Global Discourse, Local Context:

Counter-terrorism and Human Rights in Morocco

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PART I

Introduction

Human rights and terrorism are two of the most frequently invoked, powerfully deployed, and hotly contested paradigms of our time. They are, first and foremost, words. They are words that attempt to describe concepts, values and actions. Human rights are understood as the fundamental “civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights that all human being should enjoy” beyond the non-negotiable, fundamental right to life (United Nations). The concept of terrorism seeks to categorize and comprehend what has been perceived as a uniquely transnational, increasing phenomenon of violent, ideologically driven attacks targeting civilians. Accordingly, counter-terrorism is normatively understood to consist of efforts aimed at preventing these types of acts of violence against civilians, and based off this understanding, is presumed to be an irrefutable force of good and justice. It is crucial to analyze the social construction of both of human rights and terrorism, as well as the fields of meaning they encompass, if we are to understand global differences in their conceptualization and discrepancies in how they are accepted and actualized.

Investigations into difference and universality are increasingly important during an era of social and political thought best embodied in Samuel Huntington’s “Clash of Civilizations” theory. “According to [Huntington’s] conception of international relations, there are immanent, structural differences between peoples of different religious backgrounds and cultural origins”, and these fault lines will provide the fodder

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for major and inevitable violent conflict in the 21st century (Gafaïti 102). The powerful impact of Huntington’s argument, both in policy and civilian consciousnesses, has still yet to be fully understood or systematically analyzed. It is the position of this author, however, that Huntington’s thesis homogenizes vastly different groups of people into cohesive “civilizational” identities that, in reality, do not exist. Furthermore, he irresponsibly and inaccurately seeks to characterize as elements of time immemorial conflicts with very specific historical, political, and economic roots.

This paper seeks to explore discursive formations of terror and counter-terrorism and their impact on human rights in Morocco. I refer to discourse in the Foucauldian sense of word to account for the mechanisms (verbal, visual, aural) utilized to define and delimit a particular concept. “Discourses neither antedate nor express some truth or reality. Instead, they form regularities that emerge and become systematized in and through the articulation and reiteration of particular norms and practices, not because they are logical or true but rather because of this regularity” (Berman 47). Discourses reflect embedded power relations but also serve as sites of contestation and redefinition. Using both secondary research and qualitative data collected during semi-structured interviews, I seek to explore the local implications of the universally circulating discourses of human rights and terrorism and the ways they interact and react within the Moroccan context. Through the narratives of Moroccan residents themselves (though not citizens, necessarily), I hope to demonstrate that: 1) Despite arguments to the contrary, the discourse of human rights is invoked throughout the world in the name of justice and peace, and encompasses a set of values understood as indigenous within and common between societies of diverse cultural and religious backgrounds, 2) Terrorism remains a
disputed discourse, as even those who recognize and condemn the acts of violence it seeks to describe, also condemn the stereotypes, biases, and developmental logical embedded within its rhetoric and structure, and 3) If counter-terror efforts are to succeed in pursuing the principles and objectives implied in the essence of the discourse, they must be closely monitored. The consequences of policies are mitigated by the specific characteristics of the countries in which they are implemented, and this must be taken into account. Counter-terror measures that are exploited to violate human rights will have grave repercussions, effectively collapsing distinctions between terrorism and counter-terrorism, terrorist organizations and the “legitimate” forces attempting to combat them.

Methodology

This paper integrates research from secondary material found in a wide variety of sources, with firsthand, qualitative information collected in face-to-face interviews. To find potential contacts, I utilized past lecturers at the Center for Cross Cultural Learning, the suggestions of my academic directors, extensive online research, and “snowball” information provided by each interviewee if possible. The intent of this project was not, however, to conduct a widespread survey of the general population, but to target individuals in specific professional and educational sectors. A study focused on the general population, while extremely important and perhaps a project for a future date, was far beyond my linguistic and financial resources and not possible within such a limited period of time. Persons initially contacted for thus study included professors, human rights activists, lawyers, journalists, political party members, Moroccan and international NGOs, and governmental organizations.
There were, however, several methodological issues that impeded my ability to collect a diverse and substantive sample of informants. First and foremost, there was the main issue of language barriers. The major languages spoken in Morocco are Darija (Moroccan Arabic) and French. I can speak neither of these languages, and therefore my access to both Moroccan literature and individuals was severely limited. I acknowledge and lament this obstacle that absolutely limited my ability to pursue this topic to my ideal amount of detail or depth. There exists in Morocco a vibrant set of exchanges and activism regarding terrorism and the consequences of the Casa bombings, but I was only able to access a very small portion of this wealth of information. Furthermore, while I did conduct one interview with an interpreter, the skill level of this interpreter was less than I anticipated, and this inevitably impacted the quality of the exchange that took place.

Secondly, logistical barriers loomed around every corner. From taxis drivers who had never heard the streets I tried to find, to the innumerable unanswered phone calls and emails that left my voicemail and inbox empty, it was extraordinarily difficult to find, in the very literal sense of the word, people to talk with. Email is not the preferred mode of communication in Morocco, and often it took weeks, if at all, to receive a response from a particular organization or individual. Of the 30 some individuals and organizations that I contacted before and during the timeframe of the project, ten responded. Of those ten, one was a major organization to which I sent two unanswered emails (one in English and one in French). Undeterred, I called them directly and the woman I spoke with asked that I send an email detailing my request. Needless to say, the email went unanswered. Another potential participant requested that I email him at the end of April, but never
responded to my follow up e-mail. A third individual, the member of a major human rights association, did not respond to either email I sent him, but then responded to an email I sent to another member of his organization. He provided me with his personal contact information and suggested I call him to set up an appointment. However, upon my first attempt, he requested that I call back at the end of the day. I complied, but he did not pick up his phone or respond to my follow-up emails. The majority of the major organizations I emailed simply did not respond, and one explicitly declined to participate.

In total, I was able to interview six individuals. Three are academics, one is a refugee currently living in Morocco, one is an artist/writer, and one is on the board of a non-governmental, human rights advocacy group. For confidentiality reasons, all of their names have been changed, however, issues of vulnerability were somewhat limited in this study because the majority of my informants are well established in their fields and their viewpoints are public and known. One participant in particular who is a sub-Saharan refugee was concerned about how I attained his contact information because, as he explained in the email, members of his community and organization have to worry about police repression and retaliation. Once I explained in further detail who I was and how I had come across his email address however, he was more than willing to meet with me.

Language and Discourse

September 11th functioned as the semiotic nucleus for the subsequent discursive explosion of terror and terrorism in the United States’ and broader Western, collective imagination. The use of terrorism as a paradigm to describe and understand particular acts of violence far proceeds the tragic events of 9/11. A close examination of its usage both throughout history and in the present-day context reveals that the meaning of
terrorism was and continues to be neither fixed nor stable. Today’s understanding of terrorism has departed quite significantly from its initial deployment describing “French revolutionary actions against domestic enemies in 1793 and 1794” (Bartolucci 4). Today, the term is most commonly used in reference to and associated with “‘Islamic terrorism’ and ‘Islamic radicalism’, and since 2001… with the Al-Qaida network” (Bartolucci 7)

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), in its extensive report “Terrorism, Counter-Terrorism, and Human Rights” begins with the caveat that “The debate over the causes of terrorism is hampered by a lack of a universally accepted definition” (5). Following this acknowledgment, the OHCHR then proceeds to define terrorism as “acts of violence that target civilians in the pursuit of political or ideological aims” (5). It acknowledges that while “in legal terms, although the international community has yet to adopt a comprehensive definition of terrorism, existing declarations, resolutions and universal ‘sectoral’ treaties relating to specific aspects of it define certain acts and core elements” (OHCHR 5). Francis Y. Owusu offers a similar but more comprehensive definition of the term in his paper “Post-9/11 U.S. Foreign Aid, the Millennium Challenge Account, and Africa: How Many Birds Can One Stone Kill?” Owusu defines “terrorism as the calculated use of violence or threat of violence against civilians in order to attain goals that are political, religious, or ideological, through the use of intimidation, coercion, or the instilling of fear” (6).

On December 10th, 1948, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, (UDHR) and this document, “together with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and its two Optional Protocols, and
the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, form the so-called International Bill of Human Rights” (United Nations). The OHCHR asserts that “The full spectrum of human rights involves respect for, and protection and fulfillment of, civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights, as well as the right to development. Human rights are universal—in other words, they belong inherently to all human beings—and are interdependent and indivisible” (4). Articulating what exactly these values consist of and determining the strength and extent of the legal guarantees developed for their promotion and protection have remained difficult issues with tenuous, if any, international consensus in either theory or practice. Clearly, though, as one of the foundational documents of the young U.N., advocacy for the inviolable sanctity of human rights has an established history within the context of international governing bodies. Furthermore, the concept of human rights has been articulated in religious and secular philosophical traditions throughout history, ancient and modern. Issues of origins and implementation aside, for the purpose of this paper I will employ the definition offered above by the OHCHR. To argue persuasively for the undeniable universality of human rights, we must examine how these principles and the language with which they are articulated interact with innumerable local contexts of diverse political systems, cultural values, gender norms and (in)equalities, levels of economic development, and religious, ethnic, and racial identities.

Between human rights and terrorism there exists a “complex and multifaceted relationship” (OHCHR 2). As their meanings are neither fixed nor stable, exploring the ways in which these words have been utilized and appropriated by various regimes and
actors, and the resulting consequences for civilian populations and states alike, reveals
their core ambiguities. Clearly,

“Terrorism clearly has a very real and direct impact on human rights, with
devastating consequences for the enjoyment of the right to life, liberty and
physical integrity of victims. In addition to these individual costs,
terrorism can destabilize governments, undermine civil society, jeopardize
peace and security, and threaten social and economic development”
(OHCHR 1).

Since September 11th and its profound impact on U.S. foreign policy, with resulting
reverberations across the globe, “the measures adopted by States to counter terrorism
have themselves often posed serious challenges to human rights and the rule of law”
(OHCHR 1). Thus, while terrorism itself clearly undermines all of the liberties enshrined
within human rights doctrine, counter-terrorism has emerged, at least in practice, less as a
strategy to counteract the injustices of terrorism and more as the other side of the same
coin. The implications of this perversion of justice are troubling. Former General
Secretary to the U.N. Kofi Annan eloquently summarizes the dangerous consequences of
such a situation, cautioning that “to pursue security at the expense of human rights is
short-sighted, self contradictory, and, in the long run, self-defeating” (HRW Evil 4).

PART II

Morocco: A brief overview

The Kingdom of Morocco’s “strategic location has shaped its history” (State
Department). Located at the crossroads of present-day Africa, Europe, and the Middle
East, it has always been a country of human mobility, cultural interface, and intellectual
intersections. In the 7th century Arab invaders conquered the indigenous, largely Berber
population, bringing with them Sunni Islam. Today, Morocco is approximately 99%
Muslim and identifies with the Maliki school of jurisprudence. The country is ruled by the Alaouite dynasty, which acceded to the throne in 1649. The ruling family claims descent from the Prophet Muhammad, and the King is both “Commander in Chief of the military and holds the title of Amir al-Mou’minin, or Commander of the Faithful, the country's religious leader” (CIA/State Department). Morocco is a constitutional monarchy that, as mandated by 1996 revisions to its then-25 year old constitution, created a bicameral parliament legislature.

“The Moroccan Constitution provides for a strong monarchy, but a weak Parliament and judicial branch. Dominant authority rests with the King. The King presides over the Council of Ministers; appoints the Prime Minister following legislative elections; appoints all members of the government taking into account the Prime Minister's recommendations; and may, at his discretion, terminate the tenure of any minister, dissolve the Parliament, call for new elections, or rule by decree” (State Department).

The degree to which the monarchy enjoys popular legitimacy is debated both within academic and popular circles. Professor Jack Kalpakian notes that, “unlike other Arab or Muslim monarchies, the Moroccan monarchy was established over a thousand years ago, with the current dynasty ruling for more than three hundred years… the extent of [its] legitimacy can be disputed, but its existence should not be discounted” (Tug-of-War 120). On the other hand, John P. Entelis, a well-established scholar on Maghreb countries, argues that

“the North African state can better be understood as ‘fierce’ since, in order to preserve itself, it resorts to the use of raw power as its default function. It is not ‘strong,’ because the Maghrib state ‘lacks the infrastructural power that enables [it] to penetrate society effectively through mechanisms such as taxation. [It also] lacks ideological hegemony (in a Gramscian sense) that would enable it to forge a historic social bloc that accepts the legitimacy of the ruling stratum” (543).
Based on informal observation and discussion, this author is inclined to agree more with Kalpakian’s argument, but as within all countries, the spectrum of affiliation/opposition is wide and varied, and generalizations are somewhat difficult to make. However, especially in comparison to his father, it appears that large segments of the Moroccan population are at least nominally satisfied with Mohammed VI, if not quite content, and do not feel any pressing desire for fundamental changes in government.

The social development of Morocco has been uneven, with rural and northern areas lagging behind urban locales and the Southern regions. The literacy level (definition--age 15 and over can read and write) of the total population stands at 52.3%. The gender breakdown reveals severe gender-based inequality, with the male literacy rate standing at 65.7% and the female literacy rate at a mere 39.6% according to the 2004 census (CIA). In rural areas, furthermore, the female literacy rate in estimated to stand at no more than 10% (State Department.). The Moroccan workforce consists of ~11.5 million persons according to 2008 estimates, and unemployment stands at 9.9% (CIA). The 2005-2007 Euromed Partnership report on Morocco characterizes

“The social situation [as] worrying. The unemployment rate in cities is over 20% (notably among the young and females), poverty has been on the rise since the 1990s, and there are still marked disparities in access to basic services (water, electricity, housing, education and health). These disparities are even more notable when female access to these services (particularly education) are considered” (2).

However, Morocco is generally recognized to be far more liberal than the majority of MENA states, with slowly increasing levels of governmental transparency, civil society development, and human development.

Islam is indivisible from politics in Morocco in the same way that it is indivisible from social and cultural rituals and the mundane activities of everyday life. It is built into
Moroccan speech, dress, celebration, mourning, and even architecture. While “the proper role of religion in the polity is an issue for debate… that the two should be linked is not” (Kalpakian 133). The king himself occupies the position of Commander of the Faithful, and part of the ruling family’s claim on its legitimacy to govern is based on their descent from the line of the Prophet. Islam has also been instrumentalized by opposition political parties, to call for political and social reform, and:

“There are three main types of Islamist movements in Morocco. First, there are movements that work within the government… There are also those outside the political mainstream… This second group includes both violent and non-violent political movements… A third movement holds that Islam, in its most fundamental form, is a personal choice and eschews politics altogether” (Kalpakian 125).

Of the politically active Islamist organizations, the most mainstream within the system is that of the Party of Justice and Development (PJD), which has “cultivated a loyal grassroots base by attacking government corruption, trumpeting democracy as a challenge to the autocratic executive, and providing local constituent services” (Wittes & McFaul 22). The 2007 parliamentary elections reflected upon “The slow, partial democratization that appears to be underway in monarchical Morocco… [and] stands as a unique experiment, one that so far has been yielding results notable different from those seen in other parts of the Arab world” (Wittes & McFaul 20). Perhaps most significantly, while the PJD won a sizeable number of seats, it was not overwhelmingly voted into the majority as analysts expected. Also of extreme importance and concern in considering these elections, however, were the very low turnout rates estimated to be at 37%, with 1/5 of those ballots intentionally spoiled (Wittes & McFaul 21). That being said, Wittes and McFaul emphasize that
“all Islamist parties are not the same… [and] the PJD’s participation in elections and Parliament seems to have had a moderating effect on the party’s orientation, and has spurred important intraparty debates over how to balance Islamist political principles, opposition tactics, and democratic values” (20).

When considering Islamism in Morocco, these testaments to its diversity and dynamism are important to keep in mind. On the other hand, as Smith and Loudiy note,

“Islamists also equivocate when asked how they would maintain speech and other liberties if they were to gain more power. Islam, as moderate Islamists tend to see it, is incompatible with the exercise of [certain] liberties which human rights advocates and other pro-democracy Muslim dissidents consider universal” (1088).

Regardless, when discussing the treatment of Islamists by the government and allegations of radicalism and terrorism, it is important to note that just as in Islam itself, Islamist parties and agendas in Morocco are by no means uniform, and “the monarchy has not attempted to encourage dissent between Islamists because they have been and remain deeply divided, even within the PJD” (Kalpakian 133)

*The Bombings*

On May 16th, 2003, “in the most devastating such attack in Morocco, twelve suicide bombers struck five locations in Casablanca — a large hotel, two restaurants, a Jewish civic association, and the Jewish cemetery in the old city. The attacks killed thirty-three people in addition to the bombers and injured more than one hundred” (HRW Crossroads 25). Subsequent investigation revealed that “There was no initial plan to attack the Jewish cemetery, and it was attacked as a target of opportunity by a terrorist
who had failed at another location” (Kalpakian Human Bomb 116). All 14\(^2\) bombers were from shantytowns on the outskirts of Casa Blanca, in particular Sidi Moumen, Carriere Thomas, and Thomasville (CPT). All were members of a violent minority Islamist group most commonly referred as al-Salifiya al-Jihadiya, although subsequent research confirms that “the recruits were unaware of organization they had become active in, and it’s actual name” (Kalpakian 115). While the Center for Policing Terrorism (CPT) reports that “The attacks bore many al-Qaeda hallmarks: multiple, simultaneous attacks; suicide assailants; and lightly defended targets,” the actual nature of the bombers’ affiliation with al-Qaeda remains contested, an issue that came up within my fieldwork. As Participant A put it, “I really have the feeling it was local initiative and they knew that they would be affiliated with Al-Qaeda.” Kalpakian asserts that, “This movement/organization is not in a hierarchical relationship with al-Qaeda. Instead, the appropriate terminology here is that they were its ‘fellow travelers’… The al-Qaeda brand has been applied to what is in fact a local product, which initially appears impressive” (120).

A similar point was expressed by Participant A, who noted to the poor organization, failed execution, high death toll of Moroccans and comparatively low death toll of Westerners (~4:1), and surmised “al-Qaeda is responsible for 9/11? Al-Qaeda is responsible for this? No, I don’t think it’s the same organization.”

Government Reaction

The Moroccan government reacted swiftly and forcefully to the attacks. As one of my informants pointed out, one of the most important aspects of the bombings, from

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\(^2\) An interesting reflection of journalistic responsibility, the published sources on the logistics of the bombing vary with regard to number of bombers, number of deaths, and targets!
the perspective of the State was how “it took the regime by surprise because the king is ‘supposedly’ the commander of the faithful. This mythology was broken.” One immediate repercussion was the dismissal of the Minister of Religious Affairs, who had occupied his position for 18 years, and according to one my informants “was known for his sympathy with more radical Islamist forces.” Dr. Ahmed Taufiq, “known for his Sufi preferences and membership in the Boutchaychiya Brotherhood,” was enlisted to fill the position a vigorous campaign of religious standardization was embarked upon (Kalpakian Tug-of-War 130). Within the judicial realm, “On May 29, 2003, less than two weeks after the Casablanca bombings, the Moroccan parliament, in a special session, passed the Law to Combat Terror (Bill 03.03). The bill had been pending before the parliament through the winter session” (Human Rights Watch 26).

Before going into the specifics of Bill 3.03, it is worthwhile to explain some of the most salient features of the Moroccan legal system. Morocco’s current judicial structures were developed during French colonial rule and remain modeled after the French system. “A challenge for each Moroccan monarch has been the postcolonial legal system” (Slyomovics 13). Of central importance within its judicial structure is “the Code of Penal Procedure (CPP), a compilation of rules governing police investigations, prosecution, remedies to the law, and evidence” (Slyomovics 14). Of particular importance in understanding how abuses of human rights occur within the framework of this system is the concept of garde à vue. Here I will quote Slyomovics at length:

“Garde à vue refers to the period during which the suspect spends in detention while a police inquiry is undertaken, but before he or she is charged with a crime and brought to trial…English language human rights reports gloss garde à vue as incommunicado detention. The translation itself defines an inherently illegal procedure according to
Anglo-American procedures: to be held incommunicado circumvents provisions of habeas corpus” (14).

The duration of the legal period of garde à vue has fluctuated over time, but “since the events of September 11th and the passage of the USA Patriot Act, Morocco has increased [this] amount” (Slyomovics 16). The Law to Combat Terror has further extended the legally permissible length of garde à vue, and is discussed in further detail below. Also of note, “Morocco’s Penal Code does not include a definition of torture which is fully consistent with the provisions of Convention against Torture” (HRW 38). Furthermore:

“Morocco is among the few states that declared, in accordance with Article 28 of the Convention against Torture, that they did not recognize the competence of the U.N. Committee against Torture under the Convention’s Article 20 to conduct confidential investigations. Morocco also does not recognize the competence of CAT under Article 22 of the Convention to consider individual complaints” (HRW 38,39).

Taking into consideration the past history of abuses facilitated by this legal system, Bill 3.03 compounds and intensifies the possibilities of rights abuses that, while forbidden by international human rights laws, remain ambiguously (il)legal within the current domestic framework.

In its 2004 report “Morocco: Human Rights at a Crossroads,” the authors report that one of the most problematic aspects of the bill is that it

“introduced a broad definition of terrorism. A list of specific acts can be classified as terrorist when they ‘are deliberately perpetrated by an individual, group or organization, where the main objective is to disrupt public order by intimidation, force, violence, fear or terror.’ The list of acts includes theft, extortion, and the “promulgation and dissemination of propaganda or advertisement in support of such acts.” This definition of terrorism has been applied to convict and imprison journalists who “incite violence” (HRW 26).

One of the bill’s most dangerous features is the extension it allows on the period of garde à vue for cases deemed to be relating to terrorism. “The United Nations Commission on
Human Rights has stated that, “prolonged incommunicado detention may facilitate the perpetration of torture and can in itself constitute a form of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or even torture” (HRW 30). Bill 3.03, however, permits the period of incommunicado detention to be “increased from eight to twelve days.… before [the suspect must be] brought before the investigative judge. It also allows the judicial police, with the prosecutor’s approval, to prevent suspects being investigated from meeting with their lawyers for up to ten days” (HRW 27). Such an extreme extension of garde à vue, as well as “Twelve days of detention without judicial review, constitute a violation of Morocco’s obligations under… The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights” (HRW 32). Islamist suspects arrested in the aftermath of the Casablanca bombings have reported incidents of torture, secret detention³.

### III Perspectives from the Field

In this section I have thematically organized the major issues that emerged out of my fieldwork. I have chosen to proceed thematically in order to highlight consensus in and conflicts of opinion regarding various major issues discussed in my interviews. The major foci are as follows: the global and the local, causes of radicalization, Bill 3.03 and the justice system, the discourse of terrorism, the universality of human rights.

The individuals who participated in this project expressed an acute sense of the inextricable interplay between local and global forces in accounting for both the causes and consequences of the Casa bombings. Almost all the participants began by explaining the immediate effects of the attacks. The most commonly used words were “trauma” and “shock”. A described the bombings as “a national trauma [that] changed our perception of self and other… and who the Other can be. B reinforced this claim, explaining that “it


was never expected. A big shock.” While, needless to say, terrorism was by no means an alien concept or an unheard of phenomenon, there existed in Morocco “a Moroccan exceptionalism, a sense that these things simply don’t happen here. In many ways it was an accurate exceptionalism, but one that was shattered on 5/17/03” (C).

What immediately followed the bombings, in both civil society and at the state level, was “dissent and discourse: what is Islam and its place?” (C). Competing forces sought to identify the causes of the attacks based on their particular ideological perspectives: “blame [was] placed on Saudi Arabia by traditionalists, ignorance by liberals, poverty by Marxists; there was a hijacking of this issue of terrorism” (C). The extreme politicization of the bombings reflected the many fault lines of identity in Morocco society. In particular, “A certain elite/intellectual/Francophone segment [began] publishing strong attacks on Islamism if not Islam itself” (A). It was uniformly asserted by my participants that an undue and simplistic burden of blame was placed upon Islamism and in some cases, on Islam as well. One participant recalled how, following the bombings, an article in L’Economiste was published suggesting that the private sector should refuse to hire veiled women. B emphasized the dangerous irony of such an approach in a Muslim country when, globally, “there is already this confusion of Muslim = terrorist. They have co-opted this for their own political reasons without understanding the danger of the discourse.”

The bombings and the subsequent mass arrests and investigations left “people… frightened. We had never seen such violence, especially in civil society… and then the arrests, barriers for cars… it created a sense of terror for civilian Moroccans.” Entelis, argues that if the systems of structural violence in Maghreb states are to be overcome, “it
must begin with political change in the Maghrib itself” (Entelis 539). One of my respondents pointed to the fact that even in the immediate aftermath of the bombings, the mass mobilization of the remained fragmented and the demographics of the two rallies that took place in Casa and Rabat reflected more than geographical divides. Currently, “there is no organized or sustained form of protest against the current state of public liberties, nor is there sustained advocacy for a constitutional amendment in this area” even though the repressive nature of the post-2003 period has been internationally acknowledged (Smith & Loudiy 34). In this vein, one of my participants strongly rejected the impulse to point the finger of blame “outward” onto foreign radicalizing influences. With regards to those who alleged that an increasing Saudi Arabian Wahhabi influence was to blame, he retorted “Wahhabism is like Marxism at Yale; it’s been present here since the 19th century.” He continued by postulating that while some of the bombers’ inspirational figures may have been affiliated with the Wahhabi movement, the Moroccan bombers themselves were “not necessarily ideologically or jurisprudentially Wahhabi.” At the same time however, it cannot be denied and must be accounted for that the bombers themselves and the conditions of poverty that characterized the communities in which they lived, are linked to transnational communities and global forces.

As noted earlier, Entelis characterizes Morocco as a “fierce state”. The country’s "fierce" attributes are “reinforced by its rentier status that enables the country's fiscal health to remain disconnected from society's productive economic forces yet directly tied to the international political economy” (543). The of disconnect between the government and the population was reiterated by participant E, who commented that, “the state doesn’t do much really to solve poverty… the state can do a lot. We have the money.
But there is corruption and dilapidation of public funds.” Many scholars and policymakers emphasize how “The growth of nationalist and global jihadism has been greatly facilitated by Moroccan and Algerian extremist communities operating in Europe. They provide money; recruit, indoctrinate, and train potential terrorists; and give supporting logistical services and shelter to terrorist organizations (Celso 84). My participants, however, pointed first and foremost to internal dynamics and conditions as both explanatory factors of the bombings and as the greatest threats to Morocco’s future security. In “Post-9/11 U.S. Foreign Aid, the Millennium Challenge Account, and Africa: How Many Birds Can One Stone Kill?”, Owusu discusses the concern over the “increasing securitization of Africa — which has resulted from viewing the continent through the terrorism lens” (18). Informant E in particular articulated concern over the effects of this securitization: “if you don’t have something to fight… you create it. This isn’t to deny its [terrorism’s] existence, but it makes it much bigger so as to justify arms securitization instead of promoting peace, justice, tolerance, and dialogue between religions and cultures.”

All of my participants were extremely engaged in offering their views on how and why radicalization occurs, immediately affirming the observation emphasized by Owusu that “few of the world’s well-known terrorist groups in recent years have been rooted in poverty or have had the goal of its elimination” (9). Informant A asserted “NO. I really don’t think we have that exclusivity. Look at sub-Saharan Africa… it [their poverty] is not even comparable. People aren’t dying of hunger [in Morocco]. They’re not starving in the shantytowns. But sub-Saharan aren’t radicalizing. How come they don’t commit suicide acts of terror? There must be other reasons.”

Echoing these sentiments, participant C remarked,
“I’m very suspicious of the poverty thesis. The poorer Moroccans get, the more liberal they are! The poor are more interesting in de-othering you than the middle and upper classes. The poorest people are not represented in these bombings…Radicalization is not an act of empathizing with the poor.”

Participant B suggested that “it’s not because of poverty. It’s about marginalization, integration, and frustration.” This belief was supported by A’s analysis that suicide bombings represent “a performance, a show… they [the bombers] came from shantytowns. They were people who did not ‘exist’. They had no visibility. So then, in this bombing, they could be. They were the stars.”

Lack of education and employment were perceived to be two of the critical factors that facilitated the radicalization of the Casa bombers in particular. More generally speaking, lack of education, in a broader sense of the word than mere literacy, was also stressed as a serious problem and a major cause of the spread of radical Islam. Scholars such as Mohamed El-Khawas argue that neither of these factors can account for radicalization: “Within these countries, the Islamists are the only organized, well-resourced groups that offer options for change. Their messages have been finding receptive audience among restless youth—rich and poor, educated and uneducated alike” (my emphasis). El-Khawas does not, however, specify what then can account for the appeal of the Islamist message. Participant F claimed that “terrorism starts with religion – the misinterpretation of religion. You misconstrue things in your mind and find others of like persuasion.” It is important to note here that participant F was a Christian refugee from sub-Saharan Africa who asserted that “Muslim logic is different” and also identified religious difference as one of the main points of conflict between sub-Saharan and Moroccans.
Two of my other participants, both Moroccan Muslims, stressed the importance of being able to read the Qur’an and fiqh, as well as having access to critical interpretations of these texts. Participant A concluded his response to the question of radicalization by stressing that it came down to issues of “ideology. I really believe it has to do with ideology…If you use poverty in another meaning of the word. In terms of education – yes. More than 50% of the population is illiterate. If people are illiterate… among that population it’s easier to mislead and manipulate [them]… They cannot read the Qur’an.”

Likewise, participant E, while acknowledging poverty, unemployment, and social exclusion, emphasized that the most likely targets for fundamentalists are the “young people who are, above all, illiterate.” Participant C struck a balance, summarizing that, “when we analyze social or political phenomenon, we need to avoid determinism. We cannot deny that they come from the most marginalized sectors of Casa, but to explain [their actions] only through economics, that [would be to look through] a tunnel.”

The OHCHR states that, “The important objective of countering terrorism is often used as a pretext to broaden State powers in other areas. Offences which are not acts of terrorism, regardless of how serious they are, should not be the subject of counter-terrorist legislation” (24). Many of my participants identified Bill 3.03’s problematically broad redefinition of terrorism as being one of its major flaws. They also cited the expansive search powers given to law enforcement officials as frightening and too far-reaching. One participant, an expert in law, exclaimed that “it [the law] has to be changed. Certain articles, it’s too much!” Another echoed this sentiment. “In my opinion we don’t need this law. In our criminal law we have enough heavy sentences.”
With the memories of severe government repression under King Hassan II still raw and unresolved in the public consciousness, the possibilities of torture and disappearance due to provisions of Bill 3.03 were identified as of grave concern. “The prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment is absolute under international law. It is a peremptory norm—or a norm of jus cogens—and is non-derogable even in states of emergency threatening the life of the nation under international and regional human rights treaties” (OHCHR 32). However, as discussed in previous sections, allegations of torture, secret detention, and police brutality have all been made by Islamists detained under the law, and many of their allegations have been confirmed by both domestic and international NGOs and human rights watchdog groups. As participant E, the member of a major Moroccan rights association explained, “even if we [at NGO] don’t share their [Islamist] ideas, we are obliged to advocate for fair trials and freedom from torture”.

Participant D voiced the opinion that talking about the specifics of the law was somewhat pointless given the overarching structure of the Moroccan legal system. “Whatever who we are, we need a legal system that is independent.” Participant E suggested that the law was passed largely as a statement, both to the international community and to Moroccan civilians, “to give a clear message that the state is in control.” Not all of my participants, however shared the same view. Participant C offered the following assessment: “The law is a good law. It addressed some of the security concerns but didn’t go off the deep end… it’s procedural enough that it’s not anything goes. It’s a reasonable amount of due process.” However, he added the caveat that “it must be thought of as a temporary law” to address the current security threats
posed by terrorist groups. “If the law is still on the books in 2020, then I think things need to be reconsidered.”

My participants engaged with the concept of terrorism in diverse ways. While some uncritically accepted the discourse, others questioned its functionality as an effective paradigm through which to understand acts of violence. Almost all of the participants acknowledged and passionately critiqued the implicit association between terrorism and Islam and terrorist and Muslim in dominant Western discourse. They identified the discourse’s undercurrents of ethnocentrism, Orientalism, and essentialism as serious flaws in its potential for international legitimacy. Participant A highlighted the role of the media and visual mediums of communication in delimiting what terrorism means and looks like. When asked what first came to mind upon hearing the word terrorism, he responded “It’s images, of course. Had you asked this before 9/11 my answer would be different. It’s the Twin Towers – not just in the states. These images have been broadcasted over and over. We are shaped and limited by this image even though so many others since have not looked like that.” Participant D took a much more critical approach, arguing that “already to speak about terrorism is to be situated within a particular discourse. So, I try to avoid this concept altogether and speak about violence, acts of violence which can be perpetuated by many actors, state as much as non-state.” Interestingly enough, participant C emphasized to the contrary his belief that “other words for state-terrorism and other concepts can be applied. I’m not friendly to the idea that everything can be understood as terrorism. There are other words for state atrocities, like crimes against humanity.”
My participants uniformly denied the validity of arguments alleging that human rights are a Western concept or an imperialist discourse (which is not to say that they have never been instrumentalized in neo-imperialist policies and projects). Participant F, a refugee from sub-Saharan Africa, sitting on Mohammed V Avenue in Rabat, immediately referenced the Geneva convention when asked to define human rights. Participant E explained that the mission of the NGO he represents, a Moroccan NGO active for almost three decades in civil society and activism, was the “defense and promotion of human rights in their globality and universality.” Participant C scoffed at the notion of human rights as non-universal in their values and principles. “That’s BS. It’s something I’ve had to grapple with here. There is plenty of protection of human rights within Islam. It’s sheer, utter nonsense. The same people raising [this claim] are often the first to cry for it when they’re taken away.” Participant B offered an interesting analysis, explaining that resistance to the idea of universal human rights on the part of certain actors stemmed from “a certain confusion about human rights with certain Western rights such as homosexuality or sexual relations outside marriage.” I think this analysis offers an interesting example of how deeply internalized the idea of a civilizational “West” remains within our conceptual and verbal framework. Furthermore, it reveals problematic possibilities for relativistic arguments in the realm of women’s and sexual rights. These issues, however, remain outside the specific scope of this paper and cannot be addressed now.

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PART IV

Connections and Reflections

Within Western scholarship there exists a long and insidious tradition of seeking to explain the condition of the Other through lenses of ethnocentric cultural and psychological analysis while remaining obstinately and curiously blind towards structural factors and historical context. Today, “Despite the current appeal of culturally-based explanations for the authoritarian impulse [in Maghreb states], most analysts privilege more complex dynamics involving economic growth and stagnation, social-structural transformation, state formation and institutional inertia, and ideological transformation” (Entelis 541). However, even within the secondary sources utilized by this author, a “psychologizing” of the subaltern appeared within several of the texts. For example, Celso posits that the radicalization of North African emigrants in Europe is due in part to “present conflicts [that] invite feelings of past colonial humiliation and shame that can be righted by violent retaliation” (88). He fails to account for, however, the individual and institutional forms racism and economic deprivation that many Maghrebi emigrants confront while in Europe, and minimizes the impact of the brutal forms of physical and structural violence inflicted by colonial regimes worldwide and their enduring social and economic consequences. Furthermore, he temporally displaces the subaltern subject (a well explored mechanism within Orientalist literature), implying that the North African emigrant always carries upon his/her back and at the forefront of his/her consciousness “feelings of past colonial humiliation and shame” rather than cohabitating the temporal present like the Western Europeans around him/her.
All of my informants expressed apprehension over the racist, ethnocentric, and Islamophobic currents sensed in the current international discourse of terrorism. They stressed that these biases undermine the validity of the counter-terror project in its entirety and obscure its fundamentally universal objectives of protecting life and liberty. They also stressed a point made by Gafaïți in his article “Hyperculturization” after September 11: The Arab-Muslim World and the West” that

“Arab and Muslim societies have experienced modernity, including secularism and critical thinking. Significantly, this large and very important counter-current in the somewhat traditional societies of the Middle East and North Africa is to a large extent ignored—passively or voluntarily—by both Western scholarship and the Western media” (101).

The perceived anti-Islamic agenda of Western foreign policy, and within the War on Terror in particular, remains one of the global counter-terror effort’s biggest obstacles. Within the Moroccan context in particular, counter-terror laws are regarded as mechanisms of state control and an example of the international community’s hypocrisy and ignorance towards the actual effects of counterterrorism within a particular domestic context. Perhaps one of the biggest struggles for Western governments and peoples will be accepting “an understanding of subjectivity, alterity, politics and hermeneutics that is no longer grounded in the Enlightenment prejudice against religion, nor in the theories of secularization that predicted the disappearance of religion in the process of rationalization understood as the essence of liberal modernity” (Gandolfo 331).

My participants identified education as one of most effective strategies for countering radicalization, as well as being a critical component of any larger foreign policy efforts to improve relationships between the Arab/Muslim and Western worlds. Gafaïți argues that:
“one needs to go beyond Said’s notion of a “natural” ignorance among entities separated by geography, history, and cultural spaces. Indeed, and unfortunately, this mutual ignorance is not a given. In fact, it is constructed and institutionalized. Thus we are bound to face “institutionalized ignorance”—that is, an epistemological system, a state and its institutions that intentionally and systematically produce misrepresentations of the Other in a discourse whose objective is to maintain its citizens’ ignorance about the rest of the world” (104).

Along this vein, Participant E repeatedly stressed that he believes Barack Obama must “work with local media in the USA to change the image of Muslims and to promote dialogue”. Many participants pointed to U.S. media as a major problem and an example of Gafaiti’s idea of “institutionalized ignorance”. However, acts of misrepresentation and otherizing are not only committed by “Western” actors and institutions. Mechanisms and methods of Occidentalism and self-Orientalism remain curiously understudied, perhaps out of a misplaced and inaccurate sense of political correctness. As participant C explains, “in the perception of Arabs/Muslims it’s ALL Americans, not just the administration” [making violent policies, targeting Muslims, etc.]. Said himself, in his piece entitled “The Alternative United States”

“shows that the history, society, and culture of the American nation should not be identified with the hegemonic policies of its capitalist trusts, special interest groups, and belligerent governments. He criticizes Arab-Muslims for their nearly total absence of knowledge of the multifaceted reality of the people, movements, organizations, political spectrum, and sociocultural richness of the United States” (Gafaiti100).

De-otherizing, accurate representations of the diversity and heterogeneity between and within defined social groups demands the involvement and creative collaboration of engaged citizens and governments worldwide.

The United States has responded with carrots, rather than sticks, to the Moroccan State’s efforts to combat terrorism and its more or less steadfast support of the Bush Administration’s War on Terror policies (with the exception that it refused to support an
invasion of Iraq without a U.N. resolution). The Bush administration’s silence, however, on the well-documented abuses of human rights, particularly of widespread arrests, violations of due process, and torture, has not gone unnoticed. Perhaps reflective of the administration’s own horrific ambivalence towards the use of torture (as evidenced by the recent release of Department of Justice memos on the subject, as ordered by President Obama), this series of connections has negatively impacted perceptions of the United States in its entirety and of the validity of “counter-terrorism”. That being said, my participants conveyed a sense of cautious optimism regarding the future of counter-terrorism and human rights issues in both the United States and Morocco, especially with the arrival of new president who has provided an iconic new face and has already made important policy reversals. All participants articulated the opinion that the United States could and should have a major role in international affairs (or perhaps this was more a realistic resignation that it will). In order for the United States’ impact to be a positive one, however, its policies must take into greater account actual, on-the-ground implications for countries with different political systems, economic issues, religious and cultural norms, and historically contextual, embedded systems of structural violence.

My interviewees criticized the unrealistically significant place that superficial understandings of “terrorism” and “counter-terrorism” occupy in U.S. foreign policy. All were uncomfortable with the idea that poverty relief was increasingly conceptualized “as a tool… for combating global poverty, not only for its own good, but also as part of the “war on terrorism” (Owusu 5). As their comments suggest and many scholars argue, linking poverty and terrorism in any reductive manner facilitates a one-dimensional, homogenizing, and reductive understanding of why acts of terror occur and the
conditions that enable their rationalization. “The challenges facing many poor people around the world, and especially Africa’s poor who do not pose a direct terrorist threat, are being ignored” (Owusu 1). In country like Morocco, with extreme but very unevenly distributed poverty, and a historically moderate and tolerant form indigenous form of Islam, this poses a serious concern. Furthermore, such a policy risks creating a self-fulfilling prophecy. Truly neglected and underserved areas deemed unimportant to security concerns, and therefore secondary on the aid agenda, could, in fact, radicalize around violent ideology as a response to this neglect.

One of the sentiments repeated over and over was the sense of injustice regarding how “After 11 September, American policy makers suddenly decided that much of the world’s trouble came from political Islam, forgetting that the United States had a role in its rise during the past two decades” (El-Khawas 181). Nowhere was this articulated more clearly than with reference to Afghanistan. As participant D stressed, “do not try to use violent Islamists as an International Relations tool. There is a constant temptation to use these people as weapons against the enemies of the US… in many parts of the world, communism is not the worst thing that could happen. Get to know Leftists. Afghanistan should never happen again.” The situation in Afghanistan was commonly identified as one of the gravest and most tragic unresolved injustices in recent history – a situation for which the United States is directly responsible. I believe, based off the conversations I have had during the course of this project, as well outside focus on this issue throughout my academic career, that a public, honest, admission of accountability for the current situation in Afghanistan, and a comprehensive commitment to peace and rebuilding, on Afghan terms, more than anything else, could restore significant credibility
and respect to the United States. As of yet, no sufficient acknowledgment has been made regarding the U.S. role in facilitating the continued impoverishment, violence, and novel forms of radicalization that the Afghanistan population has been subjected to. The 1980s C.I.A operations in which millions were spent funneling arms through Pakistan’s secret service agency to Afghan radicals fighting the Soviets remains far too untouched in critical public discourse.

My participants expressed dismay and frustration at the United States’ gall to champion democracy and punish certain regimes for the inability to follow suite, yet at the same time undertake policies and relationships directly contradicting the democratic ideal. As participant D stated “Be consistent; if you are speaking the language of a democratic, liberal Middle East, you cannot maintain relationships with dictators”. Participant C made a similar request. “Support Arab liberals. Support them broadly. Enable them to have the resources to create the civil society networks to compete with Islamists (violent). Liberal not in the American sense, it could mean Sufis, nonviolent Islamists.” Participant E stated the opinion that “helping governments financially should be linked to democracy and transparency building,” and repeatedly implied throughout his interview that many of United States efforts in the region have been, intentionally or not, quite to the contrary.

**Conclusion:**

Clearly, the task of balancing security concerns with human rights presents “serious practical challenges for [all] States” (OHCHR 22). However, counter-terrorism efforts that bypass international and domestic laws safeguarding human rights are
ultimately self-sabotaging. As Participant E noted, in the case of Morocco “those [innocent] people were sent to jail with organized fundamentalists and then, after the fact, real radicalization occurred”. If terrorism has emerged onto the international stage as the effect of numerous inequalities and injustices embedded in economic and social structures around the world, the most effective, sustainable, and far-reaching counter-strategies require an approach that emphasizes social justice ad human rights rather than securitization and criminalization.

There are several lenses of analysis that remain under-researched and deserve further attention, such as links between patriarchy, militarism, and violence. A critical, gendered framework of investigation could reveal much about the gender and sexual politics that facilitate radicalization and terrorism. The way that ideas of male ownership over female “honor” and “sexuality” are often instrumentalized both by repressive (predominantly male) state forces and (predominantly male) terrorist radicals alike in threats of violence, during sessions of torture, and in manifesto literature, demonstrate the need for a more interdisciplinary approach towards studies of terrorism and violence. This question could also be extended to examine the presumed gender of the normative subject in human rights discourse and the potential drawbacks of gender-neutral language.

Ultimately, the strongest international bodies and most powerful nations in the world have yet to fully commit to upholding human rights as unassailable rights when weighing matters of national and international security. For example, within the U.N.,

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“Although the CTC has unequalled power to compel governments to explain their actions and has set up a mandatory counter-terrorism reporting system for all UN member states, that reporting system currently includes no human rights component” (HRW Evil 3). While it is one of the most powerful countries in the world, “the image of the United States is [that of] a state that promotes violence” (Participant E). “Now people say, “look at the US, look at what they’ve done to human rights, they’re worse than our dictatorships”… but “the US still could be a model for human rights [as it once was]” (Participant B). While the Moroccan state should by no means be exempted from their own responsibility to uphold these norms and address the internal conditions that foster terrorism, my participants stressed the belief that if the United States takes a more active and uncompromising stance in the defense of human rights “this will send a big message all over the world” (Participant E). I will conclude this article with another thought from Participant E:

“I hope people loving peace and solidarity promote ideas of tolerance and dialogue... instead of promoting security. And it’s possible. I really believe that.”

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6 CTC refers to the Counter Terrorism Committee of the United Nations Security Council
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