanding ally and partner in national government since 1998. From the point of view of their supporters, ideological discrepancies are only minor and thus seemingly constitute no serious impediment to cross-party cooperation between the USFP and the PJD. Although supporters are not identical to party activists, the fact that local councillors defended the formation of local government coalitions with the PJD *vis-à-vis* their national leadership seems to suggest that their views are not different from those held by ordinary party supporters. As a USFP councillor in a coalition with the PJD put it, for him the PJD mayor is just the person owning the grocery shop, that is, a common citizen.⁶² Unless it is the ideological aversion of national USFP leaders themselves that makes them discard any form of cooperation with the PJD, our findings suggest that reasons other than ideology must be involved in the party leadership's objection to any form of cross-party cooperation.

What, then, are these reasons? Since entering the *alternance* government in 1998, the USFP has experienced a rather dramatic decline in its electoral support. It won 884,061 votes in 1997 (the largest number of all parties). In 2002, this number had decreased to 685,710 and by 2007 the number of votes received had fallen to less than half its 1997 total (408,945). Additionally, its support has become stronger in districts with high rates of illiteracy, suggesting that clientelistic linkages are becoming increasingly relevant for USFP voters. Pellicer and Wegner show that, for 2002, there was a negative correlation of USFP votes with illiteracy, whereas in 2007 that correlation had become positive.⁶³ Additionally, USFP support in 2007 had a relatively high correlation with turnout. In Morocco, this is another indicator of clientelistic voting. Although the USFP could perhaps recuperate part of its previous electoral base in democratic elections, USFP activists are painfully aware of the fact that they were once the party of the urban and educated—where programmatic voting is more prominent—but that this has now become the characteristic of the PJD.⁶⁴ The authors of this study thus suggest that weakening electoral support, and in particular its decreasing *programmatic* support, might be a relevant factor behind the USFP's avoidance of any cooperation with the PJD in a broader reform coalition. This implies, of course, that the USFP leadership's commitment to democratic change has become rather ambiguous.

USFP activists and local councillors appeared much more determined to fight their decrease in credibility and electoral strength than the national leadership. For instance, activists argued that leaving previous local government coalitions (such as with the Istiqlal and the RNI) and entering new ones with the PJD was a way of recuperating credibility in the eyes of the Moroccan electorate and hence their share of votes. This discrepancy in attitudes towards cross-party cooperation with the PJD between party leadership and activists is likely related to the USFP's co-optation into government, which since the late 1990s has yielded benefits to national leaders and MPs, but not to party activists at the local level. Participation

⁶² Authors' interview with a USFP activist, 29 June 2009.

⁶³ Pellicer and Wegner, 'Socio-economic Voter Profile'.

⁶⁴ Authors' interview with a USFP activist, 29 June 2009.

in and leadership of the *alternance* government from 1998 to 2002 was certainly motivated by the hope to advance political and economic reforms. The *alternance* government has, however, performed far below expectations on this front and the USFP joined subsequent coalition governments, in which it played an increasingly insignificant role. Moreover, the first of these governments (2002–2007) was led by Driss Jettou, a ‘non-partisan’ appointee of King Mohamed VI, and a violation of a just-established practice—the appointment of the leader of the strongest party as Prime Minister—in the context of political liberalisation.⁶⁵ Since then, the party has hung on to cabinet participation, in spite of its dramatic electoral decline and increasing violations of press freedom and human rights. These factors suggest that the USFP remains in government not exactly for programmatic reasons. Given that pro-democracy cooperation with the Islamists would require the USFP’s departure from government, the national leadership’s opposition to such cooperation is likely to be linked to its attachment to office.⁶⁶ In short, the current status of non-cooperation carries, from the USFP leadership’s point of view, secure gains—that is, retention of the spoils of government—whereas it is far from certain what the gains would be for the party if it entered into a broader coalition with the PJD. In fact, not only is such cooperation likely to cost the USFP its position in government, but it could expose the party to renewed government repression, something the USFP is currently not a particular target of.

In sum, entering a reform coalition with the PJD would entail, from the USFP leadership’s point of view, obvious costs and rather uncertain benefits. The costs consist of a most certain loss of the spoils of co-optation currently available to the party leadership, the potential of renewed state repression, and possibly even a loss of significance in a successful democratisation process. Following the analysis of the profiles of USFP and PJD supporters, an ideological sell-out does not appear to be among the costs, despite being advanced by the USFP leadership as the prime reason for its reluctance to cooperate with the PJD. What is more, none of these costs seem to weigh up against the—albeit uncertain—benefits of any USFP–PJD cooperation. These benefits consist of a potential to more effectively pressure the government into pursuing further democratising reforms by laying bare the lack of real freedoms and by tarnishing its carefully constructed image as a reforming regime, and in so doing improving the prospects of the USFP to recuperate some of its credibility as a meaningful opposition party within the broader Moroccan society.

Concluding Remarks

This contribution has argued that ideology is a less important factor in determining cooperation choices between Islamists and leftists in Morocco than is widely assumed in the literature. From the point of view of the PJD leadership, the benefits of forging a broader reform coalition with the USFP are so substantial that the leadership is willing to overlook for the time being whatever ideological differences there are. From the point of view of the USFP leadership, the costs of

⁶⁵ In 2002, this would have been the USFP’s leader.

⁶⁶ A good example is Driss Lachgar, the USFP leader who had been advocating a rapprochement with the Islamists since 2007. Lachgar later dropped the issue and mentioned commonalities between the USFP and PAM, after being appointed Minister of Parliamentary Relations. See M. Monjib, ‘The USFP and the Moroccan Monarchy: The Power of Patronage’, *Arab Reform Bulletin*, 4 May 2010.

any cross-party cooperation with the Islamists are perceived to be so high that ideological differences appear as a good pretext to hold on to their current government coalition with Istiqlal, whose supporters, ironically, are generally more conservative than those of the PJD. That ideology appears to be used as a pretext by USFP leaders, rather than the key reason behind their unwillingness to ally with the PJD, is also suggested by the fact that local USFP activists and councillors have been perfectly content to enter municipal government coalitions with the PJD across the kingdom.

The asymmetry in electoral strength and differences in the type of electoral support the two parties enjoy appear to hold far greater explanatory power for why the USFP and PJD differ so dramatically in their coalition-building preferences. For the PJD, its superior electoral support and the higher degree of programmatic support lead it to expect higher voter mobilisation in democratic elections, while for the USFP the contrary seems to hold true. Ultimately, however, it is the USFP's co-optation that seems to be the most important driver behind its reluctance to ally with the Islamists. Such a reform coalition in Morocco would require the abandoning of the USFP's cabinet posts, a step for which the party's leadership does not appear to be ready.

Perhaps, however, the prospects for the emergence of a new reform coalition between the USFP and the PJD in Morocco are not so bleak after all. With the fall of other Middle Eastern and North African autocracies and an increase in street protests in Morocco, an alliance with the Islamists and a programmatic renewal of the party in opposition might eventually become more appealing to the USFP leadership. Indeed, Van de Walle argues that the likelihood of sustained opposition cooperation increases with the likelihood of a transition.⁶⁷ As the regime appears weak(er), it makes sense for the country's opposition forces (and even the co-opted opposition) to reassess their position and consider joint action in support of democratic reforms.⁶⁸ Although the constitutional reforms recently announced by King Mohammed VI are of a defensive nature, and not intended to produce a democratisation of the political system, their mere existence suggests that the space for genuine reforms, and thus the potential benefits of opposition cooperation, have increased.

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⁶⁷ Van de Walle, 'Tipping Games'.

⁶⁸ Note that this point is not uncontested. Ghandi argues that the mechanism tends to work the other way around. In her study of opposition alliances in presidential regimes, she finds that alliances are less likely when regime change is likely. This is because the future president gets to determine policy and typically has relatively far-reaching powers. Hence, all opposition leaders want to be the candidate behind whom the others rally, but not to support another candidate. See J. Ghandi, 'Coordination among Opposition Parties in Authoritarian Elections', paper presented at the conference 'Dictatorships: Their Governance and Social Consequences', Princeton University, April 2008.