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ABSTRACT ONLY – WORK IN PROGRESS

“Morocco’s Islamism(s) and the Arab Awakening:
Opportunities and Limitations”

By: Khalid Madhi, Ph.D Candidate
(University of Illinois at Chicago, IL)

This study attempts to situate Morocco within the so-called “Arab Awakening.” Special attention will be given to Moroccan Islamists’ reactions to Morocco’s own “*Mouvement du 20 Février*.” The extant literature on Morocco’s Islamism deems the 2003 Casablanca terrorist attacks a turning point in the Islamists’ relationships with the regime, and the public’s view of political Islam: the regime could justify its crackdown and thereby monopolize the religious sphere. However, with the recent protest movements, the regime can no longer sustain its security approach to Islamism. Further, and unlike the 2003 attacks, which made all Islamists prime suspects, the 2011 Marrakesh bombings brought the regime under further scrutiny by the protest movement. In the midst of the changes sweeping the Arab world, both the monarchical government and Islamists are facing a set of unknown parameters. It remains unclear whether the recent widening of dissent to include liberals, women and minorities would strengthen Islamism’s presence in the Moroccan political scene. In order to call into question the trend deeming Islamism a recent phenomenon this study aims to historicize Islamism in Morocco. So, an exploration of the origins, evolution and language of Islamism in Morocco is central to this study. Theoretically, the study eschews the convenience of confining Islamism within an iron triangle of interpretations: essentialist (assuming a fixed and unchanging nature of Islam), functionalist (attributing the causes of the rise of Islamisms to a purported function) and instrumentalist (viewing Islamism as a reaction to exogenous forces of change).