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CHAPTER 1: GEOGRAPHY

Introduction

Roughly the size of California, Morocco occupies the strategic northwest corner of Africa, where the Mediterranean Sea meets the Atlantic Ocean. The only African country with coastal access to both bodies of water, Morocco lies 13 km (8 mi) from Spain across the Strait of Gibraltar. Known traditionally as the Maghreb, or “far west,” the northwest region of Africa includes Algeria, Tunisia, and the politically contested Western Sahara.1, 2, 3, 4

Morocco’s eastern-southeastern boundary abuts Algeria; it spans the Atlas Mountains in the north and stretches in the south along the northwestern edge of the Sahara. The northern and western boundaries touch the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean, respectively, with the exception of the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla in the north. The hyperarid Western Sahara, claimed and administered by Morocco, lies to the south.5

Geographic and Topographical Divisions

Mountains

The Rif Mountains, with peaks reaching 2,456 m (8,058 ft), parallel the Mediterranean coast in the northeast.6, 7 This rugged, steeply cliffed area is difficult to reach, even with modern transportation. Few towns or beaches exist in this region.8 The Berbers, one of Morocco’s largest remaining tribes, live in the Rif Mountains.9, 10

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The three ranges of the Atlas Mountains extend across northwest Africa for nearly 2,500 km (1,553 mi) and stretch into southwest Morocco. From north to south the ranges are: Middle Atlas, High Atlas, and Anti-Atlas. Anti-Atlas peaks reach about 2,400 m (7,874 ft) while those in the Middle Atlas rise about 3,000 m (9,842 ft). The peaks in the High Atlas, as the name implies, soar the highest and include the country’s highest mountain, Mount Toubkal, at 4,165 m (13,664 ft). These mountains are a climatic buffer between moist ocean winds and dry winds from the Sahara. North-facing slopes receive rain while arid conditions persist on south-facing slopes.

A narrow pass near the city of Taza separates the Middle Atlas from the Rif Mountains. Known as Tizi n’ Touahar, it was the traditional invasion path for armies from the east.

**The Plains**

South of Tangier and the westernmost Rif Mountains, and northwest of the Atlas Mountains, lay fertile coastal plains and higher inland plains where the majority of Morocco’s people live. This region is also the country’s breadbasket. To the east, the plains are bounded by the Middle and High Atlas ranges. Casablanca, Morocco’s largest city, and Rabat, the capital, are on the Atlantic coast. The northern part of this region, called the Gharb plain, is drained by the Sebou River, part of which flows near Morocco’s third-largest city, Fès. South of Casablanca, the region’s two main rivers, the Oum er-Rbia and the Tensift, flow among several plains including the Doukkala, Chaouia, Abda, and Haouz. Marrakech, the largest city south of the Middle Atlas, lies in the

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Haouz plain just south of the Tensift River.\textsuperscript{22, 23} The Souss Valley, between the High Atlas and the Anti-Atlas, is a tourist magnet because of beach resorts at Agadir.\textsuperscript{24}

\textit{The Desert Southeast}

Southeast of the High Atlas, arid plains and valleys merge into the northwestern edge of the Sahara. Most of Morocco’s borders with Western Sahara and Algeria lie in this inhospitable region. The Draa River, flowing southeast out of the High Atlas before turning southwest toward the Atlantic, forms part of the boundary with Algeria.\textsuperscript{25} The few towns in the region are generally in riverine oases.\textsuperscript{26}

\textbf{Climate}

Much of Morocco, particularly the coast, has a Mediterranean climate with dry, hot summers, and wet winters from October to April. Rainfall generally increases from south to north because of Morocco’s position on the southern edge of the North Atlantic frontal system tract. When high-pressure ridges develop and persist off the coast in winter, even northern regions receive little rain and drought conditions can occur.\textsuperscript{27, 28}

Precipitation varies with elevation. The coastal lowlands around the Gharb plain have 800 mm (32 in) of average rainfall yearly, while in the Souss Valley it rains 200 mm (8 in) per year. Farther south of the Anti-Atlas, where the land becomes desert, rainfall is almost nonexistent. In the mountains, yearly rainfall may be as heavy as 2,030 mm (80 in) in the central Rif Mountains, dropping to 760 mm (30 in) in the High Atlas. Snow falls in mountains above 2,000 m (6,561 ft), and in the highest elevations, the snowpack may last until late spring or early summer.\textsuperscript{29}

Spring and summer temperatures are mild in coastal regions because of onshore ocean breezes, but they can reach 35°C (95°F) inland. During the summer, hot, dry \textit{sharqi} winds from the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{22} Encyclopædia Britannica Online, “Marrakech,” 2011, http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/366128/Marrakech
\item \textsuperscript{24} Paul Clammer et al., Lonely Planet: Morocco (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet Publications, 2009), 375.
\item \textsuperscript{27} Encyclopædia Britannica Online, “Morocco: Relief,” 2011, http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/392604/Morocco/46568/Relief
\item \textsuperscript{28} Encyclopædia Britannica Online, “Morocco: Climate,” 2011, http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/392604/Morocco/46571/Climate
\item \textsuperscript{29} C. McSweeney, M. New, and G. Lizcano, “Morocco (excluding Western Sahara),” UN Development Programme Climate Change Country Profiles, 2011, http://country-profiles.geog.ox.ac.uk/UNDP_reports/Morocco/Morocco.hires_report.pdf
\end{itemize}
Sahara can sweep over the mountains, raising temperatures dramatically, even along the coast. These winds can severely dry out unharvested crops. Average coastal temperatures in the winter range from 8°C–17°C (46°F–63°F). Inland temperatures can drop significantly and occasionally fall below freezing.30

**Rivers and Lakes**

Most of Morocco’s rivers are only navigable by small boat. However, they provide sources of irrigation and drinking water for the majority of Moroccans.31 Almost all the major rivers have their sources in the Middle and High Atlas ranges. One of these, the Moulayou, is the only major river to flow northward into the Mediterranean Sea. It is 515 km (320 mi) long and reaches the Mediterranean near the Algerian border, east of the Rif Mountains.32

The other important rivers all flow westward toward the Atlantic Ocean. These include the Sebou River, 450 km (280 mi) long, which has the largest flow volume and reaches the Atlantic just north of Rabat; the Oum er-Rbia River, which travels 555 km (345 mi) through some of Morocco’s most productive farmland; and the Tensift River, which travels 260 km (162 mi) from its source and runs through the heavily irrigated Haouz plain.33, 34

Morocco’s natural lakes are small; the largest bodies of water are man-made. Only three countries in Africa have more irrigated acreage than Morocco, and much of this water comes from dam reservoirs. Four of these dams have reservoirs with volumes over 1 billion cubic m (35 billion cubic ft). The largest, al-Wahda, lies on the Ouergha River, which travels through the southern slopes of the Rif Mountains before feeding into the Sebou River. The other three mega-reservoirs are al-Massira on the Oum er-Rbia River, Bin al-Ouidane on a feeder stream to the Oum er-Rbia, and Idriss 1 on a feeder stream to the Sebou River.35

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Cities

**Casablanca (Dar al-Baïda)**

Casablanca is Morocco’s largest city, with 3.25 million inhabitants; it is the nation’s economic center and the site of its largest port. Casablanca, Spanish for “white house,” comes from the Portuguese “Casa Branca.” The Portuguese destroyed the city (then known as Anfa) twice, in 1468 in reprisal for pirate attacks and again in 1515. They rebuilt Casablanca in 1575 and remained, despite attacks by Muslim tribes. In 1755, an earthquake demolished the city, and the Portuguese abandoned it shortly afterward. By 1830, Casablanca had been reduced to a village of about 600 people. In the second half of the 19th century, it began to revive as a trading center with Europe.

Casablanca’s ascendancy as Morocco’s commercial hub came shortly after the French established a Moroccan protectorate in the early 20th century. The French built an artificial port that dramatically helped boost trade and economic development, in turn sparking a population boom as poor rural residents moved to the outskirts of the city looking for work. Today it is estimated that one-quarter of the population lives in shantytowns (bidonvilles) beyond the central city and fashionable suburbs. These areas have become breeding grounds for terrorists, including the suicide bombers who killed 45 people in Casablanca in 2003. Several of the bombers were from the Sidi Moumen slum area, which has come to symbolize the increasing radicalism emerging among the poor in Morocco’s cities.

**Rabat**

Rabat is Morocco’s capital and home to about 1.77 million people. It was founded in the 12th century as a staging area for Almohad troops, who were waging jihad in Spain. Sultan Yakoub

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al-Mansour later briefly established the city as his capital. He began work on a great mosque near the river but died before it was completed. Only Hassan Tower, an enormous minaret, was finished. Still standing, it is Rabat’s most famous architectural landmark.\(^{47}\)

In 1912, Rabat became the French administrative center of Morocco, replacing Fès, which was being threatened by a Berber rebellion.\(^ {48}, 49\) Yusef ben Hassan, the reigning Alouite sultan, moved the court to Rabat. Thus, the city became the last of the Alouite imperial capitals.\(^ {50}\) Rabat remained the capital after Morocco gained independence in 1956.\(^ {51}\)

In the 17th century, Rabat reached a zenith when it became the refuge of the Mudejars. These Andalusians, the last of the Spanish Moors, recreated themselves as Barbary pirates after being driven from Spain. The Mudejars terrorized the Atlantic shipping lanes between the Canary Islands and England, making Rabat wealthy and powerful.\(^ {52}\)

**Fès**

Fès is a living museum of Morocco’s long imperial history. At the confluence of caravan routes that linked the Atlantic coast to the central Maghreb and that led through mountain passes to southeastern desert lands, Fès is a great remnant of ancient Islamic civilization.\(^ {53}\) Its founding by Idriss I, a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad’s daughter Fatima, initiated Morocco’s line of imperial dynasties.\(^ {54}\) In 786 C.E., after joining an uprising against Abbasid caliphs in Mecca, Idriss I fled to Morocco, where he established Fès as his capital with the help of local Berber tribes.\(^ {55}\) A few decades later, the city became the refuge of Arab families fleeing Kaïraouan (in modern Tunisia), and of Andalusians (people from modern southern Spain) who had been driven out of Cordoba by the


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Umayyads. From the beginning, Fès absorbed strong doses of Andalusian, Arabic, and Berber cultures.56

At the heart of the city is the immense walled quarter or medina, the largest in the Islamic world. Inside the medina are the Kairouine mosque and its university—possibly the world’s oldest continuously operating university.57 It has long attracted scholars and artisans and has made Fès the intellectual, spiritual, and cultural capital of Morocco, even when the political capital was elsewhere. Fès is known for its leather goods and other traditional wares, which are still made and sold in the ancient medina.58

In recent years, many professionals have moved out of the medina into the French-built, industrialized nouvelle ville (new city).59, 60 Large numbers of the rural poor have moved into the old part of the city, where donkeys and mules are often the primary mode of transportation.61, 62

Marrakech

Like Fès, Marrakech has served as the imperial capital several times over the last 1,000 years. Situated in the Haouz plain near the northern edge of the High Atlas range, the city came into existence in 1062, after armies of the Almoravid dynasty swept over the mountains from the southern deserts. The site quickly evolved from a base camp for Almoravid forces to the capital of a rapidly expanding empire that eventually occupied parts of Europe. After the Almohad sultan Abd al-Moumen razed Marrakech in 1147, it was quickly rebuilt and made the Almohad capital.63, 64

The city declined in the late 13th century after the capital was moved to Fès. However, it experienced a renaissance two-and-a-half centuries later when the Saadian dynasty came to power and made it the capital. In the late 15th century, Marrakech absorbed many of the Mudejars who had been expelled from southern Spain when Grenada fell; thus, much of its 16th-

century architecture has Andalusian influences. Because of the surrounding red-clay earth, almost all the buildings are ochre or rose.

Marrakech is Morocco’s southernmost major city. Because it is near the High Atlas range, where mostly Berbers live, it has a strong Berber culture and only slight Arab influences compared to other large Moroccan cities. Marrakech is a top tourist destination, which has led to the building of many hotels and villas in the palm and olive groves around the city. Other industries besides tourism are fruit processing and the production of leather products and carpets. Lead, zinc, copper, molybdenum, and graphite are mined in surrounding regions.

**Tangier**

A Phoenician trading post in the first millennium B.C.E., Tangier has a long and varied history. Ruled by Rome until the fifth century, the city fell under Byzantine rule in the sixth century and Arab rule in the seventh century. In the mid-1400s, it came under the rule of Portugal, then Spain, then Portugal again. In 1662, Tangier became an English possession; 22 years later, the city came under Moroccan rule.

In the 19th century, when Tangier was Morocco’s diplomatic capital, British trade and other British factors influenced it. In the mid-1800s, the Spanish and the British sparred for control of the city. As a result, Tangier became an international zone in 1912, nominally ruled by the Moroccan sultan but in reality administered by three European nations. After World War I, additional European powers and the United States took an interest in Tangier, and the city’s administration was further divided among outside nations. Tangier did not come under true Moroccan control again until independence in 1956.

In the 1990s, many historic buildings were torn down and replaced with nondescript concrete structures. Corruption was rife, and Tangier became a center of crime. Morocco’s current ruler,

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Mohammed VI, declared that the city needed a makeover, and state resources are being used again to make Tangier a world-class tourism and shipping center.\textsuperscript{75, 76}

**Environmental Concerns**

Soil erosion is a major environmental problem. Morocco has one of the highest soil erosion rates in the world in its mountainous north.\textsuperscript{77} Deforestation of mountain forests has exacerbated soil erosion, while overgrazing in arid and semiarid rangelands has made these regions more susceptible to desertification.\textsuperscript{78, 79} Besides loss of productive farmland, soil erosion in mountainous areas leads to sedimentation in reservoirs and decreased water storage capacity. A recent study found that an average Moroccan dam loses more than 5% of its yearly capacity because of sedimentation.\textsuperscript{80}

Water is critical to Morocco. Population growth is rapid, and people are moving to major urban areas, but agriculture remains the bedrock of the economy and the largest employer.\textsuperscript{81} About 85% of Morocco’s water use is for agricultural purposes.\textsuperscript{82} An extraordinary number of drought years have occurred recently in Morocco. These dry conditions have reduced reservoir levels and created reliance on groundwater as an irrigation source.\textsuperscript{83}

As groundwater use has expanded, salinity levels in soils have increased because aquifer groundwater in Morocco is often saltier than surface irrigation water.\textsuperscript{84} Excessive pumping has also contributed to saltwater intrusion in coastal aquifers.\textsuperscript{85}

Water pollution is another major problem. Pollution sources include untreated wastewater, leaching and runoff from agricultural water with pesticide and fertilizer residues, solid-waste dumping, and industrial effluents. Morocco has 63 waste-treatment plants, but most are not in operation because of lack of funds or insufficient technical capacity to sustain operation and maintenance.\(^{86}\) At coastal sites, much of this waste is dumped into the sea. Near the phosphate plants at Safi and Jorf Lasfar, south of Casablanca, the accumulation of heavy metals in coastal waters is problematic.\(^{87, 88}\)

**Natural Hazards**

The mountainous region of Morocco is in the seismically active zone where the Eurasian and African plates meet. This geologically unstable area is at risk for earthquakes.\(^{89}\) In February 2004, a magnitude 6.4 quake struck the region around the coastal city of al-Hoceima, killing 600 people and leaving hundreds injured or homeless.\(^{90}\) The al-Hoceima region is in a high-seismic hazard zone that encompasses the Rif Mountains and the Sebou River basin to the southwest.\(^{91}\) Mountain villages in this zone are particularly vulnerable to high death tolls when earthquakes strike because many homes are built of unreinforced mud bricks and stones.\(^{92, 93}\) In 2011, a magnitude 4.5 quake occurred at the eastern end of the Rif Mountains.\(^{94}\)

Earthquake danger decreases south of the Middle Atlas range, but history has shown that no part of Morocco is entirely safe from earthquakes. The deadliest quake since 1900 occurred 750 km (466 mi) southwest of the al-Hoceima region in the coastal city of Agadir—an area thought to have little to no seismic hazard. About one-third of Agadir’s 35,000 residents were killed in this “moderate” 1960 earthquake.\(^{95}\)

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disease grew, the old part of the city was bulldozed, corpses and all. The resulting burial mound, a memorial to the tragedy, is called Old Talborjt.\textsuperscript{96} The new Agadir, built 2 km (1.2 mi) to the south, has become one of Morocco’s largest cities, with a thriving economy based mainly on fishing and tourism.

Although droughts are less deadly than catastrophic earthquakes, they have occurred frequently in recent decades and have significantly affected Morocco’s agricultural economy.\textsuperscript{97, 98, 99} Forest fires are a secondary effect when drought conditions occur.\textsuperscript{100}

\textsuperscript{96} Etain O’Carroll et al., \textit{Lonely Planet: Morocco} (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet Publications, 2007), 69.
\textsuperscript{100} “Drought Brings Recession to Morocco,” \textit{Afrol News}, 20 June 2005, \url{http://www.afrol.com/articles/16617}
Chapter 1 Assessment

1. Morocco is part of what has been traditionally known as the Maghreb, meaning “far west.”
   True
   Morocco is found in the western part of North Africa (which includes Algeria, Tunisia, and Western Sahara), and has served as a strategic crossroad for traders and conquerors.

2. The High Atlas range, which includes Mount Toubkal, the highest North African peak, forms a climatic barrier between the Sahara and the ocean.
   True
   This range forms a climatic buffer between the dry winds of the Sahara and moist ocean winds.

3. The area south of the westernmost Rif Mountains and northwest of the Atlas Mountains is uninhabited except by a few Berber tribes.
   False
   Most Moroccans live in this region of fertile coastal and high inland plains.

4. Morocco has a predominately Mediterranean climate with dry, hot summers, and wet winters from October to April.
   True
   This is especially the case along the coast; rainfall increases from south to north.

5. Much of Morocco’s irrigation comes from its natural lakes.
   False
   Much of Morocco’s irrigation water comes from dam reservoirs.
CHAPTER 2: HISTORY

Introduction

Morocco’s strategic position at the northwestern tip of Africa has played a significant role in its history. Situated at the end of overland trade routes and at the western edge of the Mediterranean, the country has seen numerous invaders from Europe, Africa, and the Middle East, although it has generally been at the periphery of empires. For this reason, it has been less affected by conquering armies than most of the Arab world. Even the Ottoman Empire, the most influential Muslim civilization of the last millennium, barely left a footprint in the sands of Morocco’s history.

Since the introduction of Islam in the late seventh century, Morocco has been ruled almost continuously by sultanic dynasties of Arabic or Berber descent. Some dynasties extended over a large part of North Africa and much of Spain, while others only controlled a small portion of Morocco’s current territory. Few Moroccan dynasties have lasted more than 200 years; new forces, often led by religious reformers, emerged from the southern deserts and mountains to write the next chapter of Moroccan history.

Early History

Morocco Through the Roman Era

Morocco’s earliest inhabitants probably arrived overland from the south and east and by sea across the Strait of Gibraltar. These tribes referred to themselves collectively as Imazighen (singular, Amizagh). During Roman rule they were known as Mauri; much later, they were called Moors, in reference to the Islamic population in southern Spain during the 8th–15th centuries. These people became the Berbers, although they were not a homogeneous group. Even today, three Berber dialects are spoken in Morocco.

Phoenician traders first visited Morocco’s shores early in the first millennium B.C.E. They established ports along the coast. They often paid tribute to the Berbers to ensure safe passage of their trading caravans into Africa’s interior.

The Romans had extended their military power into what is now northern Morocco by the first century C.E. They improved the ports and built irrigation systems and roads. They also seized the best farmland, causing the Berbers to flee to the mountains, from where they attacked Roman outposts. Mauretania Tingitana (Morocco), one of Rome’s most remote provinces, was difficult to govern. Berber uprisings in the second and third centuries led the Roman emperor Diocletian to abandon the province except for a few strategic coastal settlements.

The Post-Roman Era

Most of the remaining Roman outposts fell to the Vandals around 429. One of the few facts known about this period is that the Byzantine general Belisarius defeated the Vandals and seized their North African holdings in 533–534. During the sixth and seventh centuries, the Visigoths briefly conquered the northern ports of Septa (modern-day Ceuta) and Tingis (Tangier), which both lay across the Strait of Gibraltar from their Spanish stronghold. However, there is little evidence that the Vandals, Byzantines, or Visigoths showed any interest in Morocco except for a few strategic northern ports of the former Roman province. Inland portions of Mauretania Tingitana and more southerly Atlantic ports may have reverted to Berber control after the Romans left.

117 The Vandals were a central European tribe who swept through much of the western Roman Empire during the fifth century C.E. See *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*, “Vandal,” 2011, http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/622890/Vandal
The Early Islamic Dynasties

The Umayyads: Arab Control

In 682, 50 years after the death of the Prophet Muhammad, the first Umayyad Arab leader, Uqba bin Nafi, reached Morocco’s Atlantic coast. Ruling from Damascus, the Umayyads were the first great Muslim dynasty to oversee the Arab kingdom. Uqba bin Nafi eventually retreated to modern Algeria, where he was killed by Berbers under “King” Kusaylah, who had converted to Islam but opposed direct Arab rule.123

Islam meshed with Berber beliefs, including the idea of clan loyalty. This convergence led many Berbers to convert to Islam, which quickly gained a foothold in the region. However, the Umayyads treated the Berbers as second-class citizens, forcing them to pay tribute, which the Berbers considered antithetical to Islam’s teachings. This discontent continued for years.124, 125, 126 By the mid-700s, festering antagonisms led to a Berber insurrection that overthrew the Umayyads.127, 128, 129, 130

The Idrisid Dynasty: Linked to the Prophet

The first Islamic dynasty in Morocco was founded in 788 by Idriss I (Idriss ibn Abd Allah ibn Hassan II), a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad’s daughter Fatima.131, 132 Idriss I unified much of northern Morocco under Islamic rule before his death by poisoning in 792.133

His son, Idriss II, extended control into Europe. Later, he divided his kingdoms among his 13 sons, but these smaller kingdoms warred against one another. Under attack from Berber tribes and Muslims from Spain, the divided realm was eventually conquered in the 10th century by a Muslim emir from Spain.134, 135

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134 Francesca Davis Di Piazza, Morocco in Pictures (Minneapolis: Twenty-First Century Books, 2007), 23.
The Almoravid and Almohad Dynasties: Berber Kingdoms

In the southwestern part of the country, a stricter form of Islam emerged under Yahya ibn Ibrahim, chief of the Sanhaja tribe. These Islamic zealots, known as the Almoravids, subdued neighboring tribes. By 1035, many desert Berbers were living under a puritanical version of Islam that had spread to the Atlas region and central Morocco. By the end of the 11th century, Almoravid control extended from the northwestern quarter of Morocco into Spain. When the Almoravid ruler Yusef I died in 1106, control rapidly declined.

Rival Berbers accepted Mohammed ibn Tumart as their spiritual leader in opposition to the Almoravids' strict Islam, and became known as the Almohads. The Almohads launched a war against the Almoravids in 1125. Ibn Tumart was killed in 1130, but his successor, Abd al-Mumin al-Kumi, continued to extend control over the Atlas Mountains. After defeating the Almoravids in their capital of Marrakech, he consolidated power over the entire Maghreb region and extended Almohad reach into Andalusia. By the 13th century, the Marinids had replaced the Almohads.

The Marinids: Secular Berbers

Unlike the previous two Berber dynasties, the Marinids did not represent a religious movement. Because their rulers had no ties to the Prophet Muhammad, they met resistance in their capital, Fès, where many residents claimed Idrisid ancestry. Perhaps to compensate for a lack of religion, the Marinids established madrassas (Quranic schools) in urban centers.

140 Francesca Davis Di Piazza, Morocco in Pictures (Minneapolis: Twenty-First Century Books, 2007), 23–24.
144 Francesca Davis Di Piazza, Morocco in Pictures (Minneapolis: Twenty-First Century Books, 2007), 25.
They also waged campaigns to gain back parts of the Almohad dynasty in Spain and the eastern Maghreb, but their territorial gains were temporary.\(^{149}\)

The decentralized Marinid dynasty began unraveling in the second half of the 14th century. Marinid rulers were killed or deposed frequently during this period.\(^{150, 151}\) Under Sultan Mohammed al-Saïd al-Mahdi, the Watas seized power after a revolt in 1465, ushering in the Wattasid dynasty, which lasted until the mid-1500s.\(^{152, 153}\)

**The Sharifian Dynasties**

**The Saadians**

Although the Wattasids were the nominal rulers, they only truly controlled Fès; beyond, local tribes ruled. During this time, Spanish monarchs expelled Arabs and Jews, many of whom went to Morocco. This influx of wealth and new ideas fundamentally impacted Moroccan culture.\(^ {154}\)

The Wattasid period also witnessed the beginning of European incursions into Morocco. The Portuguese were the first to arrive. To establish a naval trading network with West Africa that bypassed the lucrative overland trade routes—the linchpins of inland Morocco’s economy—they established garrison forts at several Moroccan Atlantic ports.\(^{155}\) Unable to repel the Portuguese, the Wattasid leaders pursued a policy of cooperation. Other Berber tribes viewed this appeasement as an affront to Islam, which led to war in 1536 between the two most powerful tribes, the Wattasids and the Saadians.\(^ {156}\)

A settlement gave the Saadians control of Marrakech and territorial power. Within ten years they had driven the Portuguese from Morocco. The 17th century brought plague, drought, and famine to an already unstable country, and after 50 years of civil war, the Saadian dynasty fell to the Alaouites.\(^ {157}\)

**The Alaouite Dynasty: Links to the Prophet Again**

In 1666, the reign of the Berbers ended and Alaouite rule began. Thought to be direct descendants of the Prophet Muhammad, the Alaouites were invited to take control of the Moroccan throne, which they still occupy. Believing that closer ties with Europe would improve
Morocco’s security and economic strength, the early rulers formed alliances and established embassies in several European nations.\textsuperscript{158, 159}

These efforts did not protect Morocco from foreign intervention. The country had to turn over some of its land to Spain and France in return for favors, including help from Spain in quelling insurrection by Rif Berbers. The strategic importance of Morocco was clear to other nations, who also wanted to gain a foothold.\textsuperscript{160, 161, 162}

During the first three decades of the 19th century, the Alaouite sultan Moulay Sulaiman isolated Morocco from Christian Europe. Trade with its northern neighbors was limited to essential imports, and the small number of Europeans in the country lived in a few port cities. However, around 1830, European nations began incursions into other parts of North Africa as the Ottoman Empire weakened.\textsuperscript{163, 164}

Although Morocco was never incorporated into the Ottoman Empire, it still became a target for the enterprising European colonialist. Unfortunately, it ended badly for the Moroccan sultanate. In 1844, the French navy shelled the ports of Tangier and Mogador (Essaouira). French forces defeated the Moroccan army near Oujda in retaliation for support of the rebel Algerian emir Abdul Qadir. A Franco-Moroccan treaty was hastily negotiated in which Morocco agreed to cut off assistance to the emir. In 1859, Spain attacked and occupied the northern city of Tétouan. These events and others marked the beginning of the end of Morocco’s independence from European interests.\textsuperscript{165, 166}

\textbf{Onset of Colonial Rule}

European influence—most notably French, Spanish, and British—increased dramatically toward the end of the 19th century.\textsuperscript{167, 168} France, in particular, aggressively pursued colonial interests in Morocco.\textsuperscript{169} In 1904, the French and British reached an agreement that relinquished French “rights and interests” in Egypt in exchange for Britain’s abdication of Morocco.\textsuperscript{170} A few months
later, the French and Spanish negotiated an agreement outlining their spheres of influence in Morocco.\(^{171}\)

The Moroccan sultan Moulay Abdul-Aziz was too weak to resist the colonial takeover. As the French and Spanish encroached on Moroccan affairs, tribal insurrections increased against the Europeans and the sultan, who was thought to be allied with the foreign powers.\(^{172, 173}\) These internal attacks forced Sultan Abdul-Aziz to depend even more on the French and Spanish to maintain his precarious position.\(^{174}\)

By 1907, the French controlled Casablanca and were expanding their influence in other parts of the country, using tribal attacks on their nationals as a pretext for expansion.\(^{175}\) The sultan was overthrown by forces loyal to his brother, Moulay Hafiz, in 1908, but the situation was beyond the control of any Moroccan ruler. In 1912, Moulay Hafiz signed a treaty making most of Morocco a French Protectorate. The Spanish retained protectorate status over the sparsely populated southern region (now Western Sahara) and the northernmost region, except for the internationally administered city of Tangier.\(^{176}\)

**French and Spanish Morocco**

In southern Morocco, the French formed an alliance with Berber chief Thami al-Glaoui, who, as pasha of Marrakech, served as a local enforcer for French interests. He made sure other tribes in the region did not disrupt his feudal domain.\(^{177}\) The French also left much of the Moroccan civic, governmental, and tribal institutions alone, although under a watchful eye. The medinas, or walled quarters, of the major cities were retained, with modern cities (*nouvelles villes*) built adjacent to them for the French.\(^{178}\) Even the sultanate continued, under Sultan Moulay Yusuf, who ruled as a figurehead from his palace in Rabat, the French administrative headquarters.\(^{179}\)

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Moroccan infrastructure improved greatly during the 42 years of French control.\textsuperscript{180} New all-weather roads and railways improved connections between larger cities. Dams and other hydraulic works added irrigation capacity to the agricultural sector.\textsuperscript{181} Casablanca became the country’s major seaport and economic focal point when its harbor was substantially improved.\textsuperscript{182} Electricity grids were also introduced, primarily to serve the European communities, not the medinas. Much of this development came at the expense of Moroccan taxpayers, who for the most part did not benefit from it because it was oriented toward Europeans.\textsuperscript{183}

In the far north, the colonial experience was different. Economic development was limited to only a few cities (Tétouan, Melilla, and Larache), and infrastructure improvements were piecemeal and often halfhearted.\textsuperscript{184} Fierce resistance from the Berbers in the Rif Mountains continued until 1926, keeping Spanish military forces on the defensive.\textsuperscript{185}

When Sultan Moulay Yusuf died in 1927, his third son, Sidi Muhammed (Mohammed V), was chosen by the French to succeed him. Although he had little authority, his resistance in 1934 to French legislation aimed at further driving a wedge between Moroccan Berbers and Moroccan Arabs elevated his status among the small but growing number of Moroccan nationalists.\textsuperscript{186}

\textit{World War II and Independence}

With the German occupation of France in 1940, Morocco came under the control of the collaborationist Vichy regime in southeast France. Vichy rule in Morocco was short-lived.\textsuperscript{187} In November 1942, Morocco’s Atlantic coast was the western front of Operation Torch, a massive Allied invasion of North Africa. The successful invasion made Morocco a southern base for the Allies in operations against Axis forces.\textsuperscript{188, 189}

In 1943, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and United States President Franklin Roosevelt met in a suburb of Casablanca to confer on global military strategy. While in Morocco, Roosevelt and Sultan Mohammed V discussed Morocco’s future, with Roosevelt expressing support for Moroccan independence from France. Later that year, the Hizb al-Istiglal (Independence Party) was formed, and the leaders soon called for an end to French rule.

After the war, the French reclaimed control of Morocco, but persistent calls for independence by the Hizb al-Istiglal, supported by the sultan, threatened their authority. In 1953, the French, working with Berber chief Thami al-Glaoui, orchestrated Mohammed V’s exile to Madagascar and replaced him with one of his relatives in Fès. The move quickly backfired on the French; terrorist attacks by resistance groups operating out of Morocco’s Spanish zone escalated. A second violent independence movement was occurring in eastern Morocco, and the French could not fight on two fronts simultaneously. In October 1955, Mohammed V was sent to Paris from Madagascar to negotiate the terms of Moroccan independence. When he returned to Morocco the next month, he received a hero’s welcome as the symbol of the fight for independence.

The new nation of Morocco emerged the following year. On 2 March 1956, the French formally recognized Moroccan independence. A month later the Spanish government did the same and returned most of its northern territory. The international city of Tangier became part of the new nation in October.

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Modern Morocco

King Mohammed V and King Hassan II: Steps to Democracy

The new government was a monarchy with a parliament and an independent judiciary. The king (as the sultan became known) was given great latitude to guide military and political affairs. As a shariif, or descendant of the Prophet Muhammad through his daughter Fatima, he was also the country’s religious and moral leader, an important counterbalance against threats to his authority from religious elements.

Mohammed V’s rule ended abruptly with his death in 1961. His oldest son, Hassan II (Moulay al-Hasan), succeeded him. The new king and his cabinet introduced the country’s first democratic constitution, but during elections that followed, various political parties claimed that the voting was rigged. A second constitution was introduced in 1970 and approved by voter referendum, although claims of election-rigging surfaced again. Eventually such claims led to violent dissent that threatened the king’s rule. In the early 1970s, Hassan II escaped several assassination attempts by military leaders, including a 1971 attack by 1,000 mutineers during his birthday party.

Hassan II weathered this period, partly by directing national attention toward Western Sahara, which was slowly being relinquished by the Spanish. In 1975, the International Court of Justice ruled that Morocco’s claim on the Spanish colony was invalid and that the Sahrawi, the region’s residents, should determine their political future by referendum. In response, the Moroccan government organized a march of 350,000 unarmed citizens into Western Sahara. This event was labeled the “Green March” by Hassan II because of the historic association of the color green with Islam. Morocco today occupies all of Western Sahara, although most countries (including the United States) have never recognized its territorial claims over the region.

Hassan II remained in power until his sudden death in 1999. During his rule the Moroccan government became one of the most important forces for political moderation in the Arab world. The king was a key mediator in disputes among Middle Eastern countries.215

**King Mohammed VI: The Reformer King**

Hassan II’s oldest son succeeded his father as King Mohammed VI. The king has been a force for modernization, which has antagonized religious conservatives in the country. Democratic reforms are slowly being implemented, and the rights of women are improving.216,217,218,219 Morocco remains an extremely poor country, and the king has been vocal about upgrading the status of the poor.220 Policies aimed at opening up activity in the private sector, or economic liberalization, are being pursued to attract foreign investment and jump-start the economy.221

Islamic fundamentalist terrorist groups have been active during the king’s reign. In 2003, deadly suicide bombings took place in Casablanca, and in 2004 several Moroccans were implicated in the train bombings in Madrid. These terrorist attacks triggered a government crackdown on militant groups in the country.222 Despite these measures, Casablanca experienced more suicide bombings in April 2007, and a remote-controlled bomb in Marrakech killed 15 people in 2011.223,224

In June 2011, in an attempt to preempt calls for democracy amid the “Arab Spring” movements engulfing the Middle East, the king proposed constitutional changes that limit his powers and strengthen the prime minister and parliament—although the king still has complete control over religious affairs, security, and strategic policy. In July, voters approved the referendum despite claims that the new reforms fail to create a more open political system.225,226

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Protests continue throughout the country. Some protesters have set themselves on fire near Rabat and Marrakech. Popular demonstrations continue in response to tough economic times, corruption in the government and the courts, and the lack of a more democratic government.227, 228, 229

Chapter 2 Assessment

1. Sultanic dynasties have ruled Morocco sporadically since the seventh century.
   **False**
   Arab and Berber sultanic dynasties have ruled Morocco almost continuously since the introduction of Islam in the late seventh century.

2. Idriss I established the first true Islamic dynasty in Morocco in 788.
   **True**
   Idriss I also unified much of northern Morocco under Islamic rule.

3. The Sanhaja Berbers, known as the Almoravids, were opposed to Islamic beliefs.
   **False**
   The Almoravids spread a strict, puritanical form of Islamic doctrine.

4. King Mohammed VI has relinquished some of his powers as part of new democratic reforms.
   **True**
   In 2011, the king supported a constitutional referendum that limits some of his powers, although he maintains complete control over religious affairs, security, and strategic policy.

5. Foreign involvement by France, Spain, and Britain was brief and ended during the late 19th century.
   **False**
   European powers—Spain, Britain, and especially France—greatly expanded their presence in Morocco toward the end of the 19th century.
CHAPTER 3: ECONOMY

Introduction

In recent years Morocco has been pursuing, with mixed success, economic policies aimed at broadening its tourism, agriculture, and service sectors. On the positive side, it has achieved decreasing budget deficits, low inflation, plentiful foreign exchange reserves, and increasing foreign direct investment. On the negative side, Morocco has had sluggish and irregular growth, high poverty and unemployment rates, and large trade deficits. Numerous five-year plans have had moderate success, although some indicators point to sustained growth in the near future.\(^{230}\)

The traditional economic pillars—agriculture and phosphates—have been bolstered by an expanding industrial base and a burgeoning service sector led by tourism.\(^{231}\)

The global economic crisis of 2008 did not devastate Morocco, but it exposed weaknesses and challenges. The king identified priorities to improve the economy, such as increasing the level of competitiveness in many sectors, updating legal and regulatory frameworks, and maintaining the strength of the banking and finance sector.\(^{232}\)

Unemployment is a major problem: the official rate is about 8.7% and nearly 23% of the workforce is underemployed.\(^{233, 234}\) Most of the unemployed live in urban areas.\(^{235}\) Unemployment among the young is particularly high—from 33% in urban areas to just over 50% in rural areas.\(^{236}\) The number of workers entering the workforce each year outpaces the number of new jobs.\(^{237}\) Most work is in the informal sector, which accounts for 40%–80% of all nonagricultural employment.\(^{238}\)


\(^{233}\) Francesca Davis Di Piazza, Morocco in Pictures (Minneapolis: Twenty-First Century Books, 2007), 58.


\(^{237}\) Francesca Davis Di Piazza, Morocco in Pictures (Minneapolis: Twenty-First Century Books, 2007), 58.

New reforms, including privatizing industries, developing rural areas, and improving trade relations with the European Union and the United States, have been introduced. There are expanded efforts to create new jobs and training, especially for unemployed youth.239

Agriculture

Morocco is heavily dependent on its agricultural sector, the largest in the region.240 Counting livestock, forestry, and fishing, this sector employs about 45% of the labor force and makes up about 17% of gross domestic product (GDP).241, 242 Morocco produces about two-thirds of its domestic grains, mainly growing wheat, barley, and corn. Citrus fruits and early vegetables, including tomatoes, French beans, and zucchini, are key crops for export.243

To take advantage of the fast-growing expansion in the world olive oil market, the government recently implemented an incentive program to increase the acreage devoted to olive trees.244, 245 To achieve this goal, some land currently used for grain production will be converted to olive tree acreage.246 This strategy is tied to water issues: some of the high-water-use grains grown in southern regions are particularly susceptible to drought.247

In the Rif Mountain regions, cannabis is a cash crop, and nearly two-thirds of Berber farmers rely on the sale of marijuana and hashish for their livelihoods. The government has invested USD millions on alternative crops and pilot projects.248

Morocco is Africa’s largest exporter of seafood, primarily to European countries.249 The rich, Atlantic coastal waters of the Canary Current supply sardines, of which Morocco is the world’s

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248 Francesca Davis Di Piazza, Morocco in Pictures (Minneapolis: Twenty-First Century Books, 2007), 63.
leading exporter.250 Moroccan deep-sea fishing boats catch octopus, squid, cuttlefish, hake, sea bream, sole, and shrimp.251 Most of the fishing fleet operates out of Agadir and smaller ports to the southwest.252 Numerous modernization projects feature plans to increase greatly the GDP contribution of the fishing sector.253

About a third of Morocco’s agricultural income is tied to livestock.254 The country fulfills its meat requirements with local sheep and cattle herds. It is trying to become self-sufficient in the supply of cheese, milk, and other dairy products.255

Industry and Manufacturing

Mining

Since the 1980s, the government has worked to expand the manufacturing sector to decrease the economy’s reliance on agriculture and phosphate exports.256 The industrial and manufacturing sector employs about 20% of the labor force and accounts for nearly 32% of GDP.257 Mining is the main industry, with phosphates accounting for about 92% of all mineral production. Morocco controls as much as three-quarters of the world’s phosphate reserves. However, demand for phosphates, which provide 50% of total export earnings, is diminishing because of environmental concerns about phosphate-based fertilizers. Coal, iron, and manganese are also found in Morocco, but they do not match the profitability of phosphates. Although no major oil reserves have been found, the government is encouraging foreign investment in petroleum exploration.258

Textiles

Within manufacturing, the clothing and textiles industry is the nation’s second-largest export contributor.259 The industry has generated 60% of Morocco’s new manufacturing jobs since

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258 Francesca Davis Di Piazza, Morocco in Pictures (Minneapolis: Twenty-First Century Books, 2007), 60.
1986. It represented more than 40% of industrial employment in 2000, of which 71% of the workers were women. New tax breaks, the launch of the country’s first fashion school, and initiatives between the Moroccan Association of Textile and Clothing and the government’s Ministry of Education and Vocational Training aim to take advantage of growing global markets.

**Emerging Industries**

Other industries also contribute to sector growth. The aerospace industry, mainly in Casablanca and Tangier, comprises 50 companies, pointing to the development of an aerospace hub with resident expertise. The automotive industry is growing in domestic and foreign markets. In 2009, the handicrafts industry employed 20% of the Moroccan workforce and accounted for 10% of the country’s GDP.

**Energy**

The Office National de l’Electricité (ONE) traditionally has managed energy production. However, in response to economic growth and increased population, the state has reduced its ownership in electricity generation. The government still controls the transmission and distribution network for electricity. To handle future demand, Morocco has synchronized with Spain through a link by sea and with Algeria and Tunisia. The country is anticipating a common market with the European Union.

Morocco has limited petroleum and natural gas reserves and is the largest importer of these materials in North Africa. Exploration continues offshore and in Western Sahara. The

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concessions granted in Western Sahara are politically controversial because of the region’s unresolved status.271, 272

Morocco has two petroleum refineries.273 The larger refinery is at Mohammedia, between Casablanca and Rabat. The smaller one is at Sidi Kacem.274

A huge power plant near Sidi Kacem, which would use natural gas from a pipeline that runs from Algeria through Morocco to Spain was scheduled to be completed in 2008 but was not finished as of 2010.275, 276 Numerous hydroelectric facilities provide about one-third of Morocco’s energy production.277

The nation also has a thermo-solar plant and wind-power plants, including the largest wind farm in Africa.278, 279 Morocco’s first thermo-solar plant is at Ain Beni Mathar, in the eastern plateau region south of Oujda.280, 281

Natural Resources

Morocco has relatively few natural resources besides phosphates. It is believed to have two-thirds to three-quarters of the world’s phosphate reserves, including those in the disputed Western Sahara region.282, 283 Moroccan mines produce a variety of minerals, including cobalt, copper, gold, iron ore, lead, manganese ore, mercury, barite, nickel, silver, and zinc.284

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283 Francesca Davis Di Piazza, Morocco in Pictures (Minneapolis: Twenty-First Century Books, 2007), 60.
**Trade**

Morocco is working toward more integration in the international economic system, especially with the United States and the European Union. In recent years, it has consistently registered an overall trade deficit in goods, although its overall current account balance (which measures foreign currency credits and withdrawals from other sources) has remained positive because of tourism revenue and remittances from workers abroad. Major imports include crude petroleum, textile fabric, telecommunications equipment, wheat, gas and electricity, transistors, and plastics. Major exports include clothing and textiles, electric components, inorganic chemicals, crude minerals, fertilizers, vegetables, and fish.

The nation has taken steps to remove government controls, including tariff reduction to expand the private sector. Most sectors are open to foreign investment. Closed industries include wholesale fruit and vegetable distribution, fish halls, slaughterhouses, and hazardous waste management.

In 2006, a Free Trade Agreement between the United States and Morocco took effect, providing new trade and investment opportunities for both parties. By 2009, bilateral trade had increased by 112%. The European Union, Morocco’s primary trading partner, signed a trade agreement that went into effect in 2000. Although the global economic crisis in 2008 caused a downturn in trade, the growth trend began to recover in 2010.

**Tourism**

According to a 2006 estimate, nearly 36% of the country was employed in the service sector, making up about 51% of GDP. Tourism generates the largest amount of foreign exchange and, along with remittances from workers abroad, helps offset the trade deficit. In 2011, tourism accounted for 9–10% of GDP.

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Government assistance for tourism infrastructure improvement raised the figure to 18.9% in 2010. Most new development is taking place in coastal areas, where foreign consortia have been licensed by the government to build resorts.

The tourism sector benefits from extensive coastal areas that are only a short flight away for most Europeans. The cultural centers of Fès and Marrakech are major attractions for visitors looking for more than sea and sand. The 2003 and 2007 bombings in Casablanca did not depress tourism over the long term. In fact, the number of tourists in 2007—7.4 million people—was a 13% increase over the 2006 total. The bombing of a tourist café in Marrakech in 2011 killed 15 people and sparked concern about tourism in the area. Moreover, a slowdown in tourism has occurred because of protests following the “Arab Spring.”

**Banking and Finance**

Morocco’s currency, the dirham, was equivalent to about USD 0.12 in November 2011. The currency’s exchange rate is set by the Bank al-Maghrib, the nation’s central bank, and is pegged to several foreign currencies. The euro is heavily weighted in this calculation because of Morocco’s extensive trade with Europe. This policy has helped maintain low inflation, but it has also created pressure to increase the flexibility of the currency exchange rate because of concerns that the overvalued dirham is

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295 Michael Chebatoris, “AQIM’s Threat to Morocco’s Tourism Sector,” Global Terrorism Analysis 5, no. 11 (7 June 2007), http://www.jamestown.org/programs/gta/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=4212&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=182&no_cache=1


298 Michael Chebatoris, “AQIM’s Threat to Morocco’s Tourism Sector,” Global Terrorism Analysis 5, no. 11 (7 June 2007), http://www.jamestown.org/programs/gta/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=4212&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=182&no_cache=1


hurting Morocco’s trade competitiveness.\textsuperscript{304}

The banking system has the greatest number of private banks in North Africa and is similar to the French system.\textsuperscript{305, 306} No Islamic banks exist in the country; however, Islamic banking was authorized in 2007, and commercial banks determine their own policies about offering Islamic banking products.\textsuperscript{307} The numerous commercial banks and handful of government-owned banks operating as specialized financial institutions are regulated by Bank al-Maghrib.\textsuperscript{308} The banking sector for the most part sidestepped the severity of the 2008 global financial crisis. It is considered sound.\textsuperscript{309}

In the 1990s, Morocco instituted reforms to create a more conducive environment for attracting foreign direct investment (FDI). The government privatized some state-owned businesses, including the USD 2.7 billion sale of Maroc Telecom to Vivendi Universal and the USD 1.7 billion sale of Régie des Tabacs to Altadis—making Morocco the continent’s second-largest recipient of FDI. Most of the money has come from European companies, but increasing amounts are coming from Persian Gulf countries investing in tourism, oil, and property development.\textsuperscript{310}

The Hassan II Fund, financed in part through the sales of state-owned industries, awards grants to companies that invest in industries such as electronics, information technology, and vehicle parts.\textsuperscript{311, 312} Free-trade zones have also been established, with the largest in Tangier. Foreign investors who establish businesses on undeveloped land are offered tax breaks.\textsuperscript{313}

Standard of Living

Morocco’s standard of living is low. The 2010 Human Development Index, a measure of living standards worldwide, ranked Morocco at 114 out of 169 countries.314 According to 2010 estimates, the nation’s per capita GDP is USD 4,800, ranking at 152 in the world.315 Nearly 19% of the population lives without access to improved water services and 31% without improved sanitation services.316 Illiteracy is problematic, with only 52.3% of Moroccans over 15 able to read and write and a wide literacy gender gap, particularly in rural areas. Unemployment and underemployment are also concerns. The official unemployment rate is 8.7%, but it is higher among youth, who experience rates of 33% in cities and more than 50% in rural areas.317, 318

There are signs of improvement, even as problems persist. The GDP per capita has been rising over the last few years as poverty rates decline. Unemployment has increased slightly in 2011.319, 320, 321 Although the poverty level is about 15%, other aspects of deprivation, such as lack of running water and electricity, push the rate to 28%.322, 323 Structural reforms instituted by the government to generate growth and jobs appear to be working. However, as long as relatively high percentages of GDP and employment are tied to agriculture, periodic droughts will hinder economic progress. The government has made strides in diversifying the economy to make it more resilient.324

Government initiatives have set these literacy goals: lower the illiteracy rate from 52.3% to 20% by 2010 and achieve 100% literacy by 2015.325, 326 Although the first goal was not met, increases

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in literacy levels offer optimism.\textsuperscript{327, 328} In January 2004, the Moroccan parliament passed a sweeping family law that, among other things, raised the minimum marriage age for girls from 15 to 18. Similar family law reform in Tunisia in 1956 partly explains why its literacy rate for women is nearly double that of Morocco.\textsuperscript{329}

**Employment Trends**

Although the 2008 global economic crisis did not affect Morocco severely, unemployment remains high, especially among youth and women. Data is not available for 2010, but the country recorded a drop in employment growth in 2009.\textsuperscript{330} The number of people in the labor force is projected to remain stable through 2020.\textsuperscript{331}

The job market faces stresses and challenges. In 2008, labor force participation was just over 51\%, with a disparity between men (79.4\%) and women (24.4\%). Moroccan girls and women have exceptionally high rates of illiteracy, making employment prospects in the formal sector grim.\textsuperscript{332}

The economic outlook is cautiously optimistic with the unemployment rate projected to remain stable. Regional investment is expected to increase. However, job growth will struggle to match the number of jobs that will be needed.\textsuperscript{333} Rates of overall participation in the workforce in urban areas are lower than in rural areas.\textsuperscript{334}

In 2005, Morocco instituted its National Human Development Initiative and established employment initiatives targeting youth. A recently adopted emergency plan aims to improve


\textsuperscript{328} Index Mundi, “Demographics: Literacy: Morocco,” 1 January 2011, http://www.indexmundi.com/g/g.aspx?v=39&c=mo&l=en


educational access and gender equality. The partnership between the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training and the Moroccan Association of Textile and Clothing seeks to create workers in fashion design, building on the strength of Morocco’s textile production.

Outlook

Since the early 1990s, the government has pursued multiple strategies to expand the economy and generate jobs. Privatization has been a key component of this change. Industries that were state-run, such as telecommunications, transport, water, and power, are now fully or partly privatized. Sales of state-owned properties helped to pump foreign investment into the economy. Legal, institutional, and regulatory reforms have been implemented to attract foreign business interests. The result has been more jobs that generally involve technology transfer and advanced training instead of reliance on cheap labor.

The government has also been implementing economic structural reforms. Although the budget deficit rose in 2010 because of increased spending on welfare and public investment, a reduced deficit is expected in 2011. Major budget reforms, including an overhaul of the tax system, show promise. Government support of the economy should spur increased investment. Inflation remains low, currently hovering around 1%.

Morocco’s short- and medium-term growth prospects look good; the economy is expected to expand by 4.6% in 2011 and 5% in 2012. Still, various factors could adversely affect performance. One factor is vulnerability in agriculture because of the region’s increasingly inconsistent rains. Past droughts have severely curtailed GDP growth by reducing crops and increasing imports of foodstuffs.

The long-term stability and growth of the economy depend on the following: increasing literacy rates; increasing job growth, particularly for youth; curbing corruption; sustaining efforts to diversify the economy; stabilizing the social infrastructure; and avoiding the unrest seen in other parts of the Arab world.\textsuperscript{345} Protest movements and threats of Islamic terrorism are potential threats to economic stability. So far, the government has managed potential threats. Moreover, it appears to be moving toward greater democratization. This increases the probability of stability in the region and minimizes the likelihood of economic disruption.\textsuperscript{346, 347}

Chapter 3 Assessment

1. Manufacturing is the dominant sector in the Moroccan economy.
   **False**
   Agriculture and the mining and export of phosphates have long been the mainstays of the economy.

2. The majority of the unemployed live in rural areas.
   **False**
   Most of the unemployed live in urban areas, although among young people, unemployment is higher in rural areas.

3. The exchange rate of Morocco’s currency, the dirham, is set by the International Monetary Fund.
   **False**
   The dirham’s exchange rate is set by Morocco’s central bank, Bank al-Maghrib, and is pegged to several foreign currencies.

4. Despite trade deficits in goods in recent years, Morocco’s current account balance has remained positive.
   **True**
   The overall account balance is positive because of tourism revenue and remittances from Moroccan workers overseas.

5. According to the 2010 Human Development Index, Morocco has relatively high living standards.
   **False**
   The 2010 Human Development Index ranks Morocco 114 out of 169 countries, based on factors such as per capita GDP and literacy.
CHAPTER 4: SOCIETY

Introduction

Modern Moroccans are descendants of indigenous Berber tribes and invading Arabs of the seventh century. This group makes up 99% of the population; the remaining 1% are Moroccan Jews or the Haratin, descendants of West African slaves.\(^{348}\) The population is young: the median age of the nation’s nearly 32 million residents is 26.9. A large number of Moroccans, 27.8%, are 14 or younger.\(^{349}\)

Morocco is a study in contrasts. A patchwork of traditions—borrowed from traders and occupiers—defines Morocco. Although the country is close to Europe, its way of life is vastly different.\(^{350, 351, 352}\) Although an Islamic country, it had a significant Jewish population for much of its history. Arab language and culture dominate along the coasts, but in the mountainous interior, Berber life remains much as it has for centuries. Even the climate has contrasts. The coastal Mediterranean is pleasant, but mountain temperatures can drop below freezing and deserts blaze with heat. Cities are a mix of neo-colonial structures and walled sections dating a thousand years or more.\(^{353, 354, 355}\)

Ethnic Groups and Languages

Moroccans are largely homogeneous from an ethnic perspective because 99% are Arab or Berber. A small Jewish community remains, and there are enclaves of Europeans, particularly Spanish in the north.\(^{356, 357, 358}\) The Sahrawi, descendants of the Moors, live in the disputed lands of Western Sahara.\(^{359}\)

**Berbers (Imazighen) and Tamashek**

When the Phoenicians, Carthaginians, Romans, Arabs, and

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others arrived in the Maghreb, they were met by native people whose descendants are known as Berbers (Berbers call themselves Imazighen). Anthropologists and archaeologists still debate the mysteries of the origins of these indigenous residents. The best evidence suggests that Berbers came from the north, south, and west, not from a single area. A monolithic Berber culture has likely never existed. Even today, Berbers from one part of Morocco may not fully understand the language of Berbers in another part of the country. A constitutional referendum adopted in July 2011 made Berber an official language alongside Arabic.

There are three main Berber languages in Morocco. In the Anti-Atlas range, western High Atlas range, and the Souss Valley, Tashelhit is spoken. It is also spoken by Berbers in southern parts of Morocco down to the Draa Valley. Berbers in the central and eastern High Atlas range and the Middle Atlas range speak Tamashek. In the Rif Mountains to the north, Berbers speak Tarifit.

Situated primarily in the mountains, Berber communities are often remote and isolated. As subsistence farmers, Berbers raise wheat, fruit, vegetables, and sometimes sheep and cattle. The difficulties of freezing temperatures and frequent droughts have led to self-contained communities. Often these villages are made up of related clans. Because Berbers depend on one another for survival, they are more likely to exhibit familial loyalty rather than national allegiance.

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369 Berber languages are often collectively referred to as Tamazight, so the language dialects of this part of Morocco are often specified as Central Atlas Tamazight. See David M. Hart, *Tribe and Society in Rural Morocco* (Portland, OR: Frank Cass Publishers, 2000), 23–25.
Arabic and Arabs

Arabic is the other national language of Morocco. Arabic is the first language of most Arab Moroccans living outside the mountain and desert regions where Berber dominates. Unlike Modern Standard Arabic, Moroccan Arabic is strictly a spoken language. Other differences between the two forms of Arabic make Moroccan Arabic difficult for non-Maghrebian Arabs to understand.

Although genetic analyses show no significant differences between Arabic- and Berber-speaking Moroccans, major cultural divisions exist between the groups. Moroccan Arabs dominate the professional class. The Alaouites, self-proclaimed descendants of the Prophet Muhammad, are the wealthiest and most powerful group in society. Arabs follow the Quran more strictly than Berbers. The Quran narrowly defines community roles—men are the providers and women take care of the household. However, even among Arabs, these traditional and patriarchal divisions vary. Traditions run deep and are unquestioned among fundamentalists; greater openness exists among wealthier Arabs.

Jewish Community

A Jewish population has been present in Morocco for nearly 2,000 years. Jewish enclaves exist in Rabat, Casablanca, and Tangier. Although Jews typically avoid intermarriage with the Arab community, they have adopted some Moroccan cultural practices. These include honoring local saints, a practice that Jews elsewhere do not follow. Attacks against Jewish establishments in 2003, including the bombings of a restaurant and a Jewish cemetery, caused consternation among Moroccan Jews.

Sahrawi

In 1976, Morocco annexed two-thirds of Western Sahara, and in 1979 it claimed the remaining third. The Sahrawi people launched a resistance movement and a guerrilla war, which ended in...
1991. To date, the conflict over sovereignty is unresolved and demands for a referendum on independence, supported by Algeria, are ongoing.  

The nomadic peoples of Western Sahara trace their origins to the Berbers. Migrating Arabs and Berbers intermarried, creating a cultural group known to Europeans as the Moors, but today known as the Sahrawi, or “people of the Sahara.” This formerly nomadic group has become more settled because of the danger of movement during armed conflicts.

The Sahrawi have a well-defined caste system. The highest caste members study and teach Islam or are warriors. The second caste mainly comprises craftsmen and artisans. The lowest caste members were traditionally black slaves, and although slavery has been outlawed, darker-skinned Sahrawi face discrimination. The Sahrawi have the highest level of gender equality among all groups in the country. Although Arabs have tried to acculturate them, the Sahrawi have successfully preserved much of their culture.

Religion

Islam is the state religion of Morocco. About 99% of the people are Sunni Muslims. Despite the special status of Islam, the constitution guarantees freedom of religion, and religious minorities can openly practice their faiths but not proselytize. Christian and Jewish minorities, which have long existed in Morocco, have small populations. Most of the country’s 4,000 Jews live in Casablanca; about 200–250 Jews live in Rabat. Estimates for the Christian population, which is mostly made up of expatriates living in Casablanca and Rabat, range from 5,000 to 25,000.

Morocco is one of the most liberal Islamic countries. The Maliki madhab (an Islamic legal school of thought) is followed. This doctrine is less reliant on the hadith—a record of the sayings and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad—and more open than other madhhabs to analogical reasoning (qiyaṣ). In Morocco, some Maliki rulings have extended legal interpretations to

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encompass local traditions, which differs from other Maliki regions. In fact, Moroccan Islam merges Islam with ancient Berber practices and accommodates both. More conservative Muslims might view this practice as unorthodox, but not heretical. The government currently has some concern about a trend in universities toward a more fundamentalist outlook.

Islamic practice in Morocco has been deeply influenced by Sufi mysticism. Many Sufi mystics in Morocco became venerated as marabouts (holy men) who possess baraka (grace or divine blessing), even after death. In rural areas, the marabouts have often taken on the role of tribal arbitrator because of their prestige. Sultans and kings, being shurafa (descendants of the Prophet Muhammad), have also traditionally possessed baraka. Baraka can be passed to descendants, which has created maraboutic and sharifian religious lineages in many rural areas.

**Cuisine**

Moroccan cuisine reflects many influences, including Berber, Arab, Spanish, and Jewish. The midday meal is typically the day’s main meal, except during the Ramadan fast. In wealthy families, meals are often elaborate multicourse affairs. In less affluent homes, there may be only a grain dish and a meat dish. Moroccans usually end their meal with sweet mint tea, the national drink. It is made from Chinese green tea rolled into pellets, with bits of mint added. It is heavily sweetened with sugar after steeping.

The signature grain dish is couscous, made from semolina wheat shaped into granules. Served with a meat or vegetable stew, it is usually the last dish. Moroccan meals may include beef, lamb, chicken, or seafood, usually heavily spiced. Typical spices are cinnamon, cumin, turmeric, ginger, paprika, cayenne, black pepper, and sesame and anise seeds.

Popular dishes are basteeya or bastilla (chicken in a thin pastry dough, topped with cinnamon and powdered sugar), meshoui (whole roasted lamb sprinkled with cumin and salt), harira (thick,
spicy soup made with beans, vegetables, and rice), and *djej emshmel* (roasted chicken served with a spicy sauce, lemon, and olives).  

Flatbread is eaten at nearly every meal. Typical vegetables include turnips, potatoes, and artichokes. Dessert often consists of fruit, typically oranges, grapes, melons, figs, or dates.

**Traditional Dress**

Moroccans are more relaxed about clothing than people in other Islamic countries. Clothing that exposes the skin can be worn, although it is reserved for beaches and resorts. For traditional dress, men and women wear the *djellaba*, a loose-fitting, ankle-length robe with a hood. The most common style is the *machzania djellaba*, worn as outerwear against the sun or heat. Women are more likely to wear *djellabas*, choosing darker colors than men. A variation of the *djellaba* is the *kaftan*. This garment does not have a hood, is only worn by women, and is usually more stylish than the *djellaba*. Women wear kaftans at weddings and other celebrations.

Men in Morocco still wear two traditional head coverings. The fez is a conical felt hat flattened at the top. Until the 19th century, all fezzes were made in Fès because dyes from local berries gave the fez its characteristic red color. The other popular type of headgear is the knitted kufi skullcap, which usually has elaborate geometric designs. Men often wear these skullcaps in mosques.

Western-style clothing, such as jeans and T-shirts, are becoming more popular, especially among young people. Some women wear cosmetics in moderation. A woman with too much makeup risks being interpreted as signaling an invitation to men.

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406 The Travel Source, “Culture/Dress/Artisan,” 2011, [http://www.thetravelsource.net/TravelInfoPages/culture.html](http://www.thetravelsource.net/TravelInfoPages/culture.html)
Moroccans are known for their comfortable footwear. Men and women wear heelless leather slippers called *belgha or babouch*, with yellow the traditional color for men.\footnote{Orin Hargraves, *Culture Shock! A Survival Guide to Customs and Etiquette: Morocco* (Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish Corporation, 2007), 78–79.}
Gender Issues

Morocco is a Muslim society with gender roles largely dictated by the Quran. Men and women have separate roles and responsibilities in every area of social life.\(^{413}\) Although guaranteed equal rights by the constitution, women have not been considered full citizens legally. A July 2011 constitutional referendum changed the constitution to guarantee “civic and social” equality for women.\(^{414,415}\)

Adherence to the Quran regarding gender relations is stronger among Arabs than among the Berbers or Sahrawi. Work is separated by gender. In rural areas, men tend the fields and animals; in urban areas, they work outside the home. Women are responsible for taking care of the home and the children. It is rare for women to work outside the home unless they are from high levels of society.\(^{416}\)

Despite patriarchal views, the status of women is changing. A family code (Mudawwana) enacted in 2004 gives new legal protections to women.\(^{417,418}\) After consulting religious authorities and Islamic law, King Mohammed VI pushed the legislation through the parliament.\(^{419}\)

Married women are no longer legally required to obey their husbands. Women and men are now considered equal in terms of family responsibility. Although legal, polygamy is restricted to the point of being nearly impossible. Women have the right to initiate divorce if legal conditions are met. The man’s right to divorce his wife by repudiation (the triple talaq—saying “I divorce you” three times) is subject to civil divorce court proceedings. The minimum marriage age for girls has increased from 15 to 18.\(^{420,421}\) These and other provisions of the Mudawwana give Morocco one of the most progressive family codes in the Arab world.\(^{422}\)

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New thinking about gender roles is stimulating change. In 2009, women became members of municipal councils for the first time. More women may join the labor force. Women are entering politics and more may serve on municipal councils. Women are joining the ranks of journalists, doctors, athletes, and other professionals.

**Arts**

**Music**

Music pervades rituals and celebrations and is often accompanied by dancing and storytelling. Musical styles reflect the cultures and traditions of North Africa. Classical—not to be confused with European classical music—is one style. Classical orchestras play compositions written in the 10th–15th centuries in Andalusia (southern Spain). The lyrics are in classical Arabic or the Andalusian dialect, and the complex music is played with instruments rarely used in non-Muslim countries. These include stringed instruments (rebab or fiddle, kemanjah or long-necked violin, oud or lute), a type of tambourine (tar), and sometimes a funnel-shaped clay drum (darbuqa).

Griha, a modern variant of Moroccan classical music, is the most widely played form of popular music. Griha lyrics are in modern Arabic, not in classical Arabic or rarely spoken Andalusian dialects. Griha melodies, often played on the viola or two-stringed mandolin, are accompanied by clapping.

Berber music relies heavily on percussion instruments, with the melody played by flute or rebab. The music leaves considerable room for improvisation and for unexpected instruments such as bagpipes or oboes, but the rhythms and lyrics always have traditional elements. Often there is a call-and-response motif, in which the lead singer poses a question and a female chorus answers.

**Film**

For many years Morocco has been a favorite site for American and European movie producers, drawn by desert settings or Middle Eastern backdrops that can be shot in relative safety. The world’s largest movie studio (by area) is in Ouarzazate near the Sahara. Morocco averaged fewer than four films per year from 1969 to 1998, but the number is increasing dramatically. Since 1999 the Moroccan film industry has been averaging 12 films a year (20 in 2007), and the

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government plans to expand this number to 40 by 2020 by making funding available for mid-budget films.\textsuperscript{432, 433}

To promote Morocco as a regional filmmaking center, a worldwide film festival is held each year in Marrakech. As new films emerge, controversies sometimes arise. For example, Islamist political parties harshly criticized the successful 2006 film “Marock,” which involves a relationship between a Jewish boy and Muslim girl.\textsuperscript{434}

\textit{Al-Halqa}

\textit{Al-halqa} is a unique, centuries-old form of street theater performed in the central squares of many Moroccan cities. It involves the display of art forms and talents that range from the sublime to the bizarre. The huge central square of Marrakech, Djemaa al-Fna, is known for its vast array of \textit{halaqi} (entertainers). Each \textit{halaqi} is surrounded by an audience, so within a short distance, a spectator could hear the elaborate tales of storytellers, see the ancient art of snake-charming, or watch the undulations of cross-dressing belly dancers. Gnaoua musicians, descendants of West African slaves, may be performing trancelike music on drums and castanets. The cultural importance of \textit{al-halqa} was underscored by UNESCO in 2001, when the Djemaa al-Fna became the first World Heritage Site for oral history and tradition.\textsuperscript{435, 436}

\textit{Folk Culture and Folklore}

Berber tribespeople have characteristically expressed their culture, traditions, and tales through singing and dancing. For more than 40 years, Marrakech has hosted an annual folklore festival (the Marrakech Festival of Popular Arts) that showcases Berber culture. Some traditions, such as the fantasias in which Berber horsemen perform war charges in flowing robes, have survived primarily for the benefit of tourists. Still, the Marrakech festival has preserved many Berber traditions and helped to expose them to the outside world.\textsuperscript{437}

Morocco’s numerous rural \textit{moussem}s (celebrations) play a similar role for Berbers. One well-known \textit{moussem} takes place in the Middle Atlas village of Imilchil, where for years Berbers have converged to trade, sing, and dance. Young Berber men and women also come to find a marriage partner.\textsuperscript{438, 439}

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{436} Etaín O’Carroll et al., \textit{Lonely Planet: Morocco} (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet Publications, 2007), 57–58.
\bibitem{437} Etaín O’Carroll et al., \textit{Lonely Planet: Morocco} (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet Productions, 2007), 307.
\end{thebibliography}
Sports and Recreation

The most popular sport in Morocco is football (soccer). The national team, Lions de l’Atlas (Lions of the Atlas), has had periodic success in international competition. Morocco was the first African country to reach the second round of the World Cup, in 1986. The team won the championship of the African Cup of Nations in 1976 and was runner-up in 2004.

Women’s football is slowly gaining in popularity. Organized leagues have sprung up and a national team exists. Although there is increasing acceptance of the participation of women in the traditionally male world of sports, personal and professional opportunities for young women remain limited.

In track and field, another popular sport, Moroccan athletes have achieved success. Star runner Hicham El Guerrouj won the gold medal in the men’s 1,500 m (4,900 ft) and 5,000 m (3.1 mi), an Olympic feat matched only by the legendary Paavo Nurmi, considered the greatest middle-distance runner of all time. El Guerrouj is also the current world’s record-holder in the mile. Moroccan Hasna Benhassi won a silver medal in the women’s 800-m (2,625-ft) race in the 2004 Olympic Games.

Another famous Moroccan track-and-field athlete is Nawal El Moutawakel-Bennis, who became Morocco’s first Olympic gold medalist in 1984 when she won the women’s 400-m (1,312-ft) hurdles. She was also the first Muslim and African woman to win an Olympic gold medal. Today, she is Morocco’s Minister of Youth and Sports.

Cricket is fast becoming popular, especially with urban boys and even with the king. Tennis clubs and golf courses can be found in big cities and resort areas. Some Moroccan players have emerged on the international scene, particularly in tennis. Foremost among them is tennis player Younès El Aynaoui, ranked 14th in the world in 2003.
Chapter 4 Assessment

1. A Moroccan Berber is a native speaker of one of the three main Berber languages.  
   **True**  
   Depending on the region, Moroccan Berbers speak Tashelhit, Tamashek, or Tarifit.

2. Most Moroccans living outside mountain and desert regions speak Moroccan Arabic as their first language.  
   **True**  
   Moroccan Arabic is the predominant language beyond the mountain and desert regions where Berber-speaking populations live.

3. The majority of Moroccan Muslims are Shi’ites.  
   **False**  
   Sunni Muslims make up the vast majority of the country’s Muslim population.

4. Sufi mysticism has significantly influenced Islamic practice in Morocco.  
   **True**  
   Many Sufi mystics are venerated as *marabouts*, or holy men, who possess *baraka*, or divine blessing. In rural areas, *marabouts* often serve as tribal arbitrators.

5. *Moussem* are celebrations based on Berber culture.  
   **True**  
   These Berber celebrations primarily occur in rural areas and include trading, singing, and dancing. Young Berbers search for marriage partners.
CHAPTER 5: SECURITY

Introduction

Morocco, a moderate Arab state, has experienced increased terrorist activity since the 2003 suicide bombings in Casablanca. In 2007, more suicide bombings occurred in Casablanca. In 2008, 40 members of an alleged terrorist network were arrested. The following year, 24 alleged terrorists linked to al-Qaeda were apprehended.\(^{450}\) In 2010, more terrorists with suspected al-Qaeda links were arrested in the disputed Western Sahara region.\(^{451}\)

Many Moroccan terrorist leaders have middle-class backgrounds, but those who ultimately carry out attacks are mainly recruits from the slums of Casablanca and other cities.\(^{452, 453, 454}\) Morocco’s counterterrorism efforts include addressing poverty and youth unemployment in urban areas.\(^{455, 456}\)

Moroccans have emigrated to Europe in large numbers in search of employment. Some migrants, as well as European nationals of Moroccan heritage, have been implicated in high-profile terrorist acts.\(^{457}\) The 2004 train bombings in Madrid were linked to a terrorist cell with roots in Morocco.\(^{458}\)


Morocco faces a second major security issue in Western Sahara, where a guerrilla war has led to a stalemate that complicates relations with neighbors in North Africa and Europe.\(^{459}\)

Although Morocco has been less affected than nearby countries by protest and violence following the “Arab Spring,” there are growing calls for democratic reform. These protests could alter the power distribution in the country.\(^{460}\)

**United States-Morocco Relations**

The United States and Morocco have a long history of good relations, beginning in 1777, when Morocco was the first nation to seek diplomatic relations with the United States. In 1787, the two nations concluded a Treaty of Peace and Friendship. In 1836, this treaty was renegotiated. It is still in effect today, as the longest standing unbroken treaty in U.S. history. Morocco supported the United States and coalition forces in the 1991 Gulf War.\(^{461}\) Morocco was one of the first Arab countries to denounce the 9/11 terrorist attacks against the United States. In June 2004, President Bush named Morocco a non-NATO ally of the United States in recognition of long-standing good relations and of Morocco’s fight against international terrorism.\(^{462}\) The same year, the two nations negotiated a free-trade agreement, which went into effect in 2006.\(^{463, 464}\)

Morocco has actively supported U.S. efforts in Middle East peace negotiations. In the 1970s, Morocco began a political dialogue with Israel, helping facilitate the 1978 Camp David Accords between Israel and Egypt.\(^{465}\) In 1986, King Hassan II met with Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres.\(^{466}\) Talks between Moroccan, Israeli, and Palestinian leaders established Morocco as one of the few Arab countries willing to risk internal and external criticism by joining discussions.\(^{467}\)

The United States does not recognize Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara; it maintains that Morocco and the independence-seeking Polisario Front should continue to work with each

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\(^{467}\) William E. Smith, Dean Fischer, and Roland Flamini, “Middle East When Adversaries Meet,” *Time*, 4 August 1986, [http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,961915,00.html](http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,961915,00.html)
other and the UN toward a solution. The free-trade agreement between Morocco and the United States does not apply to Western Sahara.

Relations with Neighboring Countries

Algeria

Nearly all of Morocco’s land border is with Algeria: this border symbolizes the political standoff between the two neighbors since the 1960s. Early in that decade, the two countries fought a brief war. The dispute was thought to be settled in the early 1970s, and relations between the neighbors began to normalize. Renewed conflict occurred in the 1970s when Morocco asserted control over Western Sahara and Algeria supported the Polisario Front. Since 1994, the Morocco-Algeria border has been closed. This has not stopped the cross-border flow of smuggled drugs, guns, gasoline, food, and medicine.

Positive developments in Moroccan-Algerian relations have occurred recently, including talks to normalize relations and resolve the problem of Western Sahara. Still, the border between the two countries is unlikely to open soon.

Mauritania

Mauritania, Western Sahara’s neighbor to the east and south, is a critical player in the conflict over the disputed territory. In the late 1970s, Spain ceded the southern third of Western Sahara to Mauritania. However, a costly war against the Polisario Front threatened to cripple the Mauritanian economy. A 1979 coup led to a new military-backed government signing a peace

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treaty with the Polisario Front, renouncing Mauritanian’s territorial claims in Western Sahara.479

After Mauritania’s departure, Morocco occupied southern Western Sahara.480 Relations between the two countries reached a low point from 1981 to 1985 when Mauritania accused Morocco of assisting a coup attempt.481 Morocco countered that the Polisario Front was staging attacks in Western Sahara from bases in Mauritania.482

Since 1985, the two countries have restored relations and opened a border crossing between southern Western Sahara and the Mauritanian port of Nouâdhibou, although the region is riddled with landmines.483, 484 Landmines are a problem along the entire Mauritanian-Western Sahara border, as remnants of the Polisario Front’s wars against Morocco and Mauritania in the 1970s.485, 486

Spain

Spain is a vital Moroccan trading partner and source of foreign investment.487, 488 However, relations between the two nations have been strained since 1975 because of issues surrounding Western Sahara, territorial disputes, drug trafficking, and fishing. Relations with Spain are better when Spanish leftist parties are in power. Relations became strained between 1996 and 2004 when Spain’s conservative Popular Party, which had power, took a confrontational approach toward Morocco.489

Territorial issues mainly concern the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, which share 15.9 km (9.9 mi) of land border with Morocco. Viewed by Morocco as anachronisms of the colonial past, Morocco claims these Spanish-administered enclaves.490, 491

Perhaps the height of tensions occurred when Spain sent warships to remove seven Moroccan guards from the island of Leila, just 200 m (657 ft) off the Moroccan coast, where Moroccan navy cadets had set up a base. Diplomacy defused the dispute before shots were fired.

Relations improved in 2004, when the two nations sent a joint peacekeeping unit to Haiti as part of a UN peacekeeping mission. Spain adopted a neutral position toward Western Sahara and tacitly supported Morocco’s autonomy plan. The Spanish government has been a key supporter of granting Morocco advanced status in the European Union.

Spain’s Popular Party, known for anti-Moroccan positions, is projected to win the 2012 Spanish elections, suggesting a renewal of less friendly relations. Negative feelings toward Moroccan immigrants could fuel more conflict. Although Morocco granted Spaniards living in the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla the right to vote in municipal elections in Morocco, Popular Party leaders are unwilling to allow Moroccan residents the right to vote in Spanish municipal elections; thus setting the stage for conflict.

**France**

France maintains close political and economic ties with its former protectorate. It is Morocco’s top trading partner and leading investor. In the UN Security Council, France and the United States are the strongest supporters of Morocco’s recent proposal of limited autonomy for Western Sahara (as a starting point in continuing negotiations with the Polisario Front). France, with about 1.1 million Moroccan migrants, has the largest number of expatriate Moroccans. According to the French government, 350,000 of these Moroccans hold French dual citizenship. Because of these strong ties, French remains a popular second language for Moroccans and is commonly spoken in government, business, and higher-education circles.

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Military and Law Enforcement

Morocco’s Royal Armed Forces comprises the Royal Moroccan Army (including Air Defense), the Royal Moroccan Navy (including Marines), and the Royal Moroccan Air Force. Recent estimates place the number of active-duty personnel at fewer than 200,000, of which 175,000 are army, 7,800 are navy, and 13,500 are air force. The country also has a paramilitary force of 50,000 active-duty personnel divided among the Royal Gendarmerie (GR), Auxiliary Forces, Customs, and Coast Guard. Although the GR is part of the Moroccan armed forces, it serves as the country’s main police force in rural areas. Urban areas are policed by the General Office of National Security, which is part of the Ministry of Interior.

The number of Moroccan Royal Armed Forces serving in Western Sahara is not known, but estimates suggest 100,000 troops. This means half the armed services are stationed in Western Sahara.

Army

Well versed in mountain and desert warfare and experienced in counterinsurgency operations, the Royal Moroccan Army (RMA) is a formidable force. The army bears chief responsibility for the administration of Moroccan-controlled Western Sahara. One of its chief tasks is to man the Berm, a fortified earthenwork defensive structure constructed to divide Western Sahara in two. It separates Moroccan-controlled territory from territory under control of the Polisario Front. This is a considerable undertaking, as the Berm stretches over 2,700 km (1,678 mi) in length and through some of the most inhospitable terrain in North Africa.

The RMA is comprised of 38 infantry battalions, 3 mechanized infantry brigades, 2 parachute brigades, 3 airborne battalions, 1 light security brigade, 8 mechanized infantry regiments, 12 armored battalions, and 11 artillery battalions, 4 commando units, 1 air defense battalion, 7 engineer battalions, and 1 mountain battalion. Bases are located at Rabat and Agadir. In terms of equipment, the army relies upon a variety of models of Western and former-Soviet manufacture. The majority of main battle tanks are U.S.-made Patton M48A5, M60A1, and M60A3 tanks augmented by about 40 Soviet-designed T-72B tanks and the Austrian-manufactured SK-105 Kürassier light tank. In addition, the army utilizes about 250 reconnaissance vehicles of French

504 IHS Jane’s, “Polisario,” Jane’s World Insurgency and Terrorism, 21 December 2010.
and American designs, including the up-armored Humvee, and an unknown number of armored personnel carriers from the same points of origin. Artillery, anti-tank, air defense, and infantry weapons are also of various origins.\(^{506}\)

Moroccan army personnel have deployed on various peacekeeping missions under UN auspices. The United States and the United Kingdom regularly conduct joint military exercises with the RMA.\(^{507}\)

**Air Force**

The Royal Moroccan Air Force (RMAF) proved an effective force in combat against the Polisario Front during the early 1990s. While it has maintained parity with the Algerian Air Force in terms of capabilities, many of the RMAF’s aircraft are outmoded. Accordingly, the force is in the process of a major upgrade, purchasing more sophisticated fighters and support craft from the U.S. and France. These include two dozen F-16 Fighting Falcons multirole jet fighters, two dozen Hawker Beechcraft T-6C Texan II single-engine turboprop aircraft, and an upgrade of existing Mirage I multirole fighters. Bases are located at Benguerir, Kenitra, Marrakech, Meknes, Rabat, and Sidi Slimane.\(^{508}\)

**Navy**

By far the smallest of Morocco’s military services, the Royal Moroccan Navy is a trim but well-equipped force. Recent acquisition of French FREMM multipurpose frigates and signed contracts for future delivery of three SIGMA-class corvettes assure that the navy’s capabilities and responsibilities will continue to increase. Among the navy’s current tasks are the interdiction of vehicles trafficking in drugs and illegal immigrants in the Straits of Gibraltar and the Mediterranean Sea. Bases are located at Agadir, al-Hoceima, Casablanca (headquarters), Dakhla, Kenitra, Ksar al-Seghir, Safi, and Tangier.\(^{509}\)

**Issues Affecting Stability**

**Terrorist Groups and Activity**

Since 2003, Morocco has experienced violent attacks by Islamist terrorists.\(^{510}\) In response, a multifaceted program against the spread of terrorism and extreme ideologies has been implemented. The government has used stepped-up investigations and rapid detention of suspects to halt the spread of terrorist groups. Economic reforms to improve conditions for the poor and unemployed have been promoted. The Ministry of Religious Endowments and Islamic Affairs has overseen

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revisions to religious curricula, dismissed imams promoting extremist ideology, and promoted religious tolerance through moderate sermons delivered daily via closed-circuit TV in 2,000 mosques.\(^{511,512}\)

In January 2011, the government arrested 27 people suspected of operating a terrorist cell affiliated with al-Qaeda in Western Sahara. The group is alleged to have been planning suicide and car bomb attacks as well as bank robberies in Rabat and Casablanca. The episode may signal rising extremist activity in the region.\(^{513}\) In April 2011 a Marrakech cafe was bombed. The suspects are thought to be al-Qaeda sympathizers affiliated with al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).\(^{514}\)

**The Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group**

The group believed responsible for the 2003 Casablanca bombings is the Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group, known by its French acronym GICM.\(^{515}\) A shadowy group, the GICM seems to primarily consist of small, independent cells in Western Europe and Morocco. The cell that carried out the Casablanca bombings is thought to have been organized by Abdelkarim al-Mejjati, a Moroccan former medical student with al-Qaeda connections.\(^{516}\) According to Moroccan counterterrorism officials, Mejjati provided explosives training for youths recruited from Casablanca slums. He was killed in a 2005 raid on his safe house in Saudi Arabia.\(^{517}\)

It is also believed that the GICM was associated with the Madrid train bombings in March 2004, which killed nearly 200 people. However, those links were never proved, and the bombings appear to have been conducted by North Africans linked to al-Qaeda.\(^{518}\) Several of the individuals involved were from the northern Moroccan city of Tétouan, including the second-in-

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command, Jamal Ahmidan.\textsuperscript{519} Half of the 28 defendants tried for the bombings were from Morocco.\textsuperscript{520}

In March and April 2007, Casablanca was again the site of suicide bombings; fortunately, fatalities were few. The March bombing, an explosion in an internet cafe, occurred just hours after a top GICM leader was taken into custody in Casablanca and only days after the GICM’s military chief was arrested.\textsuperscript{521}

More recently, some terrorism experts believe that GICM has been working as a faction in the Algerian-based organization al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), although others note little evidence of a unified front.\textsuperscript{522, 523} The United States named the GICM as a Foreign Terrorist Organization in 2005, but the U.S. Department of State believes the group’s command structure has been handicapped, as many leaders have been killed or imprisoned.\textsuperscript{524}

\textit{Western Sahara}

One of Africa’s longest-running political standoffs, the battle over the future of Western Sahara continues to dominate Morocco’s relations with neighboring countries.\textsuperscript{525} Although the conflict has been a war of words instead of weapons since the early 1990s, the failure to reach a satisfactory outcome generates threats of renewed military action by the Polisario Front.\textsuperscript{526} In addition, the impasse forces the Moroccan government to support an expensive military and civilian presence in the region, siphoning revenues that could be used on economic initiatives.\textsuperscript{527, 528}

Several rounds of negotiations between Morocco and the Polisario Front have occurred since 2007, but these talks have yet to produce tangible results. Morocco has proposed that Western


Since 1991, the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) has had teams of observers on both sides of the Berm. The mission was originally envisioned as a civilian-military operation to help implement a Western Sahara referendum on self-determination. It was anticipated that once the ceasefire between Morocco and the Polisario Front was signed in September 1991, the MINURSO teams would be in the region for only 26 months.\footnote{George Mason University, “United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara,” \textit{Peace Operations Policy Program}, November 1994, \url{http://www.gmu.edu/departments/t-po/peace/minurso.html}} After more than 20 years, they remain in the area.

\textit{Poverty}

Many of the suicide bombers who have carried out attacks since 2003 have been recruited from the \textit{bidonvilles} (slums) of Casablanca and other cities. Sidi Moumen, a suburb of Casablanca, has become known as a breeding ground for poor, socially alienated youth who are easily attracted to extreme ideology and, in some cases, violent action.\footnote{“Morocco – Casablanca’s Second-String Bombers,” \textit{Stratfor}, 17 April 2007, \url{http://www.stratfor.com/memberships/28449/morocco_casablanca_s_second_string_bombers?ip_auth_redirect=1}}\footnote{Gerry Hadden, “Morocco’s Poverty Woes,” \textit{PRI’s The World}, 7 March 2011, \url{http://www.theworld.org/2011/03/morocco-protests-to-reduce-poverty/}} Security crackdowns in Sidi Moumen have broken up several terrorist cells.

\textit{Drug Trafficking}

The rugged Rif Mountains are notorious for cannabis cultivation. Farmers have been growing the crop since the 15th century. For many years, Morocco was the world’s largest supplier of hashish, most of which went to Europe. Government crackdowns in recent years have reduced production by 50%.
Further reductions are hindered by the difficulty of finding a replacement crop of equal economic value.537

Drug cultivation and trafficking provide a profitable revenue source for local and European terrorist cells, which is a major security concern. As covert funding for terrorism through charities and NGOs (nongovernmental organizations) becomes harder because of scrutiny by counterterrorism agencies, traditional criminal activities (such as drug trafficking and robbery) are becoming more prevalent. The 2003 bombings in Casablanca and the 2004 Madrid train bombings are thought to have been at least partly funded by Moroccan hashish dealers.538, 539

Human Trafficking

Human smuggling has become a major concern for Morocco. The European Union estimates that 120,000 people illegally enter EU countries from Morocco each year. Spain has built fences around their Moroccan enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla in order to stave off would be illegal immigrants hoping to enter the EU through these Spanish territories. Given the poor economic conditions throughout Africa, it is unlikely that the numbers of people using Morocco as a transit point for gaining entry into Spain and other EU nations will decrease.540

Water Security

Water is becoming a source of tension in and among countries, with some observers declaring that water will be the next global challenge.541 The Western Sahara region of Morocco is fifth on the Water Stress Index and at extreme risk for water shortages, a situation that contributes to food insecurity in the region.542

Droughts have periodically reduced Morocco’s agricultural output, as in 2000, but they have been less severe in recent years. However, there is a long-term decline in water supplies, and water quality is deteriorating. It is estimated that water availability is likely to diminish by 50% by 2020. The government has formed a Water Council to try to avert severe problems related to water shortages.543

Outlook

Morocco has so far been relatively unaffected by the “Arab Spring” movement that swept much of the Middle East in 2011. However, some protests occurred, and the king moved to thwart demonstrators by introducing constitutional reforms in July 2011. Moroccans are torn because they want change, but they like the king, and the monarchy enjoys a certain legitimacy. Although welcomed by most Moroccans, the reforms may be insufficient to maintain stability if they are not matched with a greater chance for involvement by Moroccans from the bottom up.

The fight against terrorism is critical to Morocco’s economy. Tourism revenue, foreign investment, and remittances from Moroccans working abroad (Morocco’s major sources of foreign exchange) could be seriously reduced by fears not only over Morocco’s internal security against terrorism but over potential activities carried out abroad by Moroccan terrorists. Since the Madrid bombings in 2004, immigration from Morocco has increasingly been seen as a security issue within the European Union, particularly in Spain. As a result, the Spanish and Moroccan governments have developed better relations since the 2004 attacks and are now cooperating more closely on matters such as counterterrorism and illegal immigration.

The standoff in Western Sahara is not only costly and harmful to foreign relations, but it also affects Morocco’s efforts to fight terrorism. The impasse inhibits the free exchange of information between Morocco and Algeria about terrorist networks operating within their borders. Morocco’s resignation from the African Union (AU; formerly the Organization of African Unity) over the Western Sahara issue has prevented participation in continental counterterrorism efforts coordinated by the AU. With the Sahel region to Morocco’s south becoming a terrorist pipeline, such regional cooperation is important. As Moroccan Interior Minister Chakib Benmoussa has stated, “What is going on in the Sahel worries us a great deal.”

Unemployment and rising food costs threaten national security. Protests over price hikes, strikes, and a lack of jobs have exposed Morocco’s vulnerability to economic issues. Although the economy in its current composition will grow slightly, infrastructure and housing projects are needed to improve the economy. Morocco is taking steps to diversify its economy, but success depends on attracting international investors beyond the Maghreb, Western Europe, and the United States.553

Chapter 5 Assessment

1. About half of Morocco’s armed forces are serving in the disputed Western Sahara region.  
   **True**  
   Recent estimates place the number of active-duty personnel at just under 200,000, and about 100,000 are deployed in Western Sahara.

2. The United States has a long history of good relations with Morocco.  
   **True**  
   Morocco has long been an ally of the United States. In recent years, the two countries have established a free-trade agreement and coordinated efforts to fight international terrorism.

3. Morocco maintains stable diplomatic relations with its largest neighbor, Algeria.  
   **False**  
   In the 1960s, Morocco and Algeria fought a brief war, and an ongoing dispute over Western Sahara began in the 1970s. The Morocco-Algeria border has been closed since 1994.

4. Morocco is a member of the African Union.  
   **False**  
   Morocco resigned from the African Union over the Western Sahara issue and no longer participates in counterterrorism issues coordinated by the AU.

5. Despite substantial economic ties, Morocco and Spain have had uneasy diplomatic relations since 1975.  
   **True**  
   The Western Sahara issue, disputes over island and coastal territories, drug trafficking, and immigration continue to cause diplomatic problems between the two countries.
FINAL ASSESSMENT

1. Morocco is one of several North African countries with direct access to the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea.
   True / False

2. The Souss Valley, located between the High Atlas and the Anti-Atlas, is an isolated region.
   True / False

3. The area south of Casablanca marks the end of the Oum er-Rbia and Tensift, the two main rivers of the region, and the beginning of the Sahara.
   True / False

4. Marrakech has a strong Berber cultural influence.
   True / False

5. The importance of farming in Morocco is reflected in heavy agricultural water use.
   True / False

6. The earliest inhabitants of Morocco were tribes called Imazighen.
   True / False

7. Criticism of Almoravid rule by ibn Tumart propelled him to become leader of the Almoravids.
   True / False

8. By 1035, the Almoravid form of Islam had expanded into the Atlas region and central Morocco.
   True / False

9. King Hassan II introduced the country’s first democratic constitution.
   True / False

10. Morocco was integrated with Europe in the early 19th century because of its trade relationships with European powers.
    True / False

11. The textile and clothing industry is an important component of Morocco’s export sector.
    True / False

12. Morocco’s tourism industry benefits from the country’s proximity to Europe.
    True / False
13. Because the euro is an influential currency in the calculation of the exchange rate for the dirham, high inflation is a serious problem in Morocco.
   True / False

14. Coal for Morocco’s power plants is primarily imported from Sweden and Australia.
   True / False

15. Illiteracy and urban unemployment are two critical problems in Morocco.
   True / False

16. The evening meal is the most important meal of the day.
   True / False

17. Al-halqa is a unique form of street theater performed in the central squares of many Moroccan cities.
   True / False

18. Moroccan men and women wear a type of loose-fitting robe called a kaftan.
   True / False

19. The most popular sport in Morocco is football, or soccer.
   True / False

20. Recent legislation in Morocco has provided new legal protections for women.
   True / False

21. French is a popular second language for Moroccans and is commonly used in government, business, and higher-education circles.
   True / False

22. Moroccan authorities believe the Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group (GICM) was associated with terrorist attacks in Casablanca and Madrid.
   True / False

23. The UN has only recently attempted to resolve the territorial dispute in Western Sahara.
   True / False

24. The bidonvilles, or slums, of Casablanca and other Moroccan cities are popular recruiting grounds for terrorist organizations.
   True / False

25. In recent years, Moroccan authorities have largely eliminated the country’s illegal production of cannabis.
   True / False
FURTHER RESOURCES

Books and Articles


Videos
