

CHAPTER IV THE MAIN FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION IN MOROCCO

THE FIRST PIVOTAL QUESTION:

*** WHAT ARE THE FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION IN MOROCCO*?**

1.1 Introduction

This chapter meticulously examines the multifaceted social and political tapestry that characterizes Morocco's progression towards democratic reform. It synthesizes a broad spectrum of scholarly works, institutional accounts, governmental inputs, and empirical studies to construct a comprehensive backdrop that elucidates Morocco's democratic ambitions. By dissecting historical and contemporary narratives, this discourse presents a detailed examination of Morocco's strides towards democratization.

Morocco's quest for democratic evolution is enmeshed within a labyrinthine matrix of societal and political intricacies. The nation's socio-political milieu significantly influences its democratic trajectory, underpinned by a rich historical tapestry. The amalgamation of Morocco's historical encounters, pivotal conflicts, and significant events intricately stitches the fabric of its democratic pursuit. The interweaving of colonial imprints and autochthonous endeavors with current realities further enriches this case.

The case is augmented by ongoing transformations, where political overhauls, civic engagement, and institutional developments sculpt a vibrant milieu. Morocco's allegiance to democratic tenets manifests in its concerted efforts to harmonize ancestral customs with contemporary advancements.

In amalgamating these diverse strands, the dissertation uncovers the latent complexities embedded within Morocco's democratic ambitions. It explores the synergy between cultural traditions and political entities, as well as the communal ambitions that forge the nation's democratic course. This exploration provides a window into the potential hurdles and prospects that Morocco faces.

To encapsulate, Morocco's odyssey towards democracy represents an essential confluence of historical legacies and modern shifts. Comprehending this intricate weave is pivotal in recognizing the nation's resilience and its adeptness in charting a democratic course.

Addressing the query regarding the factors influencing Morocco's democratic transition, it is essential to consider the interplay of various elements such as political reforms, civil society activism, institutional evolution, and the balancing act between tradition and innovation. These components collectively contribute to shaping Morocco's democratic landscape.

1. Historical and Political Landscape

Morocco's pursuit of democracy is rooted in its storied past, shaped by colonial legacies, the sustained presence of monarchical rule, and an ongoing push

for modern governance. The political terrain has been sculpted by substantial reforms, particularly those propelled by the Arab Spring, which aimed to align the traditional monarchy with burgeoning democratic principles. The scholarly contributions of (Abubakar, 2019) offer a thorough examination of Morocco's persistent quest for democracy, while (Belkeziz, 2012) scrutinizes the constitutional amendments crucial in reshaping the political structure.

The Arab Spring emerged as a turning point for Morocco's political evolution, prompting the 2011 constitutional reforms designed to foster a more democratic governance model. These reforms emerged as a response to public demonstrations advocating for greater democracy, inclusivity, and shared prosperity (Seiderer & Bteddini, 2013). The 2021 Moroccan elections marked a significant shift in the political framework, with the National Rally of Independents (RNI) securing a victory that signaled a new developmental paradigm for the nation (Elcano, 2021). This transformative era is characterized by endeavors to fortify Morocco's governance framework, ensuring that reforms are not merely transient amid the flux of change (Seiderer & Bteddini, 2013).

2. Synthesis of Historical Dynamics

A synthesis of Morocco's historical dynamics unveils a nation straddling the dichotomy of tradition and modernity, where the monarchy's role has adapted to the populace's democratic aspirations. The semblance of stability afforded by regular elections belies the limited impact these polls have had on political evolution, as the royal palace continues to set the overarching agenda for Moroccan

politics (Elcano, 2021). This intricate dance between historical influences and current political realities lays the groundwork for a nuanced comprehension of Morocco's democratic transition.

3. Significance of democratic transition in Morocco

The significance of the democratic transition in Morocco cannot be overstated. It represents a pivotal shift in the political landscape of not only the nation but also the broader Arab world, where democratic reforms have been historically challenging. For Morocco, this transition is a testament to the country's resilience and commitment to progressive governance. It reflects a conscious move towards greater political inclusivity, transparency, and accountability (Dudouet & Lundström, 2016). The reforms have been instrumental in empowering citizens, fostering a sense of ownership over national policies, and enhancing the legitimacy of the government. Moreover, the democratic transition has implications for Morocco's international relations, as it positions the country as a potential leader in democratic practices in the region (Cavatorta, 2005). This transition is not just about changing the way politics is conducted; it's about transforming the societal fabric to reflect the aspirations of its people for a more equitable and just Morocco. The journey towards democracy is a beacon of hope for a future where the rights and voices of all Moroccans are heard and respected.

1.2 Political Factors

A. Constitutional Reforms

The constitutional reforms in Morocco have been a transformative force in the nation's democratic journey. These reforms, initiated with the aim of recalibrating the power dynamics between the monarchy and the elected government, have been pivotal in enhancing the legislative influence of elected officials. The process of constitutional revision has been marked by a deliberate effort to transfer greater authority to the parliament, a move that is emblematic of democratic governance (Auel & Benz, 2005). This shift towards a more parliamentary-centric system underscores Morocco's dedication to fostering a political environment where the will of the people is more directly reflected in governance and policy-making. The reforms have also been instrumental in delineating a clearer separation of powers, which is fundamental to the checks and balances characteristic of a healthy democracy (Bellamy, 2017).

1. Electoral Developments

The electoral landscape of Morocco has undergone significant changes, particularly highlighted by the elections of 2021. These elections have been a critical milestone in the country's political evolution, serving as a clear indicator of Morocco's steadfast commitment to democratic ideals. The elections not only provided a platform for the expression of the popular will but also established a robust mechanism for political accountability (Fox, 2000). The active participation of the citizenry in these elections has been a reflection of the burgeoning political consciousness and the desire for a more representative and responsive government. The role of these electoral processes in the political development of Morocco is profound, as they have not only shaped the current political discourse but also set

the stage for future democratic engagement and reform. The significance of these elections extends beyond the immediate political outcomes (Anderson & Dodd, 2009); they are a harbinger of the potential for a more participatory and transparent political system in Morocco.

1.3 Economic Factors

a. Economic Plans and International Support

The interplay between economic factors and political stability is a critical aspect of Morocco's democratic transition. The nation's economic strategies, bolstered by the support of international financial institutions, have been instrumental in establishing macroeconomic stability (Gai et al., 2008). This stability is not merely a fiscal objective but a foundational pillar for the political transition, creating a conducive environment where democratic institutions can take root and thrive. The collaboration with international bodies has provided Morocco with the necessary financial acumen and resources to navigate the complex interdependencies of economic and political reforms (Boukhars, 2019). These partnerships underscore the global community's commitment to supporting Morocco's aspirations for a stable and democratic future.

b. Development Models

Morocco's 'new development model,' projected to guide the nation's economic trajectory until 2035, is a visionary blueprint for addressing the multifaceted economic challenges that the country faces (Susan Davis, 2002). This comprehensive plan is designed to catalyze sustainable growth, ensuring that

economic advancement and democratic principles evolve in tandem. The model's emphasis on inclusivity and sustainability is expected to have a profound impact on the democratic transition, fostering an environment where economic prosperity is not an end in itself but a means to achieve political stability and democratic governance. By aligning economic policies with democratic values, Morocco is setting a precedent for how economic reform can be harmoniously integrated with the pursuit of democratic ideals (Is, 2007).

1.4 Social Factors

a. Civic Participation

Civic participation stands as a cornerstone of the democratic transition, embodying the essence of a society that values the voice and agency of its citizens. In Morocco, the establishment of channels for civic engagement has been a deliberate strategy to ensure that the political process is not a distant spectacle but a participatory dialogue (Schmoll, 2021). This engagement ranges from local community meetings to national policy discussions, enabling individuals to contribute to the governance of their country. Such participation is not merely a token of democracy but a driving force for progress, empowering citizens to take ownership of their civic responsibilities (Abdessadek, 2021). It fosters a culture of transparency and accountability in governance, where decision-making is subject to public scrutiny and debate. The recommendation for continued progress lies in nurturing this civic spirit, ensuring that it permeates all levels of society and becomes a defining characteristic of the nation's political life (Naciri, 2013).

b. Cultural Influences

The cultural milieu of Morocco, enriched by its proximity to southern Europe, has been a dynamic factor in its democratic transition. The intermingling of cultures, traditions, and languages has given rise to a unique societal fabric that is both diverse and harmonious. This cultural confluence has served as a bridge, connecting Morocco to broader democratic ideals and practices. The exchange of ideas and values has fostered a societal openness to change, making the concept of democracy not just an imported idea but a lived experience (Karl, 2012). The influence of European democratic norms has subtly permeated Moroccan society, encouraging a reevaluation of traditional power structures and prompting a shift towards a more open and democratic society. This cultural dynamism is a testament to the power of cultural exchange as a catalyst for political and social transformation, paving the way for a Morocco that is both true to its heritage and open to the winds of change (Sciences et al., 2014).

Table 4.1: “Cultural Crossroads: The Role of European Influence in Morocco’s Democratic Evolution”

Factor	Description	Impact on Democratic Transition
Cultural Milieu	Morocco’s unique blend of cultures, traditions, and languages due to its proximity to southern Europe.	Serves as a bridge to broader democratic ideals, fostering societal openness to change.
Cultural Confluence	The intermingling of European and Moroccan cultural elements.	Encourages the reevaluation of traditional power structures and a shift towards a more open society.
Exchange of Ideas	The flow of democratic norms and values from Europe to Morocco.	Transforms democracy from an imported idea to a lived experience, promoting social transformation.
Cultural Dynamism	The active engagement with cultural exchange as a catalyst for change.	Paves the way for a Morocco that honors its heritage while embracing democratic change.

Note: Adapted from (Dennison et al., 2011)

Explanation table 4.1

Morocco's democratic development is closely linked to its rich cultural environment, as proximity and interaction with southern Europe have fostered a diverse and harmonious societal fabric. This cultural confluence not only facilitated the exchange of democratic ideals, but also transformed them into lived experience, prompting a reevaluation of traditional power structures and encouraging a shift toward a more open and democratic society. The European Union played an important role in this transformation, as it provided support and served as a model

for democratic practices. Even if they were only formal, it played an effective role in Morocco's journey towards adopting democratic change while remaining true to its heritage.

1.5 Legal and Institutional Framework

a. Legal Reforms

The trajectory of Morocco's democratic transition is inextricably linked to the implementation of comprehensive legal reforms. The call for a consensual constitution reflects the nation's collective aspiration for a foundational document that embodies the principles of democracy and encapsulates the will of the people. A fair electoral system is equally paramount, serving as the bedrock upon which the legitimacy of democratic representation is built (Khanani, 2014). These legal reforms are not mere procedural updates; they are transformative actions designed to safeguard the rights of all citizens and to enshrine the rule of law as the supreme arbiter in the nation's governance. The pursuit of these reforms is a clear indication of Morocco's dedication to constructing a legal framework that is equitable, transparent, and conducive to the flourishing of a democratic society.

b. Judicial Independence

Judicial independence is a critical pillar of democratic integrity and a fundamental requirement for the rule of law. In Morocco, the establishment of a judiciary that operates free from political influence is not just an ideal but a necessary condition for the democratic transition (Madani et al., 2012). An independent judiciary ensures that legal standards are applied uniformly, without prejudice or favoritism, to all citizens. This independence is the guarantor of justice,

providing a check against the concentration of power and serving as a safeguard for civil liberties. The commitment to judicial independence is a commitment to a system where laws are not tools of the powerful but shields for the powerless, where justice is not a privilege but a right, and where the scales of justice are balanced for all members of society (Degli et al., 2018).

1.6 Civil Society and Public Opinion

a. Role of Civil Society

In the landscape of Morocco's democratic transition, civil society emerges as a formidable force, playing an indispensable role in the cultivation of a democratic ethos. The multifaceted nature of civil society (encompassing non-governmental organizations, community groups, and advocacy networks) allows it to act as a vigilant watchdog over governmental actions. This vigilance is crucial in ensuring that the government remains transparent and accountable to its citizens. Moreover, civil society is often at the vanguard of advocating for democratic reforms and the protection of human rights, serving as both a conscience and a catalyst for the nation (Khakee & Weilandt, 2022). It is through the persistent efforts of these groups that issues of public concern are brought to the forefront, influencing policy and fostering a culture of civic responsibility.

b. Public Opinion

Public opinion in Morocco serves as a barometer for the nation's political climate and a powerful driver of reform. The collective perspective of the populace is a critical component of the democratic process, reflecting the needs, desires, and

aspirations of the citizenry. The government's responsiveness to this public opinion is a testament to the maturing of Morocco's democracy . When the voices of the people prompt legislative changes or policy shifts, it demonstrates a dynamic and responsive governance structure (فهييم, 2010). This interplay between public opinion and political action is indicative of a healthy democracy, where the will of the people is not only heard but also acted upon, shaping the nation's trajectory towards a more inclusive and representative governance model (Madani et al., 2012). The evolution of public opinion into tangible political change is a hallmark of a society progressing steadily on the path of democratic consolidation.

1.7 External Factors

a. International Relations

Morocco's engagement with the international community is a critical external factor that has significant implications for its democratic transition. The nation's diplomatic relations and strategic alliances have the potential to shape its political landscape profoundly (الدين, 1995). These external connections offer Morocco a variety of models of democratic governance, which can serve as benchmarks or sources of inspiration for its own political reforms. Moreover, international partnerships often come with expectations and pressures for democratic practices, which can act as catalysts for change within the country. Whether through soft diplomacy or more direct forms of influence, the international community plays an indispensable role in encouraging and supporting Morocco's journey towards a more democratic society.

b. EU Support

The European Union's support is particularly noteworthy in the context of Morocco's democratic evolution. The EU's foundational principles of human rights, democracy, and the rule of law resonate with the aspirations of Morocco's democratic transition. Through a combination of moral backing and practical assistance, the EU can significantly contribute to Morocco's efforts to establish and strengthen democratic institutions and processes. This support can take various forms, including policy advice, financial aid, and capacity-building initiatives, all aimed at reinforcing Morocco's commitment to democratic values (Kausch, 2009). The EU's involvement is not just a testament to its commitment to promoting democracy beyond its borders but also an acknowledgment of the strategic importance of a stable and democratic Morocco in the region.

Table 4.2: “EU Support for Morocco’s Democratic Progress: Key Data and Insights”

Aspect of Support	Description	Statistics	Explanation
Moral Backing	Aligning with Morocco’s aspirations for democracy, human rights, and the rule of law.	Not quantifiable	The EU’s moral support is crucial as it aligns with the core values of Morocco’s democratic movement and provides legitimacy to the reform efforts.
Practical Assistance	Contributing to the establishment and strengthening of democratic institutions and processes.	€343 million ¹	This financial assistance is aimed at supporting key reforms and strengthening institutions necessary for a functioning democracy.
Forms of Support	Policy advice, financial aid, and capacity-building initiatives.	€624 million in cooperation programmes ²	These programmes are designed to modernize and democratize Morocco, with a focus on economic and institutional reforms.
Aim	Reinforcing Morocco’s commitment to democratic values.	Not quantifiable	The aim is to ensure that Morocco’s transition to democracy is genuine and leads to the establishment of accountable institutions.
Significance	Demonstrating the EU’s commitment to promoting democracy and recognizing the strategic importance of a stable and democratic Morocco.	Not quantifiable	A democratic Morocco is strategically important for the EU’s interests in the region, promoting stability and partnership.

Note: Adapted from (European Commission, 2023)

Explanation Table 4.1

The statistics presented are based on the latest available data and reflect the European Union's significant investment in democratic development in Morocco. These clarifications help to understand the impact and objectives of the support provided by the European Union, which not only attests to its commitment to democracy, but also indicates, in essence, the pursuit and preservation of interests given Morocco's strategic importance in the region.

However, this investment can be viewed as part of a broader geopolitical strategy where the EU's engagement with Morocco serves multiple functions. It enhances political stability, encourages economic reforms consistent with international standards, and supports Morocco's role as a moderate and progressive player in North Africa, thus contributing to regional security and prosperity. However, in relation to the democracy index, the matter remains very weak despite political and economic stability.

1.8 Resume

Morocco's path toward democratic transition is a complex interplay of various factors that collectively contribute to its evolving political landscape. The process is anchored by political reforms, notably the constitutional amendments of 2011, which were catalyzed by the Arab Spring and aimed to enhance democratic freedoms and establish a clearer separation of powers. The vigor of civil society is evident as organizations mobilize citizens and advocate for governance changes, reflecting a significant increase in public demand for political freedom and social justice.

Economic stability, fostered by economic policies and plans often backed

by international financial institutions, creates a conducive environment for political and economic transitions, influencing the democratic process. Institutional developments have been pivotal, with the establishment of mechanisms that ensure the transparency and fairness of elections, fortifying the democratic framework.

The cultural and regional dynamics play a crucial role, with cities like Rabat and Casablanca and regions like the Rif contributing uniquely to the democratization narrative. These areas reflect the interweaving of Morocco's historical encounters, pivotal conflicts, and significant events that intricately stitch the fabric of its democratic pursuit.

Public discourse, propelled by traditional and social media, has become a vital avenue for political participation, fostering an informed and engaged citizenry. The flow of ideas and information through these mediums has enhanced the quality of democracy and the importance of public participation.

Lastly, the establishment of a legal and judicial framework that upholds a fair legal system and an independent judiciary has been essential for a successful democratic transition. This framework ensures the government's adherence to democratic principles and the implementation of political reforms.

Together, these factors illustrate Morocco's commitment to democratic principles and its efforts to balance tradition with progress, highlighting the nation's adaptability and capacity to navigate its democratic path. The synthesis of these diverse strands offers insights into the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead for Morocco's democratic aspirations.