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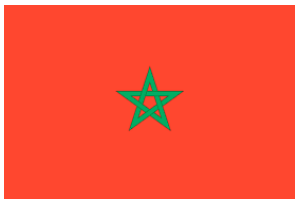

ENC ANALYSIS

Secularism in Morocco

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Summary

This chapter examines how Morocco, a state with a constitutionally established official religion, makes room for some of its citizens, who wish to pursue secular lives. In the first section, we outline the role and the nature of Islam in the Moroccan constitution and in the de-facto ideology of the country, which dates to ‘Allal al-Fassi’s unique synthesis of tradition and modernity with Islam and Liberalism. In the second section, we outline the social and physical spaces where secular people can pursue their lives in relative freedom. In the third section, we detail the tensions and pressures that face secular people in Morocco. Finally, we conclude with a discussion concerning the future of secular life in Morocco.

Secularism in Morocco

Introduction

Visitors to Morocco are sometimes surprised by the high level of personal freedoms and liberties that the population enjoys relative to peer countries, such as other Arab monarchies. From the presence of women police officers to the relative availability of alcoholic beverages, the overall picture suggests that secularism, or the separation of the spiritual and civic realms, has made inroads in Morocco. The inclusion of women in the Police took place in the face of opposition claiming that such a move is “un-Islamic.” While there is some truth in the idea that there is some secular life in the country, the reality is very complex. Morocco has made room for its Secular communities without altering the Islamic character of the state or of the society. As with all compromises and easements, this “room” has limits and there are boundaries that Secular people cannot cross. Many academic discussion concerning civil rights or civil liberties in Morocco reflects these limits and focuses on them exclusively. The resulting academic literature tends to be overtly critical and partisan, putting the Moroccan state under scrutiny and favouring the radical opposition to the government, either within the parliament or on the street. While not without its basis, this sort of account ignores a central reality within political life – the role of Islam in politics and law is uncontroversial for the vast majority of the citizens of the country. As a state that used Islam as its cultural identity first by the Arab conquest in the 7th century, and then as its national identity by the missionary activities of the Portuguese in the 15th century, in addition to the respect of the French protectorate to Islam between 1912 and 1925 as well, Morocco always intermingled Islam in its state structure because it found no other option. Nevertheless, the Moroccan monarch achieved to implement secularism by adopting it not as an outcome of the western civilization and also the French Protectorate, but as a natural system with all its obedience to Islam. Even though secularism was established by the French in Morocco, the monarch in the postcolonial episode managed to establish its necessary institutions independently from the French rule but per se, as a natural way to serve its citizens more fruitfully. In this sense, it would be safe to say that Morocco might be the only Middle Eastern and North African state that implies secularism within Islam, and that could manage to rate a democracy level not according to its Islamic side but its secular side that impacts the whole Muslim population in addition to the Jewish one. The perspective that the country should be Secular stems from a deductive ideological perspective. An assessment of that particular point of view on its own merits is outside the ambit of this paper. For the purposes of this paper, an inductive perspective is adopted that is based on the social life of the country and its values. It is precisely this inductive perspective that allows us to appreciate the extent of the room that the society and the state create for those people in it who seek a Secular life.

The creation of this Secular personal space was neither easy nor was it uncontested. Even the existing is being contested by both Moroccan traditionalists and Islamists constantly over issues like women police, women’s inheritance, the availability of alcoholic beverages and the content of the educational curriculum. That the country enjoys the level of Secular-like freedoms is a testament to the moderation and pragmatic approach its successive

governments, including the current Islamist governments, have used towards those who want to pursue Secular lives. To that end, this chapter is divided into several sections. In the first section, the chapter deals with the colonial roots of the Secularism in Morocco. Afterwards it addresses the legal context of the Moroccan state, especially its constitutional and ideological basis. The third section captures the elite discussions and contestations surrounding the issue of Secular life. The fourth section examines personal issues that face Secular people and how they negotiate them. The fifth section deals with religion in the public sphere. The sixth section addresses issues of identity and confession. The seventh section addresses the questions related to women's right. The chapter proceeds with a discussion and concludes with some reflections surrounding Morocco and secularism.

Roots of Moroccan secularism: General Lyautey's education reforms

The French Protectorate in Morocco between 1912 and 1956 significantly impacted not only the postcolonial Moroccan national identity as we have today, but also the secular development. At the very beginning of the Protectorate, General Lyautey's education reforms as alternatives to religious schools in Morocco were important steps for the construction of secular Morocco.

General Lyautey decided to protect Islam and sultan in Protectorate policies to successfully integrate with the Moroccan approach to Islam, that later paved the way to the emergence of a cultural hybridity between the Moroccan locals and the French. However, this integration involved merely Blad al Makhzen (the lands of the state), in contrast to Blad al Siba (the lands of chaotic dispossession). Geographic conditions in the region with high mountains stopped the French troops accessing southern Morocco. On the other hand, the brutality of the resistance by the Amazigh tribes against the French was unnerving the French soldiers. Moreover, the Amazigh tribes there already denied the sultan's authority. Lyautey who could provide the control of the Blad al Makhzen was not able show the same performance as he did about Islam through *la politique musulmane* in Blad al Siba. The Blad al Siba Amazighs were quite angry about the French presence in Morocco and they were discretely approaching Blad al Makhzen borders. These Amazighs of Blad al Siba were trying to influence the Amazighs and Arabs of Blad al Makhzen to join their resistance. Under such conditions, General Lyautey decided to prevent this interaction. In a letter sent to General Lyautey from Lieutenant Henry on May 2nd 1914, he suggested General Lyautey to start a cultural campaign that would alienate the Amazighs and Arabs of Blad al Makhzen from the Amazighs of Blad al Siba. In the letter, Lieutenant Henrys said:

> It clearly seems to me that it would be impossible to hold the Amazigh tribes under our control whom we met in the south. What we must do, first and foremost, is to prevent their interaction with the people here so that they would not be influenced of them. It would be great to alienate the Amazighs here from these barbarians, as soon as possible.[1]

[1] Letter of General Henrys to General Lyautey, May 2nd 1914: Il m'apparait nettement qu'il est impossible de ne pas tenir compte de l'état particulier des tribus avec lesquelles nous venons d'entrer en contact. Ce qu'il

Three months after he received the letter from Lieutenant Henrys, General Lyautey promulgated a dahir on July 31st 1914 that concerned the Amazighs of Blad al Makhzen. Called as the 1914 Amazigh dahir, the alienation of the Amazighs and Arabs in Blad al Makhzen from the Blad al Siba Berbes would be provided by a new intensive education system. This system carried out by General Lyautey involved teaching of French to the Amazighs (also Arabs) in Blad al Makhzen. Accordingly, this system would not only differ the Blad al Makzhen Amazighs from Blad al Siba ones but also modernize the education system based on Koran. The policy to instruct French language in Blad al Makhzen came up within the letters of General Bremont and General Marty to Lyautey. In his letter sent on June 3rd 1916 to Lyautey, General Bremont said that the Arabic language would just make the Amazighs more Islamic:

> That we let the Amazighs be Islamize in their mountains under the imposition of Arabic and cadi is a mistake. We must train them with the French language.[2]

In addition, General Marty in his letter to Lyautey on June 25th 1916 argued that the Amazighs must be evolved with the French language:

> First of all, we should not teach Arabic to this population. Arabic is a factor of Islamization because this language was thought in the Koran. Our interests command us to make Amazighs get rid of Islamic context. Islam was not believed among the Amazighs. These people do not practice their religion.[3]

General Lyautey replied to Marty and Bremont on April 2nd 1916 to declare his decision to instruct French to the Amazighs:

> In the linguistic view, we must directly switch from Arabic and Amazigh to French. For this, we need that our education officers work on the study of Amazigh dialects. Moreover, we must found Franco-Amazigh schools where we are going to teach French to the young Amazighs. It is the mountains where we are going to construct these schools so that they would be away from the Arabic influence.[4]

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faut à tout prix, c'est d'éviter de leur inculquer la patrie makhzen qui ne pourrait que nous aliéner, sans retour, ces montagnards.

2 Letter from Bremont to Lyautey, June 3rd 1916 : Que nous islamisons les Berbères de la montagne, leur imposant l'Arabe et le cadi, c'est une erreur; il nous faut leur enseigner le français.

3 Letter from Marty to Lyautey, June 25th 1916 : Tout d'abord nous n'avons pas à enseigner l'arabe à des populations qui s'en sont passés. L'arabe est le facteur d'islamisation, parce que cette langue s'apprend dans e coran. Or, notre intérêt nous commande de faire évoluer les Berbères hors du cadre d'Islam. Nous devons nous garder soigneusement d'intervenir sur e terrain religieux. L'islam n'a déposé sur les Berbères, j'entends ceux qui ont conservé leur Independence, qu'une empreinte très superficielle. Ces populations ont rejeté du Coran tous les concepts juridiques.

4 Letter from Lyautey to Marty and Bremont, April 2nd 1916 : Au point de vue linguistique, nous devons tendre à passer directement du berbère au français. Pour cela, il nous fait des Amazighaisants et nos officiers de renseignements doivent se mettre résolument à l'étude des dialectes berbères, il faut créer aussi les écoles

At the end of this decision, the French decided to train the Amazighs in Blad al Makhzen in the French language so that they would be alienated from the Amazighs in the Blad al Siba. This triggered an education reform movement in Blad al Makhzen where the French started to teach French language to the Amazighs in Blad al Makhzen. Accordingly, three principals were brought to education system. First, General Lyautey modelled the role of French state in education system in Morocco. Associating the French system with Islam in Morocco, General Lyautey rendered the Protectorate state as the only authority in education. According to this system, the role of mosques in education would remain but their authority would be reduced. Accordingly, no school would be opened in Morocco without the permission of the Protectorate state. Second, General Lyautey divided the schools of the Protectorate into the schools for Europeans-Israelites and the schools for Muslims (Rivet 1996:242). General Lyautey let the Koranic schools continue with their programs but they were not considered in the official education system determined. General Lyautey was looking forward to settling an education system that would train the future leaders of Morocco. That is why he decided to set the *Ecole Superieure de Langue et des dialects Amazighs* (E.S.L.D.B)[5] in 1921. E.S.L.D.B had one basic role which was to act as a linguistic study centre and training school of European and local administrations in Morocco. This new institute had two duties: to form functionaries for the Protectorate by preparing children on interpretation, linguistics and local law and to prepare kids for examinations in literature in relation with the faculties of University of Algiers and Bordeaux. Third, Lyautey also let the state to open the Franco-Arabic schools in Morocco besides E.S.L.D.B. These schools were represented by either public schools, elite schools, or the Mohammedan colleges in Fez and Rabat for the secondary education. These schools would have both a religious and scientific education at the same time. The elite schools, on the other hand, would be represented by the Mohammedan schools in which the Moroccan families were paying in the way to train their kids. The French were attaching a special importance to public schools since it was quite important to train artisans in Morocco who could work for the French interests in the future. These schools were supposed to train farmers, merchants, and artists in the production circuit and exchanges with Europe (Merrouni 1993: 20). In the last year of the post of General Lyautey in Morocco, the Protectorate education was headed by European Israelites schools on one hand and Franco-Arabic schools & E.S.D.L.B, on the other hand.

In the first thirteen years of the French rule in Morocco, Protectorate education worked successfully. Moroccan locals started to be trained according to French methods by positive sciences besides the religious education (Bensamoun 2007:268). The positive notes about General Lyatey by both elites and non-elites specifically emphasize the success of these reforms. Among them one says:

> I have the pleasure to admit that in all the regions I passed, I saw the most perfect order and peace thanks to the collaboration that qualified and that united the

franco berbères ou l'on apprendra le français aux jeunes berbères. C'est dans la montagne qu'il faut les former et les garder pour protéger de toute imprégnation arabe.

[5] Superior School of Arabic Language and Amazigh Dialects

> French and Sharifian authorities. This collaboration could just be an advantage of a union in our imperial city Rabat. Animated with biggest desire to ameliorate the conditions of my Muslim subjects, I am resolute to continue the most loyal and active concurrence to the artifact of progress and civilization that was integrated by the government of your Republic.[i]

Another one says:

> Everything has been said concerning life of the colonial artifact. This magnificent artifact made at the same time the great soldier, a pacificator, a constructer of cities, and organization of the French Morocco. He attained among Moroccans an incomparable prestige thanks to the charm that brought by his personality, his qualities of heart, and also his comprehension of the Muslim soul. He liked the Muslims and in return the Muslims were attached to him. He was a Christian who liked the Muslims. We can say that the secret of Lyautey's success in indigenous politics resides mostly in the fact that he liked the Muslims while at the same time he knew how to administer them. Thanks to Lyautey, reorganization of high Islamic education, institutions of the Muslim colleges, the schools of notables, Muslim primary schools were carried out.[ii]

And another one says:

> The idea that pervaded the whole program of the Protectorate is to make the Moroccan people progress and to bring it to the same level of other civilized nations, by introducing reforms that would bring progress, well-being and peace, without touching religion, by assisting and empowering the Makhzen and by offering its Sharifian sovereigns power to it[iii]

Between 1925 and 1930, the number of Franco-Arabic schools dramatically increased. However, nationalist rise by 1925 influenced this education system. Qarayiwin University as the centre of superior studies for religion turned into a venue of political discussions and Moroccan nationalism. The Moroccan Action Committee was founded in Qarayiwin in 1934. In 1941, the Protectorate decided to separate girls from boys in classes and created a special college for them in Rabat. In 1944, this system was extended to all schools in Morocco and continued until 1956.

Morocco as a religious state

With Moroccan independence, the secularist policy that came with the French had to recede. The Moroccan state, in the postcolonial era, is established as an Islamic state, with the King acting as the Commander of the Faithful within the context of its borders. As a traditional Islamic state, it vests sovereignty in God. Per Islamic tradition, this divine sovereignty is exercised by the Muslim community as an act of stewardship. In turn, the community vests the Sultan through *Baiy'a*, allegiance, with its exercise. The Sultanate, or Moroccan Kingship, is hereditary, but succession cannot take place without the allegiance ceremony

(Kingdom of Morocco, 2011). In other words, the succeeding King needs to be acceptable to the population, including the *ulema* – the religious scholars and clerics. The King's religious role is constitutionally listed, but there are aspects of his religious role that are not clearly spelled out in text. The role played by his ability to engage in ritual and the use of Islamic religious rituals in generating legitimacy in Morocco has been explained extensively by Schilling-Comb. Others like Jonathan Wyrtzen have explored the centrality of the monarch in Moroccan identity and have updated some Combs-Schilling's work (Combs-Schilling, 1989:187, Wyrtzen, 2016:286).

The 2011 constitution abolished the sacredness clause surrounding the person of the King that existed in earlier Moroccan constitutions. That particular clause set the King and the monarchy apart from the rest of the population, and made it difficult, albeit possible, to critique policies that originate in the palace. But in practice, the sole limits on speech surrounded Islam, the monarchy and the territorial integrity of the country, meaning that the removal of the clause did not alter the lived lives of Moroccans in any way. Morocco defines its official form of Islam in a very clear and particular way: the Maliki school of Sunni jurisprudence, the doctrine of Imam Ash'ari, and the Sufi *Sanad* or support base. These three orientations need further clarification.

First among these, the Maliki school of jurisprudence relies on the work of Imam Malik Ibn Anas, who argued that Muslims should base their societies on the precedent set by the prophet and the Muslim community in Madina. Malik Ibn Anas argued that only through basing themselves on a real model community, with all of its dilemmas and problems, can Muslims create functional healthy societies. This principal is called *'amal ahl al Madina* – the work-precedent of the people of Madina, and it represents an alternative to the textualist approach used in the Hanbali school dominant in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. While conservative, the approach is somewhat lenient since it is based on a real community and its complex issues. The second orientation of Moroccan Islam, as established by the state, is the doctrine, '*aqidah*, of Imam Ash'ari. Asha'ari argued that there are aspects of Islam and the faith that cannot be questioned and must be taken on face value. He argued that believers should not ask why lest they stop believing. While this may appear very harsh and authoritarian, it actually represents a concession to reality. As a faith, Islam asks its believers to believe. Consequently, the Ash'ari doctrine contrasts heavily with other approaches that hold that the Quran contains all knowledge or that it is a scientific document with validity, as is argued with the current *I'jaz* narratives. The third orientation concerns Sufism. The form that Morocco endorses is Sufism per the approach of Imam Junayd, or the sober, moderate form rather than the "inebriated" forms of the Mawlaiya in Turkey and elsewhere. In short, the King and the *ulema* preside over a religious state that has been modified to contain modern elements like a parliament, an elected government, and a modern bureaucracy. This context creates a serious challenge to those who want to live Secular lives or would like to experience freedoms that are enjoyed by people living in Secular states (Ministry of *Awqaf* and Islamic Affairs, Kingdom of Morocco, 2018). Nevertheless, it is possible for people to live in Morocco, should they be willing to respect the feelings of the Muslim majority, exercise due discretion, and accept the legal context under which they have to live.

The Individual and the Religious State

At the individual's level, the religious role of the Moroccan state plays itself out in terms of enforced social taboos concerning marriage, fasting, alcohol, the pilgrimage, prayers, and identity. Some of these taboos are not enforced by the state, but rather through social custom and social inclusion/exclusion dynamics. The taboo concerning marriage is enforced by the state. Muslim Moroccan women are not allowed to marry non-Muslim men without the latter's conversion to Islam. Women who not profess Islam, Judaism or Christianity cannot marry Muslim Moroccan men without at least claiming to be a member of one these three communities. These restrictions represent some of the most serious limitations on the lives of Secular Moroccans and they lead to many paper conversions, where the non-Muslim spouse converts to Islam (in the case of men) or to Islam or an alternative Abrahamic religion (in the case of women). One such convert likened the process to that of getting in line at the Department of Motor Vehicles for a driving license. While some of these conversions are genuine, a significant number of the "converts" are Secular, Irreligious, Atheist or retain whatever their "previous" belief was in private.

With the notable exception of the Jewish community, the state also assumes that the citizen is a Muslim and enforces the fasting taboo in public during Ramadan. With a few exceptions, Morocco does not allow people to eat in public during Ramadan, because such an act offends the feelings of the Moroccan population. There are of course, categories of people who are exempt from the fasting requirement including the sick, the old, pregnant and menstruating women, and others who have exceptions due to their roles as soldiers, pilots or doctors. In the case of fasting, it is not the state that is so strict, it is the society. For example, there are always a few restaurants serving foreigners and those exempt from fasting, discretely. There is also no state enforcement of this taboo in the private sphere, especially in people's homes. Society, however, holds that everyone should fast without exception, and diabetics and others often take immense health risks because they not want to offend their neighbours and relatives or even because they do not want to believe that they are in fact not required to fast under some very traditional and orthodox understandings of Islamic tradition, particularly under the Maliki school of jurisprudence which is the official form of Sunnism in the country.

While available, alcohol faces significant restrictions in terms of taxes, the number of establishments selling it, and the space available to use it. The larger issues with alcohol is the society's rejection of it in public. That public rejection is not consistent, however, and many people do drink in private without any issue. Technically, the stores selling alcohol are there for the foreign and Jewish communities, but they are extensively used by Secular and Muslim Moroccans as well. The country produces beer, wine and spirits as well and taxes them. While formidable in theory and text, the restrictions are rather easy to bypass, meaning those who enjoy a drink will almost always find a libation. Society publicly rejects drinking, and enjoins the pilgrimage to Mecca. The state facilitates the pilgrimage in conjunction with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and trains the pilgrims before they leave to minimize the influence of the Wahhabi clerical establishment on Moroccans. But while the society expects Moroccans to carry out the pilgrimage, it not a matter that the state enforces.

Secular Moroccans may conduct a pilgrimage and take the title of *Hadj,* but they may also chose to ignore the matter and claim that they do not have the funds to facilitate it.

Prayers and identity are matters not necessarily actively enforced by the state. Instead, people are excepted to attend prayers by relatives and friends. It is not uncommon to be invited to pray with a new friend as an act of cementing a friendship or an association. This poses a dilemma for Secular people who may or may not want to pray. Some Secular people occasionally pray and there is no necessary dichotomy between Secularism and prayers, but the whole issue centres around being expected to, and of course there are several ways to cope. A Secular Moroccan may choose to pray in public to avoid social scrutiny. Alternatively, he or she can claim to have prayed elsewhere or to be attached a particular and faraway Mosque. Finally, identity is an issue of concern to some Secular people. They may not want to be identified as Muslim in public or private. It is ironically this issue that leads to some of the most exacerbating problems at the level of both of the state and society. Fortunately, most Secular Moroccans do not object to being identified as Muslim, meaning that this final problem is often absent among most. Those who would like to be open about their views, especially those who are Dawkinsite Atheists, tend to either isolate themselves from the rest of Moroccan society and set themselves up in wealthier Secular-friendly areas in the major cities or emigrate. Secular people negotiate their location and space inside Morocco, and for the most part, they are given the space in which they can live in relative peace. For many, especially women, the restrictions on who they can marry are the most difficult to accept, but the reality is that the process of conversion is a very *pro forma* event that does not entail an inquiry to ascertain true conversion.

Secularist Intellectuals and the Islamist Movements

The way that both the society and the state retained their Islamic character and at the same time allowed those who do not wish to be strict in practice to coexist in privileged enclaves of its core is one of the main sources of contradiction that fed the rise of both the Islamist and Secularist movements in Morocco. Neither of these two social movements is particularly monolithic, nor does either one of them have a monopoly on democratic credentials. The Islamist movement in particular displays wide diversity in its various strands. It is possible to use the principles of violence, politics, democracy, and liberties to categorize the various Islamist movements in Morocco. At the most fundamental level, the question of violence divides the Islamist movement into two irreconcilable camps. Daesh and Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, as well as some of their local imitators, reject politics, democracy, and civil liberties, especially gender equality, as un-Islamic. To that end, these strand attempts to conduct violent operations against the state and against the society itself. Its relative lack of success reflects the extent with which this sort of extremism is rejected by Moroccan people in general. The larger diversity lies among those who reject violence. The country has a Salafi movement that rejects violence, but also rejects democracy, politics and civil liberties as well. Writing in a newspaper called *Al-Sabil,* one of the stated goals of this movement is to “liberate Moroccan women from the Feminist movement.” Fortunately, these Salafis’ rejection of politics also means that they do not seek power and are content with being active within society or at least left alone to pursue their puritanical lifestyles. They are also very

socially productive and many good small businesses, particularly those in the service sector, are a result of their disciplined focus on work. This movement is best represented by the a*l Dawah wa-Tabligh*, whose pacifism and rejection of politics in general is under-reported and under-appreciated. The remaining non-violent Islamist movements accept democracy and a measure of civil liberties, but differ on the question of politics. The ruling Party of Justice and Development represents the strand that accepts the political process, while the Justice and Charity movement represents a strand that rejects the political process as it is currently constituted. Finally, there is a liberal Islamist strand whose acceptance of civil liberties is not partial.

Given the political and demographic weight of the Islamist movement, Secular intellectuals could not ignore these realities and have engaged some of the Islamist movements in dialogue. Some Secularists reject any role for Islam in the political and social life of the Morocco they seek to inhabit in the future. Others seek to engage those in the Islamist movement willing to respect human rights and individual liberties. Encounters were arranged between the two perspectives, including one organized by Munjib Maati in 2008, and there is an emerging dialogue between the two movements (Maati, 2008). If dialectics do emerge, we may see an articulation of a stabilized Moroccan Islamic democratic perspective. Under such a scenario, the state and society would remain Islamic, but people would be empowered to live their lives as they see fit, whether to pursue Salafi or Secular lifestyles would be up to the citizen and her or his conscience. Under such a scenario, the hardest set of issues to untangle would be the laws and statutes pertaining to the status of women – where the patriarchy transcends the Secular-Islamist divide.

The Status of Women

Unfortunately, for many people, the issues of gender equality and women's rights are "secular" concerns. For example, over the last two years, the country has been in the grip of a debate concerning whether women should be allowed to inherit in the same manner as men. At present and in accordance with the Shariah, daughters inherit half a son's share, and this contradicts the country's commitment to gender equality and to the Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Wgainst Women (CEDAW). The debate led to the departure of the country's leading woman religious scholar, Asmaa Lamrabet, from the *Rabita Al Muhammadiya lil Ulema,* the official body recognizing and regulating the *ulema* as a class and a profession in Morocco (Kasraoui, 2018). The debate pitted those who believe in gender equality against traditionalists who reject it. More importantly, the debate cut across the traditional dividing lines between the Islamists and Secularists, probably due to the patriarchal nature of the issue. The sole remaining Moroccan reservation with regard to CEDAW concerns the reservation of the Moroccan throne to males, so the debate was urgently needed and was overdue in some respects.

The issues surrounding inheritance and marriage are highlighted here because they are currently under debate and discussion. Gone are the days when Moroccan women were barred from serving in the Police or becoming Judges or Ambassadors, so there has been movement along lines that can broadly be defined as Secular, but it is not even and by no

means uncontested. Unlike many peer states, women receive an education in Morocco and there is a health office for guiding and helping mothers with paediatric and reproductive medicine, but the country does ban abortion. So there has been movement towards gender equality, albeit perhaps not as fast as many Moroccan women would have preferred. Nonetheless, Moroccan women wishing to live Secular lives can do so provided they have the wealth and class standing that enables them to bypass societal restrictions and negotiate the state's adherence to its traditional Islamic identity.

Belief and Identity

One of the central tenets of Secularism is that people should be able to self-identify with the religion of their choice. This goes beyond private belief and extends to the right to be able to talk about one's beliefs or preferences. Morocco's laws inhibit non-Muslims from discussing their beliefs save in an academic setting, because "shaking the faith of a Muslim" is considered a crime. This means that while Churches or other non-Muslim religious establishments can operate in relative freedom, they cannot work with or serve those who are seen by the state as Muslims, regardless of the latter's religious beliefs and preferences. Save for some academic forums, atheists and agnostics cannot discuss their own views either. People cannot name their children using non-Islamic names to preserve the Muslim identity of the country. Again, the social restrictions are far more extensive than those of the government. Of course in practice, these issues are not as severe as one imagines, at least not as far as the state is concerned.

For example, "Brother Rashid," a Moroccan Christian published a column in *Hespress* – an Islamist newspaper, a Moroccan Baha'i is the most widely read psychologist in the country, and satellite transmission includes material covering all sorts of religious movements from Christians to Hare Krishnas, sometimes in Arabic as well. The internet is also relatively free meaning that people can read about other faiths or irreligion in all its forms if they are curious. The public sphere is where the focus is at present. Nevertheless, it is important to understand the motives of the state concerning restrictions on public profession of alternative religious identities. First, Christianity and Secularism (especially in its French form) are regarded as associated with colonialism and alien rule. Second, Moroccans genuinely fear their country's culture being swallowed up by the larger and more powerful European cultures north of it. They see the subtle and corrosive assimilation Moroccans abroad undergo, wherein there are increasingly classes of people who can be honestly regarded as Moroccan in name only. Third, Islam helps solidify the country's national identity, and its erosion would be dangerous to the country's sense of solidarity and cohesion. Given these well-founded fears, the real news is that there is a measure of emancipation taking place in Morocco where some non-believers are being allowed to be open about their views, even from self-imposed exile.

Discussion and Conclusion

The number of secular people remains small in Morocco. A rough and imperfect estimation of their actual numbers would be about 5-8 percent, taking into account many categories,

including practicing Muslims who prefer a wider gap between public and religious life. Militant Secularists seeking to change Moroccan society and the state need to think thrice about their approaches. First, the imposition of Secular politics will not be supported by the vast majority of Moroccan people who prefer an integrated religious polity. Second, the issues that concern them can be addressed without challenging the centrality of the religious state. For example, there are many states that have official religious institutions allow all manners of freedoms associated with secularism. Third, the history of Secularism in the region should give them pause. In Tunisia and Egypt, it was imposed by dictatorial regimes. In turn, this led to extremism in the Islamist movement, and further suppression of liberal freedoms that are associated with Secularism. Finally, having a religious state allows Morocco to regulate the interpretation and articulation of Islam in a way that a Secular state never could. Concerning the first set of issues, the presence of Islamist parties and movements that reject violence should be fully exploited. These movements represent a wonderful opportunity for dialogue that can create positive developmental dialectics enabling the enlargement of the Secular space in Morocco. To that end, more encounters and debates would be called for. The presence of self-critical strand within Moroccan Salafism, as exemplified by the late Farid al-Ansari, also allows the two movements to begin a process of rapprochement. It would help if Secularists acknowledge the excesses committed in Egypt, Tunisia and Algeria in the name of Secularism against religious people.

With regard to the issue of civil liberties and rights, it is fair to ask Moroccan Secularists a basic question – what is wrong with England and Scotland or, formerly, the Nordic states? In all of these examples, there is an established, state-supported, church. Civil liberties and Secularism thrive there nonetheless. A French model of Secularism that sets the state against religion is not a fruitful path for Morocco to follow or emulate. To insist on it may be both politically and socially counter-productive. As long as the issue is framed as that of Islam-versus-Secularism, it would be difficult to expand the room for Secular life in the country. As the example of Egypt and Tunisia shows, the attempt to change society from above almost always failed in North Africa and the Middle East, and it is more important to work issue by issue to expand the space for secular life instead. Also, Secular regimes in the region cannot control the narratives, interpretations and articulations of Islam as well as those operating from religious legitimacy. This means that through the imamate of the king, the control of *ulema* and the Ministry of *Awqaf* and Islamic Affairs, the Moroccan state can make arguments concerning what is or what is not Islamic in a way neither Egypt nor Tunisia ever could – which opened the door there for all manner of unchallenged assertions concerning Islam, Salafism and Jihadism. Nothing in this chapter should be interpreted as an indictment of any non-violent social movement, whether Islamist or Secular. At the same time, this chapter constitutes an invitation to understanding the religious political and social context of the country. It is precisely that sort of understanding that would enable a truer appreciation of the spaces the country has created for its Secular community. Some Islamists and Secularists argue that Morocco is *de-facto* Secular, because it does not adhere fully to traditional approaches to Islamic law. Another form of that argument is that Moroccan people are Secular in terms of dividing their practical and religious lives into non-overlapping spheres. While this is certainly the case for many people, they would not

necessarily identify themselves or their preferences as Secular. And herein lies the particular dilemma facing all sides, and it is not sufficient to say that the society is hypocritical to resolve it. The proper frame to use is that the country is pragmatic enough to have coexistence both within and between people.

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[i] Letter from Youssef to Lyautey, March 11th 1916 : M. Le General, J'ai eu le plaisir à me rendre compte que par toutes les régions ou j'ai passé règnent l'ordre le plus parfait, la paix la plus complète grâce à la collaboration si extraite qui unit les autorités français et chérifiennes. Cette collaboration ne peut que se

rassurer davantage par la Réunion dans notre ville impériale de Rabat. Anime du plus grand désir d'améliorer la condition de mes sujets Musulmanes, je suis résolu à continuer mon concours le plus entier et le plus loyal à l'œuvre et de civilisation entreprise par le gouvernement de votre république.

[ii] Anonymous telegram to Lyautey, April 3rd 1915 : Tout été dit sur la vie de l'œuvre coloniale. Cette œuvre magnifique appartient désormais à l'histoire et la postérité que Marechal Lyautey a été en même temps qu'un grand soldat, un pacificateur, un bâtisseur des villes, et organisateurs de Maroc français. Il a exercé sur les Marocains un prestige incomparable, grâce à la séduction qui menait de sa personne, à ses qualités de cœur, et aussi à sa compréhension institue de l'âme musulmane. Il a aimé les musulmanes et en retour eux ci qui ont voue un attachement que l'épreuve de la grande guerre a révélé sincère. Il était un chrétien qui aimait les Musulmanes. On peut dire que le secret de l'étonnante réussite de Lyautey en politique ingénieux réside en grande partie dans le fait qu'il a aimé les Musulmanes en même temps qu'il a su les gouverner. Grace à Lyautey, réorganisation du haut enseignement islamique, institutions des collèges Musulmanes, des écoles notables, des écoles primaires musulmanes sont construits.

[iii] Letter of el Fassi to Lyautey, September 24th 1918 : L'idée qui résume tout le programme de Protectorat est de faire progresser le peuple marocain et de l'amener au même niveau que les nations civilises, en introduisant les reformes qui amèneront les progrès, le bien-être et la paix, sans toucher la religion, en assistant et en renforçant le makhzen et en lui conservant sa puissance chérifienne souveraine(Rivet 1996).