



The earthen buildings at Ait-Ben-Haddou, in Ouarzazate Province, date back to the 17th century.
Flickr / Jane drumsara

MOROCCO



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Chapter 1 | Geography



The 250 m- (820 ft)-high Erg Chebbi dunes are among Morocco's most famous desert destinations.
Wikimedia / Lefidele

Introduction

Slightly larger than California, Morocco occupies the strategic northwestern corner of Africa, where the Mediterranean Sea meets the Atlantic Ocean. Morocco's Point Cires overlooks the narrowest part of the Strait of Gibraltar—the channel that connects the Mediterranean Sea with the Atlantic Ocean—only 13 km (8 mi) from Spain. Morocco has a coastline of 1,110 km (690 mi) and land borders that stretch along 2,046 km (1,270 mi).^{1,2} Morocco is part of the Maghreb (or Maghrib, meaning “west” in Arabic), which refers to the western part of North Africa and also includes Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya. Morocco has a land border with Algeria to the east and southeast, along with the disputed Western Sahara to the south. The Atlantic Ocean lies to the west and the Mediterranean Sea to the north. Although mainland Spain lies 13 km (8 mi) north across the Strait of Gibraltar, Morocco shares land boundaries with the European country at two small Spanish enclaves on the Mediterranean coast: Ceuta and Melilla. Mauritania shares a land border with Western Sahara but not with Morocco, yet is considered a neighboring country.^{3,4,5}

- 1 Central Intelligence Agency, “Morocco,” in *The World Factbook*, 21 August 2019, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mo.html>
- 2 Fanack, “Geography of Morocco,” n.d., <https://fanack.com/morocco/geography/>
- 3 Will D. Swearingen et al., “Morocco,” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 27 February 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Morocco>
- 4 *Encyclopædia Britannica*, “Maghreb,” 28 March 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Maghreb>
- 5 Center for Strategic & International Studies, “The Maghreb,” n.d., <https://www.csis.org/programs/middle-east-program/regions/maghreb>

Geographic and Topographic Divisions

Rif Mountains

Most of Morocco lies at high elevations, averaging about 800 m (2,600 ft). The Rif Mountains (Arabic for “edge of the cultivated area”) are Morocco’s northernmost mountain range, with their highest peak, Tidirhine, rising to a little over 2,400 m (8,000 ft). This crescent-shaped mountain range rises sharply from the narrow coastal plain; it runs parallel to the Mediterranean coast and ends near the town of Tétouan, in the Jebala massif. The peaks are sometimes covered in snow in the winter, but the mountains can get very hot during summer days. Chefchaouen is one of the Rif’s principal towns. The indigenous people of the region are called Rifians or Rifi.⁶ An important local crop is cannabis (*kif*).^{7, 8, 9}

Atlas Mountains

The Atlas Mountains extend across northwest Africa for nearly 2,000 km (1,200 mi), from Agadir in Morocco to Tunis in Tunisia. In Morocco, the range runs northeast–southwest. The center of Morocco is occupied by three ranges of the Atlas Mountains, with hundreds of summits approaching 3,000 m (10,000 ft) and several over 4,000 m (13,000 ft) in elevation.^{10, 11}

Anti-Atlas Mountains

The southernmost range in southwest Morocco is the Anti-Atlas (also known as the Little Atlas Mountains), with peaks that reach about 2,400 m (7,874 ft). This range rises close to the Atlantic coast and borders the Sahara Desert. Like in the Sahara, the land is barren, the climate is dry with annual precipitation of less than 200 mm (7.8 in), and the summer heat can be oppressive. The villages in this range are less developed than those in other mountain ranges. Jebel Siroua, an ancient volcano, is a popular destination for mountain climbers.^{12, 13, 14}

High Atlas Mountains

The High Atlas mountain range runs north of and parallel to the Anti-Atlas. 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), which is also the highest peak in North Africa. The High Atlas Mountains are home to Mgoun National Park, famous for its scenic rivers and deep gorge. Apples, peaches, walnuts, and cherries are grown in this region.^{15, 16}

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- 6 The indigenous people of Morocco, the Amazigh (plural Imazighen), are also called Berbers. However, not all Berbers identify as Amazigh. Furthermore, the Amazigh have regional subgroups such as the Rifians, Kabyles and Tuareg.
- 7 Countries and Their Cultures, “The United Kingdom of Morocco,” n.d., <https://www.everyculture.com/Ma-Ni/The-United-Kingdom-of-Morocco.html>
- 8 Heather Carreiro, “Rif Mountains Trip Guide,” Journey Beyond Travel, n.d., <https://www.journeybeyondtravel.com/blog/rif-mountains-morocco-travel.html>
- 9 Sensi Seeds, “The Children of Morocco’s Rif Mountains,” 29 September 2015, <https://sensiseeds.com/en/blog/the-children-of-moroccos-rif-mountains/>
- 10 Shelley A. Gable, “Morocco’s Mountain Ranges: An Overview,” Journey Beyond Travel, n.d., <https://www.journeybeyondtravel.com/blog/morocco-mountains-high-atlas-middle-atlas-anti-atlas.html>
- 11 Marvin W. Mikesell and Hildebert Isnard, “Atlas Mountains,” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 9 April 2014, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Atlas-Mountains>
- 12 Shelley A. Gable, “Morocco’s Mountain Ranges: An Overview,” Journey Beyond Travel, n.d., <https://www.journeybeyondtravel.com/blog/morocco-mountains-high-atlas-middle-atlas-anti-atlas.html>
- 13 Will D. Swearingen et al., “Morocco,” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 27 February 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Morocco>
- 14 Fanack, “Geography of Morocco,” n.d., <https://fanack.com/morocco/geography/>
- 15 J. Henry, “Moroccans: Land and Location,” in *Worldmark Encyclopedia of Cultures and Daily Life*, vol. 1—Africa, 2nd ed., eds. Timothy L. Gall and Jeneen Hobby (New York: Gale Cengage Learning, 2009), 389.
- 16 Shelley A. Gable, “Morocco’s Mountain Ranges: An Overview,” Journey Beyond Travel, n.d., <https://www.journeybeyondtravel.com/blog/morocco-mountains-high-atlas-middle-atlas-anti-atlas.html>

Middle Atlas Mountains

The Middle Atlas range is located in the center of the country. It stretches north of the High Atlas and south of the Rif Mountains. Peaks in the Middle Atlas rise to about 3,000 m (9,842 ft). The mountains function as a climatic buffer between the moist ocean winds and the dry winds from the Sahara. Northwest-facing slopes receive rain while arid conditions persist on southeast-facing slopes.^{17, 18}

A narrow pass near the medieval city of Taza separates the Middle Atlas from the Rif Mountains. Known as Tizi n' Touahar or the Taza Gap, it was the traditional invasion path for armies from Algeria in the east. Taza province is home to the largest underground cave network in North Africa, the Friouato Caves, which were first explored in 1930.^{19, 20}

The Plains

The narrow Mediterranean coastline is cut off from the rest of Morocco by the Rif Mountains. South of Tangier and west of the Rif and Atlas Mountains lie the fertile coastal plains and the inland plains where the majority of the country's population concentrates. The plains are the country's breadbasket.^{21, 22}

The coastal lowland plain in northwestern Morocco is called the Gharb. The Gharb extends about 80 km (50 mi) along the Atlantic coast and 110 km (70 mi) inland, where it meets the Rif Mountains. The Gharb is crossed by the Sebou River, which rises in the Middle Atlas and flows near Morocco's third-largest city, Fès. The main agricultural crops of the Sebou basin are olives, grains, sugar beets, citrus, and grapes.^{23, 24}

The Chaouia coastal plain, where Casablanca is located, has historically been the breadbasket of Morocco. South of Casablanca, the region's two main rivers, the Oum er-Rbia, and the Tensift, flow among several plains, including the Doukkala and Abda. Marrakech, the largest city south of the Middle Atlas, lies in the fertile al-Haouz plain just south of the Tensift River.²⁵

The Souss Valley is a vast fertile plain that lies between the High Atlas and the Anti-Atlas and ends in the city of Agadir, on the Atlantic coast. The valley is lined with argan trees from which the indigenous Amazigh population has been extracting oil for generations. In the early 2000s, the cosmetic industry began manufacturing many products from argan oil, boosting employment for the locals.^{26, 27}

The Desert Southeast

Southeast of the High Atlas, the arid plains and valleys merge into the northwestern edge of the Sahara. Most of Morocco's borders with Western Sahara and Algeria run through this inhospitable region. The Drâa River, flowing southeast out of the High Atlas before turning southwest toward the Atlantic Ocean, forms part of the boundary

17 Timothy Kusky, *Encyclopedia of Earth Science* (New York: Facts on File, 2005), 31.

18 Daisy Carrington and Jon Jensen, "Atlas Mountains: Morocco's Hidden Travel Gem," CNN, 25 March 2017, <https://www.cnn.com/travel/article/moroccos-hidden-travel-gem-atlas-mountains/index.html>

19 Will D. Swearingen et al., "Morocco," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 27 February 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Morocco>

20 Morocco.com, "Friouato Caves—Spectacular Underground World," n.d., <https://www.morocco.com/attractions/friouato-caves/>

21 Will D. Swearingen et al., "Morocco," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 27 February 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Morocco>

22 All Countries, "Morocco: Geography," 2007, <http://www.allcountries.eu/morocco.htm>

23 *Encyclopædia Britannica*, "Gharb," 11 May 2007, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Gharb>

24 *Encyclopædia Britannica*, "Sebou River," 12 April 2016, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Sebou-River>

25 *Encyclopædia Britannica*, "Marrakech," 19 August 2016, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Marrakech>

26 Holiday Morocco, "Souss Valley, Anti Atlas and Atlantic Coast," n.d., <https://www.holiday.com/en/intermediaire/souss-valley/>

27 Will D. Swearingen et al., "Morocco," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 27 February 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Morocco>

with Algeria.²⁸ The few towns in this arid region are generally located in riverine oases.²⁹ The windswept, endless sand dunes (*erg*) of Erg Chegaga, where the dunes reach up to 300 m (984 ft), and Erg Chebbi, an area that spans 50 km (31 mi) from north to south, are the most visited parts of the Moroccan Sahara.³⁰

Climate

Morocco's climate can be very diverse, varying with seasons and regions. Generally, the country can be divided into two climactic zones: the Mediterranean northern coastal regions and the southern interior regions, which lie on the edge of the Sahara Desert. Along the coasts, the climate is moderate and subtropical, cooled off by breezes from the Atlantic and Mediterranean. In the interior, temperatures are more extreme with fairly cold winters and very hot summers.^{31, 32}

The coast has a Mediterranean climate with dry, hot summers and wet winters that last from October to April. Rainfall generally increases from south to north. When high-pressure ridges develop and persist off the coast in the winter, even northern regions receive little rain, and drought conditions can occur.^{33, 34}

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 the mountains above 2,000 m (6,561 ft), and in the highest elevations the snowpack may last until late spring or early summer.³⁵

Spring and summer temperatures are mild in the coastal regions because of onshore ocean breezes, but they can reach 35°C (95°F) inland. During the summer, hot, dry *sharqi* winds from the 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 8–17°C (46–63°F). Inland temperatures can drop significantly and occasionally fall below freezing.³⁶ Due to climate change, recent trends show that the frequency of days and nights classified as “hot” has increased significantly.³⁷

28 *Encyclopædia Britannica*, “Draa River,” 24 September 2007, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Draa-River>

29 J. Henry, “Moroccans: Land and Location,” in *Worldmark Encyclopedia of Cultures and Daily Life*, vol. 1—Africa, 2nd ed., eds. Timothy L. Gall and Jeneen Hobby (New York: Gale Cengage Learning, 2009), 389. Will D. Swearingen et al., “Morocco,” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 27 February 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Morocco>

30 On the Go Tours, “Visiting the Moroccan Sahara,” n.d., <https://www.onthegotours.com/us/Morocco/Visiting-the-Moroccan-Sahara>

31 C. McSweeney, M. New, and G. Lizcano, “Morocco (Excluding Western Sahara),” UN Development Programme Climate Change Country Profiles, University of North Texas, August 2010, <https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc226616/#when>

32 Wildland Adventure, “Morocco Seasons & Climate,” n.d., <https://www.wildland.com/destinations/mediterranean/morocco/seasonsclimate.aspx>

33 Will D. Swearingen et al., “Morocco,” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 27 February 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Morocco>

34 C. McSweeney, M. New, and G. Lizcano, “Morocco (Excluding Western Sahara),” UN Development Programme Climate Change Country Profiles, University of North Texas, August 2010, <https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc226616/#when>

35 Will D. Swearingen et al., “Morocco,” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 27 February 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Morocco>

36 Will D. Swearingen et al., “Morocco,” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 27 February 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Morocco>

37 C. McSweeney, M. New, and G. Lizcano, “Morocco (excluding Western Sahara),” UN Development Programme Climate Change Country Profiles, University of North Texas, August 2010, <https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc226616/#when>

Rivers and Lakes

Morocco has the most extensive river network in North Africa. Most rivers flow south or west toward the Atlantic, with some minor streams flowing southeast toward the Sahara Desert. Almost all the major rivers rise in the Middle and High Atlas ranges. The Moulouya is the only major river to flow northward from the High Atlas into the Mediterranean Sea. Flowing along 515 km (320 mi), it is the third-longest river in Morocco. The river empties into the Mediterranean near the Algerian border.^{38, 39, 40}

The other important rivers flow westward toward the Atlantic Ocean. The Drâa River, Morocco's longest, flows across 1,100 km (700 mi). The river forms much of the border with Algeria. Morocco's second-longest river, Oum er-Rbia, travels for 555 km (345 mi) through some of Morocco's most productive farmland. There are six dams on the river, one of which is the Al Massira dam.^{41, 42}

The Sebou River—although not the longest river in Morocco—flows along 450 km (280 mi) and has the largest water volume in North Africa. It reaches the Atlantic Ocean just north of Rabat. The Sebou is also known as Bou Regreg. The Tensift River, which travels 260 km (162 mi) from its source, runs through the heavily irrigated al-Haouz plain.^{43, 44}

In the south, the Sous River, which rises in the High Atlas in southern Morocco, flows along 180 km (112 mi) toward the Atlantic Ocean and empties south of Agadir. The Ziz and Rheris are the main rivers that flow southward into the Sahara.^{45, 46}

Morocco's natural lakes are small; its largest bodies of standing water are manmade. Morocco has the fourth-highest irrigated acreage among African countries, and much of this water comes from dam reservoirs. Four of these dams have reservoirs with volumes of 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. A dam on the Moulouya River at Mechra Klila provides electricity for the towns of northern Morocco.^{47, 48, 49}

38 Will D. Swearingen et al., "Morocco," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 27 February 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Morocco>

39 *Nations Encyclopedia*, "Morocco—Topography," n.d., <https://www.nationsencyclopedia.com/Africa/Morocco-TOPOGRAPHY.html#ixzz5IUlqnN24>

40 *Encyclopædia Britannica*, "Moulouya River," 24 September 2007, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Moulouya-River>

41 World Atlas, "Longest Rivers in Morocco," n.d., <https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/longest-rivers-in-morocco.html>

42 *Encyclopædia Britannica*, "Draa River," 24 September 2007, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Draa-River>

43 Will D. Swearingen et al., "Morocco," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 27 February 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Morocco>

44 *Encyclopædia Britannica*, "Tensift River," 24 September 2007, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Tensift-River>

45 *Encyclopædia Britannica*, "Sous River," 24 September 2007, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Sous-River>

46 *Nations Encyclopedia*, "Morocco—Topography," n.d., <https://www.nationsencyclopedia.com/Africa/Morocco-TOPOGRAPHY.html#ixzz5IUlqnN24>

47 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, "Dams and Agriculture in Africa," *Aquastat*, May 2007, http://www.fao.org/nr/water/aquastat/damsafrica/Aquastat_Dams_Africa_070524.pdf

48 *Encyclopædia Britannica*, "Moulouya River," 24 September 2007, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Moulouya-River>

49 World of Waterfalls, "Aguelma Azigza National Park / Khenifra / Middle Atlas Mountains, Khenifra Province, Morocco," n.d., <https://www.world-of-waterfalls.com/waterfalls/africa-sources-oum-er-rbia/>

Major Cities

City	Population ⁵⁰
Casablanca	3,684,000
Rabat	1,847,000
Fès	1,184,000
Tangier	1,116,000
Marrakech	976,000
Agadir	888,000

Casablanca (Dar al-Baïda)

Casablanca, called the gateway to North Africa, is Morocco’s most populous city, with 3.6 million inhabitants. The city is the nation’s financial and industrial center and the site of its largest seaport on the Atlantic coast. Major Moroccan and multinational companies are headquartered in Casablanca, informally called *Kaza*.^{50, 51}

The Portuguese occupied the city—then known as Anfa, the capital of an indigenous Amazigh kingdom—in 1468 as a reprisal for pirate attacks. In 1575, the Portuguese named the city Casa Branca (white house), later to be renamed by the Spanish as Casablanca. In 1755, an earthquake destroyed the city, and the Portuguese abandoned it. The Arabs who rebuilt the city called it Dar al-Baïda. By 1830, Casablanca had been reduced to a village of about 600 people.^{52, 53, 54}

Casablanca’s ascendancy as Morocco’s commercial hub took place after the French established a Moroccan protectorate in the early 20th century. The artificial port built by the French helped boost the city’s economy and sparked a population boom.⁵⁵

In the 1920s, rural residents who migrated to the city to work on construction projects began building shantytowns on the city’s outskirts, calling them *bidonvilles*, meaning “tin can towns” in French because the shantytowns were built of oil drums or other metal containers. Over the decades, as more migrant workers flooded the city, more shantytowns were built, becoming permanent residences for the poor. These shantytowns gave the city a reputation for extreme poverty, prostitution, crime, and social unrest. In 2003, twelve residents of the *bidonville* Sidi Moumen carried out suicide bombing attacks in Casablanca. The attack in Madrid, Spain, in 2004, and

50 Central Intelligence Agency, “Morocco,” in *The World Factbook*, 21 August 2019, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mo.html>

51 Franck Jacobs, “These Cities are the Hubs of Africa’s Economic Boom,” Big Think, 4 October 2018, <https://bigthink.com/strange-maps/richest-cities-in-africa?rebellitem=9#rebellitem9>

52 *Encyclopædia Britannica*, “Casablanca,” 22 February 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Casablanca-Morocco>

53 World Atlas, “The Biggest Cities in Morocco,” 2019, <https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/biggest-cities-in-morocco.html>

54 Morocco.com, “Morocco’s Casablanca—Here’s Lookin’ at You, Kid!” n.d., <https://www.morocco.com/blog/moroccos-casablanca-heres-lookin-at-you-kid/>

55 *Encyclopædia Britannica*, “Casablanca,” 22 February 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Casablanca-Morocco>

another suicide attack on an internet café in Casablanca in 2007 were also carried out by residents from the same shantytown.^{56, 57, 58}

Casablanca is home to the Hassan II Mosque, one of the largest mosques in the world. The mosque's minaret is among the tallest in the world, standing at 210 m (689 ft). The construction of the mosque began in 1986 and was supposed to be completed on King Hassan II's 60th birthday in 1989, but was delayed until 1993. Inside, up to 25,000 worshippers can pray on a glass floor built over the Atlantic Ocean. The Hassan II Mosque is one of the few mosques in Morocco that is open to people of all faiths.^{59, 60}

The film *Casablanca*, starring Humphrey Bogart and Ingrid Bergman, was a box office success in 1942. It featured secret agents, nightlife, refugees, Nazis, Vichy France sympathizers, and the Free French; in the years since the film has made Casablanca a household name.^{61, 62}

Rabat

Located on the Atlantic Coast, Rabat is Morocco's capital and the home of the king, various government ministries, and embassies. Rabat lies on the south bank of the Sebou River, across from the city of Salé. About 1.8 million people live in Rabat, which is one of Morocco's four imperial cities along with Fès, Meknes, and Marrakech. The city was founded in the 12th century by the Almohad caliph, Sultan Yakoub al-Mansour, who designated it as his capital. In 1195, he began work on the Hassan Mosque on the south bank of the Sebou River but died before it was completed. Only the tower, an enormous minaret, was finished. Still standing, it is the most remarkable piece of Almohad architecture in Morocco and Rabat's most famous architectural landmark.^{63, 64, 65}

In the 17th century, Rabat became a refuge for the Spanish Moors (Mudejars), who became the Barbary pirates after being driven out of Spain. The Mudejars terrorized the Atlantic shipping lanes between the Canary Islands and England for 200 years, making Rabat wealthy and powerful.⁶⁶

In 1912, Rabat replaced Fès as the capital during the French protectorate and remained the capital of Morocco

56 Jennie Litvack, et al, *Kingdom of Morocco: Poverty Report: Strengthening Policy by Identifying the Geographic Dimension of Poverty* (report, Social and Economic Development Group Middle East and North Africa Region, The World Bank, September 2004), <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTMOROCCOINFRENCH/Resources/MR-poverty-report-GB.pdf>

57 Rough Guides, "Casablanca's Slums," 2019, <https://www.roughguides.com/destinations/africa/morocco/atlantic-coast-rabat-essaouira/casablanca/casablancas-slums/>

58 Mark Jenkins, "In 'Horses of God,' a Sprawling Slum Breeds a Violent Act," NPR, 15 May 2014, <https://www.npr.org/2014/05/15/312705750/in-horses-of-god-a-sprawling-slum-breeds-a-violent-act>

59 Morocco.com, "Hassan II Mosque—Second Largest Mosque in the World," n.d., <https://www.morocco.com/attractions/mosques/hassan-mosque/>

60 Lonely Planet, "Hassan II Mosque," n.d., <https://www.lonelyplanet.com/morocco/casablanca/attractions/hassan-ii-mosque/a/poi-sig/1379578/1331580>

61 David W. Brown, "Happy 70th Anniversary, Casablanca," *Atlantic*, 29 September 2012, <https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2012/09/happy-70th-anniversary-casablanca/263040/>

62 Nicholas Barber, "Why Casablanca is the Ultimate Film about Refugees," BBC, 24 November 2017, <http://www.bbc.com/culture/story/20171124-why-casablanca-is-the-ultimate-film-about-refugees>

63 Central Intelligence Agency, "Morocco," in *The World Factbook*, 21 August 2019, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mo.html>

64 Maria Inês Pinto, "Hassan Tower and Mohamed V Mausoleum in Rabat, Morocco," Journey Beyond Travel," n.d., <https://www.journeybeyondtravel.com/blog/hassan-tower-mohamed-v-mausoleum.html>

65 *Encyclopædia Britannica*, "Rabat," 26 September 2017, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Rabat>

66 Mohamed Métalsi, Cécile Tréal, and Jean-Michel Ruiz, *The Imperial Cities of Morocco* (Paris: Finest SA/Edition Pierre Terrail, 2001), 160–61.

after independence in 1956. The Udayas Kasbah is located in the mouth of Rabat’s Bou Regreg River on the Atlantic Ocean (a Kasbah is an older type of *medina*, serving as a fortress to protect the inhabitants.)^{67, 68, 69}

Fès (Fez)

Located in northeastern Morocco, Fès is Morocco’s third largest city, with a population of about one million people.⁷⁰ It is the oldest of Morocco’s four imperial cities and still retains its status as the country’s cultural and spiritual center. The city was founded on the banks of Wadi Fès by Idrīs I and Idrīs II between 789 and 809 CE. At the heart of the city lies the 1,200-year-old *medina* with its 9,500 alleyways, mosques, and over 60 public fountains.^{71, 72} The *medina* is one of the most extensive and best conserved medieval towns of the Arab-Muslim world, and the world’s largest car-free urban zones. Inside the *medina* are the Qarawīyīn Mosque and Qarawīyīn University, founded in 859. The university is considered the world’s oldest continuously operating degree-granting educational institution. In 1981, UNESCO designated the entire *medina* quarter—the Fez el-Bali (Old Fès)—a World Heritage Site.^{73, 74, 75}

Jews were among the first settlers of Fès. In 808 CE, Jews came to Fès from Andalusia and began a long history of Jewish presence in Morocco. The *mellah* (Arabic for “salt marsh” or “salt spring”), which is the common term for Jewish quarters in Moroccan towns, was established in 1438 and contained synagogues, fountains, and markets. In 1947, 22,480 Jews lived in Fès and its surroundings. By the late 1990s, only 150 Jews remained.^{76, 77, 78}

In the 20th century, during the French protectorate, the French decided that new developments serving European administrators should be built outside the *medinas* in order to preserve the old way of life. As a result, the *ville nouvelle* (new city), was constructed outside the city walls. The wide Hassan II Avenue is a feature of the *ville nouvelle* with its upscale shops, prominent fountain, flower gardens, and rows of planted Moroccan palms.^{79, 80}

Fès is known for its leather goods and pottery, which are still made and sold in the *sūqs* (markets) of the *medina*.⁸¹ The Fès–Saïss Airport, located approximately 10 km (6.2 mi) south of the city, serves several African and European destinations.⁸²

67 Lucas Peters, “Insider’s Guide to Rabat, Morocco,” n.d., <https://www.journeybeyondtravel.com/morocco/rabat>

68 Friendly Morocco, “Top 10 Kasbahs (Fortress) in Morocco,” n.d., <https://friendlymorocco.com/top-10/top-10-kasbahs-fortress-in-morocco/>

69 Travel Geekery, “5 Key Terms You’ll Need to Know Before Heading to Morocco,” n.d., <https://www.travelgeekery.com/5-key-terms-morocco/>

70 Central Intelligence Agency, “Morocco,” in *The World Factbook*, 21 August 2019, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mo.html>

71 Lonely Planet, “Fez in Detail,” n.d., <https://www.lonelyplanet.com/morocco/fez/background/other-features/a/nar/d8da78a2-accd-41dd-a4ac-bc5a96cc373b/355510>

72 Insight Guides, “Life in a Moroccan Medina,” n.d., <https://www.insightguides.com/destinations/africa-middle-east/morocco/cultural-features/life-in-a-medina>

73 Morocco.com, “Fez: Culture, Tradition, and a Disputed Past,” n.d., <https://www.morocco.com/blog/fez-culture-tradition-and-a-disputed-past/>

74 *Encyclopædia Britannica*, “Fes,” 25 April 2018, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Fes>

75 UNESCO, “Medina of Fez,” n.d., <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/170>

76 Thomas Hollowell, “The Jewish Quarters (Mellahs) of Morocco’s Medinas,” Journey Beyond Travel, n.d., <https://www.journeybeyondtravel.com/blog/jewish-mellahs-morocco.html>

77 Museum of the Jewish People at Beit Hatfusot, “The Jewish Community of Fez, Morocco,” n.d., <https://www.bh.org.il/jewish-community-fez-morocco/>

78 Atlas Obscura, “The Fez Mellah,” n.d., <https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/the-fez-mellah>

79 GPS My City, “Fes Ville Nouvelle, Fes,” n.d., <https://www.gpsmycity.com/tours/fes-ville-nouvelle-4245.html>

80 Journey Beyond Travel, “Insider’s Fez (Fes) Travel Guide,” n.d., <https://www.journeybeyondtravel.com/morocco/fez>

81 *Encyclopædia Britannica*, “Fes,” 25 April 2018, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Fes>

82 Moroccan Moments, “The Travellers Guide to Morocco,” n.d., <http://www.moroccan-moments.com/airports/fez.php>

Tangier

Tangier, the White City, sits 27 km (17 mi) from the southern tip of Spain. The city's busy port is located at the western entrance to the Strait of Gibraltar. Nine miles outside of Tangier, Cap Spartel sits at the entrance to the Strait of Gibraltar, about 300 m (1000 ft) above sea level, with the Caves of Hercules below the cape. According to mythology, the Roman god Hercules once slept there.^{83, 84}

Tangier began as a Phoenician trading post in the first millennium BCE. It was ruled by Rome until the 5th century CE, then fell under Byzantine rule and later under Arab rule. Between 1471 and 1662, Portugal and Spain fought for control of the city. In 1662, the city was given as dowry to Catherine of Braganza for her marriage to Charles II, the King of England. After 22 years, the city was returned to Morocco.⁸⁵

In the 19th century, Tangier was Morocco's diplomatic capital. In the mid-1800s, the Spanish and British sparred for control of the city, leading to a partitioning of Tangier between France and Spain in 1912. In 1923, the city became an international zone administered by the French, British, and Spanish. After World War I, other European powers and the United States took an interest in Tangier, further dividing the city's administration. In the late 1930s and the early years of World War II, Tangier had a reputation for intrigue and espionage. With independence in 1956, the city came under Moroccan control.^{86, 87, 88}

Tangier consists of a recently restored *medina* with a Kasbah and a ville nouvelle. Tangier was the world's first gay resort and is very popular with foreign and domestic tourists. The city is a magnet for wealthy tourists, and a new luxury port is dotted with yachts of the rich. Many famous writers have visited Tangier and called it home, among them the American Beat writer William Burroughs, who wrote his controversial 1959 novel *Naked Lunch* while living in Tangier. Paul Bowles, Tennessee Williams, Allen Ginsberg, and Jack Kerouac also lived in Tangier for short periods.^{89, 90, 91} Today, the city has a population of 976,000.⁹²

Marrakech

Like Fès, Marrakech has served as imperial capital several times over the past millennium. Situated in the al-Haouz plain near the northern edge of the High Atlas range, the city was founded 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 the Almoravid armies to the capital of an expanding empire that eventually occupied parts of Europe. After the Almohad sultan, Abd al-Moumen razed Marrakech in 1147, and it was quickly rebuilt and made the Almohad capital. Because of the surrounding red clay earth, almost all the buildings are ochre or rose, giving Marrakech the name "Red City."^{93, 94}

83 *Encyclopædia Britannica*, "Tangier," 13 April 2016, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Tangier-Morocco>

84 MarocMama, "The Ultimate Cheat Sheet on Travel to Tangier, Morocco," n.d., <https://marocmama.com/destination-guide-tangier-morocco/>

85 *Encyclopædia Britannica*, "Tangier," 13 April 2016, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Tangier-Morocco>

86 *Encyclopædia Britannica*, "Tangier," 13 April 2016, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Tangier-Morocco>

87 MarocMama, "The Ultimate Cheat Sheet on Travel to Tangier, Morocco," n.d., <https://marocmama.com/destination-guide-tangier-morocco/>

88 Lucas Peters, "Insider's Tangier (Tangiers) Travel Guide," *Journey Beyond Travel*, n.d., <https://www.journeybeyondtravel.com/morocco/tangier>

89 Morocco.com, "Tangier in Morocco Awaits You," n.d., <https://www.morocco.com/regions/tangier-tetouan/tangier/>

90 Tom Vitale, "Burroughs' 'Naked Lunch,' Still Fresh at 50," *All Things Considered*, NPR, 8 October 2009, <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=113610846>

91 Silvia McCallister-Castillo, "A Literary and Artistic Tour of Tangier," *Journey Beyond Travel*, n.d., <https://www.journeybeyondtravel.com/blog/tangier-art-literature-morocco.html>

92 Central Intelligence Agency, "Morocco," in *The World Factbook*, 19 April 2019, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mo.html>

93 *Encyclopædia Britannica*, "Marrakech," 19 August 2016, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Marrakech>

94 *Journey Beyond Travel*, "Insider's Marrakesh Travel Guide," n.d., <https://www.journeybeyondtravel.com/morocco/marrakesh>

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.⁹⁵ The old Jewish Quarter, the *mellah*, was built in 1558 and housed the Jewish population, which consisted of metal workers, sugar traders, bankers, jewelers, and tailors. The remnants of the *mellah* inside the Kasbah walls are known as Hay Essalam (peace neighborhood).^{96, 97} In 1985, the *medina* of Marrakech was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site.⁹⁸

Marrakech is Morocco's southernmost major city. It has a population of 888,000. Because it is located near the High Atlas range, it has a strong indigenous 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 surrounding palm and olive groves.^{99, 100}

Besides tourism, fruit processing and the production of leather products and carpets provide employment to local residents. Lead, zinc, copper, molybdenum, and graphite are mined in the surrounding regions.¹⁰¹

Environmental Concerns

Morocco has one of the highest soil erosion rates in the world due to deforestation, overgrazing, and poor soil conservation practices.^{102, 103} Besides the loss of farmland, soil erosion in the mountains leads to sedimentation in reservoirs. Moroccan dams lose more than 5% of their yearly water capacity because of sedimentation.¹⁰⁴

About 85% of Morocco's water use is for agricultural purposes.¹⁰⁵ With the expansion of groundwater use, salinity levels in the soil has increased because the aquifer groundwater in Morocco is often saltier than surface irrigation water. Excessive pumping has also contributed to saltwater intrusion in coastal aquifers.¹⁰⁶

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 runoffs.^{107, 108} In

95 Shaun Kilgore, "Marrakesh: A Brief History," Journey Beyond Travel, n.d., <https://www.journeybeyondtravel.com/blog/history-marrakesh-morocco.html#more-3068>

96 Morocco.com, "The Mellah of Marrakech," n.d., <https://www.morocco.com/blog/the-mellah-of-marrakech/>

97 Journey Beyond Travel, "Insider's Marrakesh Travel Guide," n.d., <https://www.journeybeyondtravel.com/morocco/marrakesh>

98 UNESCO, "Medina of Marrakesh," World Heritage List, n.d., <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/331>

99 Journey Beyond Travel, "Insider's Marrakesh Travel Guide," n.d., <https://www.journeybeyondtravel.com/morocco/marrakesh>

100 Central Intelligence Agency, "Morocco," in *The World Factbook*, 19 April 2019, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mo.html>

101 "Regions of Morocco: Marrakesh-Tensift-Al Haouz," *Morocco Business News*, n.d., <http://www.moroccobusinessnews.com/Morocco/Marrakech.asp>

102 Abdellah Ouassou, Tayeb H. Amziane, and Lahcen Lajouad, *Desertification in the Mediterranean Region: A Security Issue* (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer, 2006), 253.

103 Etain O'Carroll et al, *Lonely Planet: Morocco* (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet Publications, 2007), 83.

104 H. R. Fox and H. M. Moore, *Human Impact on Erosion and Sedimentation/Proceedings of the Rabat Symposium, April 1997* (Wallingford, England: International Association of Hydrological Sciences, 1997), 234.

105 The World Bank, *Making the Most of Scarcity: Accountability for Better Water Management Results in the Middle East and North Africa* (Washington, DC: The World Bank, 2007), 147, http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTMENA/Resources/Water_Scarcity_Full.pdf

106 M. Qurtobi et al., "Origin of Salinity and Its Impact on Fresh Groundwater Resources in the Souss-Massa Basin in the South-West of Morocco: Optimisation of Isotopic Techniques." paper presented at the Salt Water Intrusion Meeting, Cartagena, Spain, 31 May–3 June 2004, <http://www.geo.vu.nl/users/swim/pdf/swim18/Qurtobi.pdf>

107 A. Gaudry et al., "Heavy Metals Pollution of the Atlantic Marine Environment by the Moroccan Phosphate Industry, as Observed through their Bioaccumulation in *Ulva Lactuca*," in *Water, Air, & Soil Pollution* 178, nos. 1–4 (January 2007): 267–85.

108 Mohamed Maanan, "Biomonitoring of Heavy Metals Using *Mytilus galloprovincialis* in Safi Coastal Waters, Morocco," in *Environmental Toxicology* 22, no. 5 (15 August 2005): 527–29, 5 June 2007, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/tox.20301/pdf>

2005, Morocco embarked on a water management improvement project that involved the construction of 102 wastewater treatment plants, resulting in an increase in the sewage treatment rate from 8% in 2005 to 42% in 2015.¹⁰⁹

Coastal sites produce 2.5 million tons of solid waste per year, much of which is dumped into the sea. Near the phosphate plants at Safi and Jorf Lasfar, south of Casablanca, heavy metals accumulate in the coastal waters.¹¹⁰

¹¹¹ The government is attempting to address the solid waste problem by building 22 new landfills and promoting recycling and waste reconversion initiatives.¹¹²

The environment is further impacted by pesticides, insect infestations, and accidental oil spills. Morocco has seen many of its mammals, birds, and plants added to the endangered species list.¹¹³

Natural Hazards

Since nearly 85% of Morocco's agricultural land is irrigated by rain only and wheat is one of the most important food staples, droughts have a severe impact on food security and economic growth. Due to climate change, droughts have increased in frequency and intensity. The 2015–16 drought was the worst in three decades, causing economic growth to fall to 1.5% in 2016.^{114, 115, 116, 117} In November 2017, King Mohammed VI called for all mosques in the country to pray for rain.¹¹⁸

Morocco has a long history of destructive earthquakes. The mountainous region is located in a seismically active zone where the Eurasian and African plates meet. The high seismic zone encompasses the Rif Mountains and the Sebou River basin to the southwest, but no part of Morocco is entirely safe from earthquakes.^{119, 120} One of the deadliest earthquakes to hit the country in recent years occurred in February 2004, when a magnitude 6.4 quake struck the city of al-Hoceima on the Mediterranean coast, killing 630 people and leveling 2,600

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- 109 Oxford Business Group, "Efforts to Improve Waste Management in Morocco Yield Positive Results," 23 January 2017, <https://oxfordbusinessgroup.com/analysis/cleaning-efforts-improve-waste-management-and-water-treatment-yielding-positive-results>
- 110 A. Gaudry et al., "Heavy Metals Pollution of the Atlantic Marine Environment by the Moroccan Phosphate Industry, as Observed through their Bioaccumulation in *Ulva Lactuca*," in *Water, Air, & Soil Pollution* 178, nos. 1–4 (January 2007): 267–85.
- 111 Mohamed Maanan, "Biomonitoring of Heavy Metals Using *Mytilus galloprovincialis* in Safi Coastal Waters, Morocco," in *Environmental Toxicology* 22, no. 5 (15 August 2005): 527–29, 5 June 2007, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/tox.20301/pdf>
- 112 Oxford Business Group, "Efforts to Improve Waste Management in Morocco Yield Positive Results," 23 January 2017, <https://oxfordbusinessgroup.com/analysis/cleaning-efforts-improve-waste-management-and-water-treatment-yielding-positive-results>
- 113 *Nations Encyclopedia*, "Morocco—Environnement," n.d., <https://www.nationsencyclopedia.com/Africa/Morocco-ENVIRONMENT.html>
- 114 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, "Morocco in the Face of Climate Change," 2017, http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/FAO-countries/Maroc/docs/2017-CC-FAO-EN.pdf
- 115 Dorte Verner et al., "Climate Variability, Drought, and Drought Management in Morocco's Agricultural Sector," World Bank Group, 1 October 2018, <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/353801538414553978/pdf/130404-WP-P159851-Morocco-WEB.pdf>
- 116 World Bank, "5 Things Morocco is Doing about Climate Change," 17 November 2016, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2016/11/17/5-things-morocco-is-doing-about-climate-change>
- 117 Saad Gurraoui, "Morocco Braces for Drought Fallout," Arab Weekly, 7 January 2018, <https://thearabweekly.com/morocco-braces-drought-fallout>
- 118 BBC News, "Morocco Prays For Rain as Shortage Threatens Agriculture," 24 November 2017, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-42119365>
- 119 Central Intelligence Agency, "Morocco: Geography," in *The World Factbook*, 7 April 2019, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mo.html>
- 120 Atlas Magazine, "Earthquake in Morocco," n.d., <https://www.atlas-mag.net/en/issue/earthquake-in-morocco>

houses. In 2011, a magnitude 4.5 quake shook the eastern end of the Rif Mountains.^{121, 122, 123} In October 2018, an earthquake with a magnitude of 3.2 on the Richter scale shook the province of Meknes, west of Fès. In January 2019, an earthquake measuring 4.2 on the Richter scale hit Driouch province in northern Morocco.¹²⁴ Mountain villages in this zone are particularly vulnerable to high death tolls when earthquakes strike because many homes are built from mud bricks and stones.¹²⁵

Earthquake danger decreases south of the Middle Atlas range, but history has shown that every part of Morocco is prone to earthquakes. The deadliest quake to ever hit Morocco occurred in 1960, in the city of Agadir on the Atlantic coast—an area thought to have little to no seismic hazard. The final death toll was 12,000. The earthquake measured 6.7 on the Richter scale and was followed by a tidal wave and fires that added to the destruction. When the possibility of finding survivors diminished and fears of disease grew, the old part of the city was completely bulldozed with no recovery efforts for the casualties. The resulting burial mound, a memorial to the tragedy, is called Old Talborjt.^{126, 127} 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.^{128, 129}

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- 121 ReliefWeb, “M6.4 Al Hoceima, Morocco Earthquake of 24 February 2004,” 27 February 2004, <https://reliefweb.int/map/morocco/m64-al-hoceima-morocco-earthquake-24-february-2004>
- 122 Megan Sever, “Earthquake Rocks Morocco,” *Geotimes*, 25 February 2004, <http://www.geotimes.org/feb04/WebExtra022404.html>
- 123 Earthquake Report, “M4.5 Earthquake in Morocco—Moderately Dangerous,” 14 February 2011, <https://earthquake-report.com/2011/02/14/m4-5-earthquake-in-morocco-moderately-dangerous/>
- 124 Morocco World News, “4.2 Magnitude Earthquake Hits Morocco’s Driouch Province,” 17 January 2019, <https://www.morocroworldnews.com/2019/01/263668/4earthquake-moroccos-driouch-province/>
- 125 Etain O’Carroll et al., *Lonely Planet: Morocco* (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet Publications, 2007), 202.
- 126 Etain O’Carroll et al., *Lonely Planet: Morocco* (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet Publications, 2007), 69.
- 127 History.com, “Earthquake Devastates Moroccan City,” 21 August 2018, <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/earthquake-devastates-moroccan-city>
- 128 Visit Morocco, “Agadir-Taghazout, the Sun and the Beach,” n.d., <https://www.visitmorocco.com/en/travel/agadir-taghazout>
- 129 BBC News, “1960: Thousands Dead in Moroccan Earthquake,” On This Day 29 February 1960, http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/february/29/newsid_3829000/3829809.stm

Morocco in Perspective

Chapter 1 | Geography, Assessment

Read the following statements and answer True or False

- | | | | |
|----|---|------|-------|
| 1. | Most of Morocco's rivers flow northward and empty into the Mediterranean Sea. | True | False |
| 2. | <i>Bidonvilles</i> are the slums or shantytown located on the outskirts of Morocco's large cities. | True | False |
| 3. | Fès has been the capital of Morocco since the 8th century. | True | False |
| 4. | Morocco is prone to powerful earthquakes. | True | False |
| 5. | A <i>mellah</i> is a small temple in which rural Amazigh perform rituals and worship their ancestors. | True | False |

Morocco in Perspective

Chapter 1 | Geography, Assessment Answers

1. False :
Most rivers flow south or west to the Atlantic Ocean, and some minor streams flow southeast toward the Sahara Desert. The Moulouya is the only major river to flow northward from the High Atlas into the Mediterranean Sea. Morocco has the most extensive river network in North Africa.
2. True:
Shantytowns that were built on the outskirts of cities by migrant workers in the 1920s and 1930s were called *bidonvilles*, meaning “tin can towns” in French. Over the decades, as more migrant workers flooded the cities and more shantytowns were built, they became permanent residences for the poor.
3. False:
In 1912, during the French protectorate, Rabat replaced Fès as the capital and remained the capital of Morocco after independence in 1956. As Morocco’s capital, Rabat is home of the king, various government ministries, and embassies.
4. True:
Morocco has a long history of destructive earthquakes. The mountainous region is located in a seismically active zone where the Eurasian and African plates meet. In 2004, a magnitude 6.4 quake struck the city of al-Hoceima on the Mediterranean coast, killing 630 people and leveling 2,600 houses.
5. False:
The *mellah* was the common term for Jewish quarters in Moroccan towns. The mellah was located inside the Kasbah and contained synagogues, fountains, and markets. Jewish neighborhoods—*mellahs*—existed in Casablanca, Rabat, Fez, Marrakesh, Mogador, Meknes, and Tangier.

Chapter 2 | History



The archeological site at Volubilis, Menkes Province, attests to ancient Roman influence in North Africa.
Flickr / Dan Diffendale

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 its footprint on the country.^{1,2}

Since the introduction of Islam in the late 7th century, Morocco has been ruled almost continuously by dynasties of Arabic or Amazigh descent. Some dynasties extended over parts of North Africa and Spain, while others controlled only a small portion of Morocco's current territory. The current king, Mohammed VI, is the 23rd ruler of the Alaouite dynasty, whose reign began in the mid-17th century. In 2019, Mohammed VI will celebrate the 20th anniversary of his ascension to the throne at the age of 36.^{3,4}

- 1 Will D. Swearingen et al., "Morocco," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 27 February 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Morocco>
- 2 Kevin Delgado, *Modern Nations of the World: Morocco* (New York: Lucent Books, 2006), 22–25.
- 3 Kevin Delgado, *Modern Nations of the World: Morocco* (New York: Lucent Books, 2006), 25–38.
- 4 Fanack, "Morocco's Mohammed VI: A King for All Seasons," n.d., <https://fanack.com/morocco/faces/king-mohammed-vi/>

The king has been a stabilizing force in Morocco. He introduced several social and religious reforms, including a 2004 reform to the Family Law that granted unprecedented rights to women. In 2011, faced with the mass protests of the Arab Spring, he initiated a reform to the constitution. His efforts to help the poor and modernize the country have further enhanced his popularity. Morocco's current challenges include the status of Western Sahara, the Islamist movement, high youth unemployment, and poverty.^{5, 6, 7, 8}

Early History

The exact origin of the indigenous people of Morocco is unknown. The earliest inhabitants arrived overland from the south (Niger basin) and east (Egypt) and by sea across the Strait of Gibraltar. These tribes referred to themselves collectively as Imazighen (singular Amazigh), which means “free man.”⁹

In 900 BCE, Phoenician traders arrived in the western Mediterranean by sea from present-day Lebanon and established the colony of Carthage (present-day Tunis). During the centuries of Carthaginian colonization, some of the indigenous Imazighen became serfs to the Carthaginians while others were recruited for the Carthaginian military.^{10, 11}

The Roman Empire (146 BCE – 429 CE)

In 146 BCE, the Romans destroyed the city of Carthage and established control of North Africa. The influence of the Amazigh persisted, however, and some of their kingdoms survived for nearly 150 years until the Roman Empire annexed the territory in 24 CE.^{12, 13, 14}

Ruins from the Roman period remain in Morocco, one of which is the UNESCO World Heritage site at Volubilis, a major outpost of the empire. The city was also home to King Juba II, a man of Amazigh descent who was educated in Rome. Juba II was installed as the client king of Numidia (present-day Algeria) and later Mauretania. In 40 CE, the Roman Emperor Caligula murdered Ptolemy, the son of Juba II, and declared an end to Amazigh autonomy; the region rose in a bloody revolt. Emperor Claudius, who followed Caligula, divided the region into Mauretania Caesariensis (West Algeria) and Mauretania Tingitana (Morocco) with its capital in Tingis (present-day Tangier).^{15, 16}

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- 5 Daniel Samet, “The Western Sahara Dispute Drags On after 27 Years in Limbo,” Freedom House, 9 January 2019, <https://freedomhouse.org/blog/western-sahara-dispute-drags-after-27-years-limbo>
 - 6 Fanack, “Morocco’s Mohammed VI: A King for All Seasons,” n.d., <https://fanack.com/morocco/faces/king-mohammed-vi/>
 - 7 Trading Economics, “Morocco Unemployment Rate,” 2019, <https://tradingeconomics.com/morocco/unemployment-rate>
 - 8 Tamba François Koundouno, “Jeune Afrique: King Mohammed VI Has Changed Morocco in 20 Years,” Morocco World News, 24 December 2018, <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2018/12/26/1481/jeune-afrique-king-mohammed-vi-morocco/>
 - 9 Facts and Details, “Origin of the Berbers,” n.d., <http://factsanddetails.com/world/cat55/sub394/entry-5932.html#chapter-6>
 - 10 Helen Chapan Metz, ed., *Algeria: A Country Study* (Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1994), <http://countrystudies.us/algeria/5.htm>
 - 11 Bruce Maddy-Weitzman, “Berbers and the Nation-State in North Africa,” *Oxford Research Encyclopedias*, July 2017, <http://oxfordre.com/africanhistory/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277734.001.0001/acrefore-9780190277734-e-105>
 - 12 Barnaby Rogerson, “Chapter 4: The Roman Conquest of North Africa, 202 BC–46 AD,” in *A Traveller’s History of North Africa*, 2nd ed. (New York: Interlink Books, 2001), 50.
 - 13 Helen Chapan Metz, ed., *Algeria: A Country Study* (Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1994), <http://countrystudies.us/algeria/5.htm>
 - 14 Phillip C. Naylor, “Chapter 2: Rome and North Africa,” in *North Africa: A History from Antiquity to the Present* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009), 38.
 - 15 Fodors Travel, “The Romans in Morocco,” n.d., <https://www.fodors.com/world/africa-and-middle-east/morocco/the-northern-atlantic-coast/experiences/the-romans-in-morocco-267072340>
 - 16 UNESCO, “Archaeological Site of Volubilis,” n.d., <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/836>

In 285 CE, Roman rule of the region began to disintegrate. Rome maintained its presence in the region by keeping small garrisons manned by local soldiers. Roman influence remained mostly in the northwest of present-day Morocco.^{17, 18, 19}

North Africa was under Roman rule for nearly 500 years. Greek and Roman historians referred to the native population as “Libyans,” “Africans,” Numidians,” and “Moors,” and classified them as “barbarians” (*barbaroi*), a name that was later adopted by the Arab conquerors.²⁰ Many Berbers today reject the name because of the negative connotation, and insist on being called Amazigh (plural Imazighen), which means “free people” in the indigenous language Tamazight. Some Berbers, however, do not identify as Amazigh.²¹

Christianity began to spread in the region during the 2nd century CE, and by the end of the 4th century, most settled areas had largely converted.²² In the mountains and desert regions, Christianity competed with traditional tribal beliefs and Judaism.²³

The Vandals (429–533)

Roman rule over North Africa was disrupted in 429, when Germanic tribes from central Europe known as Vandals invaded North Africa from Spain, seized Hippo Regius (modern Annaba in Algeria), and made it their first capital in North Africa. With the Romans no longer around, several independent Amazigh kingdoms were established in the mountains and inland deserts.^{24, 25, 26}

Byzantine Rule (533–700)

In 533, the Byzantine (Eastern Roman Empire) general Belisarius landed in present-day Tunisia with an army that quickly vanquished the Vandal plunderers and brought North Africa once again under nominal Roman imperial control. During much of the next century, the Byzantines were preoccupied with military campaigns, allowing Amazigh kingdoms to thrive in the hinterlands.^{27, 28}

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- 17 Graham Land, “The Marvel of North Africa During Roman Times,” History Hit, 24 July 2018, <https://www.historyhit.com/the-marvel-of-north-africa-during-roman-times/>
 - 18 Fodors Travel, “The Romans in Morocco,” n.d., <https://www.fodors.com/world/africa-and-middle-east/morocco/the-northern-atlantic-coast/experiences/the-romans-in-morocco-267072340>
 - 19 Facts and Details, “Berbers and North Africa in the Roman Era,” n.d., <http://factsanddetails.com/world/cat55/sub394/entry-5932.html#chapter-6>
 - 20 Bruce Maddy-Weitzman, “Berbers and the Nation-State in North Africa,” *Oxford Research Encyclopedias*, July 2017, <http://oxfordre.com/africanhistory/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277734.001.0001/acrefore-9780190277734-e-105>
 - 21 Nuunja Kahina, “Free People: The Imazighen of North Africa,” *Intercontinental Cry*, 12 March 2013, <https://intercontinentalcry.org/free-people-the-imazighen-of-north-africa/>
 - 22 Helen Chapan Metz, ed., *Algeria: A Country Study* (Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1994), <http://countrystudies.us/algeria/6.htm>
 - 23 Tony Zurlo, “2: Many Masters: History to the Nineteenth Century,” in *Algeria* (Detroit: Lucent Books, 2005), 22.
 - 24 Helen Chapan Metz, ed., *Algeria: A Country Study* (Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1994), <http://countrystudies.us/algeria/7.htm>
 - 25 Barnaby Rogerson, “Chapter 8: Bishops, Barbarians, and Byzantium, 400–647,” in *A Traveller's History of North Africa*, 2nd ed. (New York: Interlink Books, 2001), 104.
 - 26 *Encyclopædia Britannica*, “Vandal,” 11 February 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Vandal-Germanic-people>
 - 27 Tony Zurlo, “2: Many Masters: History to the Nineteenth Century,” in *Algeria* (Detroit: Lucent Books, 2005), 22.
 - 28 Helen Chapan Metz, ed., *Algeria: A Country Study* (Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1994), <http://countrystudies.us/algeria/6.htm>

During the 6th and 7th centuries, the Visigoths briefly conquered the northern ports of Septa (modern-day Ceuta) and Tingis (Tangier), which lay across the Strait of Gibraltar, from their stronghold on the Iberian Peninsula.^{29, 30}

The Spread of Islam and the Arab Caliphates (700–1500)

The Arab invasion changed the region's identity. After Muhammad's death in 632, Arab armies quickly conquered western Asia, but Byzantine and Amazigh forces, sometimes jointly and sometimes separately, maintained a prolonged resistance for several decades.^{31, 32}

The Umayyad Caliphate (705–749)

In 682, Uqba bin Nafi, the Arab commander of the Muslim forces who conquered North Africa, reached Morocco's Atlantic coast. In 705, the Maghreb was made a province of the Umayyad Caliphate. Ruling from Damascus, the Umayyads were the first Muslim dynasty to oversee the Arab kingdom. Uqba bin Nafi was killed in Algeria by King Kusaylah's forces. Although Kusaylah had converted to Islam, he opposed direct Arab rule.^{33, 34}

The Umayyads forced the indigenous people to pay human tribute, which the local population considered antithetical to Islam's teachings. This discontent continued for years. By the mid-700s, festering antagonisms led to an insurrection that overthrew the Umayyads.^{35, 36}

The Abbasid and Fatimid Caliphates (750–1258)

The Abbasid Caliphate succeeded the Umayyads as Arab Muslim rulers in 750. The capital moved to Baghdad as the caliphate's focus turned eastward from North Africa and the Mediterranean.³⁷ The dynasty ended in 1258 during a Mongol siege of Baghdad. The Fatimids, who claimed descent from Fatima, daughter of Muhammad and wife of Ali, replaced the Abbasids in North Africa in the 10th century.³⁸ The Fatimids, whose armies suffered repeated defeats in Arabia, left Morocco to be ruled by local Amazigh dynasties (also called Berbers at the time) after conquering Sijilmasa in east Morocco. The dynasty ended in 1171.^{39, 40, 41}

29 Joseph F. O'Callaghan, *A History of Medieval Spain* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 42.

30 Thomas K. Park and Aomar Boum, *Historical Dictionary of Morocco*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2006), 330.

31 Barnaby Rogerson, "Chapter 9: The Arab Conquest, 647–710," in *A Traveller's History of North Africa*, 2nd ed. (New York: Interlink Books, 2001), 119.

32 Abu Tariq Hijazi, "Uqba bin Nafe: The Conqueror of Africa," Arab News, 4 April 2014, <http://www.arabnews.com/news/550251>

33 Michael Brett et al., "North Africa: From the Arab Conquest to 1830," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 20 April 2016, <https://www.britannica.com/place/North-Africa/From-the-Arab-conquest-to-1830>

34 Abu Tariq Hijazi, "Uqba bin Nafe: The Conqueror of Africa," Arab News, 4 April 2014, <http://www.arabnews.com/news/550251>

35 Kevin Delgado, *Modern Nations of the World: Morocco* (New York: Lucent Books, 2006), 28.

36 Brian H. Warmington, "North Africa: Kharijite Berber Resistance to Arab Rule," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 20 April 2016, <https://www.britannica.com/place/North-Africa/From-the-Arab-conquest-to-1830>

37 *Encyclopædia Britannica*, "Abbāsīd Caliphate," 2 April 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Abbasid-caliphate>

38 *Encyclopædia Britannica*, "Fāṭimid Dynasty," 7 April 2014, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Fatimid-dynasty>

39 Helen Chapan Metz, ed., *Algeria: A Country Study* (Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1994), <http://countrystudies.us/algeria/8.htm>

40 Facts and Details, "Arab Conquest of the Maghrib," n.d., <http://factsanddetails.com/world/cat55/sub394/entry-5932.html#chapter-6>

41 Facts and Details, "Fatimids in East Africa," n.d., <http://factsanddetails.com/world/cat55/sub394/entry-5932.html#chapter-6>

The Indigenous Moroccan Dynasties

The Idrisid Dynasty (788–793)

The first Islamic dynasty that was indigenous to Morocco was founded in 788 by Idriss I, a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad's daughter Fatima. Idriss I unified much of northern Morocco under Islamic rule before his death by poisoning in 793.^{42, 43}

His son, Idriss II (793–828), extended control into Europe. He established Fès in 808 as the capital and founded the world's oldest university, Al-Qarawiyyin University. Later, he divided his kingdom among his sons. The smaller kingdoms warred against one another and broke up.^{44, 45} In 985, The last Idrisid switched allegiance to the Fatamids and was deposed and executed by the caliphate of Cordoba.⁴⁶

The Almoravids (1056–1147)

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 inhabitants were living under a puritanical version of Islam that had spread to the Atlas region and central Morocco.⁴⁷

The Almoravids, an Amazigh group (also called Berbers at the time) that came from southern Morocco and Mauretania, captured the key Saharan trade route to Sijilmasa and defeated their primary rivals in Fès. In 1070, they established Marrakech and made it their capital.⁴⁸ 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, their control declined.^{49, 50, 51}

The Almohads (1130–1269)

The Almohads ("the unitarians") were Amazigh (also called Berbers at the time) of the Atlas Mountains who followed spiritual leader Muhammad ibn Tumart, a self-appointed Mahdi and imam who opposed the Almoravids' strict Islam.⁵² A war between the Almohads and Almoravids broke out in 1125. When the Almohad leader, Ibn Tumart, was killed in 1130, his successor, Abd al-Mumin al-Kumi, took the title of caliph and continued to extend control over the Atlas Mountains. After defeating the Almoravids in their capital of Marrakech, al-Kumi consolidated

42 History Files, "African Kingdom: North Africa," n.d., <https://www.historyfiles.co.uk/KingListsAfrica/AfricaMorocco.htm>

43 Facts and Details, "Idrisids," n.d., <http://factsanddetails.com/world/cat55/sub394/entry-5932.html#chapter-6>

44 Thomas K. Park and Aomar Boum, *Historical Dictionary of Morocco*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2006), 177.

45 Facts and Details, "Idrisids," n.d., <http://factsanddetails.com/world/cat55/sub394/entry-5932.html#chapter-6>

46 History Files, "African Kingdom: North Africa," n.d., <https://www.historyfiles.co.uk/KingListsAfrica/AfricaMorocco.htm>

47 Kevin Delgado, *Modern Nations of the World: Morocco* (New York: Lucent Books, 2006), 28–9.

48 Facts and Details, "Almoravids," n.d., <http://factsanddetails.com/world/cat55/sub394/entry-5932.html#chapter-6>

49 Kevin Delgado, *Modern Nations of the World: Morocco* (New York: Lucent Books, 2006), 29–30.

50 Michael Brett et al., "North Africa: The Maghrib under the Almoravids and the Almohads," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 20 April 2016, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/418538/North-Africa/46490/The-Maghrib-under-the-Almoravids-and-the-Almohads>

51 Malika Zeghal and Marilyn R. Waldman, "Islamic World: The Almoravid Dynasty," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 3 January 2019, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/295765/Islamic-world/26924/The-Almoravid-dynasty>

52 Jamil M. Abun-Nasr et. al., "North Africa: The Maghrib under the Almoravids and the Almohads," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 20 April 2016, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/418538/North-Africa/46490/The-Maghrib-under-the-Almoravids-and-the-Almohads>

power over the entire Maghreb region and extended Almohad reach into Andalusia. Significant tribal warfare weakened the Almohads rule, and by the 13th century, their empire collapsed.^{53, 54, 55}

The Marinids (1248–1465)

Unlike the previous two indigenous 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. To compensate for the lack of religion, the Marinids established madrassas (Quranic schools) in urban centers. They also waged campaigns to regain parts of the Almohad dynasty in Spain and the eastern Maghreb, but their territorial gains were temporary.^{56, 57}

The decentralized Marinid dynasty began unraveling in the second half of the 14th century. Marinid rulers were killed or deposed frequently during this period.^{58, 59} Under Sultan Mohammed al-Saiḥ al-Mahdi, the Watas tribe seized power after a revolt in 1465, ushering in the Wattasid dynasty, which lasted until the mid-1500s.^{60, 61}

The Wattasids and Saadians

Although the Wattasids were the nominal rulers, they controlled only Fès. In 1492, when the Spanish monarchs expelled Arabs and Jews from Spain, many fled to Morocco. The influx of wealth and new ideas fundamentally impacted Moroccan culture.⁶²

The Wattasid period witnessed the beginning of European incursions into Morocco. The Portuguese arrived in 1415 and established garrison forts in several Atlantic ports. The city of Mazagan (El Jadida) was one of the first fortified colonies that Portuguese explorers of the Atlantic coast established in Africa. In 2004, Mazagan was added to the UNESCO World Heritage list.^{63, 64}

Unable to repel the Portuguese, the Wattasids pursued cooperation. Other indigenous tribes viewed appeasement of the Portuguese as an affront to Islam, and a war broke out in 1536 between the two most powerful tribes, the Wattasids, and the Saadians.⁶⁵

A settlement gave the Saadians control of Marrakech. Within 10 years they had driven the Portuguese from Morocco. The 17th century brought plague, drought, and famine to an already unstable land, and after 50 years of civil war, the Saadian dynasty fell to the Alaouites.⁶⁶

53 Kevin Delgado, *Modern Nations of the World: Morocco* (New York: Lucent Books, 2006), 31.

54 *Encyclopædia Britannica*, “Almohads,” 17 April 2014, <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9005862/Almohads>

55 Facts and Details, “Almohads,” n.d., <http://factsanddetails.com/world/cat55/sub394/entry-5932.html#chapter-6>

56 *Encyclopædia Britannica*, “Marīnid Dynasty,” 1 September 2010, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Marinid-dynasty>

57 Thomas K. Park and Aomar Boum, *Historical Dictionary of Morocco*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2006), 237–38.

58 Etain O’Carroll et al., *Lonely Planet: Morocco* (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet Publications, 2007), 35–36.

59 Kevin Delgado, *Modern Nations of the World: Morocco* (New York: Lucent Books, 2006), 33–35.

60 *Encyclopædia Britannica*, “Marīnid Dynasty,” 1 September 2010, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Marinid-dynasty>

61 Kevin Delgado, *Modern Nations of the World: Morocco* (New York: Lucent Books, 2006), 33–35.

62 Kevin Delgado, *Modern Nations of the World: Morocco* (New York: Lucent Books, 2006), 35.

63 UNESCO, “Portuguese City of Mazagan (El Jadida),” n.d., <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1058>

64 Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo, “Portuguese Colonialism in Africa,” *Oxford Research Encyclopedias*, March 2018, <https://oxfordre.com/africanhistory/abstract/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277734.001.0001/acrefore-9780190277734-e-183>

65 Kevin Delgado, *Modern Nations of the World: Morocco* (New York: Lucent Books, 2006), 35.

66 Kevin Delgado, *Modern Nations of the World: Morocco* (New York: Lucent Books, 2006), 35–37.

The Alaouite Dynasty (1666–Present)

In 1666, the Alaouite family, thought to be direct descendants of the Prophet Muhammad, gained possession of Fès and took 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 Alaouite rulers formed alliances and established embassies in several European nations.^{67, 68, 69}

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 an insurrection by the indigenous Rif tribes. The strategic importance of Morocco was clear to other nations, who also wanted to gain a foothold.⁷⁰

During the first three decades of the 19th century, the Alaouite sultan Moulay Sulaiman isolated Morocco from Christian Europe. Trade with the northern neighbors was limited, and the Europeans who lived in the country were confined to the port cities.^{71, 72}

European Encroachment and Colonial Takeover

In the mid-19th century, Morocco, which had never been incorporated into the Ottoman Empire, became a target for enterprising European colonialists. In 1844, in retaliation for Morocco's support of the rebel Algerian emir Abdel Kader, the French navy shelled the ports of Tangier and Mogador (Essaouira). The French went on to defeat the Moroccan army in the Battle of Isly, near the northwestern Moroccan-Algerian border.⁷³ A Franco-Moroccan treaty was hastily negotiated in which Morocco agreed to cut off assistance to the emir. In 1859, a dispute over the Ceuta enclave propelled Spain to declare war and occupy the northern city of Tétouan; in 1884, Spain created a protectorate in the coastal areas.^{74, 75, 76}

European influence—most notably French, Spanish, and British—increased dramatically toward the end of the 19th century. France, in particular, aggressively pursued colonial interests in Morocco.⁷⁷ 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. A few months later, the French and Spanish negotiated an agreement outlining their spheres of influence in Morocco.^{78, 79, 80}

67 History World, "History of Morocco," n.d., <http://www.historyworld.net/wrldhis/PlainTextHistories.asp?historyid=ac97>

68 Kevin Delgado, *Modern Nations of the World: Morocco* (New York: Lucent Books, 2006), 37–38.

69 Encyclopedia.com, "Alawite Dynasty," 2004, <https://www.encyclopedia.com/humanities/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/alawite-dynasty>

70 Kevin Delgado, *Modern Nations of the World: Morocco* (New York: Lucent Books, 2006), 38–39.

71 Jamil M. Abun-Nasr, *A History of the Maghrib in the Islamic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 286.

72 Barnaby Rogerson, *A Traveller's History of North Africa*, 2nd ed. (Brooklyn: Interlink Books, 2001), 256.

73 *Encyclopædia Britannica*, "Oujda," 14 April 2014, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Oujda>

74 Jamil M. Abun-Nasr, *A History of the Maghrib in the Islamic Period*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 246.

75 Abdallah Laroui et al., "Morocco: History: Decline of Traditional Government (1830–1912)," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 27 February 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Morocco/Decline-of-traditional-government-1830-1912#ref487937>

76 BBC News, "Morocco Profile—Timeline," 24 April 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-14123260>

77 Kevin Delgado, *Modern Nations of the World: Morocco* (New York: Lucent Books, 2006), 39–41.

78 History.com, "The First Moroccan Crisis," 21 August 2018, <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/the-first-moroccan-crisis>

79 Original People.com, "Scramble for Africa: How the African continent became divided," 18 November 2012, <http://originalpeople.org/scramble-for-africa-par/>

80 BBC News, "Morocco Profile—Timeline," 24 April 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-14123260>

The Moroccan sultan Moulay Abdul-Aziz was too weak to resist this 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. These internal attacks forced Sultan Abdul-Aziz to depend even more on the French and Spanish to maintain his precarious position.^{81, 82, 83}

By 1907, the French controlled Casablanca and were expanding their influence, using tribal attacks on their nationals as a pretext for expansion.⁸⁴ 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.^{85, 86, 87, 88}

It took Spain 14 more years to subdue the tribes of the Rif Mountains. A local chief, Abd el Krim el Khattabi, organized a jihad against the Spanish forces. Thousands of Spanish soldiers were massacred, and an estimated 40,000 Spanish soldiers were pushed out of Chechouene in the Rif Mountains. In 1926, more than 300,000 French and Spanish soldiers were sent to fight the local population. After Abd el Krim surrendered, he was exiled to Egypt where he died in 1963.⁸⁹

French and Spanish Morocco

In southern Morocco, the French formed an alliance with the local 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.⁹⁰ 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 *nouvelles villes* (modern cities) built adjacent to them for the French. The sultanate continued under Sultan Moulay Yusuf, who ruled as a figurehead from his palace in Rabat, which was also a French administrative headquarters.⁹¹

Infrastructure improved significantly during the 42 years of French control. New roads and railways were built between large cities and dams; other hydraulics projects added irrigation capacity to the farmed lands.⁹² Casablanca became the country's major seaport and economic focal point when its harbor was substantially upgraded.⁹³ Electricity grids were built, primarily to serve the European communities and not the medinas. Much

81 James N. Sater, *Morocco: Challenges to Tradition and Modernity* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 4–5.

82 Kevin Delgado, *Modern Nations of the World: Morocco* (New York: Lucent Books, 2006), 41.

83 Abdallah Laroui et al., "Morocco: History: Decline of Traditional Government (1830–1912)," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 27 February 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Morocco/Decline-of-traditional-government-1830-1912#ref487937>

84 Jamil M. Abun-Nasr, *A History of the Maghrib in the Islamic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 302–3.

85 Abdallah Laroui et al., "Morocco: History: Decline of Traditional Government (1830–1912)," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 27 February 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Morocco/Decline-of-traditional-government-1830-1912#ref487937>

86 Office of the Historian, U.S. Department of State, "A Guide to the United States' History of Recognition, Diplomatic, and Consular Relations, by Country, since 1776: Morocco," n.d., <https://history.state.gov/countries/morocco>

87 BBC News, "Morocco Profile—Timeline," 24 April 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-14123260>

88 History World, "History of Morocco," n.d., <http://www.historyworld.net/wrldhis/PlainTextHistories.asp?historyid=ac97>

89 Facts and Details, "Revolt in the Rif Mountains," n.d., <http://factsanddetails.com/world/cat55/sub394/entry-5932.html#chapter-6>

90 Barnaby Rogerson, *A Traveller's History of North Africa*, 2nd ed. (Brooklyn: Interlink Books, 2001), 280.

91 L. Carl Brown et al., "Morocco: The French Protectorate (1912–56)," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 27 February 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Morocco/Decline-of-traditional-government-1830-1912#ref46591>

92 Diana K. Davis, *Resurrecting the Granary of Rome: Environmental History and French Colonial Expansion in North Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2007), 180.

93 Melvin E. Page, *Colonialism: An International Social, Cultural, and Political Encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, Inc., 2003), 103–4.

of this development came at the expense of Moroccan taxpayers, who for the most part did not benefit because it was oriented toward Europeans.⁹⁴

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.⁹⁵ Fierce resistance from the local tribes of the Rif Mountains continued until 1926, keeping Spanish military forces on the constant defensive.⁹⁶

When Sultan Moulay Yūsuf died in 1927, his third son, 17-year-old Sidi Muhammed Ben Yūsuf (Mohammed V), was chosen by the French to succeed him.⁹⁷ Although he had little authority, in 1934, he resisted French legislation aimed at furthering the wedges between Amazigh and Arabs; this stance elevated his status among the ever-growing number of Moroccan nationalists.⁹⁸

World War II and its Aftermath

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.⁹⁹ 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.^{100, 101}

In January 1943, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and President Franklin D. Roosevelt met in a suburb of Casablanca to confer on global military strategy against the Axis powers.¹⁰² While in Morocco, Roosevelt and Sultan Mohammed V discussed Morocco's future, with Roosevelt expressing support for Moroccan independence from France.^{103, 104} Later that year, the Hizb al-Istiqlal (Independence Party) was formed, and its leaders soon called for an end to French rule.^{105, 106}

After the war, the French reclaimed control of Morocco, but persistent calls for independence by the Hizb al-Istiqlal, supported by the sultan, threatened their authority. In 1953, the French, working with Amazigh chief Thami al-Glaoui, orchestrated the exile of Mohammed V and the entire royal family—including the future King Hassan II, then the crown prince—to Madagascar, and replaced him with an aged cousin of the sultan, Mohammed Ben

94 Jamil M. Abun-Nasr, *A History of the Maghrib in the Islamic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 362.

95 James M. Sater, *Morocco: Challenges to Tradition and Modernity* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 26.

96 Jamil M. Abun-Nasr, *A History of the Maghrib in the Islamic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 362–65.

97 Encyclopædia Britannica, “Louis-Hubert-Gonzalve Lyautey,” 13 November 2018, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Louis-Hubert-Gonzalve-Lyautey>

98 Encyclopædia Britannica, “Muhammad V,” 22 February 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Muhammad-V-sultan-of-Morocco>

99 L. Carl Brown et al., “Morocco: The French Zone,” Encyclopædia Britannica, 27 February 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Morocco/The-French-Zone>

100 American Battle Monument Commission, “Remembering Operation Torch: Allied Forces Land in North Africa during World War II,” 8 November 2017, <https://www.abmc.gov/news-events/news/remembering-operation-torch-allied-forces-land-north-africa-during-world-war-ii>

101 Basil Liddell Hart, “Operation Torch,” Encyclopædia Britannica, 6 May 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/event/North-Africa-campaigns/Operation-Torch>

102 Encyclopædia Britannica, “Casablanca Conference,” 5 January 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Casablanca-Conference>

103 Barnaby Rogerson, *A Traveller's History of North Africa*, 2nd ed. (Brooklyn: Interlink Books, 2001), 297.

104 L. Carl Brown et al., “Morocco: History: The French Zone,” Encyclopædia Britannica, 27 February 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Morocco/The-French-Zone>

105 Encyclopedia.com, “Istiqlal Party: Morocco,” n.d., <https://www.encyclopedia.com/humanities/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/istiqlal-party-morocco>

106 John G. Hall, *Exploration of Africa: The Emerging Nations: North Africa* (London: Chelsea House Publishers, 2003), 63–64.

Arafa.^{107, 108} The move quickly backfired on the French; terrorist attacks by resistance groups operating out of Morocco's Spanish zone escalated.^{109, 110, 111}

A second violent independence movement emerged 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.¹¹² When he returned to Morocco the next month, he received a hero's welcome as the symbol of the fight for independence.^{113, 114, 115}

Independence

On 2 March 1956, after 44 years of colonial rule, France formally recognized Moroccan independence. On April 7, 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.¹¹⁶

Since 1961, Morocco celebrates Independence Day on 18 November. This day also commemorates King Mohammed V's ascension to the throne in 1927, and his speech announcing an end to colonial rule in 1955, after his return from exile.¹¹⁷

King Mohammed V

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 sharif (a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad through his daughter Fatima), he was also the country's religious and moral leader and an important counterbalance against threats from religious elements.^{118, 119}

Mohammed V's rule ended abruptly with his death in 1961. His oldest son, Hassan II (Moulay al-Hasan), succeeded him.¹²⁰

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- 107 Jamil M. Abun-Nasr, *A History of the Maghrib in the Islamic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 376–77.
- 108 James M. Sater, *Morocco: Challenges to Tradition and Modernity* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 23–24.
- 109 Jamil M. Abun-Nasr, *A History of the Maghrib in the Islamic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 377.
- 110 James M. Sater, *Morocco: Challenges to Tradition and Modernity* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 23.
- 111 Safaa Kasraoui, "Independence Day: Importance of November 18 in Morocco's History," *Morocco World News*, 18 November 2018, <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2018/11/258048/independence-day-morocco-history-mohammed-v/>
- 112 Barnaby Rogerson, *A Traveller's History of North Africa*, 2nd ed. (Brooklyn: Interlink Books, 2001), 302.
- 113 Robert Aldrich, *Banished Potentates: Dethroning and Exiling Indigenous Monarchs under Britain and French Colonial Rule, 1815–1955* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018), 266–271.
- 114 Bernard Reich, ed., *Political Leaders of the Contemporary Middle East and North Africa: A Biographical Dictionary* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1990), 344.
- 115 James M. Sater, *Morocco: Challenges to Tradition and Modernity* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 24.
- 116 Kevin Delgado, *Modern Nations of the World: Morocco* (New York: Lucent Books, 2006), 43.
- 117 Safaa Kasraoui, "Independence Day: Importance of November 18 in Morocco's History," *Morocco World News*, 18 November 2018, <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2018/11/258048/independence-day-morocco-history-mohammed-v/>
- 118 Kevin Delgado, *Modern Nations of the World: Morocco*, (New York: Lucent Books, 2006), 43, 45.
- 119 Encyclopædia Britannica, "Muhammad V," 22 February 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Muhammad-V-sultan-of-Morocco>
- 120 Encyclopædia Britannica, "Hassan II," 19 July 2018, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Hassan-II>

King Hassan II

The new king and his cabinet introduced the country's first democratic constitution, but during the elections that followed, various political parties claimed that the voting was rigged. A second constitution was introduced in 1970 and approved by referendum, but claims of election-rigging surfaced again. Eventually, these claims led to violent dissent that threatened the king's rule. In the early 1970s, Hassan II escaped several coups and assassination attempts by military leaders, including a 1971 attack by 1,000 mutineers during his birthday party.^{121, 122, 123}

Hassan II weathered this period, partly by directing national attention toward the Western Sahara, which was slowly being relinquished by the Spanish.¹²⁴ In October 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, King Hassan II called to stage a peaceful march to the province. On November 6, the government organized a mass demonstration in which 350,000 unarmed men and women marched into Western Sahara with the purpose to free the region from the remaining Spanish rule.^{125, 126} This event was labeled the "Green March" by Hassan II because of the historical association of the color green with Islam. "The Green March" was a significant event in the country's history and is commemorated on 6 November every year. Morocco occupies 80% of Western Sahara, although most countries, including the United States, have never recognized its territorial claims over the region.^{127, 128, 129}

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.^{130, 131}

Mohammed VI: The Reformer King

Hassan II's oldest son ascended to the throne in July 1999 as King Mohammed VI. The king has been a force for modernization, which has antagonized religious conservatives in the country.¹³²

After the Casablanca terrorist attack in 2003, in which 12 suicide bombers killed 33 people, the king began promoting a more moderate and balanced form of Islam called "the middle path" (*al wasatiyya*). He also appointed

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- 121 Barnaby Rogerson, *A Traveller's History of North Africa*, 2nd ed. (Brooklyn: Interlink Books, 2001), 312
- 122 Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, "The Birthday Party Coup Attempt on Morocco's King Hassan II," October 1988, <https://adst.org/2014/07/the-birthday-party-coup-attempt-on-moroccos-king-hassan-ii/>
- 123 New York Times, "Moroccan King's Escape from Assassination Attempt is Second in 13 Months," 17 August 1972, <https://www.nytimes.com/1972/08/17/archives/moroccan-kings-escape-from-assassination-attempt-is-second-in-13.html>
- 124 Kevin Delgado, *Modern Nations of the World: Morocco* (New York: Lucent Books, 2006), 47–48.
- 125 Morocco.com, "The Green March: A Campaign for Reunification," n.d., <https://www.morocco.com/blog/the-green-march-a-campaign-for-reunification/>
- 126 Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, "Western Sahara: Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 1999," 23 February 2000, <https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/1999/423.htm>
- 127 Nicolas Niarchos, "Is One of Africa's Oldest Conflicts Finally Nearing Its End?" *New Yorker*, 29 December 2018, <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/is-one-of-africas-oldest-conflicts-finally-nearing-its-end>
- 128 Office of the Historian, U.S. Department of State, "A Guide to the United States' History of Recognition, Diplomatic, and Consular Relations, by Country, since 1776: Morocco," n.d., <https://history.state.gov/countries/morocco>
- 129 Tarek Bazza, "Green March: 43 years Later, Morocco Still Attached to Its Land," *Morocco World News*, 6 November 2018, <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2018/11/257064/green-march-morocco-still-attached-land/>
- 130 Encyclopædia Britannica, "Hassan II," 19 July 2018, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Hassan-II>
- 131 Patricia J. Campbell, "Morocco in Transition: Overcoming the Democratic and Human Rights Legacy of King Hassan II," *African Studies Quarterly* 7, no. 1 (March 2003), <http://asq.africa.ufl.edu/files/Campbell-Vol-7-Issue-1.pdf>
- 132 Tamba François Koundouno, "Jeune Afrique: King Mohammed VI Has Changed Morocco in 20 Years," *Morocco World News*, 24 December 2018, <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2018/12/261481/jeune-afrique-king-mohammed-vi-morocco/>

Ahmed Toufiq, an advocate of interfaith dialogue, as minister of Islamic affairs.^{133, 134} In 2001, the king created a commission, (*oulema*), comprised of religious, legal, and other experts to examine options for reforming the Moudawana (family code) that would advance women's rights.¹³⁵ In 2004, despite opposition from Islamists, the king endorsed the proposed revisions and later that year the parliament unanimously passed the reforms to the Moudawana, granting unprecedented rights to women, including rights to divorce and child custody.^{136, 137}

In 2006, the king initiated the training of *murshidats*, female religious guides or preachers, to further combat religious extremism. It was the first time that a religious role was given to women in a Muslim country.^{138, 139,}
¹⁴⁰ In 2008, he lifted all the country's reservations on the UN's Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and ratified the Nationality Code, which gave women the right to pass on their nationality to their children.^{141, 142, 143}

In June 2011, in response to the Arab Spring, the king ordered a committee to draw up a new constitution that would give elected politicians more power, uphold the freedom of the press, criminalize torture, and remove the term "sacred" from the status of the king, among other reforms. However, national security, the military, and religious matters remain under the king's tight control.^{144, 145, 146} A month later, 70% of the country's 13 million registered voters approved the referendum despite claims that the new reforms failed to create a more open political system.^{147, 148, 149}

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- 133 Cédric Bayloq and Aziz Hlaoua, "Spreading a 'Moderate Islam'? Morocco's New African Religious Diplomacy," *Afrique Contemporaine* 257, no 11 (2016): 113-128, https://www.cairn-int.info/article-E_AFCCO_257_0113--spreading-a-moderate-islam-morocco-s-new.htm
- 134 BBC News, "Casablanca Bombing Suspect Arrested by German police," 30 October 2012, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-20147622>
- 135 Mohamed Chtatou, "Reforming Morocco Under Mohammed VI—Analysis," *Eurasia Review*, 25 May 2017, <https://www.eurasiareview.com/25052017-reforming-morocco-under-mohammed-vi-analysis/>
- 136 Mohamed Chtatou, "Revisiting Family Code Reform in Morocco—Analysis," *Eurasia Review*, 14 March 2019, <https://www.eurasiareview.com/14032019-revisiting-family-code-reform-in-morocco-analysis/>
- 137 UNHCR, The UN Refugee Agency, "Removing Gender Discrimination from Nationality Laws," 2014, <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/54f8377d4.pdf>
- 138 Emma Batha, "Morocco's Islamic Women Preachers Lead Social Revolution," *Reuters*, 19 May 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-morocco-women-morchidat/moroccos-islamic-women-preachers-lead-social-revolution-idUSKBN0040MG20150519>
- 139 Al Jazeera, "Morocco Gets First Women Preachers," 28 April 2006, <https://www.aljazeera.com/archive/2006/04/200849152239266307.html>
- 140 Hassan al-Ashraf, "Morocco's Murshidat Female Religious Guides Preach Tolerance and Moderation," *Al Araby*, 29 May 2016, <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/society/2016/5/29/moroccos-murshidat-female-religious-guides-preach-tolerance-and-moderation>
- 141 Fanack, "Morocco's Mohammed VI: A King for All Seasons," n.d., <https://fanack.com/morocco/faces/king-mohammed-vi/>
- 142 Women News Network, "Morocco at the Helm—A Conversation with Driss El Yazami," 5 February 2016, <https://womennewsnetwork.net/2016/02/05/morocco-at-the-helm-a-conversation-with-driss-el-yazami/>
- 143 UNHCR, The UN refugee Agency, "Removing Gender Discrimination from Nationality Laws," 2014, <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/54f8377d4.pdf>
- 144 Robert Rauch, "Muhammad VI," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 17 August 2018, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Muhammad-VI>
- 145 Ilhem Rachidi, "After Struggle, New Equality for Moroccan Women," *Christian Science Monitor*, 24 October 2003, <http://www.csmonitor.com/2003/1024/p09s01-wome.html>
- 146 Giles Tremlett, "Morocco's King Bows to Pressure and Allows Reform," *Guardian*, 17 June 2011, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/jun/18/morocco-king-reform>
- 147 Al Jazeera, "Moroccans Vote 'Yes' to Revised Constitution," 2 July 2011, <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/africa/2011/07/20117154535570851.html>
- 148 CNN, "Morocco Approves Constitutional Reforms," 1 July 2011, <http://www.cnn.com/2011/WORLD/africa/07/01/morocco.vote.reforms/index.html>
- 149 Al Jazeera, "Timeline: The Reign of King Mohammed VI," 17 June 2011, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2011/06/20116181756279674.html>

In January 2017, Morocco rejoined the African Union after an absence of 33 years. Morocco had left the African Union in 1984 after the organization accepted Western Sahara as a full member.^{150, 151}

Morocco has experienced several terrorist attacks during King Mohammed VI's reign. In 2003, the al-Qaeda affiliate known as the Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group conducted a series of suicide bombings in Casablanca. In 2007, Casablanca experienced more suicide bombings. In 2011, militants set off a remote-controlled bomb in Marrakech that killed 15 people.^{152, 153} In 2015, Morocco set up the Central Bureau for Judicial Investigations (BCIJ) to fight terrorism. Since then, BCIJ has dismantled 57 militant cells allegedly planning attacks in the country.^{154, 155}

Recent Events

In 2011, after the moderate Islamist Justice and Development Party (PJD) won the most seats in a parliamentary election, the king appointed Abdelilah Benkirane as prime minister.¹⁵⁶ In the 2016 parliamentary elections, the king appointed Benkirane for a second term after his party won the majority of seats, but in early 2017, he dismissed him from his post after he failed to form a coalition government.¹⁵⁷ The new prime minister chosen by the king—allegedly to weaken the Islamist party—is former PJD secretary-general and foreign minister Saad-Eddine El Othmani.^{158, 159}

Waves of protests occasionally sweep parts of the country. The February 20 Movement, which was inspired by the Arab Spring, represents a variety of political groups and is still active. Protesters demand government action against corruption and poverty.¹⁶⁰ The Hirak Rif protest movement—which started in 2016 after a fish seller was crushed inside a garbage truck while trying to retrieve a large fish that was confiscated from him—has caused the biggest unrest seen in Morocco since the Arab Spring. The protests started in the impoverished northern city of Al-Hoceima and grew into nationwide protests. Protestors demanded government action against corruption and for development in the region. Recent protests erupted in the capital when demonstrators denounced long prison sentences imposed on Hirak activists.^{161, 162, 163}

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- 150 Ed Copley, "In Tilt from Europe, Morocco Rejoins African Union," Reuters, 31 January 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-africa-summit-morocco/in-tilt-from-europe-morocco-rejoins-african-union-idUSKBN15F18Z>
- 151 Conor Gaffey, "Why Has Morocco Rejoined the African Union after 33 Years?" Newsweek, 2 February 2017, <https://www.newsweek.com/morocco-african-union-western-sahara-551783>
- 152 Counter Extremism Project, "Morocco" Extremism & Counter-Extremism," 2019, <https://www.counterextremism.com/countries/morocco>
- 153 Al Jazeera, "Timeline: The Reign of King Mohammed VI," 17 June 2011, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2011/06/20116181756279674.html>
- 154 Saad Guerraoui, "Sleeper Terrorist Cells Highlight Morocco's Homegrown Threat," Arab Weekly, 6 January 2019, <https://theArabweekly.com/sleeper-terrorist-cells-highlight-moroccos-homegrown-threat>
- 155 Willemijn de Koning, "Morocco Boasts Success Fighting Terrorism," Deutsche Welle, 3 March 2017, <https://www.dw.com/en/morocco-boasts-success-fighting-terrorism/a-37793321>
- 156 Reuters, "Timeline-The Rise of Morocco's PJD party," 29 November 2011, <https://www.reuters.com/article/morocco-pjd-idAFL5E7MT5SF20111129>
- 157 Intissar Fakir, "Morocco's Islamist Party: Redefining Politics Under Pressure," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 28 December 2017, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2017/12/28/morocco-s-islamist-party-redefining-politics-under-pressure-pub-75121>
- 158 BBC News, "Morocco Profile—Timeline," 24 April 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-14123260>
- 159 Samia Errazzouki, "Morocco's King Names PJD's Othmani As Prime Minister," Reuters, 17 March 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-morocco-politics/moroccos-king-names-pjds-othmani-as-new-prime-minister-idUSKBN16O1WU>
- 160 Ahmed Zakarya Mitche, "Morocco's February 20 Movement: 'Demands Still alive,'" Al Jazeera, 22 February 2017, <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/02/morocco-february-20-movement-demands-alive-170222063934604.html>
- 161 Aljazeera, "Fishmonger's Gruesome Death Sparks Protests in Morocco," 31 October 2016, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/10/fishmonger-gruesome-death-sparks-protests-morocco-161031131330359.html>
- 162 Aljazeera, "Morocco: Al-Hoceima Remains Tense Over Protest Arrests," 28 May 2017, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/05/morocco-al-hoceima-remains-tense-protest-arrests-170528144511699.html>
- 163 Deutsche Welle, "Morocco: Thousands Call for Release of Jailed Activists," 22 April 2019, <https://www.dw.com/en/morocco-thousands-call-for-release-of-jailed-activists/a-48429157>

Morocco in Perspective

Chapter 2 | History, Assessment

Read the following statements and answer True or False

- | | | | |
|----|--|------|-------|
| 1. | King Idris I established the first Arab dynasty that ruled over Morocco. | True | False |
| 2. | The European incursions into Morocco began with the Portuguese in the early 1400s. | True | False |
| 3. | During World War II, Morocco was declared a neutral country. | True | False |
| 4. | The Green March was a show of force of Morocco's small farmers who during the Arab Spring marched on the capital with a demand for an agrarian reform and fair distribution of land. | True | False |
| 5. | The current king of Morocco is a descendent of one of the great Amazigh dynasties. | True | False |

Morocco in Perspective

Chapter 2 | History, Assessment Answers

1. True:
The first Islamic dynasty in Morocco was founded in 788 by Idriss I, a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad's daughter Fatima. King Idriss I unified much of northern Morocco under Islamic rule before his death.
2. True:
The Portuguese arrived in Morocco in 1415 and established garrison forts in several Atlantic ports. The city of Mazagan (El Jadida) was one of the first fortified colonies that Portuguese explorers of the Atlantic coast established in Africa.
3. False:
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 their military operations against Axis forces.
4. False:
The Green March was a peaceful demonstration organized by King Hassan II against the ruling of the International Court of Justice which stated that Morocco's claim over Western Sahara was invalid. On 6 November 1975, 350,000 unarmed men and women marched toward Western Sahara carrying portraits of the king, Moroccan flags, and copies of the Quran. More than 150,000 Moroccans entered the territory, forcing Spain to engage in negotiations with Morocco over the territory.
5. False:
The current king of Morocco, King Mohammed VI, is an Alaouite. The Alaouites are an Arab-Muslim family, believed to be direct descendants of the Prophet Muhammad. The Alaouites gained possession of Fès in 1666 and have been occupying the Moroccan throne ever since.

Chapter 3 | Economy



The Chaouara leather tanneries in Fez.
Flickr / Jose Javier Martin Espartosa

Introduction

Morocco is the sixth largest economy in Africa.^{1,2} The economy is dominated by the agricultural sector, which employs nearly 45% of the workforce and contributes 15% to the GDP. Economic activity and growth rely heavily on this sector.^{3,4}

Industry accounts for 23% of the GDP. The largest segments in this sector include manufacturing, construction, and mining. Morocco controls more than two-thirds of the world's phosphate reserves, used for the manufacture of fertilizers. Until recently, phosphate and derivate products were the top export of Morocco. Apart from phosphates, Morocco has relatively small quantities of mineral resources.^{5, 6, 7}

- 1 Trading Economics, "Morocco GDP Annual Growth Rate," May 2019, <https://tradingeconomics.com/morocco/gdp-growth-annual>
- 2 IOL, "These are the Biggest Economies in Africa—IMF," 10 July 2018, <https://www.iol.co.za/business-report/economy/these-are-the-biggest-economies-in-africa-imf-15929339>
- 3 Santander Trade Portal, "Morocco: Economic and Political Outline," 2019, <https://en.portal.santandertrade.com/analyse-markets/morocco/economic-political-outline>
- 4 Export.gov, "Morocco—Agricultural Sector," 31 January 2019, <https://www.export.gov/article?id=Morocco-Agricultural-Sector>
- 5 Santander Trade Portal, "Morocco: Economic and Political Outline," 2019, <https://en.portal.santandertrade.com/analyse-markets/morocco/economic-political-outline>
- 6 Will D. Swearingen et al., "Morocco," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 27 February 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Morocco/Economy>
- 7 Oxford Business Group, "Manufacturing Industry Central To Morocco's Exports," 2018, <https://oxfordbusinessgroup.com/overview/new-ecosystem-manufacturing-becoming-central-kingdom%E2%80%99s-exports>

The services sector accounts for 54% of total GDP and includes tourism, public administration, and transport. Morocco's banking sector is the most developed in North Africa and among the most advanced in the wider region. Tourism is one of the pillars of the Moroccan economy.^{8, 9, 10}

Economic diversification into the automotive, electronics, chemistry, and aerospace industries has helped the country reduce its dependence on the agricultural sector.¹¹

A major weakness in the economy is the shortage of energy sources, as Morocco imports most of its energy. The government plans to reduce dependence on foreign imports by developing renewable energies, investing mostly in wind and solar power.^{12, 13}

Agriculture

Agriculture is the backbone of Morocco's economy. Counting livestock rearing, crop cultivation, forestry, and fishing, the agricultural sector employs about 45% of the labor force (more than 4 million rural inhabitants) and makes up about 15% of Morocco's gross domestic product (GDP). The agriculture sector relies heavily on traditional production methods, with limited use of fertilizers, pesticides, and mechanization.^{14, 15, 16}

There is a significant gap between the private, irrigated, modernized farms of the country's fertile areas that produce mostly fruits and vegetables for export and the small farms that rely on rainfall to produce grains, red meat, dairy, and olives. Irrigated land is just 16% of cultivated land, yet generates 75% of agricultural exports and half of agricultural GDP. The majority of farms are small—about 70% of farmers cultivate fewer than five hectares and occupy a quarter of the total land under cultivation—and produce mostly food for local markets or for the farmers' consumption.^{17, 18, 19}

Cereal crops occupy 75% of arable land and include wheat, barley, rice, sorghum, and corn for animal feed. A small portion of the land is sown with pulses (legumes) such as soybean, peas, chickpeas, and lentils. Since cereal crops rely on rainfall, fluctuation in rainfall has a profound effect on agricultural output. In 2015 and 2016,

8 Trading Economics, "Morocco GDP Annual Growth Rate," May 2019, <https://tradingeconomics.com/morocco/gdp-growth-annual>

9 Ahlam Ben Saga, "Tourism, a Driving Force for Morocco's GDP Growth: Report," Morocco World News, 20 July 2018, <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2018/07/250908/tourism-gdp-growth-bmi/>

10 Oxford Business Group, "Moroccan Banking Sector Enhanced by Islamic Financial Services And Regulatory Reform," 2018, <https://oxfordbusinessgroup.com/overview/above-and-beyond-islamic-banking-services-and-regulatory-reform-set-reshape-sector%E2%80%99s-fortunes>

11 Santander Trade Portal, "Morocco: Economic and Political Outline," 2019, <https://en.portal.santandertrade.com/analyse-markets/morocco/economic-political-outline>

12 MBendi, "Morocco: Oil and Gas Industry," n.d., <https://mbendi.co.za/cymooi.htm>

13 EIA, "Morocco," September 2014, <https://www.eia.gov/beta/international/analysis.php?iso=MAR>

14 Central Intelligence Agency, "Morocco: Economy," *The World Factbook*, 19 April 2019, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mo.html>

15 Export.gov, "Morocco—Agricultural Sector," 31 January 2019, <https://www.export.gov/article?id=Morocco-Agricultural-Sector>

16 Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Rural Development, Water and Forests, "Green Morocco," n.d., <http://www.agriculture.gov.ma/en/pages/strategy>

17 World Bank, "Growing Morocco's Agricultural Potential," 25 July 2018, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2016/02/18/growing-morocco-s-agricultural-potential1>

18 Megan Perry, "Moroccan Agriculture: Facing the Challenges of a Divided System," Sustainable Food Trust, 10 April 2015, <https://sustainablefoodtrust.org/articles/moroccan-agriculture-facing-challenges-divided-system/>

19 New Agriculturalist, "Country Profile—Morocco," November 2001, <http://www.new-ag.info/en/country/profile.php?a=869>

Morocco experienced the worst drought in 30 years, and cereal production dropped from 11.5 million tons in previous years to 3.35 million tons, slowing down economic growth.^{20, 21, 22, 23}

Livestock, particularly red meat and dairy, makes a significant contribution to the economy and food security. Livestock contributes to the income of more than 80% of the rural population and acts as insurance to mitigate the effect of drought. Over 90% of fresh milk and dairy products and 98% of red meat consumed in Morocco are produced domestically. Cattle, sheep, goats, and Arabian camels graze the country's pasture lands.^{24, 25}

Morocco is the world's top exporter of capers, white beans, and argan oil; third in canned olives; and fourth in tomatoes and clementines.^{26, 27}

Argan oil is derived from the fruit of the argan tree. This oil has been used in Moroccan cuisine for centuries and has many health benefits. It is rich in vitamin E, anti-oxidants and anti-inflammatory compounds and is present in many cosmetic products.²⁸

Morocco is among the world's top cannabis resin exporters.²⁹ Cannabis (*kif*) is a cash crop in the Rif Mountain regions, despite the crop being illegal. Nearly 3% of the population relies on cannabis for their income. Most of the cannabis is grown outdoors in the open air.^{30, 31, 32} The cultivation of cannabis also boosts tourism in the region.³³

Fisheries

The Atlantic coast of Morocco makes the country one of the world's most productive regions for fishing. With more than 300 fishing vessels and over 400 fish processing plants, the fishing industry contributes 2.3% to GDP. In 2018, Morocco was the largest seafood exporter in Africa and the 13th largest in the world. Morocco is also the world's largest exporter of octopus, alongside China. Aquaculture accounts for only a small fraction of Morocco's fish production. In 2016, King Mohammed VI opened the first commercial shellfish hatchery and farm. The fish processing sector amounts to 58% of agri-food exports and 7% of the total exports—mostly of frozen

- 20 Oxford Business Group, "Morocco's Attention Shifts Towards Agri-Business and Diversification of Exports," 2017, <https://oxfordbusinessgroup.com/overview/higher-value-attention-shifts-towards-agri-business-supply-chain-integration-and-diversification>
- 21 Export.gov, "Morocco—Agricultural Sector," 31 January 2019, <https://www.export.gov/article?id=Morocco-Agricultural-Sector>
- 22 Export.gov, "Morocco—Agricultural Sector," 31 January 2019, <https://www.export.gov/article?id=Morocco-Agricultural-Sector>
- 23 Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Rural Development, Water and Forests, Green Morocco," n.d., <http://www.agriculture.gov.ma/en/pages/strategy>
- 24 Megan Perry, "Moroccan Agriculture: Facing the Challenges of a Divided System," Sustainable Food Trust, 10 April 2015, <https://sustainablefoodtrust.org/articles/moroccan-agriculture-facing-challenges-divided-system/>
- 25 Rim Elmkinssi, "Profile of the Dairy and Red Meat Sector in Morocco," Canadian Trade Commissioner Service, Government of Canada, February 2016, <http://www.agr.gc.ca/eng/industry-markets-and-trade/international-agri-food-market-intelligence/reports/profile-of-the-dairy-and-red-meat-sector-in-morocco/?id=1486065836964>
- 26 Export.gov, "Morocco—Agricultural Sector," 31 January 2019, <https://www.export.gov/article?id=Morocco-Agricultural-Sector>
- 27 Oxford Business Group, "Morocco's Attention Shifts towards Agri-Business and Diversification of Exports," 2017, <https://oxfordbusinessgroup.com/overview/higher-value-attention-shifts-towards-agri-business-supply-chain-integration-and-diversification>
- 28 Healthline, "12 Benefits and uses of Argan Oil." n.d., <https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/argan-oil#section12>
- 29 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, "Market Analysis of Plant-Based Drugs," World Drug Report, May 2017, https://www.unodc.org/wdr2017/field/Booklet_3_Plantbased.pdf
- 30 Agence France-Presse, "High Times: Morocco's Growing Number of Cannabis Tourists," South China Morning Post, 10 December 2017, <https://www.scmp.com/lifestyle/travel-leisure/article/2123521/high-times-moroccos-growing-number-cannabis-tourists>
- 31 Chaima Lahsini, "Morocco Remains World's Largest Cannabis Resin Exporter: UN Report," Morocco World News, 4 July 2017, <https://www.morocroworldnews.com/2017/07/222013/morocco-worlds-remains-largest-cannabis-resin-exporter-un-report/>
- 32 Maria Inês Pinto, "Kif in the Rif: Truths about Hashish in Morocco," Journey Beyond Travel, n.d., <https://www.journeybeyondtravel.com/blog/kif-rif-hashish-morocco.html>
- 33 Fanack, "In Morocco, Cannabis Remains a Sensitive Topic," 14 December 2018, <https://fanack.com/morocco/history-past-to-present/cannabis-remains-sensitive-topic/>

and canned products. It is estimated that 3 million people depend on fisheries for their livelihoods. A national fisheries plan, called Halieutis, which has been in place since 2009, aims to triple fish production by 2020.^{34, 35, 36, 37} Morocco has been producing algae (agar extraction) for over 50 years, and today is the world's second largest agar exporter.^{38, 39, 40}

Industry and Manufacturing

The industrial and manufacturing sector employs about 20% of the labor force and accounts for 29.5% of GDP.⁴¹ In recent years, the automotive industry has grown to such an extent that cars have become the main export product of Morocco, surpassing the traditional phosphate sector. Today, the main industries in Morocco include automotive (24% of total exports), agricultural and food processing products (21% of exports), phosphate and derivative products such as fertilizers (18% of total exports), textiles and leather products (15%), aerospace products (5% of total export), and electronic goods (4% of total exports). The cement and pharmaceutical sectors are not geared toward export; however, Moroccan companies build and establish production operations across West Africa. Pharmaceuticals contribute about 1.5% to GDP and account for 5.2% of industrial production.⁴²

Automotive

Morocco is the leading car manufacturer in Africa. The country has been manufacturing auto parts since the 1960s, but the arrival of the French firm Renault in 2012 has given the automotive sector a strong boost. Renault has two vehicle assembly plants, one in Casablanca and the other in Tangier. In 2017, the company announced that it had produced 1 million cars in Morocco. French manufacturer PSA Peugeot Citroën operates a plant in the coastal city of Kenitra, north of Rabat.⁴³ The Canadian manufacturer Linamar builds car engine parts, and Italy-based Sogefi manufactures engine filtration systems at its production unit in Tangier. The Chinese firm BYD is building an electric vehicle factory in the Mohammed VI Tangiers Tech City, and Toyota and Hyundai have expressed interest in coming to Morocco as well. The automotive sector employs close to 84,000 people, which represents 93% of the goal set for 2020.^{44, 45, 46, 47}

- 34 Hamza Guessous, "FAO: Morocco 13th in Global Fish Production," Morocco World News, 13 July 2018, <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2018/07/250484/fao-morocco-global-fish-production/>
- 35 Euro Med PMI, "Fishing Industry in Morocco," 2014, <https://www.comunitapmimediteraneo.org/en/news/fishing-industry-in-morocco/>
- 36 Nicki Holmyard, "Morocco Aims to Double Value of Seafood Exports by 2020," Seafood Source, 13 February 2018, <https://www.seafoodsource.com/features/morocco-aims-to-double-value-of-seafood-exports-by-2020>
- 37 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, "Morocco Fisheries Statistics: Production, Consumption and Trade," 2016, http://www.fao.org/in-action/globefish/countries/countries/mar/en/?page=7&ipp=5&tx_dynalist_pi1%5Bpar%5D=YToxOntzOjE6IkwiO3M6MToiNil7fQ%3D%3D
- 38 Hamza Guessous, "FAO: Morocco 13th in Global Fish Production," Morocco World News, 13 July 2018, <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2018/07/250484/fao-morocco-global-fish-production/>
- 39 Euro Med PMI, "Fishing Industry in Morocco," 2014, <https://www.comunitapmimediteraneo.org/en/news/fishing-industry-in-morocco/>
- 40 Nicki Holmyard, "Morocco Aims to Double Value of Seafood Exports by 2020," Seafood Source, 13 February 2018, <https://www.seafoodsource.com/features/morocco-aims-to-double-value-of-seafood-exports-by-2020>
- 41 Central Intelligence Agency, "Morocco: Economy," in *The World Factbook*, 1 May 2019, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mo.html>
- 42 Oxford Business Group, "Manufacturing Industry Central to Morocco's Exports," 2018, <https://oxfordbusinessgroup.com/overview/new-ecosystem-manufacturing-becoming-central-kingdom%E2%80%99s-exports>
- 43 Tarek Bazza, "PSA Plant in Morocco's Kenitra to Produce 200,000 Cars in 2020," Morocco World News, 6 September 2018, <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2018/09/253112/psa-plant-moroccos-kenitra-produce-200000-cars-2020/>
- 44 Oxford Business Group, "Manufacturing Industry Central to Morocco's Exports," 2018, <https://oxfordbusinessgroup.com/overview/new-ecosystem-manufacturing-becoming-central-kingdom%E2%80%99s-exports>
- 45 Said Tamsamani, "Morocco among Top Most Promising Markets for Automotive Industry," Eurasia Review, 26 October 2018, <https://www.eurasiareview.com/26102018-morocco-among-top-most-promising-markets-for-automotive-industry-oped/>
- 46 Karim Ahniche, "Morocco: The Leading Car Manufacturer in Africa," Aims International, 13 March 2019,
- 47 Xinhua, "Morocco Joins Hands with China's Carmaker BYD to Boost Auto Industry," 10 December 2017, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-12/10/c_136815713.htm

Mining

The mining sector contributes 10% to GDP and is considered the most attractive market in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, after Saudi Arabia, because of the phosphate, gold, and copper sub-sectors. The newly privatized mining industry and the updated mining code have allowed for joint exploration of gold and silver deposits with the Canadian international mining exploration company Maya Gold & Silver.^{48, 49, 50}

Morocco controls the world's largest phosphate reserves (77%) and is a leading global exporter of phosphates after China. Phosphates account for about 90% of all mineral production in the country.^{51, 52} In 2018, the state-owned OCP, a fertilizer-exporting giant headquartered in Casablanca, entered into a partnership with Ethiopia to build the continent's largest fertilizer plant at a total cost of USD 3.6 billion.⁵³

Silver is mined in Zgounder Mine east of Agadir, and Imider Mine, the biggest mine on the African continent and the 7th largest producer of silver in the world.^{54, 55} The mine is at the center of a decade's long fight by local Amazigh residents who claim that it has drained their water reserves and destroyed their agricultural community.⁵⁶

Aeronautics

A burgeoning sector of the economy, aeronautics has put Morocco on the global map, ranking 15th worldwide for attracting aviation industry investments. Canada's Bombardier and France's Thales and Safran are two major companies that manufacture airplane components in Morocco. The aeronautics sector was established on the outskirts of Casablanca in the Midparc Free Zone, which offers tax exemptions and subsidies to manufacturers. Currently, about 200 companies operate in this sector.^{57, 58, 59}

Textile and handicrafts

Textiles and handicrafts continue to play an important part in the economy. Currently, Morocco is competing for a European market share with countries from Eastern Europe, Turkey, India, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Vietnam, and China. There are around 1,600 textile manufacturers in the country, employing 183,000 people, in the so-called "fast-fashion" industry. Revenue has increased in recent years with an upswing registering in the local

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- 48 Tarek Bazza, "Canada's Maya Starts Commercial Silver Production at Morocco's Zgounder," Morocco World News, 11 January 2019, <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2019/01/263102/canada-maya-silver-production-morocco-zgounder/>
- 49 Sana Elouazi, "Moroccan Mining Sector Ranks 2nd in MENA Region: Report," Morocco World News, 20 April 2018, <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2018/04/244823/moroccan-mining-sector-ranks-2nd-in-mena-region-report-bmi/>
- 50 DLA Piper, "Mining in Morocco: A Legal Snapshot," 13 July 2017, <https://www.dlapiper.com/en/africa/insights/publications/2017/07/mining-in-morocco-a-legal-snapshot/>
- 51 Alex Kasprak, "The Desert Rock that Feeds the World," Atlantic, 29 November 2016, <https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2016/11/the-desert-rock-that-feeds-the-world/508853/>
- 52 Oxford Business Group, "Mining Sector in Morocco Diversifies away from Phosphates," The Report: Morocco 2016: Industry & Mining, 2016, <https://oxfordbusinessgroup.com/overview/new-tricks-having-traditionally-relied-phosphates-industry-mining-sector-diversifying>
- 53 Stratfor, "Why Banks in Morocco are Spreading the Wealth Around Africa," 11 January 2019, <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/why-banks-morocco-are-spreading-wealth-around-africa>
- 54 Oxford Business Group, "Mining Sector in Morocco Diversifies away from Phosphates," The Report: Morocco 2016: Industry & Mining, 2016, <https://oxfordbusinessgroup.com/overview/new-tricks-having-traditionally-relied-phosphates-industry-mining-sector-diversifying>
- 55 Environmental Justice Atlas, "Imider Silver Mine, Morocco," 6 March 2017, <https://ejatlas.org/conflict/imider-silver-mine-morocco>
- 56 Nadir Bouhmouch and Kristian Davis Bailey, "A Moroccan Village's Long Fight for Water Rights," Aljazeera, 13 December 2015, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/12/moroccan-village-long-fight-water-rights-151205121358666.html>
- 57 Oxford Business Group, "Manufacturing Industry Central to Morocco's Exports," 2018, <https://oxfordbusinessgroup.com/overview/new-ecosystem-manufacturing-becoming-central-kingdom%E2%80%99s-exports>
- 58 Export.gov, "Morocco—Aerospace," 31 January 2019, <https://www.export.gov/article?id=Morocco-Aerospace>
- 59 North Africa Post, "Aeronautics: Two New Plants Open in Morocco," 5 July 2018, <http://northafricapost.com/24437-aeronautics-two-new-plants-open-in-morocco.html>

market as well.⁶⁰ Spain is the largest market for Moroccan textiles and clothing, followed by France. Marwa, a fast fashion chain from Casablanca geared toward Muslim women, operates more than 70 stores in Morocco, six in Algeria, and two in Lebanon and Libya. Handicrafts such as leather bags and poufs, wedding blankets and Berber rugs, ceramics and metal lamps contribute about 6% to GDP, employing more than 2 million artisans.^{61, 62, 63} For example, Marrakech is famous for its leather goods which are produced in the city's many tanneries.^{64, 65}

Energy

Morocco imports 90% of its energy needs.⁶⁶ Morocco is the only MENA country that still relies on coal. The country's electricity production derives from coal (31%), fuel oil (25%), hydroelectricity (22%), natural gas (10%), wind (10%), and solar (2%).^{67, 68} The two largest oil and gas fields are in the Essaouira Basin on the coast, producing oil and natural gas, and in the Gharb Basin in the north, producing natural gas.⁶⁹ Every year, Morocco also receives natural gas from the Europe-Maghreb Pipeline, which transports natural gas from Algeria to Spain and passes through Morocco.⁷⁰

Until 2009, Morocco had two oil refineries. In 2009, the refinery at Sidi Kacem was closed; in 2015, the second refinery in Mohammedia, near Casablanca, was shut down due to unpaid taxes. The closure of the second refinery left Morocco dependent on imported refined products.^{71, 72, 73}

According to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Sustainable Development, Morocco ranks fifth in the world for oil shale reserves. Oil shale is extracted from sedimentary rock and requires more processing than conventional oil.^{74, 75} With less than one-tenth of the natural gas reserve potential realized and the high potential for shale oil production, L'Office Nationale des Hydrocarbures et des Mines (OHNYM), Morocco's agency that manages hydrocarbon resources, offers attractive operating and investment terms to oil and gas exploration and production companies.⁷⁶

- 60 Oxford Business Group, "Manufacturing Industry Central to Morocco's Exports," 2018, <https://oxfordbusinessgroup.com/overview/new-ecosystem-manufacturing-becoming-central-kingdom%E2%80%99s-exports>
- 61 Michelle Russell, "Morocco Textile and Apparel Exports Grow in 2017," Just Style, 30 May 2018, https://www.just-style.com/news/morocco-textile-and-apparel-exports-grow-in-2017_id133633.aspx
- 62 Willemijn de Koning, "World in Progress: Moroccan Textile Industry Expanding," *Deutsche Welle*, 7 July 2017, <https://www.dw.com/en/world-in-progress-moroccan-textile-industry-expanding/av-39146438>
- 63 Regina Henkel, "Morocco Wants to Grow Its Production Industry," Fashion United, 10 November 2017, <https://fashionunited.uk/news/business/morocco-wants-to-grow-its-production-industry/2017111026731>
- 64 Colleen Clark, "The Secrets to Shopping in Marrakesh," BBC, 8 June 2011, <http://www.bbc.com/travel/story/20110608-the-secrets-to-shopping-in-marrakesh>
- 65 Valerie Wheatley, "Guide to Shopping in Morocco: What to Buy & How to Bargain," Wandering Wheatley, 7 March 2018, <https://wanderingwheatleys.com/guide-to-shopping-in-morocco/>
- 66 MBendi, "Morocco: Oil and Gas Industry," n.d., <https://mbendi.co.za/cymooi.htm>
- 67 Export.gov, "Morocco—Energy," 31 January 2019, <https://www.export.gov/article?id=Morocco-Energy>
- 68 Chaima Lahsini, "Morocco Still Dependent on Coal for Energy Production: Apicor," Morocco World News, 30 August 2017, <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2017/08/227478/morocco-still-dependent-coal-energy-production-apicorp/>
- 69 MBendi, "Morocco: Oil and Gas Industry," n.d., <https://mbendi.co.za/cymooi.htm>
- 70 EIA, "Morocco," September 2014, <https://www.eia.gov/beta/international/analysis.php?iso=MAR>
- 71 Ahmed Eljehtimi, "Long Shutdown Casts Shadow over Sale of Moroccan Refinery," Reuters, 10 May 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-morocco-economy/long-shutdown-casts-shadow-over-sale-of-moroccan-refinery-idUSKBN1IB1DQ>
- 72 Tamba François Koundouno, "Workers' Rights Group to 'Salvage' Morocco's Only Oil Refinery," Morocco World News, 3 July 2018, <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2018/07/249887/workers-rights-group-salvage-morocco-only-oil-refinery/>
- 73 A Barrel Full, "Samir Sidi Kacem Refinery," n.d., <http://abarrelfull.wikidot.com/samir-sidi-kacem-refinery>
- 74 EIA, "Morocco," September 2014, <https://www.eia.gov/beta/international/analysis.php?iso=MAR>
- 75 Petroleum Economist, "Morocco an 'Ideal' Place for Oil-Shale," n.d., <https://www.petroleum-economist.com/articles/upstream/exploration-production/2011/morocco-an-ideal-place-for-oil-shale>
- 76 Gaurav Sharma, "Morocco's Energy Industry in the Midst of a Massive Shakeup," Forbes, 13 February 2019, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/gauravsharma/2019/02/13/moroccos-energy-industry-in-the-midst-of-a-massive-shakeup/#ae76b243b7a1>

Morocco plans to reduce its dependence on foreign imports by developing renewable energies. The state-owned Office National de l'Electricite (ONE) plans to harness solar and wind energy to generate about 52% of the country's electricity needs by 2030.^{77, 78} Currently, Tarfaya in southwest Morocco is the site of Africa's largest wind farm, generating enough power for 1.5 million homes. The wind turbines have been specifically designed to withstand the salty ocean winds, desert sandstorms, and hot weather. Morocco's first thermal solar plant was inaugurated in 2010 at Ain Beni Mathar, near the border with Algeria, and is the first of its kind in Africa.^{79, 80, 81}

Natural Resources

Morocco is responsible for 16% of global arsenic output, 10% of barite, 2% of cobalt, and 1% of fluorspar. Other mineral reserves include lead, zinc, copper, manganese, and iron ore, although mining is underdeveloped in part because of outdated mining regulations and that only 36% of the country has been geologically mapped.^{82, 83} With the approval of the new mining code in 2015, the authorities began issuing exploration permits and licenses to foreign companies to dig for tungsten, tin minerals, zinc, and copper.⁸⁴

Trade

Morocco's trade deficit expanded in 2018. Oil and gas imports weigh on the trade balance, undermining the increase in exports of phosphates and automobiles.⁸⁵

The European Union is Morocco's largest trading partner. EU imports from Morocco are dominated by machinery and transport equipment, agricultural products, and textiles and clothing. EU exports to Morocco include machinery and transport equipment, fuels, metals and minerals, textiles and clothing, and agricultural products.

Morocco and the European Union have an Association Agreement and are currently negotiating a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement. Morocco is a partner in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, through which the EU offers its neighbors a privileged relationship.⁸⁶

Morocco has free trade agreements with the United States, the European Free Trade Association, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates. Morocco is also a member of the Agadir group, an Arab free trade area that includes Egypt,

77 EIA, "Morocco," September 2014, <https://www.eia.gov/beta/international/analysis.php?iso=MAR>

78 Siemens, "Turning Wind into Clean Energy Millions Rely On," 2018, <https://new.siemens.com/ma/en/company/topic-areas/ingenuity-for-life/tarfaya-wind-farm.html>

79 Siemens, "Turning Wind into Clean Energy Millions Rely On," 2018, <https://new.siemens.com/ma/en/company/topic-areas/ingenuity-for-life/tarfaya-wind-farm.html>

80 Sun & Wind Energy, "Africa's Largest Wind Farm," 2018, <http://www.sunwindenergy.com/news/africas-largest-wind-farm>

81 African Development Bank, "Ain Beni Mathar: A Unique Thermo Solar Powerplant in Morocco," 5 May 2011, <https://www.afdb.org/en/projects-and-operations/selected-projects/ain-beni-mathar-a-unique-thermo-solar-powerplant-in-morocco-142/>

82 Oxford Business Group, "Mining Sector in Morocco Diversifies away from Phosphates," The Report: Morocco 2016: Industry & Mining, 2016, <https://oxfordbusinessgroup.com/overview/new-tricks-having-traditionally-relied-phosphates-industry-mining-sector-diversifying>

83 DLA Piper, "Mining in Morocco: A Legal Snapshot," 13 July 2017, <https://www.dlapiper.com/en/africa/insights/publications/2017/07/mining-in-morocco-a-legal-snapshot/>

84 Ahlam Ben Saga, "UK-Based Mining Company to Dig for Zinc and Copper in Morocco," Morocco World News, 18 June 2018, <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2018/06/248815/uk-mining-zinc-copper-morocco/>

85 Reuters, "Morocco Trade Deficit Expands by 7.8 pct Jan–Oct," 16 November 2018, <https://af.reuters.com/article/moroccoNews/idAFL8N1XR59K?feedType=RSS&feedName=moroccoNews>

86 European Commission, "Countries and Regions: Morocco," 24 May 2018, <http://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/countries/morocco/>

Jordan, and Tunisia.^{87, 88} In 2017, Morocco applied for membership in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), a regional union of 15 countries, but the membership requirement to ease travel restrictions for citizens from these countries, who might traverse Morocco to enter Europe, has slowed negotiations.⁸⁹

Morocco's top export destinations are France, Spain, Germany, Italy, and the United States. Top imports originate in Spain, France, China, Germany, and Italy.⁹⁰ Morocco's top exports are cars, chemical fertilizers, insulated wire, women's suits, and phosphoric acid. Its top imports are refined petroleum (USD 3.13 billion), cars, petroleum gas, vehicle parts, and wheat.⁹¹

Morocco intends to establish itself as a major link between Europe and Africa, and European companies are ready to use Morocco as a conduit into African Markets.⁹²

More than 100 U.S. firms operate in Morocco, mostly in the renewable energy, aviation, infrastructure, and environmental technology sectors.^{93, 94}

Tourism

Morocco has one of the best-developed tourism industries in Africa, and the tourism industry is a pillar of the economy, alongside the automotive industry, agriculture, and phosphates. Close proximity to Europe, year-round hospitable weather along the coast, rich history and cultural traditions, and a relatively stable political environment make Morocco an attractive destination for international and local tourists.⁹⁵

In 2018, tourism contributed more than 8% to GDP, a figure that grows to about 15% when transport, food, handicraft, and other related sectors are considered. Foreign direct investment (FDI) in the tourism and hospitality sectors has exceeded USD 1 billion annually since 2015, and hotel capacity is growing. It is estimated that more than 2.5 million people work in the tourism sector (directly and indirectly), accounting for almost 25% of the total workforce.⁹⁶ In 2018, 12.3 million people visited Morocco, an increase of 8.5% over 2017. Most tourists came from Europe, and the number of Chinese tourists began to grow dramatically when visa requirements for Chinese citizens were removed.^{97, 98}

87 Rim Elmkinni, "Profile of the Dairy and Red Meat Sector in Morocco," Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Government of Canada, February 2016, <http://www.agr.gc.ca/eng/industry-markets-and-trade/international-agri-food-market-intelligence/reports/profile-of-the-dairy-and-red-meat-sector-in-morocco/?id=1486065836964>

88 European Commission, "Countries and Regions: Morocco," 24 May 2018, <http://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/countries/morocco/>

89 Stratfor, "Why Banks in Morocco Are Spreading the Wealth around Africa," 11 January 2019, <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/why-banks-morocco-are-spreading-wealth-around-africa>

90 OEC, "Morocco," 2018, <https://atlas.media.mit.edu/en/profile/country/mar/>

91 OEC, "Morocco," 2018, <https://atlas.media.mit.edu/en/profile/country/mar/>

92 Stratfor, "Why Banks in Morocco Are Spreading the Wealth around Africa," 11 January 2019, <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/why-banks-morocco-are-spreading-wealth-around-africa>

93 Export.gov, "Morocco—Market Overview," 31 January 2018, <https://www.export.gov/article?id=Morocco-Market-Overview>

94 Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, U.S. Department of State, "U.S. Relations with Morocco," 19 July 2018, <https://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5431.htm>

95 Oxford Business Group, "The Report: Morocco 2019, Tourism" 2019, <https://oxfordbusinessgroup.com/morocco-2019/tourism>

96 World Finance, "Inspiring a Tourism Revolution in Morocco," 6 March 2019, <https://www.worldfinance.com/wealth-management/inspiring-a-tourism-revolution-in-morocco>

97 Middle East Online, "Morocco's Tourism Sector Posts Strong Result in 2018," 23 January 2019, <https://middle-east-online.com/en/morocco%E2%80%99s-tourism-sector-posts-strong-result-2018>

98 Victoria Rosenthal, "Tourist Numbers in Morocco Jump 10 Percent in 2018's First Half," Hotel Management, 16 August 2018, <https://www.hotelmanagement.net/marketplace/tourist-numbers-morocco-jump-10-percent-2018-s-first-half>

In 2018, Marrakech was designated the African Capital of Culture 2020. In 2019, the famous Lonely Planet travel guide listed Meknes as one of the top ten cities to visit, along with Fez and Marrakech.^{99, 100} The British magazine *Which?*, which ranks tourism security according to the crime rate, risk of natural disasters, health threats, and risk of terrorist attacks, listed Morocco on the World Economic Fund Safety Index as the world's 8th safest country to travel, ahead of the United States, France, and Italy.¹⁰¹

In December 2018, two Danish female students were murdered while hiking in the foothills of Toubkal, the highest summit in North Africa, by men who allegedly had pledged allegiance to the Islamic State. The authorities called the murder a terrorist act and arrested two dozen suspects. The killings have raised concerns about the impact of extremism on Morocco's tourism sector.^{102, 103}

Banking and Finance

Morocco's currency is the dirham (MAD). The dirham is also used in Western Sahara. In May 2019, USD 1 was equivalent to MAD 9.65.^{104, 105}

The Moroccan dirham correlates closer to the euro than the U.S. dollar. In 2017, the central bank, Bank al-Maghrib, reduced the weight of the euro to 60–80% and raised the U.S. dollar to 40%, up from 20%. It was the first change to the currency basket in a decade, due to an increase in trade with the United States, China, and the rest of Africa and a slowdown in the eurozone. The change was aimed to help Moroccan exports and boost tourism revenue and remittances from the 4.5 million Moroccans living abroad, most of whom work in the eurozone.^{106, 107}

Morocco has some of the largest banks in Africa, and its banking system is similar to that of France. The sector is dominated by locally owned banks and the Casablanca Stock Exchange, which is one of the largest and most important in Africa. There are 19 onshore licensed banks in Morocco and six offshore banks, 34 non-bank financial institutions, including 16 consumer credit specialists, 13 microcredit lenders, and six leasing companies. Credit is allocated freely, and the central bank controls the interest rate and the volume of credit.^{108, 109, 110}

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- 103 The Local, "Trial for Murder of Scandinavian Hikers to Open in Morocco," 30 April 2019, <https://www.thelocal.no/20190430/trial-for-murder-of-scandinavian-hikers-to-open-in-morocco>
- 104 XE, "MAD—Moroccan Dirham," 6 May 2019, <https://www.xe.com/currency/mad-moroccan-dirham?r=>
- 105 XE, "XE Currency Converter: 1 USD to MAD = 9.65966 Moroccan Dirhams," 6 May 2019, <https://www.xe.com/currencyconverter/convert/?Amount=1&From=USD&To=MAD>
- 106 Export.gov, "Morocco—Foreign Exchange Controls," 31 January 2019, <https://www.export.gov/article?id=Morocco-Foreign-Exchange-Controls>
- 107 Aziz El Yaakoubi, "Morocco Looks for Smooth Transition to More Flexible Exchange-Rate System," Reuters, 14 January 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/morocco-currency/morocco-looks-for-smooth-transition-to-more-flexible-exchange-rate-system-idUSL8N1P90D0>
- 108 Export.gov, "Morocco—Banking Systems," 31 January 2019, <https://www.export.gov/article?id=Morocco-Banking-Systems>
- 109 Oxford Business Group, "Moroccan Banking Sector Enhanced by Islamic Financial Services and Regulatory Reform," 2018, <https://oxfordbusinessgroup.com/overview/above-and-beyond-islamic-banking-services-and-regulatory-reform-set-reshape-sector%E2%80%99s-fortunes>
- 110 World Bank, "Financial Sector Assessment: Morocco," February 2016, <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/802191484661795353/pdf/Morocco-FSAP-Update-FSA-Public-01132017.pdf>

In recent years, Moroccan banks, which had little room to grow domestically, began venturing into the African continent. In 2016, Morocco's largest bank, Attijariwafa purchased Barclays Egypt. Currently, 22% of Attijariwafa's profit comes from sub-Saharan Africa.^{111, 112, 113}

In 2015, a new banking law approved the establishment of an Islamic banking subsector and the central bank set up a committee of Islamic scholars to oversee the sector. The first Islamic bank, Umnia Bank, a joint venture of Qatar International Islamic Bank and Moroccan lender Credit CIH Bank, opened in 2017. As of 2018, more than 70 banks and financial institutions provide Sharia-compliant financial services.^{114, 115, 116}

Standard of Living

By international standards, Morocco's standard of living is low. Despite registering economic progress, 15% of the population lives below the poverty line. Rural poverty is about three times higher than urban poverty.^{117, 118, 119}

The 2018 Human Development Index, which measures living standards worldwide, ranked Morocco at 123 out of 189 countries.¹²⁰ Life expectancy at birth is 74 for men and 80 for women, placing Morocco at 75 out of 223 countries. Despite low school enrollment in remote areas, Morocco has made progress in increasing adult literacy. Today, the literacy rate of the total population is 68.5%, with 78.8% among men and 58.8% for women, up from 44% in 1994. The illiteracy rate remains high in rural areas.^{121, 122, 123, 124}

Morocco's GDP per capita is USD 7,340, and it is listed as a lower-middle income country by the World Bank. The Human Capital Index (HCI), which measures the survival rate and education level that a child born in 2018 can expect to attain by the age of 18 and conveys the productivity of the next generation of workers, ranked Morocco at 98 out of 157 countries, with an HCI higher for girls than for boys. Morocco is ranked lower than average among MENA countries but higher than the average for its income group.^{125, 126}

- 111 Stratfor, "Why Banks in Morocco Are Spreading the Wealth around Africa," 11 January 2019, <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/why-banks-morocco-are-spreading-wealth-around-africa>
- 112 Heba Saleh, "Moroccan Companies and Banks Support King's Push into Africa," *Financial Times*, 23 January 2019, <https://www.ft.com/content/be100158-f967-11e8-a154-2b65ddf314e9>
- 113 Nicholas Megaw and Heba Saleh, "Morocco Banks Expand to West Africa for Greater if Riskier Returns," *Financial Times*, 23 January 2019, <https://www.ft.com/content/c6f6e486-fc68-11e8-b03f-bc62050f3c4e>
- 114 Oxford Business Group, "Moroccan Banking Sector Enhanced by Islamic Financial Services and Regulatory Reform," 2018, <https://oxfordbusinessgroup.com/overview/above-and-beyond-islamic-banking-services-and-regulatory-reform-set-reshape-sector%E2%80%99s-fortunes>
- 115 Samia Errazzouki, "Morocco Opens First Islamic Bank Branch Months After Approval," Reuters, 23 May 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/morocco-banks/morocco-opens-first-islamic-bank-branch-months-after-approval-idUSL8N1IP6CO>
- 116 Arno Maierbrugger, "Islamic Finance Well Received in Morocco after Last Year's Launch," *Gulf News*, 14 August 2019, <https://www.gulf-times.com/story/602838/Islamic-finance-well-received-in-Morocco-after-las>
- 117 Central Intelligence Agency, "Morocco: Economy," in *The World Factbook*, 19 April 2019, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mo.html>
- 118 Santander Trade Portal, "Morocco: Economic and Political Outline," 2019, <https://en.portal.santandertrade.com/analyse-markets/morocco/economic-political-outline>
- 119 African Development Bank, "North Africa Economic Outlook 2018," 2018, <https://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Publications/2018AEO/African-Economic-Outlook-2018-North-Africa.pdf>
- 120 UN Development Programme, "Human Development Reports 2018," 2018, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/2018-update>
- 121 Central Intelligence Agency, "Morocco: Economy," in *The World Factbook*, 19 April 2019, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mo.html>
- 122 UN Development Programme, "Human Development Reports 2018," 2018, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/2018-update>
- 123 World Bank, "Boosting Adult Literacy in Morocco," n.d., http://web.worldbank.org/archive/website01033/WEB/0_CO-75.HTM
- 124 Ahmed Idrissi Noury, "Lifting Moroccans out of Poverty," *Fair Observer*, 5 April 2017, <https://www.fairobserver.com/world-news/poverty-morocco-world-news-sustainable-development-34540/>
- 125 The World Bank, "Morocco: Human Capital Index Rank 98 out of 157," October 2018, https://databank.worldbank.org/data/download/hci/HCI_2pager_MAR.pdf
- 126 Jean-Pierre Chauffour, "Morocco 2014 : Emerging by Investing in Intangible Capital," World Bank, 2017, <http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/873111494618941322/Morocco-CEM2017-summary-ENG.pdf>

A 2017 study of Morocco's economy concluded that the standard of living in Morocco corresponds to that reached by France in 1950, Italy in 1955, Spain in 1960, and Portugal in 1965.¹²⁷

Employment

Unemployment hovers around 10%. Youth unemployment is almost triple the national rate. Unemployment is 26% among the 15–24 age group, 15% among the 25–34 age group, and 17% among college graduates.^{128, 129, 130} About 43% of the labor force is employed in the service sector, which is led by real estate and tourism. However, services sector employment is concentrated in services considered low-skilled, and productivity is low.^{131, 132}

The informal economy makes reliable employment data difficult to produce. A 2014 study revealed that the informal economy, excluding agriculture, contributes 20% to GDP. The informal sector saw the largest job creation in recent years, with 2.4 million informal employees. The informal economy provides jobs in textiles and clothing, road freight transport, construction, and food and tobacco.^{133, 134}

Policymakers recognize the acute need to promote youth employment. In recent years, the authorities have reduced energy subsidies to divert funds towards boosting employment.¹³⁵ The labor force stands at 12 million, and the labor force participation rate is 46.2%.¹³⁶

Outlook

The Moroccan economy is resilient and relies on exports, private investment, and tourism. After being hit by a drought in 2015 and 2016, leading to a slowdown in GDP growth, economic activity picked up. Inflation remains below 2%.^{137, 138}

Growth is expected to rebound modestly in 2020 with the expected support of strong tourism, domestic consumption, and a stable currency. The introduction of a floating exchange rate is expected to bring more FDI to key sectors, especially the automotive industry.¹³⁹

The agriculture sector is the weak spot of the economy, as it is vulnerable to swings in climate conditions. In the coming year, the agriculture GDP is projected to decline, primarily because of the average cereal harvest.

127 Sana Elouazi, "Morocco's Standard of Living Equal to France's in 1950: World Bank," Morocco World News, 21 October 2017, <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2017/10/231757/morocco-standard-living-equal-france-world-bank/>

128 Santander Trade Portal, "Morocco: Economic and Political Outline," 2019, <https://en.portal.santandertrade.com/analyse-markets/morocco/economic-political-outline>

129 Trading Economics, "Morocco Unemployment Rate," 2019, <https://tradingeconomics.com/morocco/unemployment-rate>

130 World Bank, "Labor Market in Morocco: Challenges and Opportunities," 9 April 2018, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/morocco/publication/labor-market-in-morocco-challenges-and-opportunities>

131 Santander Trade Portal, "Morocco: Economic and Political Outline," 2019, <https://en.portal.santandertrade.com/analyse-markets/morocco/economic-political-outline>

132 World Bank, "Labor Market in Morocco: Challenges and Opportunities," 9 April 2018, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/morocco/publication/labor-market-in-morocco-challenges-and-opportunities>

133 Reuters, "Morocco's Unemployment Rate Drops to 9.8 pct in 2018—Planning Agency," 5 February 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/morocco-employment/moroccos-unemployment-rate-drops-to-98-pct-in-2018-planning-agency-idUSL5N2003E1>

134 Sana Elouazi, "Informal Economy Represents More than 20% of Morocco's GDP," Morocco World News, 7 April 2018, <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2018/04/243990/informal-economy-morocco-gdp-study/>

135 Stratfor, "Why Banks in Morocco Are Spreading the Wealth around Africa," 11 January 2019, <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/why-banks-morocco-are-spreading-wealth-around-africa>

136 Ceicdata, "Morocco Unemployment Rate," 2019, <https://www.ceicdata.com/en/indicator/morocco/unemployment-rate>

137 Santander Trade Portal, "Morocco: Economic and Political Outline," 2019, <https://en.portal.santandertrade.com/analyse-markets/morocco/economic-political-outline>

138 World Bank, "Morocco Overview," 1 April 2019, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/morocco/overview>

139 Focus Economics, "Morocco Economic Forecast," 2 April 2019, <https://www.focus-economics.com/countries/morocco>

Nonagricultural GDP, however, is expected to sustain its performance due to the strong manufacturing and services sectors. A decline in phosphate production is expected to affect the mining sector, which is the main contributor to economic growth.^{140, 141, 142, 143}

The fiscal deficit fell short of the government's expectations in 2018 but is projected to decrease, owing to the tax reform, the restructuring of public expenditures, and more effective collection of tax revenues.¹⁴⁴

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- 140 Focus Economics, "Morocco Economic Forecast," 2 April 2019, <https://www.focus-economics.com/countries/morocco>
- 141 World Bank, "Morocco's Economic Outlook—October 2018," 3 October 2018, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/morocco/publication/economic-outlook-october-2018>
- 142 *Economist*, "Morocco: In Brief," 2019, <https://country.eiu.com/morocco>
- 143 Focus Economics, "Morocco Economic Forecast," 2 April 2019, <https://www.focus-economics.com/countries/morocco>
- 144 African Development Bank, "Morocco Economic Outlook," 2019, <https://www.afdb.org/en/countries/north-africa/morocco/morocco-economic-outlook/>

Morocco in Perspective

Chapter 3 | Economy, Assessment

Read the following statements and answer True or False

- | | | | |
|----|--|------|-------|
| 1. | Cars are the main export product of Morocco. | True | False |
| 2. | Morocco imports almost all of its energy from other countries. | True | False |
| 3. | Morocco banned Islamic banking on its soil in order to attract European investors. | True | False |
| 4. | Kif is an important cash crop in the Rif Mountains. | True | False |
| 5. | Security concerns hurt the tourist industry in Morocco. | True | False |

Morocco in Perspective

Chapter 3 | Economy, Assessment Answers

1. True:
Morocco is Africa's leading car manufacturer. In recent years, the automotive industry has grown to such an extent that cars have become the main export product of Morocco, surpassing the traditional phosphate sector.
2. True:
Morocco is the only country in the Middle East and North Africa that relies on coal. About 30% of the country's electricity production derives from coal. Furthermore, without oil refineries, Morocco is dependent on imported refined products.
3. False:
A 2015 banking law approved the establishment of an Islamic banking subsector in Morocco. Today, more than 70 banks and financial institutions provide sharia-compliant financial services.
4. True:
Cannabis (kif) is an important cash crop in the Rif Mountain regions, despite the crop being illegal. Nearly 3% of the population relies on cannabis for income. Most of the cannabis is grown outdoors in the open air. The cultivation of cannabis also boosts tourism in the region. Morocco is among the world's top cannabis resin (hashish) exporters.
5. False:
Morocco has one of the best-developed tourism industries in Africa and the tourism industry is a pillar of the economy. In 2018, 12.3 million people visited Morocco, an increase of 8.5% over 2017.

Chapter 4 | Society



Mendicant musician playing the guimbri in Marrakesh
Flickr / Ahron de Leeuw

Introduction

Moroccans are descendants of indigenous Berber (Amazigh) tribes and Arabs which account for 99% of the population. The remaining 1% are the Haratin and the Gnawa people, who are the descendants of West African slaves; Moroccan Jews; and Europeans, who are mainly descendants of French or Spanish colonists. The country is demographically young; the median age of the nation's 35.75 million people is 29, with 27% of the population under 15.^{1,2}

The majority of the population lives west of the Atlas Mountains, in the fertile coastal plains and plateaus where the climate is more hospitable. Nearly 60% of Moroccans reside in urban areas.^{3,4}

Islam is the official religion, and 99% of the population follows Sunni Islam. Morocco had a sizable Jewish minority for much of its history, but today less than 0.2% of the population follows the Jewish faith. Other religious

- 1 Central Intelligence Agency, "Morocco: People," in *The World Factbook*, 7 April 2019, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mo.html>
- 2 World Population Review, "Morocco Population," 2019, <http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/morocco-population/>
- 3 Countries and Their Cultures, "The United Kingdom of Morocco," n.d., <https://www.everyculture.com/Ma-Ni/The-United-Kingdom-of-Morocco.html>
- 4 Central Intelligence Agency, "Morocco: People," in *The World Factbook*, 7 April 2019, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mo.html>

minorities include Christians and Bahais. Less than 0.1% of the population is Shia Muslim.⁵ Arabic language and culture dominate along the coasts, but in the mountainous interior, the Berber (Amazigh) have lived outside of this influence for centuries. A variety of traditions adopted from traders and invaders can be seen around the country and in cities, which offer a mix of neocolonial architecture and walled sections dating back a thousand years or more.^{6, 7}

Ethnic Groups and Languages

Berbers—who prefer to be called Amazigh in singular or Imazighen in plural—is the general term used for the indigenous non-Arab population. Most Moroccans are a mix of Arab and indigenous Berber. Several tribes in the High and Middle Atlas Mountains identify themselves as pure Amazigh Berbers. The Soussi tribe lives in the Anti-Atlas. Less than 1% of the population consists of a small Jewish community, Sub-Saharan Africans, Gnawa, and several enclaves of Europeans, particularly Spanish, in the north.^{8, 9} The Sahrawi, who are a mix of Berbers, Arabs, and Black Africans, live in the disputed territory of Western Sahara.^{10, 11, 12}

Morocco has two official languages: Modern Standard Arabic, which is taught in schools, and Tamazight, one of the three main Berber languages. About 35% of Moroccans are native speakers of one of the Berber languages. French is used in government, diplomacy, and the business world and is also taught in schools. Spanish is spoken in the north, and English is becoming more common.^{13, 14}

Berbers – Imazighen

The indigenous non-Arab population of North Africa (Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia) have been referred to as Berbers for centuries, but they consider this term offensive as it is derived from the word “barbarian,” a name given by Greeks and Romans to those who spoke languages other than Greek or Latin, and later changed into Barbar by the Arabs. Instead, Berbers call themselves Amazigh, which means “free people” in the indigenous Tamazight language. It is estimated that more than 60% of Morocco’s population is Berber.^{15, 16}

The Moroccan indigenous Berber tribes are divided into three regional groups: the Rifians of the north; the Shluh of the southeast; and the Berraber in the center of the country and the Sahara.¹⁷ Other tribes are the Drawa, who live in the Drâa Valley; the Dades, who live in the north east; the Mesgita, Seddrat, and Zeri, who live along the

5 Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, United States Department of State, “2017 Report on International Religious Freedom: Morocco,” 29 May 2018, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2017-report-on-international-religious-freedom/morocco/>

6 Orin Hargraves, *Culture Shock! A Survival Guide to Customs and Etiquette: Morocco* (Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish Corporation, 2007), 100-101.

7 Will D. Swearingen et al., “Morocco,” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 27 February 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Morocco>

8 Countries and Their Cultures, “The United Kingdom of Morocco,” n.d., <https://www.everyculture.com/Ma-Ni/The-United-Kingdom-of-Morocco.html>

9 World Atlas, “The Ethnic Groups in Morocco,” n.d., <https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/the-ethnic-groups-in-morocco.html>

10 Organization for Statehood and Freedom, “Saharawi Culture,” n.d., <http://statehoodandfreedom.org/en/western-sahara/saharawi-culture>

11 *Encyclopædia Britannica*, “Western Sahara,” 9 January 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Western-Sahara>

12 Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, United States Department of State, “2017 Report on International Religious Freedom: Morocco,” 29 May 2018, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2017-report-on-international-religious-freedom/morocco/>

13 Fanack, “Population of Morocco,” n.d., <https://fanack.com/morocco/population/>

14 InterNations, “A Practical Guide to The Way of Life in Morocco,” n.d., <https://www.internations.org/go/moving-to-morocco/living>

15 Nuuja Kahina, “Free People: The Imazighen of North Africa,” *Intercontinental Cry*, 12 March 2013, <https://intercontinentalcry.org/free-people-the-imazighen-of-north-africa/>

16 Michael Brett, “Berber,” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 20 March 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Berber>

17 Canada: Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, “Morocco: Brief History of the Berbers Including Their Origins and Geographic Location,” Refworld, 16 November 2000, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3df4be668.html>

rivers of the northwest; the Ghomara, who also live in the Rif region; and the Soussi, who live in the Anti-Atlas.^{18, 19} Before the Arabs arrived in Morocco, the indigenous people were Christian or Jews, but as the Arabs settled in the region, the population converted to Islam. The majority of Berbers are Sunni Muslims. Most Christian Berbers eventually immigrated to France, while the Jewish Berbers have seen a reduction in numbers starting in the 1950s.^{20, 21}

Most of the indigenous Berbers live in the mountains while Arabs and Moors (people of mixed Berber and Arab descent) live in the cities. Berber communities are often remote and isolated. As subsistence farmers, Berbers cultivate wheat, fruit, vegetables, and sometimes sheep and cattle. Villages are often made up of related clans. Strict adherence to custom has given Berbers a strong sense of unity and identity. Consequently, Berbers are more likely to value familial loyalty over national allegiance.^{22, 23, 24}

The Berber language is a non-Semitic language from the Afro-Asiatic group and has several variants. It is primarily oral in nature, but a writing system has existed for more than 2,500 years. Three distinct dialects of Berber are spoken in Morocco. Tashlhit is spoken in the Anti-Atlas range, western High Atlas range, and the Souss Valley by 14% of the total population; Tamazight is spoken in the Middle Atlas and central and eastern High Atlas by 9% of the population, and Tarifit is spoken in the Rif Mountains by 5% of the population.^{25, 26, 27}

Berber was the language of the region until the area became Arabized through religion, trade, and government. After independence in 1956, Berber languages were marginalized in the national education system. A constitutional referendum adopted in July 2011 made Berber Tamazight an official language alongside Arabic, the official language of the state. Today, there is a movement for the language to be formalized and written, based on the Tifinagh script, the historic consonantal alphabet used by the Berber Tuareg of the Sahara. In 1994, the government began broadcasting television and radio programs in Berber languages, and the king announced that Berber languages would be taught in primary schools.^{28, 29, 30} The resurgence of Berber pride is symbolized by the Berber letter Ж.³¹

18 Carole Morris, "Who are the Morocco Berbers?" Journey Beyond Travel, n.d., <https://www.journeybeyondtravel.com/blog/morocco-travel-berbers.html>

19 Countries and Their Cultures, "The United Kingdom of Morocco," n.d., <https://www.everyculture.com/Ma-Ni/The-United-Kingdom-of-Morocco.html>

20 World Atlas, "The Ethnic Groups in Morocco," n.d., <https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/the-ethnic-groups-in-morocco.html>

21 Find Trip Info, "Berbers of Morocco," n.d., <http://www.findtripinfo.com/Morocco/berbers-morocco.html>

22 Kevin Delgado, *Modern Nations of the World: Morocco* (New York: Lucent Books, 2006), 53.

23 Carole Morris, "Who are the Morocco Berbers?" Journey Beyond Travel, n.d., <https://www.journeybeyondtravel.com/blog/morocco-travel-berbers.html>

24 Find Trip Info, "Berbers of Morocco," n.d., <http://www.findtripinfo.com/Morocco/berbers-morocco.html>

25 Fanack, "Population of Morocco," n.d., <https://fanack.com/morocco/population/>

26 H. Ekkehard Wolff, "Berber Languages," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 26 September 2016, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Amazigh-languages>

27 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.

28 Fanack, "Population of Morocco," n.d., <https://fanack.com/morocco/population/>

29 Aljazeera, "Moroccans Vote 'Yes' to Revised Constitution," 2 July 2011, <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/africa/2011/07/20117154535570851.html>

30 Canada: Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, "Morocco: Brief History of The Berbers Including Their Origins and Geographic Location" Refworld, 16 November 2000, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3df4be668.html>

31 Rough Guides, "Arabs and Berbers," n.d., <https://www.roughguides.com/destinations/africa/morocco/arabs-berbers/>

Arabs

Arab Muslims arrived in Morocco in the 7th century. Since then, the Arab and Berber ethnic groups have assimilated. Today, most Moroccans claim both Arab and Berber descent. Only a few Arabs, such as the Shereefs (Oulad Ali), who trace their ancestry back to Prophet Muhammad and have the title “Moulay,” claim to be “pure” Arabs.^{32, 33}

Moroccan Arabs dominate the professional class. The Alaouites (or ‘Alawī), Morocco’s royal family and self-proclaimed descendants of the Prophet Muhammad, are the wealthiest and most powerful group.³⁴

Arabs follow the Quran more strictly than Berbers. The Quran defines gender roles—men are the providers, and women take care of the household. However, even among Arabs, these traditional divisions vary. Traditions run deep among fundamentalists; greater openness exists among wealthier Arabs.³⁵

Moroccan Arabic, known as Darija, is the first language of most Arab Moroccans apart from the regions where Berber languages dominate. Modern Standard Arabic is typically used for official business. Darija is a spoken language used in family settings, between friends, by shopkeepers, in offices, by cab drivers, on the television, etc. Darija is very similar to the Arabic spoken in Algeria, and to a lesser extent, the Arabic of Tunisia and Libya. Arabic speakers outside of the Maghreb find Darija difficult to understand, although Moroccans can understand speakers from the Arabian Peninsula. The Darija vocabulary comes from Arabic and Tamazight, but many words in French, Spanish, English, German, and Portuguese have penetrated this dialect. Lastly, many idiomatic sayings and slang words in Darija are not easily understood outside of Morocco.³⁶

In Western Sahara, people speak a version of Arabic called Hassaniya, which has replaced Berber languages that were spoken in the region. Hassaniya has a few dialects and was influenced by the West African-based Zenaga and Wolof languages.^{37, 38}

Jews

A Jewish population has been present in Morocco for nearly 2,000 years, and Moroccan Jews have held important positions in the government and the business community—Jews had a monopoly on sugar exports and played a key role in the caravan trade.³⁹ Jewish neighborhoods (*mellahs*) existed in Casablanca, Fez, Marrakech, Rabat, Mogador, Meknes, and Tangier. During World War II, King Hassan refused to cooperate with France’s Vichy government demand to deport Jews to European concentration camps. Since the foundation of the state of Israel, the Jewish community in Morocco had shrunk from about 260,000 in 1948 to just a few thousand today, with about 2,500 Jews living in Casablanca. Morocco’s constitution recognizes the Jewish community as an integral part of society.^{40, 41, 42}

32 World Atlas, “The Ethnic Groups in Morocco,” n.d., <https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/the-ethnic-groups-in-morocco.html>

33 Rough Guides, “Arabs and Berbers,” n.d., <https://www.roughguides.com/destinations/africa/morocco/arabs-berbers/>

34 Morocco.com, “Morocco’s Alaouite Dynasty,” n.d., <https://www.morocco.com/blog/morocco-s-alaouite-dynasty/>

35 Kevin Delgado, *Modern Nations of the World: Morocco* (New York: Lucent Books, 2006), 55.

36 Sarah Williams, “Differences Between Moroccan Arabic and Standard Arabic,” Culture Trip, 20 July 2017, <https://theculturetrip.com/africa/morocco/articles/differences-between-moroccan-arabic-and-standard-arabic/>

37 Fanack, “Population of Morocco,” n.d., <https://fanack.com/morocco/population/>

38 Definitions, “Hassaniya Arabic,” n.d., <https://www.definitions.net/definition/HASSANIYA+ARABIC>

39 Project Aladin, “History of the Jews in Moroccan,” n.d., <http://www.projetaladin.org/holocaust/en/muslims-and-jews/muslims-and-jews-in-history/history-of-the-jews-in-morocco.html>

40 Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, United States Department of State, “2017 Report on International Religious Freedom: Morocco,” 29 May 2018, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2017-report-on-international-religious-freedom/morocco/>

41 Jewish Virtual Library, “Jews in Islamic Countries: Morocco,” n.d., <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jews-of-morocco>

42 Laura Stampler, “6 Moroccan Cities Where Jewish Culture Flourishes,” *Forward*, 6 February 2018, <https://forward.com/culture/392984/6-moroccan-cities-where-jewish-culture-flourishes/>

Jews do not intermarry with the Arab community but do practice some Moroccan cultural traditions, such as pilgrimages to tombs of revered sages.⁴³

In 2003, Islamic militants coordinated suicide bomb attacks against several establishments in Casablanca, including an old Jewish cemetery, a Jewish-owned restaurant, and a hotel frequented by Israelis. However, the bombings were viewed by most as an assault on the country's social and political order, rather than as an act of anti-Semitism.^{44, 45, 46}

Morocco has a highly tolerant environment for Jews compared to other Arab Muslim countries. According to a senior Jewish advisor to King Mohammed VI, in spite of some anti-Jewish sentiments in the country today, Judaism is part of the Moroccan identity.^{47, 48, 49}

Gnawa

The Gnawa people arrived in Morocco as slaves from the Empire of Ouagadougou, which ruled over present day Senegal, Mauritania, Burkina Faso, Gambia, and parts of Mali. The Gnawa brought with them rich musical and spiritual traditions and are considered experts in the treatment of psychological disorders and scorpion stings. The Gnawa practice Sufism, a mystical version of Islam, and combine Islam with sub-Saharan West African traditions. They believe in saints, demons, and supernatural beings of African origins. They practice rituals of possession called *lila*, and are known for their music, which evolved from a spiritual practice to a contemporary artistic expression.^{50, 51, 52}

Sahrawi

In 1976, Morocco annexed two-thirds of Western Sahara, and in 1979 claimed the remaining third. The Sahrawi people launched a guerrilla war, led by the Polisario Front, ending in a ceasefire agreement in 1991. As of 2019, the conflict over the sovereignty of this territory is unresolved, and the UN peacekeeping mission known as MINURSO is still in effect.^{53, 54, 55}

43 Jewish Virtual Library, "Jews in Islamic Countries: Morocco," n.d., <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jews-of-morocco>

44 Jewish Virtual Library, "Jews in Islamic Countries: Morocco," n.d., <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jews-of-morocco>

45 Project Aladin, "History of the Jews in Morocco," n.d., <http://www.projetaladin.org/holocaust/en/muslims-and-jews/muslims-and-jews-in-history/history-of-the-jews-in-morocco.html>

46 Martin Bright et al., "Horror in Casablanca as al-Qaeda Toll Hits 41," *Guardian*, 17 May 2003, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2003/may/18/alqaida.terrorism2>

47 Jewish Virtual Library, "Jews in Islamic Countries: Morocco," n.d., <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jews-of-morocco>

48 Yarden Schwartz, "For Jews and Muslims of Morocco, a Supportive Relationship Built on a Complex History," NBC, 15 July 2017, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/jews-muslims-morocco-supportive-relationship-built-complex-history-n782796>

49 Yaelle Azagury and Anouar Majid, "The Moroccan Exception in the Arab World," *New York Times*, 9 April 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/09/opinion/morocco-jews-mohammed-vi.html?action=click&module=Opinion&pgtype=Homepage>

50 World Atlas, "The Ethnic Groups in Morocco," n.d., <https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/the-ethnic-groups-in-morocco.html>

51 Tom Pfeiffer, "Morocco Taps African Roots with Gnawa Music Revival," Reuters, 13 September 2008, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-morocco-gnawa/morocco-taps-african-roots-with-gnawa-music-revival-idUSLR13523420080914>

52 Music of Morocco, "History and Origins of Gnawa Music," n.d., <http://musicofmorocco.weebly.com/history5.html>

53 Daniel Samet, "The Western Sahara Dispute Drags On after 27 Years in Limbo," Freedom House, 9 January 2019, <https://freedomhouse.org/blog/western-sahara-dispute-drags-after-27-years-limbo>

54 Conor Gaffey, "Western Sahara: What is the 40-Year Dispute All About?" *Newsweek*, 9 March 2016, <https://www.newsweek.com/western-sahara-morocco-algeria-polisario-front-435170>

55 *Encyclopædia Britannica*, "Western Sahara," 9 January 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Western-Sahara>

The nomadic peoples of Western Sahara trace their origins to the Berbers. Today, the Sahrawi are known as the “people of the Sahara.” This formerly nomadic group has become more settled because of the danger of movement during armed conflicts.^{56, 57}

The Sahrawi have a well-defined caste system. The highest caste members study and teach Islam or are warriors. The second caste comprises craftsmen and artisans. Traditionally, the lowest caste members were 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.⁵⁸

Religion

Islam is the state religion of Morocco, and 99% of the people follow Sunni Islam. Despite the special status of Islam, the constitution guarantees freedom of religion. Religious minorities can openly practice their faiths but are not allowed to proselytize. Voluntary conversion is not a crime. Christian and Jewish minorities have small populations. A majority of the country’s estimated 4,000 Jews live in Casablanca. Estimates for the Christian population, which is mostly made up of expatriates living in Casablanca and Rabat, range from 2,000 to 50,000.⁵⁹

Sunni Islam and Judaism are the only religions recognized in the constitution as native to the country; other faiths are viewed as foreign. Jews have special courts that govern personal matters such as marriage and divorce, and a separate set of civil laws. Throughout its history, Morocco has considered itself a bastion of religious tolerance in the Arab and Islamic worlds, and the monarchy has repeatedly demonstrated its commitment to the safety of the Jewish minority.^{60, 61}

After the 2003 Casablanca bombing, concern about the rise of jihadist ideology and the spread of *Hanbali Wahhabism*, in Morocco and throughout Africa, drove the government to pursue a more moderate and balanced form of Islam called *al-wasatiyya* (“the middle path”). Government officials advocate for this distinct Moroccan Islam—besides affirming that there is only one Islam—based on three principles: the Maliki school of law (*maddhab*), Ashari theology (*kalâm*), and Sunni Sufism (*tassawûf*).⁶²

Muslim judges are trained in the Maliki-Ashari Sunni interpretation of Sharia law, but some Maliki rulings have extended legal interpretations to encompass local traditions. Consequently, in rural areas, Islamic traditions are

56 Sahara Marathon, “The Saharawi People and the Western Sahara,” n.d., http://www.sahamarathon.org/en/aboutsaharawi_en/
57 Organization for Statehood and Freedom, “Saharawi Culture,” n.d., <http://statehoodandfreedom.org/en/western-sahara/saharawi-culture>

58 Kevin Delgado, *Modern Nations of the World: Morocco* (New York: Lucent Books, 2006), 58–61.

59 Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, United States Department of State. “2017 Report on International Religious Freedom: Morocco.” 29 May 2018. <https://www.state.gov/reports/2017-report-on-international-religious-freedom/morocco/>

60 Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, United States Department of State. “2017 Report on International Religious Freedom: Morocco.” 29 May 2018. <https://www.state.gov/reports/2017-report-on-international-religious-freedom/morocco/>

61 Aomar Boum, “Morocco’s Program for Securing Religious Toleration: A Model for the Region?” Martin Marty Center for the Public Understanding of Religion, University of Chicago, 18 March 2018, <https://divinity.uchicago.edu/sightings/morocco-program-securing-religious-toleration-model-region>

62 Cédric Baylocq and Aziz Hlaoua, “Spreading a ‘Moderate Islam’? Morocco’s New African Religious Diplomacy,” *Afrique Contemporaine* 257, no 11 (2016): 113-128, https://www.cairn-int.info/article-E_AFCO_257_0113--spreading-a-moderate-islam-morocco-s-new.htm

merged with ancient Berber practices. Some conservative Muslims view this practice as unorthodox but not heretical.^{63, 64, 65} Many domestic Islamic practices have been influenced by Sufi mysticism, as many Sufi mystics are venerated as *marabouts* (holy men) who possess *baraka* (divine blessing), even after death. In rural areas, the *marabouts* often take on the role of arbitrators because of their prestige. Sultans and kings, being *shurafa* (descendants of the Prophet Muhammad), have also traditionally possessed *baraka*. Since *baraka* can be passed to descendants, there are *maraboutic* and Sharifian religious lineages in many rural areas.^{66, 67, 68}

Cuisine

Moroccan cuisine is a mix of Berber, Arab, Spanish, British, French, and Jewish culinary traditions. Ingredients used routinely in Moroccan cooking are preserved lemons, olives, figs, dates, sesame seeds, and almonds. Beef is less common than seafood, fish, lamb, mutton, and poultry. Arabs introduced Moroccans to cinnamon, ginger, cumin, saffron, and caraway. Other spices used in Moroccan cooking are paprika, turmeric, cayenne, black pepper, and anise seeds.⁶⁹

Morocco's national dish is couscous or *seksu*, made from fine semolina wheat and served with meat, chicken, seafood or vegetable stew. Couscous may also be made from barley, wheat, corn, and millet. It can be garnished with a sweet raisin preserve, or in the Berber tradition, with a bowl of buttermilk. Couscous is eaten by everyone and is the most common food in Morocco.^{70, 71, 72}

Harira is a basic Moroccan dish. It is a thick, spicy soup made with tomatoes, lentils, chickpeas, and lamb, topped with a squeeze of lemon juice and chopped coriander. The soup is served with a sweet pretzel called *chebakkiya*. This soup is commonly eaten in the evening and as the first meal when the sun goes down during Ramadan.^{73, 74}

Another Moroccan signature dish is *tajine*, a stew made with lamb or poultry mixed with almonds, hard-boiled eggs, prunes, lemons, and tomatoes, and spiced with saffron, cumin, coriander, cinnamon, ginger, and ground red pepper. This stew is named after the distinctive dish in which it is cooked and served—an earthenware pot with a cone-shaped top. *Tajine* is served along with bread and can be found throughout the country at street side cafés, restaurants, and homes.⁷⁵

63 Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, United States Department of State, “2017 Report on International Religious Freedom: Morocco,” 29 May 2018, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2017-report-on-international-religious-freedom/morocco/>

64 Orin Hargraves, *Culture Shock! A Survival Guide to Customs and Etiquette: Morocco* (Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish Corporation, 2007), 43–45.

65 Cédric Bayloq and Aziz Hlaoua, “Spreading a ‘Moderate Islam’? Morocco’s New African Religious Diplomacy,” *Afrique Contemporaine* 257, no 11 (2016): 113–128, https://www.cairn-int.info/article-E_AFCO_257_0113--spreading-a-moderate-islam-morocco-s-new.htm

66 Amira K. Bennison, *Jihad and Its Interpretations in Pre-Colonial Morocco: State-Society Relations During the French Conquest of Algeria* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2002), 5.

67 Michael Brett and Elizabeth Fentress, *The Berbers* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), 226.

68 Orin Hargraves, *Culture Shock! A Survival Guide to Customs and Etiquette: Morocco* (Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish Corporation, 2007), 43–45.

69 Food in Every Country, “Morocco,” n.d., <http://www.foodbycountry.com/Kazakhstan-to-South-Africa/Morocco.html>

70 Food in Every Country, “Morocco,” n.d., <http://www.foodbycountry.com/Kazakhstan-to-South-Africa/Morocco.html>

71 Helen Ranger, “Top 10 Foods to Try in Morocco,” BBC Good Food, n.d., <https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/howto/guide/top-10-foods-try-morocco>

72 Christine Benlafquih, “Essential Ingredients in Moroccan Cooking,” Spruce Eats, 14 September 2018, <https://www.thespruceeats.com/essential-ingredients-in-moroccan-cooking-2394249>

73 Helen Ranger, “Top 10 Foods to Try in Morocco,” BBC Good Food, n.d., <https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/howto/guide/top-10-foods-try-morocco>

74 Countries and Their Cultures, “Morocco,” n.d., <https://www.everyculture.com/Ma-Ni/The-United-Kingdom-of-Morocco.html>

75 Helen Ranger, “Top 10 Foods to Try in Morocco,” BBC Good Food, n.d., <https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/howto/guide/top-10-foods-try-morocco>

Another common dish is *bisteeya* or *pastilla*, a pie of pigeon or chicken mixed with almonds, eggs, and saffron, and dusted with sugar and cinnamon. The pie was originally a Moorish dish and represents Fès cuisine, named as such in honor of the city Fès, known as the “Moroccan Capital of Food.”⁷⁶

A whole slow-roasted lamb or mutton sprinkled with cumin and salt is called *mechoui*. As with many dishes in Morocco, *mechoui* is served with bread and mint tea. Marrakech is famous for Mechoui Alley, where whole lamb or mutton are slow-cooked in underground clay pits.^{77, 78, 79}

Typical fruits and vegetables include oranges and melons, turnips, tomatoes, sweet and hot peppers, potatoes, and artichokes. Dessert often consists of fruit, typically oranges, grapes, melons, figs, or dates. Many desserts are made from almonds and honey.⁸⁰

Moroccans end their meals with the national drink, sweet mint tea—sometimes called Moroccan whiskey, even though it does not contain any alcohol. It is made from Chinese green tea with sprigs of spearmint (*na’na*). The tea is heavily sweetened with sugar and is poured into small glasses from a height to create a froth called a crown.^{81, 82}

Traditional Dress

Moroccans are more relaxed about clothing than people in other Islamic countries, but clothes that expose the skin — a for beaches and resorts.⁸³ For traditional dress, men and women wear the *djellaba*, a loose-fitting, ankle length robe with long sleeves and a pointed hood, often worn on top of other clothes. The *gandora* is similar to a *djellaba*, but it has shorter sleeves and does not have a hood. Men and women wear the *gandora*, more commonly in the summer.^{84, 85}

A variation of the *djellaba* is the *kaftan*, which is worn only by women and is usually more stylish than the *djellaba*. Historically, the *kaftan* used to be worn by royalty and as a ceremonial dress of judges.^{86, 87}

Men in Morocco wear two traditional head coverings. The iconic fez (also called *tarboosh*) is a hard conical felt hat flattened at the top.^{88, 89} The other popular head cover is the knitted kufi or taqiyah skullcap, which can have elaborate geometric designs. Men often wear these skullcaps in mosques.^{90, 91}

76 Latifa Elogri, “Four Most Popular Dishes of Fez Cuisine,” Morocco World News, 28 November 2015, <https://www.morocroworldnews.com/2015/11/173826/four-most-popular-dishes-of-fez-cuisine/>

77 Food in Every Country, “Morocco,” n.d., <http://www.foodbycountry.com/Kazakhstan-to-South-Africa/Morocco.html>

78 Helen Ranger, “Top 10 Foods to Try in Morocco,” BBC Good Food, n.d., <https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/howto/guide/top-10-foods-try-morocco>

79 Atlas Obscura, “Mechoui,” n.d., <https://www.atlasobscura.com/foods/mechoui-alley-marrakesh>

80 Food in Every Country, “Morocco,” n.d., <http://www.foodbycountry.com/Kazakhstan-to-South-Africa/Morocco.html>

81 Kevin Delgado, *Modern Nations of the World: Morocco* (New York: Lucent Books, 2006) 75–77.

82 Helen Ranger, “Top 10 Foods to Try in Morocco,” BBC Good Food, n.d., <https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/howto/guide/top-10-foods-try-morocco>

83 Justin McGuinness, *Morocco Handbook*, 3rd ed. (Bath, England: Footprint Handbooks Ltd., 2002), 41–42.

84 The Travel Source, “Culture/Dress/Artisan,” n.d., <http://www.thetravelsource.net/TravelInfoPages/culture.html>

85 Planet Marrakech, “Traditional Moroccan Clothing,” 25 December 2017, <https://planetmarrakech.com/traditional-moroccan-clothing-and-moroccan-fashion/>

86 Planet Marrakech, “Traditional Moroccan Clothing,” 25 December 2017, <https://planetmarrakech.com/traditional-moroccan-clothing-and-moroccan-fashion/>

87 The Travel Source, “Culture/Dress/Artisan,” n.d., <http://www.thetravelsource.net/TravelInfoPages/culture.html>

88 *Encyclopædia Britannica*, “Fès,” 25 April 2018, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Fes>

89 Clock of Destiny, “History of the Fez,” n.d., http://clockofdestiny.com/fez_history.htm

90 Planet Marrakech, “Traditional Moroccan Clothing,” 25 December 2017, <https://planetmarrakech.com/traditional-moroccan-clothing-and-moroccan-fashion/>

91 Muslim Clothing, “Men’s Kufi Hats and Skull Caps,” n.d., <https://www.muslimclothing.com/kufi-hats.html>

Moroccans are known for their comfortable footwear. Men and women wear heelless, slipper-like colorful leather shoes called *balgha* or *babouch*.⁹²

Muslim women wear an *abaya*, a long, loose robe that covers the head, body, feet, and hands. Not all Moroccan women wear the *abaya*, but many cover up when they are outside the home. The *hijab* is a type of head covering Muslim women use. This fitted scarf comes in different colors and sometimes matches the color of the *abaya*. The most concealing garments are the *niqab* and the *burqa*, which conceal the entire body and face.⁹³

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.⁹⁴

Gender Issues

Morocco's 2011 constitution recognizes gender equality in civil, political, economic, cultural, and environmental affairs, but the law favors men; discrimination against women continues today. Women are entitled to receive only half the inheritance that their male counterparts would receive under similar circumstances. In rural areas, women cannot own land, which leaves them vulnerable to displacement and poverty. Equal pay for equal work is required by law but is not enforced.^{95, 96}

The reformed family code, or *Moudawana*, of 2004, initiated by King Mohammed VI, increased women's rights in areas of marriage, divorce, and child custody. It eliminated the requirement of a matrimonial guardian (typically the father or a surrogate) for a woman to marry and placed the family under joint responsibility. The reforms raised the age of marriage for girls from 15 to 18 and established the right to divorce by mutual consent, thus giving women the right to divorce on the same grounds as men. Men's right to divorce their wives by repudiation—the triple *talaq*, or saying “I divorce you” three times—now falls under judicial control and has to be approved by a judge. Although polygamy is still legal, it has become so restricted that it is nearly impossible. These and other provisions of the *Moudawana* gave Morocco one of the most progressive family codes in the Arab world.^{97, 98}

In 2009, women became members of municipal councils for the first time, and in the 2016 elections, women won 21% of the seats in the House of Representatives. However, women are underrepresented in leadership positions, such as cabinet ministers and chairs of parliamentary committees. In 2018, a new law criminalizing domestic violence and forced marriage went into effect. The law also imposes stricter penalties on convicted rapists.^{99, 100}

92 Planet Marrakech, “Traditional Moroccan Clothing,” 25 December 2017, <https://planetmarrakech.com/traditional-moroccan-clothing-and-moroccan-fashion/>

93 Planet Marrakech, “Traditional Moroccan Clothing,” 25 December 2017, <https://planetmarrakech.com/traditional-moroccan-clothing-and-moroccan-fashion/>

94 Orin Hargraves, *Culture Shock! A Survival Guide to Customs and Etiquette: Morocco* (Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish Corporation, 2007), 77–79.

95 Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, United States Department of State, “2018 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Morocco,” 13 March 2019, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2018-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/morocco/>

96 Freedom House, “Freedom in the World 2019, Morocco,” 2019, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2019/morocco>

97 Mounira Maya Charrad, “Family Law in Morocco,” Global Fund for Women, n.d., <http://exhibitions.globalfundforwomen.org/exhibitions/women-power-and-politics/power/family-law>

98 Mohamed Chtatou, “Revisiting Family Code Reform in Morocco—Analysis,” *Eurasia Review*, 14 March 2019, <https://www.eurasiareview.com/14032019-revisiting-family-code-reform-in-morocco-analysis/>

99 Maati Monjib, “A Legislated Victory for Moroccan Women,” Arab Reform Bulletin, 6 October 2009, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2009/10/06/legislated-victory-for-moroccan-women/1zs>

100 Freedom House, “Freedom in the World 2019, Morocco,” 2019, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2019/morocco>

Adherence to the Quran regarding gender roles and relations is stronger among Arabs than among the Berbers or Sahrawi. In rural areas, men tend the fields and livestock; in urban areas, they work outside the home. Women are responsible for the home and the children. It is rare for women to work outside the home unless they are from a higher economic class.¹⁰¹

In 2017, the Ministry of Interior banned the sale, production, and import of *burqas*, citing security concerns. The ban did not state that women could not wear *burqas* at home. Women in Morocco usually wear the *hijab*, which does not cover the face.^{102, 103}

Arts

Music

Morocco offers many musical styles, from Berber music in the mountain villages to classical and semiclassical Arab Andalusian music in the cities to international fusion, rock, and rap. Chaabi is the pop music of Morocco. It evolved from Moroccan folk music and sounds similar to Rai, a form of folk music that originated in Algeria. Gnawa combines hypnotic trance rhythms with ceremonial dancing and acrobatics. The music came to Morocco with West African slaves and evolved in Marrakech.^{104, 105, 106}

Berber music is played with drums (bendir), flutes (nair), clarinets, and a rabab, a one-stringed fiddle. The music leaves considerable room for improvisation and for unexpected instruments, such as bagpipes or oboes (ghaita), 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 responds. Professional groups of musicians, called *imdyazn*, travel during the summer and perform in village squares and in weekly markets. Sufi music can be heard in religious rituals honoring Sufi holy men. Sufi music and dance are regarded by its followers as a way to get closer to God.^{107, 108, 109}

Moroccan Arab-Andalusian 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. Gharnati is a type of Andalusian music played in Rabat.^{110, 111, 112} Some common instruments include a bowed string instrument (*rebab*); the *kemanjah*, a long-necked violin; the five-string *oud* or lute used in Andalusian music; the *tar*, a type of tambourine; and the *darbouka*, a funnel-shaped clay drum.^{113, 114}

101 Kevin Delgado, *Modern Nations of the World: Morocco* (New York: Lucent Books, 2006), 57–58, 60.

102 Aljazeera, “Reports: Morocco Bans Sale Of Full-Face Veil,” 10 January 2017, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/01/reports-morocco-bans-production-sale-burqa-170110140716164.html>

103 Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, United States Department of State, “2017 Report on International Religious Freedom: Morocco,” 29 May 2018, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2017-report-on-international-religious-freedom/morocco/>

104 World Music Network, “The Music of Morocco,” 27 May 2011, <https://worldmusic.net/blogs/guide-to-world-music/the-music-of-morocco>

105 Amiee Maxwell, “Music of Morocco,” Journey Beyond Travel,” n.d., <https://www.journeybeyondtravel.com/blog/morocco-music.html>

106 Music of Morocco, “Instruments of Chaabi Music,” n.d., <http://musicofmorocco.weebly.com/instruments1.html>

107 World Music Network, “The Music of Morocco,” 27 May 2011, <https://worldmusic.net/blogs/guide-to-world-music/the-music-of-morocco>

108 Amiee Maxwell, “Music of Morocco,” Journey Beyond Travel,” n.d., <https://www.journeybeyondtravel.com/blog/morocco-music.html>

109 Music of Morocco, “Instruments of Chaabi Music,” n.d., <http://musicofmorocco.weebly.com/instruments1.html>

110 Kevin Delgado, *Modern Nations of the World: Morocco* (New York: Lucent Books, 2006), 72.

111 World Music Network, “The Music of Morocco,” 27 May 2011, <https://worldmusic.net/blogs/guide-to-world-music/the-music-of-morocco>

112 Morocco Guide, “Moroccan Music,” n.d., <https://www.morocco-guide.com/culture/music-of-morocco/>

113 Music of Morocco, “Instruments of Chaabi Music,” n.d., <http://musicofmorocco.weebly.com/instruments1.html>

114 Morocco Guide, “Moroccan Music,” n.d., <https://www.morocco-guide.com/culture/music-of-morocco/>

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 the CLA Studios Morocco and Atlas Corporation Studios site, located near the Sahara in the city of Ouarzazate. Kasbah Ait Ben Haddou, which is located in the foothills of the southern High Atlas, 30 km (18.5 mi) northwest of the town of Ourzazate, appears in *Lawrence of Arabia*, *Game of Thrones* and *Gladiator*.^{115, 116, 117}

To promote Morocco as a regional filmmaking center, a worldwide film festival is held each year in Marrakech.¹¹⁸ As new films emerge, controversies sometimes arise. For example, Islamist political parties harshly criticized the acclaimed 2006 film *Marock*, which involves a relationship between a Jewish boy and a Muslim girl.¹¹⁹

Al-Halqa

Al-halqa is a unique, centuries-old form of street theater performed in the central squares of many Moroccan cities. The huge central square of Marrakech, Djemaa al-Fna, is known for its vast array of *halaqi* (entertainers). Each *halaqi* is surrounded by an audience, so within a short distance, a spectator can hear the elaborate tales of storytellers, see the ancient art of snake charming, or watch the undulations of crossdressing belly dancers. The cultural importance of *al-Halqa* was underscored by UNESCO in 2001 when the Djemaa al-Fna became the first World Heritage Site for oral history and tradition.^{120, 121, 122}

Folk Culture and Folklore

For more than 40 years, Marrakech has hosted the annual Marrakech Festival of Popular Arts, which showcases Berber culture. The Marrakech festival has preserved many Berber traditions, primarily for the benefit of tourists. One such tradition is the fantasia, a horsemanship exhibition in which warring Berber horsemen in flowing robes charge on horseback and discharge weapons in unison.¹²³

Morocco's numerous rural *moussems* (celebrations) play a similar role for Berbers. The Imilchil Marriage Festival is a well-known *moussems* that takes place in the Middle Atlas village of Imilchil, where Berbers have converged to trade, sing, and dance for years. Young Berber men and women go there to find marriage partners.^{124, 125, 126}

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- 115 Liza Foreman, "Hollywood In Morocco: The Film Studios At The End of the World," Daily Beast, 10 January 2015, <https://www.thedailybeast.com/hollywood-in-morocco-the-film-studios-at-the-end-of-the-world>
- 116 Friendly Morocco, "Top 10 Kasbahs (Fortress) in Morocco," n.d., <https://friendlymorocco.com/top-10/top-10-kasbahs-fortress-in-morocco/>
- 117 Michael Turtle, "Atlas Studios, Ouarzazate, Morocco," Time Travel Turtle, n.d., <https://www.timetravelturtle.com/atlas-studios-ouarzazate-morocco/>
- 118 Festival Marrakech, "International Film Festival Marrakech," 2019, <http://www.festivalmarrakech.info/en/>
- 119 Sarah Gauch and Ursula Lindsey, "Two Arab Movies Push the Bounds of Cultural Candor," *Christian Science Monitor*, 14 June 2006, <http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/0614/p01s04-wome.html>
- 120 Mounir Haissour, "Al-Halqa: A Folk Drama that Mirrors the Moroccan Society in Crisis," Moroccan Times, 6 September 2016, <http://themoroccantimes.com/2016/09/20629/al-halqa-a-folk-drama-that-mirrors-the-moroccan-society-in-crisis-haissour>
- 121 Jaouad Radouani, "The Art of Halqa, Site-Specificity, and Moroccan Cultural Identity (Part I)," Morocco World News, 12 February 2016, <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2016/02/179676/the-art-of-halqa-site-specificity-and-moroccan-cultural-identity-part-i/>
- 122 UNESCO, "Cultural Space of Jemaa el-Fna Square," n.d., <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/cultural-space-of-jemaa-el-fna-square-00014>
- 123 Amiee Maxwell, "Marrakech Popular Arts Festival," Journey Beyond Travel, n.d., <https://www.journeybeyondtravel.com/blog/marrakech-popular-arts-festival-morocco.html>
- 124 Reids Guides, "Nomads of the Sahara," n.d., <http://www.reidsguides.com/destinations/africa/morocco/moussems.html>
- 125 Gnawa Tours Morocco, "The Annual Imilchil Marriage Festival/2018," 23 August–8 September 2018, <https://moroccognawatours.com/imilchil-marriage-festival/>
- 126 Aspects of Morocco, "Festivals and Moussems," n.d., <http://aspectsofmorocco.com/festivals-and-moussems/>

Sports and Recreation

The most popular sport in Morocco is soccer. The national team, Lions de l'Atlas (Atlas Lions), has had periodic success in international competition. In 2017, the team clinched its place in the FIFA World Cup for the first time in 20 years. Today, the team ranks second in Africa behind Senegal and has some of the most valuable players in the world.^{127, 128}

In track and field, another popular sport, many Moroccan athletes have won medals and set world records. In the 1983 World Championships in Athletics in Helsinki, Saïd Aouita won a bronze medal in the 5,000 m race, bringing Morocco its first medal in the IAAF World Championships. He continued to win races and set world records in many other championships. Nawal El Moutawakel-Bennis became Morocco's first Olympic gold medalist in 1984 when she won the women's 400 m hurdles in Los Angeles. She was also the first Muslim and African woman to win an Olympic gold medal. She went on to serve as Morocco's Minister of Youth and Sports and as vice president of the International Association of Athletics Federation (IAAF).^{129, 130, 131}

Hicham El Guerrouj, crowned the "King of the Mile," won five gold and one silver medal in IAAF World Championships between 1995 and 2003. In 2014, he became the youngest athlete to be inducted into the IAAF Hall of Fame. Nezha Bidouane, who specialized in the 400 m hurdles, became the first Moroccan woman to win a gold medal at the World Championships in Athens in 1997. Hasna Benhassi won a silver medal in the women's 800 m race in the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens.^{132, 133}

Youness El Aynaoui emerged on the international tennis scene at the Australian Open in 2003. Badr Hari is a famous kickboxing athlete.¹³⁴ Hiking, skiing, golf, and water sports are quite popular and gaining ground in contemporary Moroccan culture.¹³⁵

127 FIFA, "Atlas Lions on the March," 7 December 2017, <https://www.fifa.com/fifa-world-ranking/news/atlas-lions-on-the-march-2922953>

128 Morocco World News, "Morocco's Atlas Lions Among World's Most Valuable Teams," 2 April 2018, <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2018/04/243569/moroccos-atlas-lions-among-worlds-most-valuable-teams/>

129 Saad Eddine Lamzouwaq, "Who is Morocco's Greatest Athlete Ever?" Morocco World News, 7 May 2017, <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2017/05/215964/morocco-greatest-athlete-ever/>

130 Aziz Allilou, "12 Athletes Who Honored Morocco in IAAF World Championships," Morocco World News, 25 August 2015, <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2015/08/166325/12-athletes-who-honored-morocco-in-iaaf-world-championships/>

131 Will D. Swearingen et al., "Morocco: Sports and Recreation," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 27 February 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Morocco/Education#ref846478>

132 Aziz Allilou, "12 Athletes Who Honored Morocco in IAAF World Championships," Morocco World News, 25 August 2015, <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2015/08/166325/12-athletes-who-honored-morocco-in-iaaf-world-championships/>

133 Saad Eddine Lamzouwaq, "Who is Morocco's Greatest Athlete Ever?" Morocco World News, 7 May 2017, <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2017/05/215964/morocco-greatest-athlete-ever/>

134 Saad Eddine Lamzouwaq, "Who is Morocco's Greatest Athlete Ever?" Morocco World News, 7 May 2017, <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2017/05/215964/morocco-greatest-athlete-ever/>

135 Top End Sports, "Sport in Morocco," n.d., <https://www.topendsports.com/world/countries/morocco.htm>

Morocco in Perspective

Chapter 4 | Society, Assessment

Read the following statements and answer True or False

- | | | | |
|----|--|------|-------|
| 1. | The term Berber is considered offensive by the indigenous people of Morocco. | True | False |
| 2. | It is prohibited to sell, make, and import <i>burqas</i> into Morocco. | True | False |
| 3. | Morocco is home to world's largest movie studios. | True | False |
| 4. | Moroccan female athletes were barred from the Olympic Games until the Arab Spring of 2011. | True | False |
| 5. | Tamazight is a traditional meat stew served during holidays and weddings. | True | False |

Morocco in Perspective

Chapter 4 | Society, Assessment Answers

1. True:
The indigenous non-Arab population of North Africa have been referred to as Berbers for centuries, but this term is considered offensive by the Berbers as it is derived from the word “barbarian,” a name given by Greeks and Romans to those who spoke languages other than Greek or Latin, and later changed into Barbar by the Arabs. Instead, Berbers call themselves Amazigh, which means “free people.”
2. True:
In 2017, the Ministry of Interior banned the sale, production, and import of *burqas*, citing security concerns. The ban did not state that women could not wear burqas at home.
3. True:
American and European movie producers are drawn to Morocco because film production in its desert settings and Middle Eastern backdrops is relatively safe. The world’s largest movie studios, by area, are located in Ouarzazate, near the Sahara Desert. The most famous Kasbah in Morocco is Kasbah Ait Ben Haddou, in the foothills of the southern High Atlas in the Province of Ourzazate, 30 km (18.5 mi) northwest of the town of Ourzazate.
4. False:
In 1984, Nawal El Moutawakel-Bennis became Morocco’s first Olympic gold medalist when she won the women’s 400-meter hurdles in Los Angeles. In the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens, Hasna Benhassi won a silver medal in the women’s 800-meter race.
5. False:
Tamazight is one of the indigenous languages of Morocco. A constitutional referendum adopted in 2011 made the Berber/Tamazight language an official language of the state, alongside Arabic, which is the official language of the state. Tamazight is a non-Semitic language from the Afro-Asiatic group.

Chapter 5 | Security



The site of an April 2011 suicide bombing at a café in Marrakech.
Wikimedia / Bjorn Christian Torrissen

Introduction

Morocco's main regional adversary is Algeria, who supports the Polisario Front's claim to Western Sahara and hosts thousands of Sahrawi refugees. Other than the ongoing tensions with Algeria, Morocco faces no security threats from other nations due to its close relations with the European Union and the United States.^{1, 2, 3}

Morocco's main security issue derives from its claim to Western Sahara, where the Polisario Front's guerrilla war has led to a stalemate that has complicated relations with neighbors on the African continent.^{4, 5} Morocco's reintegration into the African Union after 39 years of absence promises more regional cooperation and stability.⁶

- 1 Stratfor, "Bad Blood Still Flows between Algeria and Morocco," 3 May 2016, <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/bad-blood-still-flows-between-algeria-and-morocco>
- 2 U.S. Department of State, "U.S. Relations with Morocco," n.d., <https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-morocco/>
- 3 Adel Abdel Ghafar, "Toward a Recalibration of EU–North Africa Relations," Brookings, 31 May 2017, <https://www.brookings.edu/research/toward-a-recalibration-of-eu-north-africa-relations/>
- 4 Yasmina Allouche, "Western Sahara Explainer," Middle East Monitor, 3 January 2018, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180103-western-sahara-explainer/>
- 5 Al Jazeera, "UN envoy: 'Peaceful Solution' to Western Sahara Conflict Possible," 6 December 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/12/envoy-peaceful-solution-western-sahara-conflict-181206164240438.html>
- 6 Matthew Tempest, "EU Welcomes Morocco Rejoining African Union," Euroactive, 31 January 2017, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/eu-welcomes-morocco-rejoining-african-union/>

Morocco's comprehensive security strategy, combined with a wide range of policies intended to improve the socioeconomic situation, promote moderate Islam, and anticipate the risk of terrorism, is showing positive results. No major terrorist attacks have taken place on Moroccan soil since 2012.⁷

However, at the end of the decade, the government is still struggling to respond to nationwide protests that reflect grievances over economic hardship, corruption, and police brutality, and to address the influx of sub-Saharan migrants who try to reach Europe through the two Spanish enclaves on the Mediterranean coast.^{8, 9}

U.S.–Morocco Relations

Morocco is an important regional security, trade, and development partner of the United States. In 1777, Morocco was one of the first nations to recognize the United States. In 1786, the two nations signed a Treaty of Peace and Friendship, which is still in effect. In 1797, the first U.S. consulate was established in Tangier. Full diplomatic relations, which began in 1905, were downgraded in 1912 when Morocco became a French protectorate. In 1956, the United States recognized Morocco's independence and resumed diplomatic ties.^{10, 11}

In June 2004, President George W. Bush named Morocco a Major non-NATO Ally of the United States in recognition of Morocco's fight against international terrorism. Morocco holds joint exercises and training with the U.S. military and works closely with the United States to promote regional stability and security through the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF), the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, and the working group of the U.S.–Morocco Strategic Dialogue. The two countries also collaborate in the fight against drug trafficking.^{12, 13}

In 2006, Morocco entered into a free trade agreement with the United States, and Moroccan exports to the United States have more than doubled since then. More than 100 U.S. companies operate in Morocco.^{14, 15, 16}

The United States does not recognize Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara and has maintained a policy of selective neutrality for many years by supporting Morocco's military operations without advocating its claims to the territory. In late 2018, John Bolton, the national security adviser, began pushing for a deadline to resolve the dispute and for closing the UN peacekeeping mission in Western Sahara.^{17, 18, 19}

7 Assia Bensalah Alaoui, "Morocco's Security Strategy: Preventing Terrorism and Countering Extremism," *European View* 16, no. 1 (June 2017): 103-120, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12290-017-0449-3>

8 Congressional Research Service, "Morocco: Background and U.S. Relations," 26 October 2018, <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R45387.pdf>

9 Chloe Teevan, "Morocco, the EU, and the Migration Dilemma," European Council on Foreign Relations, 19 November 2018, https://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_morocco_the_eu_and_the_migration_dilemma

10 U.S. Department of State, "U.S. Relations with Morocco," n.d., <https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-morocco/>

11 United States Department of State, Office of the Historian, "A Guide to the United States' History of Recognition, Diplomatic, and Consular Relation, by Country, Since 1776: Morocco," n.d., <https://history.state.gov/countries/morocco>

12 Congressional Research Service, "Morocco: Background and U.S. Relations," 26 October 2018, <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R45387.pdf>

13 U.S. Department of State, "U.S. Relations with Morocco," n.d., <https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-morocco/>

14 U.S. Department of State, "U.S. Relations with Morocco," n.d., <https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-morocco/>

15 Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, Executive Office of the President, "Morocco Free Trade Agreement," n.d., <http://www.ustr.gov/trade-agreements/free-trade-agreements/morocco-fta>

16 Congressional Research Service, "Morocco: Background and U.S. Relations," 26 October 2018, <https://www.everycrsreport.com/reports/R45387.html>

17 Abdel-Rahim Al-Manar Slimi, "The United States, Morocco and the Western Sahara Dispute," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 17 June 2009, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2009/06/17/united-states-morocco-and-western-sahara-dispute-pub-23275>

18 Sarah Feuer, "Delicate Diplomacy in Western Sahara," Washington Institute, 18 October 2018, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/delicate-diplomacy-in-western-sahara>

19 Stéphanie Fillion, "The US is Driving the New Talks on Western Sahara, Involving Morocco and Algeria," PassBlue, 2 December 2018, <https://www.passblue.com/2018/12/02/the-us-is-driving-the-new-talks-on-western-sahara-involving-morocco-and-algeria/>

Relations with Neighboring Countries

Algeria

Relations between Morocco and Algeria have been tense for decades, impeding economic cooperation between the two countries and economic integration in the Maghreb. Since Algeria gained independence in 1962, the 1,600 km (995 mi) land border between the two countries has been open for only 10 years.^{20, 21}

Between September 1963 and February 1964, Morocco and Algeria fought the brief Sand War over territories in Western Sahara. The border between the two countries was demarcated in 1972. Morocco waited 20 years before ratifying the border agreement, but hostilities between the two countries over the status of Western Sahara persist.^{22, 23, 24}

After Spain relinquished control of Western Sahara in 1975, Morocco and Mauritania claimed the territory as their own. That same year, Algeria and Morocco broke off relations after the government of Morocco organized the “Green March” in which thousands of Moroccan civilians marched into Western Sahara on 6 October. In 1976, Algerian forces clashed with Moroccan forces, nearly causing a full-scale war. Algeria actively backed the Polisario Front—a secessionist organization of Sahrawi rebels who seek independence from Morocco in Western Sahara—in the fight against Morocco.^{25, 26, 27} Relations were restored, and the border reopened in 1988.²⁸

In 1984, Mauritania withdrew its claim to the territory and recognized the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR). In 1991, a UN-backed ceasefire was reached, leaving 80% of Western Sahara’s territory to Morocco and the rest to the Polisario Front.^{29, 30, 31}

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- 20 Anouar Boukhars, “Barriers Versus Smugglers: Algeria and Morocco’s Battle for Border Security,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 19 March 2019, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2019/03/19/barriers-versus-smugglers-algeria-and-morocco-s-battle-for-border-security-pub-78618>
- 21 Djamilia Ould Khettab, “Algeria Turns ‘Deaf Ear’ to Border Dispute,” Aljazeera, 31 October 2014, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/09/algeria-turns-deaf-ear-border-dispute-2014925121752206960.html>
- 22 Middle East Monitor, “King Mohammed: Morocco, Algeria Tensions are Unreasonable,” 7 November 2018, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20181107-king-mohammed-morocco-algeria-tensions-are-unreasonable/>
- 23 *Economist*, “Deep-Rooted Rivalry between Morocco and Algeria,” Intelligence Unit, 26 April 2018, http://country.eiu.com/article.aspx?articleid=626664246&Country=Morocco&topic=Politics_1
- 24 Stratfor, “Bad Blood Still Flows between Algeria and Morocco,” 3 May 2016, <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/bad-blood-still-flows-between-algeria-and-morocco>
- 25 Stratfor, “Bad Blood Still Flows between Algeria and Morocco,” 3 May 2016, <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/bad-blood-still-flows-between-algeria-and-morocco>
- 26 Aljazeera, “UN Envoy: ‘Peaceful Solution’ to Western Sahara Conflict Possible,” 6 December 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/12/envoy-peaceful-solution-western-sahara-conflict-181206164240438.html>
- 27 Anouar Boukhars, “Barriers Versus Smugglers: Algeria and Morocco’s Battle for Border Security,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 19 March 2019, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2019/03/19/barriers-versus-smugglers-algeria-and-morocco-s-battle-for-border-security-pub-78618>
- 28 Reuters, “Chronology—Border Disputes Highlight Morocco-Algeria Rivalry,” 2 December 2007, <https://uk.reuters.com/article/morocco-algeria-border-idUKL2336727520071203>
- 29 Stratfor, “Bad Blood Still Flows between Algeria and Morocco,” 3 May 2016, <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/bad-blood-still-flows-between-algeria-and-morocco>
- 30 Aljazeera, “UN Envoy: ‘Peaceful Solution’ to Western Sahara Conflict Possible,” 6 December 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/12/envoy-peaceful-solution-western-sahara-conflict-181206164240438.html>
- 31 Anouar Boukhars, “Barriers Versus Smugglers: Algeria and Morocco’s Battle for Border Security,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 19 March 2019, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2019/03/19/barriers-versus-smugglers-algeria-and-morocco-s-battle-for-border-security-pub-78618>

After a terrorist attack on a hotel in Marrakech in 1994, Morocco, suspecting Algerian involvement, instituted visa requirements for Algerian citizens. Algeria retaliated by closing all the border crossings with Morocco, a situation that persists to this day and hurts the economy of the border regions.^{32, 33, 34}

In 2018, the United Nations hosted talks in Geneva between Morocco, Algeria, Mauritania, and the Polisario Front for the first time since 2012.^{35, 36} During the 43rd anniversary of the Green March in 2018, King Mohammed VI delivered a speech in which he expressed hope of beginning a new chapter of good relations with Algeria. Algeria did not reciprocate.^{37, 38}

Mauritania

Morocco's relations with Mauritania have been rocky for many years, mainly because of Mauritania's relations with the Polisario Front. In 1960, newly independent Mauritania claimed parts of Western Sahara. After Spain ceded the southern third of Western Sahara to Mauritania in 1975, a costly war against the Polisario Front threatened to cripple Mauritania's economy. In 1979, after Mauritania signed a peace treaty with the Polisario Front and renounced its territorial claims in Western Sahara, Morocco annexed Mauritania's portion. That year, Mauritania recognized the Polisario Front as the sole legitimate representative of the people of Western Sahara but did not recognize the SADR.^{39, 40}

Relations between the two countries reached a low point in the early 1980s after pro-Moroccan members of an opposition group attempted to topple the government of Mauritania in March of 1981. Morocco in return accused Mauritania of harboring Polisario fighters. In 1984, after Mauritania recognized SADR, Morocco moved its troops to Mauritania's northern border, only 4 km (2.5 mi) from Mauritania's key economic center at Nouâdhibou.⁴¹

In 1985, the two countries restored relations and opened a border crossing in Guerguerat, which is located between southern Western Sahara and the Mauritanian port of Nouâdhibou.^{42, 43}

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- 32 Aljazeera, "UN Envoy: 'Peaceful Solution' to Western Sahara Conflict Possible," 6 December 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/12/envoy-peaceful-solution-western-sahara-conflict-181206164240438.html>
- 33 Middle East Monitor, "King Mohammed: Morocco, Algeria Tensions Are Unreasonable," 7 November 2018, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20181107-king-mohammed-morocco-algeria-tensions-are-unreasonable/>
- 34 Anouar Boukhars, "Barriers Versus Smugglers: Algeria and Morocco's Battle for Border Security," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 19 March 2019, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2019/03/19/barriers-versus-smugglers-algeria-and-morocco-s-battle-for-border-security-pub-78618>
- 35 Aljazeera, "UN Envoy: 'Peaceful Solution' to Western Sahara Conflict Possible," 6 December 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/12/envoy-peaceful-solution-western-sahara-conflict-181206164240438.html>
- 36 Stéphanie Fillion, "The US Is Driving the New Talks on Western Sahara, Involving Morocco and Algeria," PassBlue, 2 December 2018, <https://www.passblue.com/2018/12/02/the-us-is-driving-the-new-talks-on-western-sahara-involving-morocco-and-algeria/>
- 37 Mohamed Chtatou, "Morocco and Algeria: The Endless Cold War," International Policy Digest, 19 December 2018, <https://intpolicydigest.org/2018/12/19/morocco-and-algeria-the-endless-cold-war/>
- 38 Middle East Monitor, "King Mohammed: Morocco, Algeria Tensions Are Unreasonable," 7 November 2018, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20181107-king-mohammed-morocco-algeria-tensions-are-unreasonable/>
- 39 Rachel Warner, "The Haidalla Regime," in *A Country Study: Mauritania*, ed. Robert E. Handloff (Washington, DC: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1988), <http://countrystudies.us/mauritania/22.htm>
- 40 *Encyclopædia Britannica*, "Western Sahara," 9 January 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Western-Sahara>
- 41 Rachel Warner, "The Haidalla Regime," in *A Country Study: Mauritania*, ed. Robert E. Handloff (Washington, DC: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1988), <http://countrystudies.us/mauritania/22.htm>
- 42 Saad Guerraoui, "Polisario Remains in Guerguerat Despite UN Call," Arab Weekly, 5 March 2017, <https://theArabweekly.com/polisario-remains-guerguerat-despite-un-call>
- 43 Morocco World News, "Moroccan Customs Seizes 8,300 Mobile Phones at Guerguerat Border Crossing," 13 October 2017, <https://www.morocroworldnews.com/2017/10/230955/moroccan-customs-seizes-8300-mobile-phones-guerguerat-border-crossing/>

Relations soured again in 2011 when Mauritania ordered the director of the Maghreb Arab Press office to leave the country, accusing him of being an agent of Morocco's foreign intelligence service. To compound the incident, Mauritania concluded that Morocco was behind the 2012 assassination attempt of President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz.^{44, 45}

In December 2015, when Mauritanian authorities raised the Mauritanian flag in the city of Lagouira, which Morocco considers part of its territory, tension escalated again. In 2016, Morocco sent security forces to the border with Mauritania to fight cross border trafficking; in response, Mauritania deployed missiles at the Moroccan border and ordered a military state of alert.^{46, 47}

Mauritania did not have an ambassador in Rabat between 2012 and 2017. In late 2017, after an official visit of Moroccan prime minister Abdelilah Benkirane to Mauritania and a phone call from the king to President Aziz, the Mauritanian president appointed a new ambassador to Morocco.^{48, 49, 50} Relation thawed further in 2018 when Morocco agreed to participate in a roundtable discussion concerning Western Sahara. In September 2018, during a visit of Mauritania's foreign minister to Morocco, Morocco announced that it was going to open a second border crossing with Mauritania.⁵¹ A month later, Morocco's Minister of Foreign Affairs came to Mauritania with a personal message from the king, expressing a desire to improve relations between the two countries.⁵²

Spain

Morocco has a long, shared past with Spain, marked by tensions, conflicts, and wars that began with the Arab Muslim conquests of Spain and culminated with the Morocco-Spain War of Tetouan in 1859. Relations between the two countries continue to be burdened by issues such as illegal migration from sub-Saharan Africa, fishing disputes, drug trafficking, the status of Western Sahara, and the question of Ceuta and Melilla.^{53, 54, 55, 56}

The Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla share 15.9 km (9.9 mi) of land border with Morocco. The two cities were historically used as Spanish military bases and are viewed as relics of the colonial past. Since the 1960s, Morocco has asked Spain to open a dialogue about the future of these two enclaves and several nearby islands. Spain has not only failed to reciprocate but has also refused to acknowledge the legality of Morocco's claim to

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- 44 Samir Bennis, "Morocco and Mauritania's Rocky Relations," Aljazeera, 31 August 2016, <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2016/08/morocco-mauritania-rocky-relations-160831122945279.html>
- 45 France 24, "Mauritanian President in Paris after 'Accidental' Shooting," 14 October 2012, <https://www.france24.com/en/20121014-mauritania-army-accidentally-shoots-president-military-mistake-abdel-aziz>
- 46 Ahlam Ben Saga, "Morocco and Mauritania to Open New Border Post," Morocco World News, 21 September 2018, <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2018/09/253856/morocco-mauritania-new-border-post/>
- 47 Samir Bennis, "Morocco and Mauritania's Rocky Relations," Aljazeera, 31 August 2016, <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2016/08/morocco-mauritania-rocky-relations-160831122945279.html>
- 48 Ahlam Ben Saga, "Morocco and Mauritania to Open New Border Post," Morocco World News, 21 September 2018, <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2018/09/253856/morocco-mauritania-new-border-post/>
- 49 Samir Bennis, "Morocco and Mauritania's Rocky Relations," Aljazeera, 31 August 2016, <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2016/08/morocco-mauritania-rocky-relations-160831122945279.html>
- 50 Youssef Igrouane, "Mauritanian President to Appoint New Ambassador to Morocco," Morocco World News, 29 December 2017, <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2016/12/204820/mauritanian-president-appoint-new-ambassador-morocco/>
- 51 Ahlam Ben Saga, "Morocco and Mauritania to Open New Border Post," Morocco World News, 21 September 2018, <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2018/09/253856/morocco-mauritania-new-border-post/>
- 52 Morocco World News, "Morocco, Mauritania Take Further Steps to Consolidate Diplomatic Ties," 2 November 2018, <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2018/11/256778/morocco-king-mohammed-vi-mauritania-president/>
- 53 Samir Bennis, "Morocco and Spain: History of a Contentious Relationship," Morocco World News, 2 April 2012, <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2012/04/33540/morocco-and-spain-history-of-a-contentious-relationship/>
- 54 Vasco Cotovio and James Masters, "Spanish Police Clash with Migrants after 800 Storm Morocco Border Fence," CNN, 23 August 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/07/26/europe/ceuta-migrants-morocco-spain-intl/index.html>
- 55 Chloe Teevan, "Morocco, the EU, and the Migration Dilemma," European Council on Foreign Relations, 19 November 2018, https://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_morocco_the_eu_and_the_migration_dilemma
- 56 Vish Sakthivel, "The EU, Morocco, and the Western Sahara: A Chance for Justice," European Council on Foreign Relations, 10 June 2016, https://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_the_eu_morocco_and_the_western_sahara_a_chance_for_justice_7041

Western Sahara. When, after the 2016 Brexit vote, Spain began urging the United Kingdom to start a dialogue about the status of Gibraltar, Morocco accused Spain of a double standard—claiming sovereignty over Gibraltar while holding onto two enclaves on Morocco’s mainland.^{57, 58}

Today, Spain’s economic challenges and Morocco’s diplomatic needs have forced the two nations to cooperate and diversify bilateral relations. The two countries have become strategic partners in the fight against terrorism and migration.⁵⁹ Economically, bilateral trade has doubled in the last few years, making Spain Morocco’s top trading partners.^{60, 61, 62}

France

Morocco maintains excellent diplomatic, economic, and cultural relations with France. High-level officials and heads of government hold regular meetings in both countries. President Emmanuel Macron made his first official visit outside of Europe to Morocco at the invitation of King Mohammed VI.⁶³

France is Morocco’s second-largest trading partner. France is also the leading foreign investor, with more than 800 subsidiaries of French companies operating in Morocco. Morocco is also a leading recipient of support from the French Development Agency (AFD). In the education field, 34,000 Moroccans study in France’s universities and 65% of students attending French educational institutions in Morocco are Moroccan. French is an unofficial second language in Morocco, commonly spoken in government, business, and higher-education circles.^{64, 65, 66}

France supports Morocco’s claims to some power in Western Sahara and favors bilateral negotiations. France also threatened to veto any decision by the UN Security Council that would undermine Morocco’s position. France is Morocco’s second-largest arms supplier after the United States, and Morocco’s strongest supporter in the European Union.^{67, 68} More than 1.1 million Moroccan citizens live in France, home to the largest legally residing population

57 Francis Tapon, “Spain’s Hypocrisy in the Gibraltar Debate,” *Forbes*, 8 May 2018, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/francistapon/2018/05/08/spains-hypocrisy-in-the-gibraltar-debate/#11e0b30a58a6>

58 Samir Bennis, “Gibraltar, Ceuta and Melilla: Spain’s Unequal Sovereignty Disputes,” *New Arab*, 28 June 2016, <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/comment/2016/6/28/gibraltar-ceuta-and-melilla-spains-unequal-sovereignty-disputes>

59 CBS News, “Fortified Morocco-Spain Border Fence Is under Pressure from African Migrants,” 18 January 2019, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/fortified-morocco-spain-border-fence-is-under-pressure-from-african-migrants/>

60 Ministry of Culture and Communication, Kingdom of Morocco, “Morocco and Spain Are Not Only Friendly Countries, but Also Strategic Partners,” 28 June 2018 <http://www.maroc.ma/en/news/morocco-and-spain-are-not-only-friendly-countries-also-strategic-partners-spanish-fm>

61 Hassan Masiky, “Morocco-Spain Relations: A new Found Love,” *Open Democracy*, 7 August 2013, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/can-europe-make-it/morocco-spain-relations-new-found-love/>

62 LA Moncloa, Government of Spain, “Government Boosts Economic Relations between Spain and Morocco,” 14 February 2019, <https://www.lamoncloa.gob.es/lang/en/gobierno/news/Paginas/2019/20190214-spainmorocco.aspx>

63 Chaima Lahsini, “France-Morocco: A Rich Past and a Promising Future,” *Morocco World News*, 15 June 2017, <https://www.morocroworldnews.com/2017/06/219941/france-morocco-a-rich-past-and-a-promising-future/>

64 France Diplomatie, “Morocco,” 2017, <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/country-files/morocco/france-and-morocco/>

65 Central Intelligence Agency, “Morocco,” in *The World Factbook*, 10 May 2019, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mo.html>

66 North Africa Post, “Morocco-France, an Enduring Win-Win Partnership,” 3 April 2017, <http://northafricapost.com/3251-morocco-france-an-enduring-win-win-partnership.html>

67 Vish Sakthivel, “The EU, Morocco, and the Western Sahara: a Chance for Justice,” *European Council on Foreign Relations*, 10 June 2016, https://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_the_eu_morocco_and_the_western_sahara_a_chance_for_justice_7041

68 Middle East Monitor, “France Will Not Oppose Morocco Military Intervention against Polisario,” 12 April 2018, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180412-france-will-not-oppose-morocco-military-intervention-against-polisario/>

of people of Moroccan descent.^{69, 70, 71} Strong relations between the two countries are not immune to occasional diplomatic tensions, but shared security and economic interests ensure that cooperation will continue.⁷²

Police

Morocco's national police force, the General Directorate of National Security (DGSN), reports to the Ministry of Interior. It includes the National Brigade, the Central Bureau of Judicial Investigation (BCIJ)—responsible for counterterrorism—and border and immigration services.⁷³ The BCIJ reports to the General Directorate for Territorial Surveillance (SGST).⁷⁴ The Royal Gendarmerie covers tasks related to the Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Interior. This law enforcement body controls and regulates, protects the environment, and participates in relief operations.⁷⁵

Morocco hosts an INTERPOL National Central Bureau that provides crime data and connects its national law enforcement with other countries.⁷⁶

Military

The king is the supreme commander and general chief of staff of Morocco's Royal Armed Forces (FAR).⁷⁷ The FAR consist of the Royal Moroccan Army (RMA), including Air Defense (175,000 personnel), the Royal Moroccan Air Force (13,000), and the Royal Moroccan Navy (7,800), including the Coast Guard and Marines (2,000). The Royal Gendarmerie (GR) (10,000), and the Auxiliary Forces (25,000) are also part of the FAR. The GR replaced the French Gendarmerie Legion of Morocco and polices rural areas. Urban areas are policed by the National Police, which is part of the Ministry of Interior. Recent estimates place the number of active duty personnel at 196,000–150,000 reserves. The defense budget is set to increase to USD 3.9 billion by 2022.^{78, 79, 80}

In 2018, Morocco reinstated 12-month compulsory military service for men and women between the ages of 19 and 25. People with physical disabilities or health problems can receive an exemption.^{81, 82}

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- 69 Lahcen Elyasmini, "The Evolution of Moroccan Immigration: a Lesson for All Countries," Inter Press Service, 13 December 2018, <http://www.ipsnews.net/2018/12/evolution-moroccan-immigration-lesson-countries/>
- 70 Hein de Haas, "Morocco: Setting the Stage for Becoming a Migration Transition Country?" Migration Policy Institute, 19 March 2014, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/morocco-setting-stage-becoming-migration-transition-country>
- 71 Safaa Kasraoui, "Moroccans among Highest Numbers of Legal Immigrants to France for Jobs," Morocco World News, 20 August 2018, <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2018/08/252395/moroccans-among-highest-numbers-of-legal-immigrants-to-france-for-jobs/>
- 72 *Economist*, "France and Morocco Seek to Repair Relations," Intelligence Unit, 16 February 2015, http://country.eiu.com/article.aspx?articleid=1762836160&Country=Morocco&topic=Politics_1
- 73 African Policing Civilian Oversight Forum, "Morocco," n.d. <https://apcof.org/country-data/morocco/>
- 74 United States Department of State, "Country Reports on Terrorism 2016—Morocco," 19 July 2017, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/5981e428a.html>
- 75 FIEP, "The Moroccan Royal Gendarmerie at the Service of Citizens," n.d., <http://www.fiep.org/member-forces/moroccan-royal-gendarmerie/>
- 76 Interpol, "Morocco," n.d., <https://www.interpol.int/en/Who-we-are/Member-countries/Africa/MOROCCO>
- 77 International Association of Gendarmeries and Police Forces with Military Status (FIEP), "The Moroccan Royal Gendarmerie at the Service of Citizens," n.d., <http://www.fiep.org/member-forces/moroccan-royal-gendarmerie/>
- 78 Global Fire Power, "Morocco Military Strength," 2019, https://www.globalfirepower.com/country-military-strength-detail.asp?country_id=morocco
- 79 Jordan Luke Griffiths and Guy Martin, "Royal Moroccan Armed Forces," Defence Web, 13 January 2015, <https://www.defenceweb.co.za/security/african-militaries/royal-moroccan-armed-forces/>
- 80 Tamba François Koundouno, "Moroccan Military Power Ranks Top 10 in MENA," Morocco World News, 2 March 2018, <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2018/03/241680/morocco-military-power-ranks-top-10-in-mena/amp/>
- 81 Ahmed Eljehtimi, "Morocco Reinstates Compulsory Military Service for Under-25s," Reuters, 20 August 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-morocco-army/morocco-reinstates-compulsory-military-service-for-under-25s-idUSKCN1L52DA>
- 82 Middle East Monitor, "Morocco Launches Strategy to Modernise Army," 5 January 2019, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20190105-morocco-launches-strategy-to-modernise-army/>

At the end of April 2019, the UN Security Council extended the mandate of the UN mission in Western Sahara (MINURSO) for six months.⁸³ The number of Moroccan Royal Armed Forces serving in Western Sahara is unknown, but estimates suggest that 120,000 troops patrol the Berm.⁸⁴

Royal Moroccan Army

Well-versed in mountain and desert warfare and experienced in counterinsurgency operations, the 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 patrol the Berm, a fortified earthen wall defensive structure constructed to divide Moroccan-controlled Western Sahara from the territory under control of the Polisario Front. The Berm stretches over 2,700 km (1,678 mi), traversing some of the most inhospitable terrain in North Africa.⁸⁵

The RMA is split into two commands: The Northern Zone and the Southern Zone. The army consists of 12 armored battalions, 3 mechanized infantry brigades, 8 mechanized infantry regiments, 1 light systems brigade, 3 motorized infantry battalions (including camel corps), 35 light infantry battalions, 4 commando units, 2 paratrooper brigades, 1 mountain infantry battalion, 11 artillery battalions, and 7 engineer battalions.⁸⁶

The army relies upon a variety of equipment of Western and former-Soviet manufacture. With over a thousand combat tanks, the majority are U.S.-made Patton M48A5, M60A1, and M60A3 tanks, augmented by about 40 Soviet-designed T-72B tanks and 111 Austrian-manufactured SK-105 Kürassier light tanks. In addition, the army utilizes about 2,700 armored fighting vehicles of French and American design, including the up-armored Humvee, and an unknown number of armored personnel carriers from the same points of origin. Self-propelled (530) and towed (200) artillery, antitank, air defense, and infantry weapons are also of various origins.^{87, 88, 89} In 2018, Morocco purchased 162 third-generation U.S.-made Abrams tanks and over 1,200 state-of-the-art antitank missiles in a USD 115 million deal with the Pentagon.⁹⁰ The army's major bases are located in Rabat and Agadir.⁹¹

Moroccan army personnel have deployed on various peacekeeping missions under UN auspices, most recently in Liberia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and the Central African Republic.⁹² The United States regularly conducts joint military exercises with the RMA.^{93, 94}

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- 83 Relief Web, "Security Council Extends Mandate of United Nations Mission in Western Sahara for Six Months, Adopting Resolution 2468 (2019) by Recorded Vote," 30 April 2019, <https://reliefweb.int/report/western-sahara/security-council-extends-mandate-united-nations-mission-western-sahara-six>
- 84 Carolina Veltri, "The Moroccan Wall Still Stands," *Cornell Journal of Law & Public Policy*, 23 February 2015, <http://jlpp.org/blogzine/the-berm-wall-still-stands/>
- 85 IHS Jane's, "Polisario," *Jane's World Insurgency and Terrorism*, 21 December 2010.
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- 87 IHS Jane's, "Morocco: Army," *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment—North Africa*, 03 November 2011.
- 88 Jordan Luke Griffiths and Guy Martin, "Royal Moroccan Armed Forces," Defence Web, 13 January 2015, <https://www.defenceweb.co.za/security/african-militaries/royal-moroccan-armed-forces/>
- 89 Global Fire Power, "Morocco Military Strength," 2019, https://www.globalfirepower.com/country-military-strength-detail.asp?country_id=morocco
- 90 Tamba François Koundouno, "Morocco's Growing Base of Jet Fighter Planes Unsettle Spanish Military," Morocco World News, 6 April 2019, <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2019/04/269913/morocco-jet-fighter-plane-unsettle-spanish-military/>
- 91 Global Security, "Royal Moroccan Army," n.d., <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/morocco/army.htm>
- 92 Jordan Luke Griffiths and Guy Martin, "Royal Moroccan Armed Forces," Defence Web, 13 January 2015, <https://www.defenceweb.co.za/security/african-militaries/royal-moroccan-armed-forces/>
- 93 Congressional Research Service, "Morocco: Background and U.S. Relations," 26 October 2018, <https://www.everycrsreport.com/reports/R45387.html>
- 94 Jonathon Daniell, "The End and Beginning of an Era: African Lion 19," U.S. Army, 10 April 2019, https://www.army.mil/article/219960/the_end_and_beginning_of_an_era_african_lion_19

Royal Moroccan Air Force

The RMAF has 290 aircraft, among them 113 combat and transport helicopters, 79 trainers, 120 combat jets, and 31 transport aircraft. Morocco's two squadrons of old F-5 fighters, two squadrons of slightly newer Mirage F1s, and F-16 fleet need to be replaced and upgraded in order to prevent Algerian air superiority.^{95, 96}

In the past, Morocco has relied on France as its main supplier, but recently, the kingdom has turned to the United States. In 2019, the U.S. Department of State approved a possible sale of 25 F-16 aircraft to Morocco. The cost of the deal is estimated at USD 3.8 billion. The proposed sale intends to upgrade Morocco's self-defense capabilities.⁹⁷

Royal Moroccan Navy

The smallest of Morocco's military branches, the Royal Moroccan Navy and Coast Guard is a trim but a well-equipped force with 120 naval assets, protecting Morocco's 1,835 km (1,140 mi) of coastline.⁹⁸ Morocco's two naval infantry battalions are served by 6 multipurpose frigates, corvettes, a few dozen patrol/strike boats, and 9 amphibian transport vessels. Among the navy's tasks is the interdiction of vessels trafficking in drugs and illegal immigrants in the Strait of Gibraltar and the Mediterranean Sea. Bases are located at Casablanca (headquarters), Agadir, al-Hoceima, Dakhla, Kenitra, Ksar al-Seghir, Safi, and Tangier.^{99, 100}

Issues Affecting Stability

Western Sahara and SADR

Western Sahara is considered a non-self-governing territory by the United Nations.¹⁰¹ The Saharan Arab Democratic Republic (SADR), which covers about 20% of Western Sahara's territory, was declared by the Polisario Front in 1976 and is recognized by several UN members. SADR is a full member of the African Union. Between 100,000 and 200,000 Sahrawi refugees live in camps near the western Algerian town of Tindouf, near the Moroccan and Western Sahara borders. Tindouf is the main base of the Polisario Front.^{102, 103, 104, 105}

The conflict between Morocco and the Polisario Front is a cause of continuous security concerns. In 2010, 10 members of Morocco's security forces were killed, and hundreds of people were injured in a bombing attack in Laayoune, Western Sahara.^{106, 107}

95 Jordan Luke Griffiths and Guy Martin, "Royal Moroccan Armed Forces," Defence Web, 13 January 2015, <https://www.defenseindustrydaily.com/moroccos-air-force-reloads-04469/>

96 Global Fire Power, "Morocco Military Strength," 2019, https://www.globalfirepower.com/country-military-strength-detail.asp?country_id=morocco

97 Defense Security Cooperation Agency, "Morocco—F-16 Block 72 New Purchase," 25 March 2019, <https://www.dsca.mil/major-arms-sales/morocco-f-16-block-72-new-purchase>

98 Global Fire Power, "Morocco Military Strength," 2019, https://www.globalfirepower.com/country-military-strength-detail.asp?country_id=morocco

99 IHS Jane's, "Morocco: Navy," *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment—North Africa*, 03 November 2011.

100 Jordan Luke Griffiths and Guy Martin, "Royal Moroccan Armed Forces," Defence Web, 13 January 2015, <https://www.defenceweb.co.za/security/african-militaries/royal-moroccan-armed-forces/>

101 U.S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, "War and Insurgency in the Western Sahara," May 2012, <https://ssi.armywarcollege.edu/pdffiles/PUB1152.pdf>

102 BBC News, "Western Sahara Profile," 14 May 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-14115273>

103 Nicolas Niarchos, "Is One of Africa's Oldest Conflicts Finally Nearing its End?" *New Yorker*, 29 December 2018, <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/is-one-of-africas-oldest-conflicts-finally-nearing-its-end>

104 World Atlas, "What is the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (Western Sahara)?" n.d., <https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/what-is-the-sahrawi-arab-democratic-republic-western-sahara.html>

105 Congressional Research Service, "Morocco: Background and U.S. Relations," 26 October 2018, <https://www.everycrsreport.com/reports/R45387.html>

106 BBC News, "Morocco Defends Deadly Raid on Sahrawi Camp," 16 November 2010, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-11763092>

107 Samia Errazzouki, "The Hollow War Drums of the Western Sahara Conflict," Middle East Institute, 10 April 2018, <https://www.mei.edu/publications/hollow-war-drums-western-sahara-conflict>

A 2,575 km (1,600 mi)-long sand wall called the Berm—made of rock and sand and fortified with barbed wire fences, trenches, and estimated seven million landmines—stretches along the line that separates the Moroccan-administered Western Sahara and the eastern area controlled by the Polisario Front. An estimated 120,000 soldiers patrol the Berm, which is the longest operational military barrier in the world.^{108, 109, 110}

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 the MINURSO teams would be in the region for only 26 months.^{111, 112}

Terrorist Groups

Morocco's jihadists are a low-level threat because of the competence of Morocco's intelligence agency, national police force, paramilitary police, and the Central Bureau of Judicial Investigations. Morocco is the only country in North Africa that had not suffered a major terrorist attack since 2012.¹¹³ The last incident on Morocco's soil occurred in late 2018 when two female students from Denmark and Norway were killed by extremists while camping near Mount Toubkal.^{114, 115}

Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), a U.S.-designated foreign terrorist organization, and its splinter factions and affiliated groups have carried out attacks in North African countries but not in Morocco. However, Morocco considers al-Qaeda-affiliated groups a security threat.^{116, 117} ISIS attempted to deploy operatives in Morocco without success. Since 2014, authorities have disrupted several ISIS-linked terrorist cells and arrested sympathizers.^{118, 119, 120, 121}

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- 108 Carolina Veltri, "The Moroccan Wall Still Stands," *Cornell Journal of Law & Public Policy*, 23 February 2015, <http://jppp.org/blogzine/the-berm-wall-still-stands/>
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- 110 Francis Tapon, "The No-So-Great Wall of the Western Sahara," *Forbes*, 30 May 2018, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/francistapon/2018/05/30/the-not-so-great-wall-of-the-western-sahara/#60ab7af69612>
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- 112 Congressional Research Service, "Morocco: Background and U.S. Relations," 26 October 2018, <https://www.everycrsreport.com/reports/R45387.html>
- 113 Scott Stewart, "Morocco's Jihadist Paradox, Unraveled," *Stratfor*, 20 October 2016, <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/moroccos-jihadist-paradox-unraveled>
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- 119 Counter Extremism Project, "Morocco: Extremism & Counter-Extremism," 2019, <https://www.counterextremism.com/countries/morocco>
- 120 Defense Post, "Morocco Arrests 'ISIS Supporters' Suspected of Planning 'Terrorist Acts,'" 23 April 2019, <https://thedefensepost.com/2019/04/23/morocco-arrests-6-isis-supporters-terrorist-acts-sale/>
- 121 Saad Guerraoui, "Experts Believe Moroccan Security Services Will Find Out a Lot More about the Ways and Motives of Those Who Joined ISIS," *Arab Weekly*, 17 March 2019, <https://theabweekly.com/repatriated-jihadists-provide-intelligence-bonanza-morocco>

The Polisario Front and Hezbollah

Armed conflict between Morocco and the Polisario Front began in 1975 and lasted until MINURSO brokered a ceasefire deal in 1991. The Polisario Front receives financial and logistical support from Iran via its proxy, Hezbollah. The Moroccan government claims that Iran is responsible for Hezbollah's activities and cut diplomatic ties with Iran in May 2018.¹²²

Foreign Fighters

At the height of the Islamic State (ISIS) conflict in Syria and Iraq (2014–2015), nearly 2,000 Moroccans joined the jihadists' ranks, including 289 women and 370 children, placing Morocco among the top global sources of Islamist foreign fighters.^{123, 124} Legislation from 2015 makes it illegal to join, attempt to join, or recruit others to terrorist groups abroad and allows the police to arrest ISIS supporters and returnees upon arrival. So far, Morocco has prosecuted and convicted more than 200 returning fighters.^{125, 126, 127}

Drug Cultivation and Trafficking

Morocco is the world's largest producer of cannabis resin (hashish). Production of hashish in Africa is limited to Morocco's Rif region. Spain is a major point of entry for Moroccan hashish, and most of the hashish seized in the European Union is Moroccan. In 2017, Morocco seized over 117 tons of cannabis resin and 283 tons of herbal cannabis.^{128, 129}

As trafficking in cocaine shifts from South America to North Africa, Moroccan authorities reported the largest total seizures of cocaine in Africa in 2017 and early 2018.¹³⁰

Heroin from Afghanistan continues to be trafficked through the region, but heroin trafficking is not as prevalent in Morocco as cannabis. Psychotropic substances are a growing concern; in 2017, authorities seized more than half a million MDMA tablets (derivatives of amphetamine) and 40 million tablets of Tramadol, a synthetic opioid not under international control.^{131, 132}

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- 122 Counter Extremism Project, "Morocco: Extremism & Counter-Extremism," 2019, <https://www.counterextremism.com/countries/morocco>
- 123 Saad Guerraoui, "Experts Believe Moroccan Security Services Will Find Out a Lot More about the Ways and Motives of Those Who Joined ISIS," Arab Weekly, 17 March 2019, <https://the arabweekly.com/repatriated-jihadists-provide-intelligence-bonanza-morocco>
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- 129 Tom Blickman, "Morocco and Cannabis: Reduction, Containment or Acceptance," Drug Policy Briefing 4, March 2017, https://www.tni.org/files/publication-downloads/dpb_49_eng_web.pdf
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- 132 Anouar Boukhars, "Barriers Versus Smugglers: Algeria and Morocco's Battle for Border Security," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 19 March 2019, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2019/03/19/barriers-versus-smugglers-algeria-and-morocco-s-battle-for-border-security-pub-78618>

Although Moroccan law bans the sale and consumption of cannabis, cultivation, and trafficking provide a profitable revenue source for farmers and businesses in northern Morocco.¹³³ Government crackdowns have reduced production. Further reductions are hindered by the difficulty of finding a replacement crop of equal economic value.^{134, 135}

Human Trafficking and Migration

Morocco has become a destination country for human traffickers and migrants from sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East who attempt to reach Europe.¹³⁶ Many migrants enter Morocco from Algeria after crossing the Sahara Desert from Niger. Once in Morocco, they attempt to enter the Spanish port cities of Ceuta and Melilla, which function as a gate to Europe, by using false papers, hiding in trucks or vans, riding in small fishing boats or speedboats chartered by smugglers (*pateras*), or swimming around the border fences.^{137, 138}

The fences around Ceuta and Melilla were constructed by Spain to deter illegal immigration and smuggling. Occasionally, hundreds of migrants storm the barriers and attempt to scale the fences in order to reach Spanish territory.^{139, 140, 141} Many migrants who fail to enter settle in Morocco on a semi-permanent basis in large cities or improvised camps. Refugees from sub-Saharan Africa are the target of violent, racially motivated attacks and discrimination. Politicians claim that the refugees increase unemployment, and some media outlets allege that they pose a security threat by engaging in drug trafficking and prostitution. In 2013, the king announced an immigration reform to regulate the presence of unauthorized immigrants.^{142, 143}

Economic Disparity and Poverty

Morocco holds the highest income inequality in North Africa, despite improvements in housing and infrastructure. Young Moroccans are especially intolerant of economic inequalities, as the unemployment rate among young people is 2.6 times higher than the national average. Recently, economic hardships have sent thousands of demonstrators to the streets to demand better standards of living.^{144, 145, 146}

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Corruption

Morocco is the 73rd-least corrupt nation out of 180 countries and territories, according to Transparency International. Most bribes were reported to have been paid to the judiciary, followed by the police and hospitals.^{147, 148, 149} Corruption is cited as one of the main obstacles to economic development.¹⁵⁰

Water Security

Erratic weather patterns will intensify future drought and flooding threats in Morocco. In the near future, average temperatures are expected to rise and annual precipitation to drop by up to 20% across the country. The United Nations Panel on Climate Change classifies Morocco as “very vulnerable,” along with the rest of Africa.¹⁵¹

According to the World Resource Institute, Morocco will face extremely high water stress in 2040.¹⁵² However, Morocco is well-positioned to adapt to climate change, although challenges still exist.¹⁵³

People in rural areas already feel the scarcity of drinking and irrigation water. In many cities and villages, local residents have organized protest marches to the regional government offices to draw attention to the problem.^{154, 155} In 2017, the government instituted a ministerial commission to design a plan that would address issues relating to water security such as universal access to drinking water, water storage, desalination, and water use efficiency.¹⁵⁶

Morocco has 140 large dams and several thousand waterholes and wells to extract groundwater. Agricultural activities consume 90% of the water supply, household use accounts for 9%, and industries use 1%.^{157, 158}

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Cybersecurity

The Internet arrived in Morocco in 1993 and became widely available to the public in 2000. In 2011, the General Directorate of Information Security Systems (DGSSI) was created within the Administration of National Defense to develop and implement national cybersecurity strategy and policies. In 2013, the DGSSI was able to prevent a cyberattack by Algerian-sponsored hackers who attempted to gain access and sabotage the Moroccan government information system. In 2015, banks in Morocco were attacked by a cyberespionage group named Equation, and again in 2019 by international criminal networks.^{159, 160, 161}

The Global Cybersecurity Index (GCI)—an organization that ranks countries' cybersecurity levels based on seven criteria that include rates of malware infections, cyberattacks, preparedness, and cybersecurity legislation—ranked Morocco 25th out of 60 countries in 2019.¹⁶²

Outlook

The current government coalition, dominated by the Islamist Party of Justice and Development (PJD), is showing a lack of coordination and cohesion ahead of the 2021 legislative elections. Persistent governance challenges are expected to remain.^{163, 164}

The ongoing migrant crisis and the Hirak Rif protest movement continue to put pressure on the government to provide proper social services and promote development.^{165, 166, 167}

The key security challenges to Morocco are instability in neighboring countries and the unresolved dispute over Western Sahara. Tensions between Morocco and Algeria, who backs the Polisario Front, continue to compromise Morocco's security and economic cooperation in North Africa due to periodic violent outbursts.^{168, 169}

Morocco's accession to the African Union in 2017 and the application to join the Economic Community of West African Countries (ECOWAS) provided new opportunities and demonstrated Morocco's political and geostrategic objectives of strengthening its presence on the African continent.¹⁷⁰

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Morocco in Perspective

Chapter 5 | Security, Assessment

Read the following statements and answer True or False

- | | | | |
|----|--|------|-------|
| 1. | Morocco's relations with Algeria have been strained since Algeria gained independence in 1962. | True | False |
| 2. | The Moroccan Berm is a special helmet designed for the harsh desert conditions of the Sahara and is used by the Royal Moroccan Army. | True | False |
| 3. | Military service in Morocco is mandatory for men aged 18 to 30 and lasts three years. | True | False |
| 4. | Moroccan law permits the cultivation and production of cannabis resin (<i>hashish</i>) only in the Rif Mountains region. | True | False |
| 5. | Ceuta and Melilla are the gateway to Europe for African migrants and refugees. | True | False |

Morocco in Perspective

Chapter 5 | Security, Assessment Answers

1. True:
Morocco and Algeria fought each other in the Sand War of the early 1960s, and the border between the two countries has been closed since 1994.
2. False:
The Moroccan Berm is a raised, fortified barrier made of sand dividing Moroccan-controlled Western Sahara from the territory under control of the Polisario Front. The Berm stretches over 2,700 km (1,678 mi), traversing some of the most inhospitable terrain in North Africa. The number of Moroccan Royal Armed Forces serving in Western Sahara is unknown, but estimates suggest that 120,000 troops patrol the Berm.
3. False:
In 2018, Morocco reinstated 12-month compulsory military service for men and women between the ages of 19 and 25.
4. False:
Moroccan law bans the sale and consumption of cannabis. Government crackdowns have reduced production, yet Morocco is the world's largest producer of cannabis resin (*hashish*).
5. True:
The Spanish port cities of Ceuta and Melilla function as a gate to Europe for African migrants and refugees. Migrants use false papers, hide in trucks or vans, ride in small fishing boats chartered by smugglers, or swim around the border fences. Occasionally, hundreds of migrants storm the barriers and attempt to scale the fences.

Morocco in Perspective

Further Readings and Resources

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Morocco in Perspective

Final Assessment

Read the following statements and answer True or False

- | | | | |
|-----|--|------|-------|
| 1. | The Polisario Front is an al-Qaeda-affiliated jihadist group that seeks to implement sharia law in Morocco. | True | False |
| 2. | Morocco's national dish is couscous. | True | False |
| 3. | The <i>ville nouvelle</i> is a unique Moroccan form of the novel adapted from French literature in the early 20th century. | True | False |
| 4. | Morocco is <i>not</i> one of the 55-member nations of the African Union. | True | False |
| 5. | The Almoravids built the Hassan II Mosque in their capital of Marrakech in the 10th century. | True | False |
| 6. | The Jewish community is an important part of Morocco's history. | True | False |
| 7. | Morocco's fishing industry struggles to compete against its African neighbors. | True | False |
| 8. | The world's oldest functioning university is located in Fès. | True | False |
| 9. | Islam is the state religion of Morocco. | True | False |
| 10. | Relations between Morocco and Mauritania have been rocky for many years. | True | False |

11.	Jihadist terrorism poses a high-level threat to Morocco.	True	False
12.	Moroccan Arabic is called Darija.	True	False
13.	Gnawa music emerged in the Spanish towns of the Mediterranean coast during the early 19th century.	True	False
14.	Sahrawi is a UNESCO World Heritage Site located in the Sahara Desert portion of Morocco, where prehistoric rock paintings and cave art were found in the 1950s.	True	False
15.	The value of the Moroccan dirham directly correlates to the U.S. dollar.	True	False
16.	Marrakech is known as the Red City.	True	False
17.	Moroccan men can divorce their wives by saying, “I divorce you” three times.	True	False
18.	French is one of the official languages of Morocco.	True	False
19.	Tajine is the codename for counterfeit Moroccan dirhams.	True	False
20.	Handicrafts are an important contributor to the Moroccan economy.	True	False
21.	France is one of Morocco’s strongest allies.	True	False

- | | | | |
|-----|---|------|-------|
| 22. | Rampant poverty, security concerns, and tough competition with the EU keep American companies out of Morocco. | True | False |
| 23. | Morocco prides itself on being a bastion of religious tolerance | True | False |
| 24. | Morocco is home to Africa's largest wind farm. | True | False |
| 25. | The Hirak movement was a nationalist movement that called for independence from France. | True | False |

Morocco in Perspective

Final Assessment Answers

1. False:
The Polisario Front fights for independence for the Western Sahara. The conflict between Morocco and the Polisario Front is a cause of continuous security concerns.
2. True:
Couscous, or *seksu*, is made from fine semolina wheat and served with a meat, chicken, seafood, or vegetable stew. Couscous may also be made from barley, wheat, corn, or millet.
3. False:
Villes nouvelles (“new city” in French) were constructed by the French in the first half of the 20th century outside major cities. Today, *villes nouvelles* are the modern parts of Morocco’s major cities.
4. False:
Morocco left the African Union in 1984 after the organization accepted Western Sahara as a full member, but rejoined the group in January 2017.
5. False:
Casablanca is home to the Hassan II Mosque, one of the largest mosques in the world. The construction of the mosque was completed in 1993. The Hassan II Mosque is one of the few mosques in Morocco that is open to people of all faiths.
6. True:
Before the Arabs arrived in Morocco, the indigenous population was composed primarily of Christians and Jews. Jews came to Fès in 808 CE. The old Jewish Quarter of Marrakech was built in 1558. Morocco’s constitution recognizes the Jewish community as an integral part of society.
7. False:
In 2018, Morocco was the largest seafood exporter in Africa and 13th largest in the world. Morocco is also one of the world’s largest exporters of octopus, along with China. Morocco’s fish production depends mostly on maritime fishing; only a fraction of its fish comes from fish farms.
8. True:
Qarawīyīn University was founded in 859 CE in Fès by Idriss II (793–828). The university is considered the world’s oldest continuously operating degree-granting educational institution.
9. True:
Sunni Islam and Judaism are the only religions recognized in the constitution as native to the country. A little over 99% of the population follows Sunni Islam. However, the constitution guarantees freedom of religion.

10. True:
Mauritania did not have an ambassador in Morocco between 2012 and 2017. In 2015, Mauritania deployed missiles toward Morocco when Morocco sent troops to the buffer zone between the two countries, in an effort to fight trafficking. Relations have improved slightly since 2018.
11. False:
Morocco's jihadists are a low-level threat because of the competence of Morocco's intelligence and law enforcement agencies. Morocco is the only country in North Africa that has not suffered a major terrorist attack since 2012.
12. True:
Moroccan Arabic, known as Darija, is the first language of most Arab Moroccans. Darija is a spoken language used in many business, domestic, and social settings. The Darija vocabulary comes from Arabic and Tamazight, and features a mix of European languages.
13. False:
Gnawa music came to Morocco with West African slaves and evolved in Marrakech; it combines hypnotic trance rhythms with ceremonial dancing and acrobatics. The music started as a spiritual practice and has become a contemporary artistic expression.
14. False:
Sahrawi are the people of Western Sahara. The Sahrawi have a well-defined caste system and a high level of gender equality.
15. False:
The Moroccan dirham correlates more closely to the euro more than to the U.S. dollar. In 2017, Morocco's central bank, Bank al-Maghrib, reduced the weight of the euro to 60% from 80% and raised the U.S. dollar to 40% from 20%. It was the first change to the currency basket in a decade.
16. True:
Because of the surrounding red clay earth, almost all the buildings in the medina of Marrakech are ochre or rose, giving Marrakech the name "Red City."
17. False:
The reformed family code (*Moudawana*) of 2004, established the right to divorce by mutual consent, thus giving women the right to divorce on the same grounds as men. Men's right to divorce their wives by repudiation—saying, "I divorce you" three times—now falls under judicial control and has to be approved by a judge.
18. False:
While French is used in government, diplomacy, and the business world, and is also taught in schools, it is not considered an official language.
19. False:
Tajine is a stew made with lamb or poultry mixed with almonds, hardboiled eggs, prunes, lemons, and tomatoes. This stew is named after the distinctive dish in which it is cooked and served—an earthenware pot with a cone-shaped top.

20. True:
Handicrafts contribute about 6% to GDP, employing more than 2 million artisans. For example, leather products have been a hot item in Marrakech since the 16th century, produced in the city's tanneries from the hides of camels, cows, and goats.
21. True:
France supports Morocco's claims to some power in Western Sahara and has threatened to veto any decision by the UN Security Council that would undermine Morocco's position. France is Morocco's strongest supporter in the European Union. French is a prominent, though unofficial, language in Morocco.
22. False:
More than 100 U.S. firms operate in Morocco, mostly in the renewable energy, aviation, infrastructure, and environmental technology sectors.
23. True:
To curb the rise of fundamental Islam, government officials advocate for a distinct Moroccan Islam called "the middle path" (al wasatiyya). Furthermore, in 2006, the king initiated the training of murshidats, female religious guides or preachers, to further combat religious extremism.
24. True:
Tarfaya in southwest Morocco is the site of Africa's largest wind farm, generating enough electricity to power 1.5 million homes. The wind turbines have been specifically designed to withstand the salty ocean winds, desert sandstorms, and hot weather.
25. False:
The Hirak protest movement began in the northern Rif region in 2016; it has resulted in the biggest unrest seen in Morocco since the Arab Spring of 2011. The protests started in the city of Al Hoceima, one of the most impoverished areas in the country, and spread nationwide. Protestors demanded government action against corruption and toward development in the region.