Chapter 4
Morocco

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ABSTRACT
Morocco was established as a result of a struggle against the French and Spanish Protectorates, that eventually brought the national independence to its state and people in 1956. Accordingly, the Moroccan interaction with the contemporary world goes back to that year, when Morocco became a nation-state for the very first time in its history. Among the critical events that structure this interaction are the problems in the Western Sahara region that has been making Moroccan political elites superiorize the Moroccannity component of the postcolonial Moroccan national identity, and economic relations with Turkey. The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate the general components of Moroccan state, such as its demography, economy and administration, to analyse the Moroccan economic and sociocultural interaction with its neighborhood and Turkey, and lastly to make some policy suggestions to advance the country’s relations with Turkey.

INTRODUCTION
Located in the far west Maghreb region, Morocco constitutes a geopolitical and cultural bridge between Europe and Africa. This chapter firstly explains the demographic, socio-cultural, administrative and economic properties of the country. Then, it focuses on exploring how Morocco interacted with other actors in the contemporary world, including the regions of Europe, Sub-Saharan Africa and the Maghreb. By arguing that Morocco has always been an indispensable part of the Western Sahara region, the chapter tries to show how the Western Sahara conflict has the power to shape Morocco’s relations with these regions stated above. In addition, the chapter shows how Morocco and Turkey, both Muslim entities and who have considered themselves as Europeans, developed their bilateral interaction with a specific emphasis on economics.

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BACKGROUND

The position of the authors in this chapter is to show how the Western Sahara issue has had the power to shape Moroccan foreign policy with Sub-Saharan Africa, Europe and the Maghreb regions. Different from the already existing literature that shows how the Western Sahara issue has been shaping Morocco’s relations with the Sahraouis, this chapter shows how Morocco regards the Western Sahara as not only impacting the Sahraouis but also Europeans, Sub-Saharan Africans and North Africans. In addition, the chapter contributes to the literature by presenting how Morocco and Turkey have interacted with each other. It also highlights a number of common features they share. After gaining independence for example, both countries formed their national identity through Islam. Furthermore, they both quested at the same time becoming members of the European Economic Community. And finally, both would like to create a sphere of influence in Sub-Saharan Africa to promote its foreign trade volume and state prestige.

Population and Demographic Features

To understand the context of Morocco, it is important to provide some background information concerning the Country’s geographic location and population. Morocco is located in North Africa, along the North Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea. Its neighbours are Algeria to the east and Mauritania to the south. It is 1559 km away from Algeria and 443 km from Western Sahara. To the north of the country is Ceuta and Melilla, two cities located in Spain along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. Its capital is Rabat; Casablanca, Fes and Marrakech are the most important cities. It has a strategic location overlooking the Strait of Gibraltar. The country bears four geographical features: Rif Mountains across the Atlantic Ocean, the Atlas Mountains, regions and desert lands (CIA, 2016).

The population of the country is nearly 34.4 million in 2015 (World Bank, 2016). Population density of the country is 77 per. /km². Morocco is the 40th most crowded country of the World, and 11th most crowded country of Africa. The number of females in total population is 17,388,000 and the rate of females is 50.5%. The number of males is approximately 17 million, which is equal to the rate of 50%. The life expectancy is 71.

55% of its population is composed by the Arabs who came from the Middle East. The second ethnic group is the Berbers with a rate of 34%. The Berbers spread along Northwest and West African countries and are known as the locals of the region. The third group is the Moors; they have Mauritania-origin and constitute 10% of the population. The remaining part the population includes the Spanish and other European minorities.

The official language is Arabic. By a referendum held in July 2011, the Berber language was accepted as the official language too. The Berber language is spoken in regions located in the vicinity of Sahara; French is spoken in business and management sectors; and Spanish is spoken in northern parts of the country.

The official religion is Islam. 99% of the population is Muslim. Most of the Muslims are Maliki, and a small portion is Hanafi. The remaining 1% is composed of the Christians and the Jews. 40% of the population lives in cities, and the rest of them live in the countryside. Plains of the Mediterranean part and the plains located in northern part closer to Atlantic Ocean are densely populated. In the Atlantic Ocean part of Northern Morocco, especially in Casablanca-Kenitra and Morocco-Rabat axis, the rate of urbanisation is high (Munoz & Perez, Munoz & Konate, 2016, pp.201-203).
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