CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Morocco, a country with a long history and civilisation, is one of the most important North African countries in regional and international politics. Throughout the ages, Morocco has witnessed political, social and economic developments that reflect its diversity and cultural depth. Like many countries in the Arab world, Morocco is witnessing ongoing efforts to democratise and strengthen the institutions of legitimate governance. However, there are still significant challenges facing this process related to political, economic, social and human rights organisation. This topic reflects the urgent need to study these challenges and propose appropriate solutions, as well as the role of decision-makers in activating the necessary mechanisms to achieve democratic transition in Morocco.

This research will focusing on key themes that will be the starting point of the research to reach a conclusion that will shed light on all the issues and challenges that stand in the way of achieving a democratic state.

a. Historical context

There is no doubt that countries are known for their archives, their deep history nd the succession of different civilizations and diverse cultures that have a great historical extension, in this section of this thesis, I will very briefly recall the historical depth of Morocco through its multiple phases:

b. Morocco Prehistoric

The discovery of fossilized bones in (Sale) and (Ighud Mount) provides a glimpse into the lives of early human ancestors who inhabited the area hundreds of thousands of years ago. These results contribute to our understanding of human evolution and migration. It is amazing to think of our species' resilience over vast periods of time (Theroux, 2022).

c. Phoenician and Roman Influences

The Phoenicians, seafarers and traders, established colonies along the Moroccan coast. Their presence linked Morocco to the Mediterranean world, considering its distinct geographical location, thus promoting cultural exchange and trade. The original (Amazigh), with their rich heritage, coexisted with the Phoenician effect. This contributed to bringing and eventually annexing the Roman Empire of the region. Morocco has thus become the aspiration of various States (Whittaker, 1974).

d. Arab-Islamic Rule (7th Century)

In the seventh century AD, Arab-Islamic rule began in Morocco. Arab conquerors brought Islam and established dynasties that shaped the country's history. Berber dynasties, such as the Almoravids (ALMORABITIN) and Almohads (ALMOUAHIDIN), played crucial roles during the medieval period of the Morocco's strategic location . Trade across North Africa, the Mediterranean, and beyond served as a vital link between Europe, Africa, and the Middle East, and acculturation also made a significant contribution. In short, Arab-Islamic rule left a lasting impact on Morocco, shaping its culture, trade networks, and intellectual achievements (Hakimi, 2016).

e. Colonial Period

European powers, especially Spain and Portugal, sought control of Moroccan territory during the age of exploration. Because of its strategic position, regional conflicts, cultural clashes and the emergence of powerful States (Hammoudi, 2010). Among them, French protection founded in 1912 led to major social and political changes. The rural war, fuelled by resistance against colonial rule, had a lasting impact on Moroccan identity.

Morocco's independence in 1956 marked a new chapter. The Alaouite dynasty, whose lineage dates back to the 17th century, continues to lead the nation. Modern Morocco embraces its diverse heritage, blending Berber, Arab and European influences. Its vibrant culture, architecture, and even traditions reflect this rich history (Philip & Schaefer, 2009).

In short, Morocco's historical journey is a testament to human resilience, adaptability, and interaction between civilizations. Despite its rich history, Morocco faces contemporary political challenges. Regional tensions shape the trajectory of the nation, the delicate balance between tradition and modernity, and debates about governance and human rights, some of which we will address in the context of the democratic transition, continue to define Morocco's path forward.

f. Democratic transition after independence

This thesis also will analyse the challenges that Morocco faced after its independence, highlighting the social, political and economic aspects by analysing the following points:

g. Social inequality

Social inequality is a major challenge for many countries, including post-independence Morocco. It can relate to income, economic opportunities, education, health, and access to basic services. These gaps can lead to social and economic unrest (OECD reviews of public governance)

h. Lack of trust in government institutions

Lack of trust in government institutions is a real challenge that can affect a country's stability and capacity for sustainable development. If citizens do not perceive that government institutions represent their interests, division and tension in society may increase (Malki, 2018). So political instability can therefore lead to instability and inability to formulate long-term development policies. This type of instability can lead to distrust of government and institutions, increasing the country's challenges.

The breadth of the topic of democratic transition in Morocco prompts us to familiarise ourselves with the problems that Morocco experienced during that era. In the midst of these issues that plagued the Moroccan political system after gaining independence, political decision-makers had to undertake a number of fundamental reforms that would have mitigated the chasm left by colonialism, which divided the Moroccan people and exploited their resources and wealth. Since independence, Morocco has witnessed political and constitutional development rich in lessons and events that affected the nature of the political system and the relations between the various political forces (Alapján-, 2016). Political life after independence was heated and relations between the parties and the royal institution were characterised by competition and self-assertion between the palace and some symbols of leftist

parties, but the consensus on the 1996 Constitution led to a political breakthrough and new relations between the various political forces.

The Moroccan political scene has witnessed a series of electoral stations, the results and extent of which varied according to the local and regional political and social conditions that governed the strategies and decisions of the various political actors. Nearly five decades after the establishment of the Moroccan state and the holding of the first electoral station, the questions raised before the 1963 elections regarding the perception of the Moroccan political and party scene are still being asked again (Szmolka, 2010), but in the context of data and circumstances with different levels and dimensions than the previous ones, and under a new constitution that came at the height of popular protests in Arab and North African countries that focused on fighting corruption and bribery and demanding transparency and linking the exercise of power and public responsibility to monitoring and accountability.

i. Contemporary Moroccan democratic transition

Research on the topics of democracy and schemes of reform and political change within the environment of Arab societies still raises many debates and arguments that are far from the requirements of rational thinking and epistemological arguments, and have been exacerbated by the events of the "Arab Spring" since 2011 until today with the tenth anniversary in 2021. As a result of its events and political experiences, most of the uprisings and revolutions that were launched in the midst of it failed, raising the pace of political and ideological positions and debates, and limiting the importance of academic studies and

research. (Abdessadek, 2021). This may lead some to argue that the topic is outdated, while others find it more useful from a cognitive point of view and important from a factual point of view. This is because it concerns an important chapter in the history and life of contemporary Arab societies, and because the momentum of protest and revolutionary action in the region, which removed rulers from power and pushed others to reform on the one hand and led to the consolidation of more authoritarianism on the other, should not be measured as a straight line, but rather in the historical process of revolutionary action and counter-revolution (Al-Uruwy, 1996).
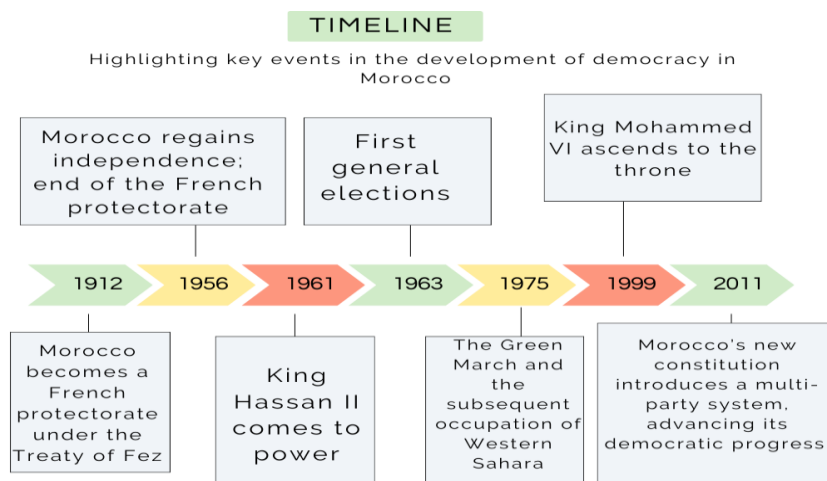
TIMELINE

Highlighting key events in the development of democracy in Morocco

| Morocco regains independence; end of the French protectorate | First general elections | King Mohammed VI ascends to the throne |

| 1912 | 1956 | 1961 | 1963 | 1975 | 1999 | 2011 |

| Morocco becomes a French protectorate under the Treaty of Fez | King Hassan II comes to power | The Green March and the subsequent occupation of Western Sahara | Morocco's new constitution introduces a multi-party system, advancing its democratic progress. |

Figure 1.1:Chronicles of Colonial Impact: A Glimpse into Morocco's Past".

Note: Adapted from (Zemrani & Lynch, 2013).

1.2 Research Authenticity

Examining the background of this thesis, Morocco, since its independence, has witnessed a political and constitutional development rich in lessons and events that have affected the nature of the political system and the relations between the various political forces.. Those familiar with the Moroccan political scene will

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know that there are more than thirty political parties operating within the framework of a country that, since its first constitutional experiment in 1962, has chosen to enshrine the principle of multipartyism (Belkeziz, 2012), not to democratize the political system, but to avoid the dominance of one party on the political scene, as the royal institution is the strategic guide and initiator in drawing the country's major choices. Six constitutions were promulgated in addition to a number of amendments to the 1972 and 1992 constitutions. Political life after independence was heated, and relations between the parties and the royal institution were characterized by rivalry and interaction to prove oneself between the palace and some symbols of the leftist parties, but the consensus achieved around the 1996 constitution led to a political breakthrough and a new relationship between the various political forces.

On this basis, the Moroccan electoral experience seems to be full of indications in reading its results and attempts to explore its effects and implications on the political and party scene. Therefore, in this research, I will recall the historical facts that surrounded the democratic transition process in all its political and social aspects, and try to answer the question of the development of the party and political scene, as well as highlighting the challenges and opportunities for an effective democratic transition

1.3 Research Problem

To analyze the idea of democratic transition in Morocco, the thesis delves into several key areas that highlight the challenges and opportunities inherent in this process:

a. **Political Reforms and Constitutional Developments**

Analyze the impact of the 2011 constitutional reforms and subsequent political changes

Discuss the role of the monarchy and the balance of power between the king and the elected parliament

b. **Challenges of Democratization**

Address constraints to democratization efforts, such as persistent socio-economic inequalities.

Discuss potential threats to the democratization process, including political unrest and external pressures.

c. **Development opportunities**

Highlight Morocco's potential as a model for democratization in the region.

Explore ways to capitalize on Morocco's geographic location to foster economic and political partnerships.

Each of these areas can be explored in depth in your chapters, providing a comprehensive analysis of Morocco's journey towards democratization. The interplay of these factors will reveal the complexities of balancing reform and stability, and the potential for Morocco to emerge as a beacon of democratic governance in North Africa.

1.4 Objectives of the Research

1. **Objective 1**: **Analyze and Understand Factors**

The primary objective of this research is to comprehensively analyze and understand the multifaceted factors that contributed to the process of democratic

transition in Morocco. By examining historical, political, and social contexts, we aim to provide a nuanced understanding of the dynamics at play during this critical period.

2. **Objective 2: Assess Challenges and Opportunities**

Another key goal is to rigorously assess the challenges and opportunities that emerged during Morocco's democratic transition. We will critically evaluate obstacles faced by the transition process, such as institutional limitations, societal resistance, and economic constraints. Simultaneously, we will identify potential pathways and opportunities for further progress toward a fully democratic system.

3. **Objective 3: Evaluate Reforms and Societal Impact**

Our research will delve into the specific political and social reforms that have been implemented in Morocco. By examining their impact on Moroccan society, we aim to provide empirical evidence and insights into the effectiveness of these reforms. This evaluation will inform policymakers, academics, and civil society stakeholders.

4. **Objective 4: Contribute to Academic Discourse**

As scholars, our intention is to contribute meaningfully to the academic dialogue on democracy in Morocco. By synthesizing existing literature, conducting empirical research, and offering fresh perspectives, we aspire to enrich scholarly discussions and enhance our collective understanding of democratic transitions.

5. **Objective 5: Inform Policy and Civil Society**

Beyond academia, our research seeks practical relevance. We aim to provide valuable insights that can inform policy decisions and empower civil society actors.

By bridging theory and practice, we hope to facilitate informed decision-making and foster positive democratic developments in Morocco.

Figure   1.2: Flowchart showing the research objectives

1.5 Significance of the Research

The overwhelming importance of the research entitled "Democratization in Morocco: opportunities and challenges" focuses on analysing the inputs and outcomes of Morocco's legislative and collective elections. The research examines the variables of the new institutional approach, such as institutions, interests, and ideas of reference. The research will show that elections in Morocco are still governed by the institutionalized weight of the executive branch, which uses the electoral process as a mechanism to manage the conflict of interests between the network of political actors involved in the electoral processes. This process is passively fed by the reference ideas that govern the electoral behavior of individuals. These three elements explain the limitations of elections in achieving the desired democratic transformation. Therefore, the research emphasizes the need to empower institutions of political representation to exercise real power, entrust

the administration of elections to an independent and neutral body, and provide a climate of rights and freedoms as key entry points to enhance the transitional role of elections and value democracy as a concept first and a reality in practice.

1.6 Research Limitation

This research is bounded by a focused scope that aims to encapsulate the multifaceted nature of democratization within Morocco. The limitations are delineated as follows:

1. Theoretical Framework of Democratization

This study delves into the theoretical underpinnings of democratization, scrutinizing the definition of democracy and the qualitative transformations within the political system. It endeavors to align the theoretical discourse with the Moroccan context, acknowledging that the conceptualization of democracy may vary across different cultural and political landscapes.

2. Democratic Transformations Post-Arab Spring

The research examines the reverberations of the Arab Spring within Morocco, particularly the constitutional reforms initiated in its aftermath. It investigates the extent to which these transformations have permeated the political fabric of the nation, recognizing that the impact of such a widespread movement may have heterogeneous effects across the region.

3. The Moroccan Political System

An analysis of the Moroccan political system is conducted, with a focus on the reforms implemented by King Mohammed VI. The study acknowledges the

unique blend of traditional monarchy and attempts at modern governance, exploring the interplay between entrenched monarchical power and emerging democratic practices.

4. Political Mobility in 2011

The role of the February 20 Movement and the ensuing popular demands that catalyzed reforms are scrutinized. The research recognizes the significance of this movement while also considering the limitations in measuring the tangible outcomes of such political mobilizations on the democratization process.

5. Manifestations of Democratization

The reality of democratization in Morocco is assessed, particularly in terms of its implications for political stability. The research contemplates the observable indicators of democratization, such as electoral processes and civil liberties, while also acknowledging the challenges in quantifying the depth and sustainability of democratic practices.

These limitations are not constraints, but rather focal points that guide the research towards a comprehensive understanding of democratization in Morocco. They serve as a framework for exploring the intricate dynamics of political change while maintaining a structured approach to the study.

1.7 Research Questions

Morocco's quest for democracy has been a journey marked by progress and adversity. This thesis seeks to dissect the elements that influenced this development, and to examine the multifaceted nature of the democratic transition. It seeks to understand the interaction between the historical, cultural and political forces that

shaped Morocco's path towards a more open and participatory system of governance.

The thesis will explore the factors that have been instrumental in this process, from the momentum provided by the Arab Spring to the ongoing constitutional reforms. It will also analyze persistent challenges, such as political deadlock, social and economic disparities, and the balance between maintaining stability and promoting democratic change. Furthermore, the thesis will consider how these challenges can be reconceptualized as opportunities to consolidate and deepen democratic principles in the Moroccan context.

In addressing these complex issues, the thesis will be guided by the following central questions, which remain central to the research:

A.   **What are the factors contributing to the democratic transition in Morocco? **

B.   **What are the challenges and opportunities facing the democratic transition in Morocco? **

These questions will ground the analysis and provide a structured framework for exploring the nuances of Morocco's democratic path. The thesis will provide a critical assessment of the progress achieved to date and future development prospects, contributing to a broader understanding of the democratization process in the Moroccan and regional context.

1.8 Research Schedule

Table 1.1: table showing the stage of completing the thesis

Month	Description
March 2024	Drafting and finalizing search proposal.
April 2024	Discussing proposal with supervisors.
May 2024	Renewing Discussing proposal with supervisors. Thesis proposal exam on may 2 2024.
June 2024	Thesis defense on June 6 2024.