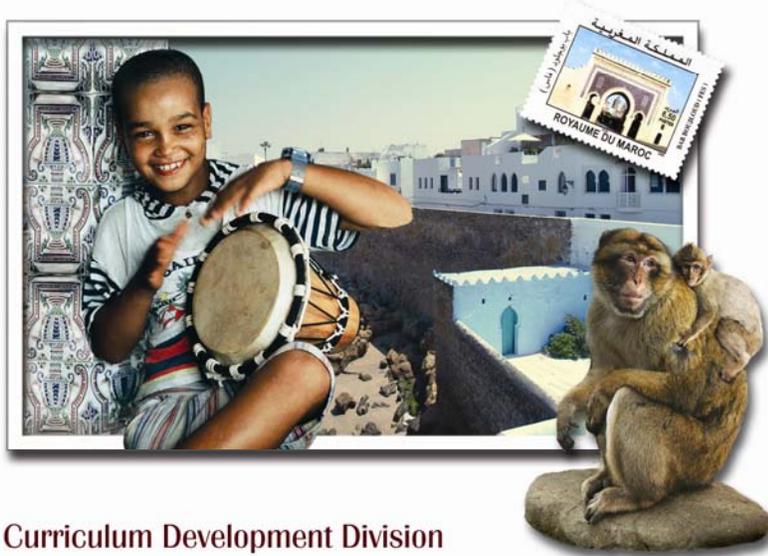


# MOROCCO in Perspective

An Orientation Guide



Curriculum Development Division  
Instructional Design Department  
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DEFENSE LANGUAGE INSTITUTE FOREIGN LANGUAGE CENTER

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# PROFILE

## Introduction

Morocco has often been characterized as a country of contrasts. It is an Islamic country, but for much of its history it also had a significant Jewish minority population in many of its cities. The culture and language is dominantly Arabic in the coastal areas, but not far away in the country's high mountains are native Berbers whose way of life has changed relatively little over the centuries. The climate is pleasant and Mediterranean in the north, harsh with temperature extremes in the central mountains, and arid and scorching hot in the south. Many of the cities feature newer sections with wide boulevards constructed during French colonial occupation that lie adjacent to bustling walled areas that have existed for over 1000 years.



© Viktor Kaposi  
A Jewish cemetery in Marrakech

In the following chapters we discuss some of the elements that make Morocco a fascinating country. Moroccan culture reflects the geographical circumstances that place it at the meeting point between Africa and Europe. Following a brief introduction to Morocco's key geographical elements, the country's rich history, evolving economy, and diverse cultural fabric are then examined in turn. Finally, we summarize some of the security concerns facing Morocco. Foremost among these issues is the internal threat posed by fundamentalist sects seeking to gain greater power and change forever Morocco's traditionally tolerant form of Islam.<sup>1</sup>

## Facts and figures<sup>2</sup>

### Location:

Northern Africa, bordering the North Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea, between Algeria and Western Sahara

### Area:

446,550 sq km (172,414 sq mi)

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<sup>1</sup> Guardian Unlimited. Observer Magazine. "Tipping Point of Terror." 4 April 2004. <http://observer.guardian.co.uk/magazine/story/0,11913,1183923,00.html>

<sup>2</sup> Information in this section comes from the following source: Central Intelligence Agency. CIA World Factbook. "Morocco." 17 January 2008. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mo.html>

**Border countries:**

Algeria 1,559 km (969 mi), Western Sahara 443 km (275 mi), Spain (Ceuta) 6.3 km (3.9 mi), Spain (Melilla) 9.6 km (6.0 mi)

**Natural hazards:**

The northern mountains are geologically unstable and are subject to earthquakes. There are also periodic droughts.

**Climate**

Mediterranean, becoming more extreme in the interior

**Environment—current issues:**

Land degradation/desertification (soil erosion resulting from farming of marginal areas, overgrazing, destruction of vegetation); water supplies contaminated by raw sewage; siltation of reservoirs; oil pollution of coastal waters.

**Population:**

33,757,175 (July 2007 est.)

**Median age:**

24.3 years (2007 est.)

**Population growth rate:**

1.528% (2007 est.)

**Life expectancy at birth:**

71.22 years (2007 est.)

**HIV/AIDS—adult prevalence rate:**

0.1% (2001 est.)

**Major infectious diseases:**

*degree of risk:* intermediate

*food or waterborne diseases:* bacterial diarrhea, and hepatitis A

*vectorborne diseases:* May be a significant risk in some locations during the transmission season, typically April through November. (2007)



**Nationality:**

*noun:* Moroccan(s)  
*adjective:* Moroccan

**Sex ratio:**

*at birth:* 1.05 male(s)/female  
*under 15 years:* 1.039 male(s)/female  
*15–64 years:* 0.994 male(s)/female  
*65 years and over:* 0.763 male(s)/female  
*total population:* 0.994 male(s)/female (2007 est.)

**Ethnic groups:**

Arab-Berber 99.1%, Other 0.7%, Jewish 0.2%

**Religions:**

Muslim 98.7%, Christian 1.1%, Jewish 0.2%

**Languages:**

Arabic (official); Berber dialects; French often the language of business, government, and diplomacy

**Literacy:**

*definition:* age 15 and over can read and write  
*total literate population:* 52.3%  
*male:* 65.7%  
*female:* 39.6% (2004 census)

**Country name:**

*conventional long form:* Kingdom of Morocco  
*conventional short form:* Morocco  
*local long form:* Al Mamlakah al Maghribiyah  
*local short form:* Al Maghrib

**Government type:**

Constitutional monarchy

**Capital:**

*name:* Rabat



© Justin Clements  
Berber girl



DoD photo  
King Hassan II

**Administrative divisions:**

15 regions; Grand Casablanca, Chaouia-Ouardigha, Doukkala-Abda, Fes-Boulemane, Gharb-Chrarda-Beni Hssen, Guelmim-Es Smara, Laayoune-Boujdour-Sakia El Hamra, Marrakech-Tensift-Al Haouz, Meknes-Tafilalet, Oriental, Rabat-Sale-Zemmour-Zaer, Souss-Massa-Draa, Tadla-Azilal, Tanger-Tetouan, Taza-Al Hoceima-Taounate  
*note:* Morocco claims the territory of Western Sahara, the political status of which is considered undetermined by the US Government; portions of the regions Guelmim-Es Smara and Laayoune-Boujdour-Sakia El Hamra as claimed by Morocco lie within Western Sahara; Morocco claims another region, Oued Eddahab-Lagouira, which falls entirely within Western Sahara

**Independence:**

2 March 1956 (from France)

**National holiday:**

Throne Day (accession of King Mohamed VI to the throne), 30 July (1999)

**Constitution:**

10 March 1972; revised 4 September 1992, amended (to create bicameral legislature) September 1996.

**Legal system:**

Based on Islamic law and French and Spanish civil law systems; judicial review of legislative acts in Constitutional Chamber of Supreme Court; has not accepted compulsory International Court of Justice jurisdiction

**Suffrage:**

18 years of age; universal (as of January 2003)

**Government:**

*chief of state:* King Mohamed VI (since 30 July 1999)

*head of government:* Prime Minister Abbas El Fassi (since 19 September 2007)

*cabinet:* Council of Ministers appointed by the monarch

*elections:* None; the monarchy is hereditary; prime minister appointed by the monarch following legislative elections



© Franz Dejon  
King Mohammed VI and Kofi Annan

**Legislative branch:**

Bicameral Parliament consists of a Chamber of Counselors (or upper house) (270 seats; members elected indirectly by local councils, professional organizations, and labor syndicates for nine-year terms; one-third of the members are elected every three years) and Chamber of Representatives (or lower house) (325 seats; 295 members elected by multi-seat constituencies and 30 from national lists of women; members elected by popular vote for five-year terms)

*elections:* Chamber of Counselors - last held 8 September 2006 (next to be held in 2009); Chamber of Representatives - last held 7 September 2007 (next to be held in 2012)

*election results:* Chamber of Counselors - percent of vote by party - NA; seats by party: Independence Party 17, People's Movement 14, National Rally of Independents 13, Socialist Union of People's Forces 11, Constitutional Union 6, National Democratic Party 4, Party of Progress and Socialism 4, Al Ahd 4, other 17; Chamber of Representatives - percent of vote by party - NA; seats by party: Independence Party 52, Justice and Development Party 46, People's Movement 41, National Rally of Independents 39, Socialist Union of People's Forces 38, Constitutional Union 27, Party of Progress and Socialism 17, Front of Democratic Forces 9, Democratic and Social Movement 9, Al Ahd 8, other 39

**Judicial branch:**

Supreme Court - Judges are appointed on the recommendation of the Supreme Council of the Judiciary, presided over by the monarch.

**International organization participation:**

Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa, Agency for the French-Speaking Community, African Development Bank, Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, Arab Monetary Fund, Arab Maghreb Union, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Food and Agriculture Organization, Group of 77, International Atomic Energy Agency, International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (World Bank), International Civil Aviation Organization, International Chamber of Commerce, International Criminal Court (signatory), International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, International Development Association, Islamic Development Bank, International Fund for Agricultural Development, International Finance Corporation, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, International Hydrographic Organization, International Labor Organization, International Monetary Fund, International Maritime Organization, International Mobile Satellite Organization, International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol), International Olympic Committee, International Organization for Migration, Inter-parliamentary Union, International Organization for Standardization, International Telecommunications Satellite Organization, International Telecommunication Union, International Trade Union Confederation, League of Arab States, Multilateral Investment Geographic Agency, United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nonaligned Movement, Organization of American States (observer), Organization of the Islamic Conference International

Organization of the French-Speaking World, Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (partner), Permanent Court of Arbitration, United Nations, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, United Nations Industrial Development Organization, United Nations Industrial Development Organization, United Nations Institute for Training and Research, United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire, World Tourism Organization, Universal Postal Union, World Confederation of Labor, World Customs Organization, World Health Organization, World Intellectual Property Organization, World Meteorological Organization, World Trade Organization,

**GDP—real growth rate:**

2.1% (2007 est.)

**GDP—composition by sector:**

*agriculture:* 15%

*industry:* 38.2%

*services:* 46.8% (2007 est.)

**Labor force—by occupation:**

*agriculture:* 40%

*industry:* 15%

*services:* 45% (2003 est.)

**Telephones—main lines in use:**

1,266,000 (2006)

**Telephones—mobile cellular:**

16,005,000 (2006)

**Radio broadcast stations:**

AM 27, FM 25, shortwave 6 (1998)

**Television broadcast stations:**

35 (plus 66 repeaters) (1995)

**Internet users:**

6,100,000 (2006)



© Steve Evans  
Produce vendor

## **Airports:**

60 (2007)

## **Airports—with paved runways:**

*total:* 27

*over 3,047 m (1.89 mi):* 11

*2,438 to 3,047 m (1.51-1.89 mi):* 6

*1,524 to 2,437 m (0.95-1.51 mi):* 7

*914 to 1,523 m (0.57-0.95 mi):* 1

*under 914 m (0.57 mi):* 2 (2007)

## **Military branches:**

Royal Armed Forces (Forces Armées Royales, FAR):  
Royal Moroccan Army (includes Air Defense), Navy  
(includes Marines), Royal Moroccan Air Force (Force  
Aérienne Royale Marocaine) (2007)

## **Military service age and obligation:**

18 years of age for compulsory and voluntary military service; conscript service  
obligation - 18 months (2004)

## **International disputes:**

*Western Sahara:*

Morocco claims and administers Western Sahara, whose sovereignty remains unresolved. A UN-administered cease-fire has remained in effect since September 1991, but attempts to hold a referendum have failed and parties have thus far rejected all brokered proposals.

*Spain:*

Morocco protests Spain's control over the coastal enclaves of Ceuta, Melilla, and Peñón de Vélez de la Gomera, the islands of Peñón de Alhucemas and Islas Chafarinas, and surrounding waters. Discussions have not progressed on a comprehensive maritime delimitation, setting limits on resource exploration and refugee interdiction, since Morocco's 2002 rejection of Spain's unilateral designation of a median line from the Canary Islands. Morocco serves as one of the primary launching areas of illegal migration into Spain from North Africa.

## **Illicit drugs:**

Morocco is one of the world's largest producers of illicit hashish, with shipments of hashish mostly directed to Western Europe. The country is also a transit point for cocaine



© Flavio Ferrari  
Marrakech-Menara Airport



© Matt Ravier  
Guards on patrol at the Royal Palace

from South America destined for Western Europe and is a significant consumer of cannabis.

# Geography

## Introduction

Morocco, like all countries, strongly reflects its location within the world's mix of cultures. In its history we also see the story of the effects of the natural environment on the local people and tribes. Sandy coasts, fertile plains, imposing mountain peaks, and scorching hot deserts relieved only by the occasional oasis are all part of the Moroccan landscape. Each environment has helped shape a part of the overall cultural and economic evolution of the modern nation.

Traditionally Morocco has been known to the Arab world as al-Maghreb al-Aqsa, or “the farthest west.” Certainly, from a Middle Eastern perspective, the name is quite appropriate. The country lies at the western edge of northern Africa, shielded from the lands to its east by mountains that offer only a limited number of practical passes. Despite this seeming isolation, however, the country has long been a crossroads for both traders and conquerors venturing from both the east and south.



© Giles Antonio Radford  
The port at Moulay Bousseleham

Morocco is also the only northern African country with direct access to the Atlantic Ocean, a geographical advantage that served well the Barbary Corsairs that for several centuries plundered European ships sailing in the North Atlantic. To Morocco's direct north lies the Mediterranean Sea and the southern shores of Spain. As a result, much of Morocco's history and culture has been shaped by its numerous interactions with European nations.

## Area

Morocco occupies the strategic northwest corner of Africa where the Mediterranean Sea meets the Atlantic Ocean. It is the only African country with coastal access to both of these bodies of water. Traditionally, the northwest region of Africa has been known as the Maghreb and also includes the countries of Algeria, Tunisia, and the politically contested Western Sahara. Morocco is the closest African country to Europe, lying only 13 km (8 mi) from Spain across the Strait of Gibraltar.



© Alexandre Nakonechnyj  
Straits of Gibraltar

Morocco's entire eastern and southeastern boundary is with Algeria, spanning the Atlas Mountains to the north and stretching along the northwestern edge of the Sahara Desert to the South. The northern and western sides of the country are bounded by the Mediterranean Sea and Atlantic Ocean, respectively (with the exception of the small Spanish territorial enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla in the north). To Morocco's south lies the hyper-arid Western Sahara, which is presently administered and claimed by Morocco.

## Geographic and Topographical Divisions

### *The Northern Highlands*

Running roughly parallel to Morocco's northern Mediterranean coast are rugged highlands that run to the edge of the Mediterranean, producing a coast that is punctuated by steep cliffs and few natural harbors. The backbone of this region is the Rif mountain range, which runs from just east of Tangier in the west to the Moulouya River basin in the east. This has long been one of Morocco's most independent and relatively unassimilated regions, and today the northern highlands remain a stronghold of Berber culture.<sup>3</sup>



Within the main part of the highlands, there are no large cities; here, agriculture is the primary form of existence. Earthquakes are also a part of life in this region as well, as the mountains lie along the seismically active zone where the Eurasian and African plates meet. In February 2004, a magnitude 6.4 earthquake struck the region around the coastal city of Al Hoceima and left 600 people dead and hundreds more injured or homeless.<sup>4</sup>

### *The Plains*

South of Tangier and the westernmost Rif Mountains and northwest of the Atlas Mountains lie fertile coastal plains and higher inland plains that are home to the majority of Morocco's population. This region is also the country's agricultural breadbasket. To the east, the plains are bounded by the Middle and High Atlas ranges. Along the Atlantic coast are Casablanca, the country's largest city, and Rabat, the capital city. The northern part of this region is known as the Gharb plain and is drained by the Sabou River, which in its inland portion flows near Fès, Morocco's third largest city. South of Casablanca, several plains are situated near and between the Oum er-Rbia and Tensift Rivers, the two main rivers of the region. Among these are the Doukkala, Chaouia, Abda, and Haouz plains.<sup>5</sup> Marrakech, the largest Moroccan city south of the Middle Atlas Mountains, lies in the Haouz plain just south of the Tensift River.

### *The Atlas Mountains*

Central Morocco is dominated by the Atlas Mountains, a chain that extends over 1,620 km (1,000 mi) across western North Africa. The highest Atlas peaks are found in Morocco, several of which are over 4,000 m (13,123 ft) high. Within Morocco, the Atlas

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<sup>3</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Rif." 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9063658/Rif>

<sup>4</sup> Geotimes. Sever, Megan. "Earthquake in Morocco." 25 February 2008. <http://www.geotimes.org/feb04/WebExtra022404.html>

<sup>5</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Morocco: Land: Relief." 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-46568/Morocco>

Mountains are divided into three parts: the Middle Atlas, the High Atlas, and the Anti-Atlas.

The Middle Atlas Mountains are the northernmost section of the Atlas range. Middle Atlas peaks are generally lower than those of the High Atlas, although one (Adrar Bou Nasser) reaches a height of 3,340 m (10, 958 ft).<sup>6</sup> The Middle Atlas range is separated from the High Atlas Mountains to the south by the upper stretches of the Moulouya River valley. To the east, a narrow pass near the city of Taza separates the Middle Atlas from the Rif Mountains. This pass (known as Tizi n' Touahar) was the traditional invasion path for armies moving through Morocco from the east.<sup>7</sup> To the east of the Middle Atlas range, the mountains gradually level off to high plateaus that extend to the Algerian border and beyond.



© Karl O'Brien  
Atlas mountains

The High Atlas Mountains lie immediately south of the Middle Atlas and extend westward to the Atlantic Coast. The highest peaks lie in the middle portions of the range, including Jebel Toubkal, which at 4,167 m (13,671 ft) is the highest peak in North Africa. The High Atlas peaks are a boundary of sorts between the hot, dry Saharan winds from the southeast and the moisture-laden Atlantic winds from the northwest.

The Anti-Atlas Mountains branch off to the southwest from the High Atlas Mountains near the volcanic peak Jebel Siroua. Like the High Atlas range, the Anti-Atlas Mountains run all the way to the Atlantic, reaching the coast near the small town of Sidi Ifni.<sup>8</sup> Between the High Atlas and the Anti-Atlas lies the Souss Valley, a citrus-growing area that is also a major tourist magnet due to the beach resorts at Agadir on the coast.

### *The Desert Southeast*

To the southeast of the High Atlas Mountains are arid plains and valleys that merge into the northwestern edge of the Sahara Desert. Most of Morocco's borders with Western Sahara and Algeria lie in this inhospitable region. Morocco's longest river, the Draa, flows southeast out of the High Atlas before turning southwest and continuing on to the Atlantic coast, forming the boundary with Algeria for part of the way.<sup>9</sup> However, much of the time the Draa is largely a dry riverbed. The few towns in this region are generally located at riverine oases.

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<sup>6</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Middle Atlas." 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9054072/Middle-Atlas>

<sup>7</sup> *Morocco*. Clammer, Paul. "The East: Taza [p. 275]." 2007. Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications

<sup>8</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Anti-Atlas." 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9007800/Anti-Atlas>

<sup>9</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Draa River." 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9031106/Draa-River>

## Topographic Features

“The Atlas is very much a borderland—not so much politically as geographically—for immediately to the south lies the Sahara, the greatest desert in the world. It is only [the] Atlas that prevents northern Morocco from succumbing to its sands.”

Jens Finke, *Chasing the Lizard's Tale*<sup>10</sup>

Morocco's mountains are the signature topographic feature of the nation. They also form an ethnic dividing line among the Moroccan people, with the mountains being the traditional home for Berbers and the plains to the northwest being populated by Arabs and Moroccans of mixed descent. The High Atlas range is referred to by local Berber tribespeople as *Idraren Draren* (“the Mountains of Mountains”) and is location of all the highest Moroccan peaks, from Jebel Toubkal (4,167 m, 13,671 ft) in the southwesternmost part of the range to Jebel Ayachi (3,747 m, 12,293 ft) at the far northeastern end.



© Omer Simkha  
Jebel Toubkal

Descending from the Atlas and Rif Mountains run numerous rivers that have carved caves, valleys, and gorges through the surrounding rocks. The presence of limestone, sandstone, and granite record the complex geologic history of the mountains, which at several times over the last several hundred million years were part of the ocean floor.<sup>11</sup> The mountains we see today are the result of tectonic forces that are pushing Africa towards Europe and driving the earth's crust upward as the two continental plates collide.

## Climate

Much of Morocco, particularly in the coastal areas, experiences a Mediterranean climate, with dry, hot summers and wet winters that run from October to April. Rainfall amounts generally increase from south to north because of Morocco's position on the southern edge of the North Atlantic frontal system tract. When high-pressure ridges develop and persist off the Morocco coast in winter, even northern regions will receive little rain and drought conditions can occur.

Morocco's Atlas and Rif Mountains receive more rainfall than lower elevations at the same latitude, and for this reason some mountainous southern regions actually get larger amounts of precipitation than do more northerly areas on the coastal plains. The Atlas Mountains also



© berlinpaul25 / Flickr.com  
Rainshowers in the Atlas mountains

<sup>10</sup> BlueGecko.org. *Chasing the Lizard's Tale: Across the Sahara by Bicycle*. Finke, Jens. “Chapter 3. The Atlas Mountains.” 1996. <http://www.bluegecko.org/lizard/>

<sup>11</sup> SevenContinents.com. “Natural Wonders of the Maghreb—An Expedition through Morocco's Earth History.” 2004–2005. <http://www.seven-continents.com/morocco.htm>

create a rain shadow to their southeast, and desert-like conditions begin rather abruptly on this side of the mountains.

Spring and summer temperatures are generally mild in coastal regions owing to onshore ocean breezes but can be as high as 35°C (95°F) in inland areas. During the summer, however, hot, dry *sharqi* winds can blow in from the Sahara and sweep over the mountains, raising temperatures dramatically, even along the coast. These winds can severely dry out crops that have not been harvested and lead to severe agricultural damage.<sup>12</sup>

Above 2,000 m (6,500 ft) in the Moroccan mountains, snowfall is common during the winter and may not melt until summer at the highest elevations. Because of this, Morocco is one of only three African countries to have ski resorts. (South Africa and Lesotho are the others.)<sup>13</sup>

### Rivers and Lakes

Very few of Morocco's rivers are navigable by anything but very small boats. Nevertheless, they provide essential sources of irrigation and drinking water for the majority of the Moroccan population. Most of Morocco's most important rivers have their sources in the Middle and High Atlas Mountains. Among these rivers are the Moulayou, which is the only major Moroccan river to flow northward into the Mediterranean Sea. It has a length of 515 km (320 mi) and reaches the Mediterranean near the Algerian border, east of the Rif Mountains.<sup>14</sup>



© James Lookley  
A lake in Marrakech

The other important rivers all flow westward toward the Atlantic Ocean. These include the Sebou River, 450 km (280 mi) long, which has the largest flow volume of any Moroccan river and reaches the Atlantic just north of Rabat; the Oum er-Rbia River, which travels 555 km (345 mi) through some of Morocco's most productive agricultural areas; and the the Tensift River (260 km, 160 mi), which runs through the heavily irrigated Haouz plain near Marrakech.<sup>15</sup>

Morocco's natural lakes are quite small, and the largest bodies of water are all man-made. Only three countries in Africa have more irrigated acreage than Morocco, and much of this irrigation water comes from dam reservoirs. Four of these dams have reservoirs with

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<sup>12</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Morocco: Land: Climate." 2008.

<http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-46571/Morocco>

<sup>13</sup> About.com. Zijlma, Anouk. "Africa Travel: Skiing in Morocco." 9 January 2006.

<http://goafrica.about.com/b/2006/01/09/skiing-in-morocco.htm>

<sup>14</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Morocco: Land: Drainage." 2008.

<http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-46569/Morocco>

<sup>15</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Tensift River." 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9071715/Tensift-River>

volumes over 1 billion cubic m (35 billion cubic ft). The largest, Al Wadha, 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, the Bin el-Ouidane on a feeder stream to the Oum er-Rbia, and the Idriss 1 on another feeder stream to the Sebou River near the city of Fès.<sup>16</sup>

### Population and Cities

Urban Area	Region (* Capital)	Population 2004 census
Casablanca	Grand Casablanca*	3,631,061
Rabat	Rabat-Salé-Zemmour-Zaer*	1,622,860
Fès	Fès-Boulemane*	946,815
Marrakech	Marrakech-Tensift-El Haouz*	823,154
Agadir	Sous-Massa-Draâ*	678,596
Tangier	Tangier-Tétouan*	669,685
Meknès	Meknès-Tafilalt*	536,232
Oujda	Oriental*	400,738
Kenitra	Gharb-Chrarda-Béni Hsen*	359,142
Tétouan	Tangier-Tétouan	320,539

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<sup>16</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. AQUASTAT Programme. "Dams and Agriculture in Africa." May 2007.  
[http://www.fao.org/nr/water/aquastat/damsafrica/Aquastat\\_Dams\\_Africa\\_070524.pdf](http://www.fao.org/nr/water/aquastat/damsafrica/Aquastat_Dams_Africa_070524.pdf)

## *Casablanca (Dar el-Baïda)*

Not only is Casablanca Morocco's largest city, it is also the nation's economic and business center and the site of its largest port. It is a huge modern city whose medina ("old city") is relatively small compared with those in older cities such as Marrakech and Fès. Casablanca's name, which means "white house" in Spanish, is actually derived from the Portuguese *Casa Branca*. The Portuguese, after destroying the city (then known as Anfa) in 1468 and later in 1515 in reprisal for pirate attacks, rebuilt the city in 1575 and stayed on, despite numerous attacks by local Muslim tribes.<sup>17</sup> Eventually, however, a catastrophic earthquake in 1755 destroyed the city and led the Portuguese to abandon the site soon after. By 1830, Casablanca was reduced to a village of roughly 600 people.<sup>18</sup> In the latter half of the 19th century, the city began to revive as a trading center with Europe.<sup>19</sup>



© Milamber's\_portfolio / Flickr.com  
Casablanca at dawn

Casablanca's ascendancy as Morocco's commercial hub came shortly after the French established a Moroccan protectorate in the early 20th century. They built a new artificial port at Casablanca that helped dramatically boost the city's trade and economic development, which in turn sparked a huge population boom as poor rural residents moved to the outer edges of the city looking for work. Today it is estimated that 1/3 of Casablanca's population lives in the shantytowns (*bidenvilles*) that lie beyond the central city and fashionable suburbs.<sup>20</sup> In recent times these areas have become breeding grounds for young terrorists, including the perpetrators of suicide bombings in Casablanca during 2003 that killed 45 people.<sup>21</sup> Several of the bombers were from the Sidi Moumen slum area, which has come to symbolize the increasing radicalism emerging from the poorer areas of Morocco's cities.<sup>22</sup>

Casablanca is the industrial, banking, and services center of Morocco. Because much of Morocco's historical and natural attractions are elsewhere, tourism is not as important to the local economy as it is in other Moroccan cities, such as Tangier and Fès. However,

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<sup>17</sup> JewishVirtualLibrary.org. "Casablanca." 2008.

<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsourc/vjw/Casablanca.html>

<sup>18</sup> *Morocco*. O'Carroll, Etain. "Casablanca (Dar El-Baïda) [p. 88]." 2007. Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications

<sup>19</sup> AsiaTour.com. "Morocco/Casablanca: History." 1 August 2007. <http://www.asiatour.com/morocco/e-04casa/em-cas11.htm>

<sup>20</sup> *Morocco*. O'Carroll, Etain. "Casablanca (Dar El-Baïda): Tin Towns [p. 94]." 2007. Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications

<sup>21</sup> World Bank. "Kingdom of Morocco Poverty Report: Strengthening Policy by Identifying the Geographic Dimension of Poverty." September 2004. [http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2005/12/09/000112742\\_20051209162419/Rendered/INDEX/2822300MOR.txt](http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2005/12/09/000112742_20051209162419/Rendered/INDEX/2822300MOR.txt)

<sup>22</sup> Mahgarebia.com. Benmehdi, Hassan. "Casablanca Residents Stand Up Against Terrorism, Call for Change." 22 March 2007.

[http://www.magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en\\_GB/features/awi/features/2007/03/22/feature-01](http://www.magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en_GB/features/awi/features/2007/03/22/feature-01)

the city's immense Hassan II mosque, completed in 1993 and built on an ocean promontory, does attract both Muslim and non-Muslim visitors.

### *Rabat*

Rabat is Morocco's capital. The city has a long history of ups and downs, twice before having briefly been an imperial capital before events led to its decline. Its most recent rise to national political prominence came at about the same time that Casablanca was becoming the country's preeminent economic capital. In 1912 Rabat became the French administrative center of Morocco in 1912, replacing Fès, which was threatened at the time by a Berber rebellion. Yusef ben Hassan, the reigning Alouite Sultan, followed suit, moving the court to Rabat as well. Thus, Rabat became the last of the Alouite imperial capitals. Rabat remained the capital of Morocco after the country gained independence in 1956.



© Mark Kirchner  
Rabat, Morocco

Rabat and its sister city Salé are divided by the Bou Regreg River, which over the centuries has provided safe harbor for Phoenician, Roman, and Carthaginian trading posts. In the 12th century, Rabat served as a staging area for the Almohad sovereign Abd el-Moumen against Christian armies in Spain and Tunisia. His grandson, Yakoub al Mansour, later briefly established the city as his capital. He began work on a great mosque near the river but died before it was completed. The Hassan Tower, an enormous minaret that is all of what was completed of the mosque, still stands today and is Rabat's most famous architectural landmark.

During the 17th century, Rabat reached a zenith of sorts when it became the refuge of the Mudejars. These Andalusians, the last of the Spanish Moors, found a second life as Barbary pirates after being driven from Spain. The Mudejars for many years terrorized the Atlantic shipping lanes between the Canary Islands and England and established Rabat as a city of great wealth and power.<sup>23</sup>

Economically, Rabat is no longer an important sea port, having been eclipsed by Casablanca to the south and the Sebou River port of Kenitra to the north. Textiles, carpets and leather crafts, fruit and fish processing, and bricks and asbestos production are some of the local industries.<sup>24</sup>

### *Fès*

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<sup>23</sup> *The Imperial Cities of Morocco*. Métalsi, Mohamed; and Cécile Tréal, Jean-Michel Ruiz. "Rabat, the Alouite Capital [pp. 160–61]." 2001. Paris: Edition Pierre Terrail.

<sup>24</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Rabat." 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9062340/Rabat>

More so than any other Moroccan city, Fès is a living museum recording Morocco's long imperial history. Situated at the confluence of caravan routes that linked the Atlantic coast to the central Maghreb and that led through passes in the Middle and High Atlas Mountain to the desert lands of the southeast, the city remains one of the great remnants of ancient Islamic civilization.<sup>25</sup> The city was founded at the beginning of Morocco's long line of imperial dynasties by Idriss I, a descendant of the Prophet Mohammed's daughter Fatima.<sup>26</sup> After taking part in an uprising against Abbasid caliphs in Mecca, Idriss fled in 786 CE to Morocco, where (with the assistance of local Berber tribes) he began plans to establish Fès as his capital.<sup>27</sup> A few decades later, the city became the refuge of Arab families fleeing from Kairouan in what is now Tunisia, as well as Andalusians (modern-day southern Spain) driven out of Cordoba by the Umayyads. Thus, the city from nearly its beginning absorbed strong doses of the Andalusian, Arabic, and Berber cultures.<sup>28</sup>



At the heart of the modern city is the immense walled medina, the largest in the Islamic world. Lying within the medina is the Kairouine mosque and its associated university. The latter institution is arguably the world's oldest continuously operating university.<sup>29</sup> Its presence has long attracted scholars and artisans and has made Fès the intellectual, spiritual, and cultural capital of Morocco, even during periods when the country's political capital was located elsewhere. Fès continues to be well known for its traditional crafts, such as leather goods, which are still made and sold in the ancient medina.

Since the establishment of the French protectorate in 1912, Fès has experienced considerable changes. Many in the professional classes have moved outside the medina walls into the French-built *nouvelle ville* (new city), where the modern industrial quarter is located.<sup>30</sup> As they have left, the rural poor have increasingly taken residence in the old part of the city, where donkeys and mules continue to be the primary mode of transportation in many sections.<sup>31, 32</sup>

<sup>25</sup> *The Imperial Cities of Morocco*. Métalsi, Mohamed; and Cécile Tréal, Jean-Michel Ruiz. "Fès, the City of Letters [p. 29]." 2001. Paris: Edition Pierre Terrail

<sup>26</sup> *Morocco*. Bing, Alison. "History: Dynastic Dramas [p. 32]." 2007. Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications

<sup>27</sup> *Morocco*. Clammer, Paul. "Imperial Cities, Middle Atlas & the East [pp. 216, 217]." 2007. Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications

<sup>28</sup> *The Imperial Cities of Morocco*. Métalsi, Mohamed; and Cécile Tréal, Jean-Michel Ruiz. "Fès, the City of Letters [pp. 29, 30]." 2001. Paris: Edition Pierre Terrail

<sup>29</sup> The Maghreb Center. "Study Development, Islam, Democracy, and Arabic in Morocco." <http://maghrebcenter.org/program.asp>

<sup>30</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Fès." 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9034128/Fes>

<sup>31</sup> *The Imperial Cities of Morocco*. Métalsi, Mohamed; and Cécile Tréal, Jean-Michel Ruiz. "Fès, the City of Letters [p. 31]." 2001. Paris: Edition Pierre Terrail

<sup>32</sup> Environmental Law Alliance Worldwide. World Bank. "Case Study 1: Valuing the Benefits of Conservation of Fès Medina." 1998. <http://www.elaw.org/assets/pdf/Valuing.Benefits.Fes.Medina.pdf>

## *Marrakech*

Marrakech, like Fès, has served as the Moroccan imperial capital during several periods over the last 1000 years. Lying in the Haouz plain near the northern edge of the High Atlas Mountains, the city came into existence in 1062 shortly after the first armies of the later-to-be-known Almoravid dynasty swept over the mountains from the deserts to the south. The site of the present city quickly evolved from a base camp for the Almoravid forces to the capital of a rapidly expanding empire that eventually occupied parts of Europe. Even after being conquered and subsequently razed by the Almohad sultan Abd Al-Moumen in 1147, Marrakech was quickly rebuilt and re-established as the Almohad capital.



© Ted Lester  
A busy market in Marrakech

The city declined in the late 13th century after the capital was moved to Fès. However, the city experienced a renaissance two and a half centuries later when the Saadian dynasty came to power and re-established Marrakesh as their capital. During the late 15th century, the city absorbed many of the Mudejars who were expelled from southern Spain when Grenada fell, and thus much of the city's architecture from the 16th century displays Andalusian influences.<sup>33</sup> Virtually all of the buildings in the city are ochre- or rose-hued, having been built from the red-clay earth that surrounds the city.

Marrakech is the most southern of Morocco's major cities. Because of its inland location near the High Atlas Mountains, which are primarily populated by Berbers, the city has retained a strong Berber culture and has seen relatively little Arab influence compared with other large Moroccan cities.<sup>34</sup> Marrakech is also one of Morocco's top tourist destinations, which has resulted in an increasing number of hotel and villa developments springing up amidst the palm and olive groves that surround the city.<sup>35</sup> Besides tourism, Marrakech hosts industries such as fruit processing and the production of leather products and carpets. Lead, zinc, copper, molybdenum, and graphite are all mined in the city's surrounding regions.<sup>36</sup>

## *Tangier*

While Tangier is definitely in Morocco, for much of the second half of the 19th century through the first half of the 20th century, that fact seemed to be simply a geographical formality. During the early years of this period, Spain, England, and France became enmeshed in diplomatic and sometimes militaristic confrontations over who would

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<sup>33</sup> *The Imperial Cities of Morocco*. Métalsi, Mohamed; and Cécile Tréal, Jean-Michel Ruiz. "Marrakesh, the City of the Seven Saints [pp. 70, 72]." 2001. Paris: Edition Pierre Terrail

<sup>34</sup> *Morocco*. Delgado, Kevin. "A Gateway Between Worlds: The Land [p. 21]." 2004. Detroit: Lucent Books.

<sup>35</sup> *Morocco*. Sattin, Anthony. "Marrakesh & Central Morocco [p. 290]." 2007. Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications

<sup>36</sup> Arab.Net. "Morocco: Marrakech/Marrakesh." 2002. [http://www.arab.net/morocco/mo\\_marrakech.htm](http://www.arab.net/morocco/mo_marrakech.htm)

control this important port on the western end of the Strait of Gibraltar. The result was that Tangier was formally recognized as an international zone in 1912, nominally ruled by the Moroccan sultan, but actually administered by the three European nations. After World War I, other European powers and the United States took an interest in establishing themselves in Tangier and the city's administration was further divided up among outside nations.<sup>37</sup> Only with Moroccan independence in 1956 did Tangier once again come under true Moroccan control.

Of course, for multicultural Tangier the intrusion of outsiders in the affairs of the city has always been more the rule than the exception. The Phoenicians, Carthaginians, Romans, Vandals, Byzantines, and Visigoths all conquered the city at one point or another, and in some cases they even stayed for awhile.<sup>38</sup> The Arabs arrived in 682 C.E., followed shortly thereafter by the Berber Almoravids from the south. As Islam spread northward, Tangier became an important port during the centuries of conflict between the armies of the Islamic empire and the kingdoms of Western Europe. Later, from the fifteenth century onward, Tangier found itself a pawn in the ongoing colonial maneuvering between the Portuguese, Spanish, and English.



After independence, Tangier declined in importance and received less support from the state coffers. Port traffic and tourism continued to prop up the local economy, but many of the European and American expatriates that inhabited the city left during the international years. Morocco's infrastructure began to crumble, and the city, always something of an "anything goes" place, became notorious for its criminal activity. Fortunately, the situation seems to have reversed somewhat since new king Mohammed VI came to the throne in 1999, and state resources are once again being directed to the city in order to make it a world-class tourism and shipping center.<sup>39</sup>

### **Environmental Concerns**

One of Morocco's most challenging environmental problems is soil erosion. The country has one of the highest soil erosion rates in the world in its mountainous north.<sup>40</sup> Deforestation of the mountain forests has further exacerbated the soil erosion problem, while overgrazing in arid and semi-arid rangelands has increased the susceptibility of

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<sup>37</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Tangier: History." 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-259477/Tangier>

<sup>38</sup> *Historical Dictionary of Morocco*, 2nd Ed. Park, Thomas K. and Aomar Boum. "Tangier [pp. 330–331]." 2006. Lanham, Md: Scarecrow Press

<sup>39</sup> Travel+Leisure. Alleman, Richard. "Morocco's St. Tropez." August 2006. <http://www.travelandleisure.com/articles/moroccos-st-tropez>

<sup>40</sup> *Desertification in the Mediterranean: A Security Issue*. Ouassou, Abdellah; and Tayeb H. Amziane, Lahcen Lajouad. "State of Natural Resources Degradation in Morocco and Plan of Action for Desertification and Drought Control [p. 253]." 2006. Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer

these regions to encroaching desertification.<sup>41, 42</sup> Besides loss of productive farmland, excessive soil erosion in mountainous areas contributes to increased sedimentation in reservoirs and thus a decreased water storage capacity. A recent study found that an average Moroccan dam loses over 0.5% of its capacity each year due to sedimentation.<sup>43</sup>

Water is critical to Morocco. While the country's population continues to grow at a rapid pace, with an increasing number of people moving to the major urban areas, agriculture remains the bedrock of the economy and the largest employment sector. Approximately 85% of Morocco's water use is for agricultural purposes. Irrigation water is used on only 14% of the country's agricultural acreage, but these fields produce 45% of agricultural revenue and 70% of total agricultural exports.<sup>44</sup> Recently, there have been an extraordinary number of drought years in Morocco. These dry conditions have reduced reservoir levels and led to an increasing reliance on groundwater as an irrigation source.<sup>45</sup>



© helter-skelter / Flickr.com  
Soil erosion

As groundwater use has expanded, salinity levels in soils have increased because aquifer groundwater in Morocco is often brackish and thus more concentrated in salts than surface irrigation water.<sup>46</sup> Excessive pumping has also contributed to saltwater intrusion in coastal aquifers.<sup>47</sup>

Water pollution is also a significant problem in Morocco. Sources of this pollution include untreated waste water, leaching and runoff from agricultural water containing pesticide and fertilizer residues, solid waste dumping, and industrial effluents. The country does have 63 waste treatment plants, but most are not in operation because of lack of funding or insufficient technical capacity to carry out sustained operation and

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<sup>41</sup> *Desertification in the Mediterranean: A Security Issue*. Ouassou, Abdellah; and Tayeb H. Amziane, Lahcen Lajouad. "State of Natural Resources Degradation in Morocco and Plan of Action for Desertification and Drought Control [p. 253]." 2006. Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer

<sup>42</sup> *Morocco*. "Environmental Issues [p. 83]." 2007. Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications

<sup>43</sup> *Human Impact on Erosion and Sedimentation (Proceedings of the Rabat Symposium, 1997)*. Fox, H. R. and H. M. Moore, J. P. Newell Price. "Soil Erosion and Reservoir Sedimentation in the High Atlas Mountains, Southern Morocco [p. 234]." 1997. Wallingford, England: International Association of Hydrological Sciences

<sup>44</sup> International Development Resource Centre. "Water in Morocco." 16 January 2008. [http://www.idrc.ca/en/ev-65879-201-1-DO\\_TOPIC.html](http://www.idrc.ca/en/ev-65879-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html)

<sup>45</sup> Water Knowledge Fair. United Nations Development Programme. "Morocco." <http://www.waterfair.org/country.spring?country=145>

<sup>46</sup> International Development Resource Center. *Water Management in Africa and the Middle East: Challenges and Opportunities*. Matoussi, Mohammed S. "Sources of Strain and Alternatives for Relief in the Most Stressed Water Systems." 1996. [http://www.crdi.ca/eau/ev-31124-201-1-DO\\_TOPIC.html](http://www.crdi.ca/eau/ev-31124-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html)

<sup>47</sup> Salt Water Intrusion Meeting, 18th. University of Amsterdam. Qurtobi, M. and L. Bouchaou, M. IbnMajah, H. Marah, C. B. Gaye, J. L. Michelot. "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." 31 May–June 3 2004. <http://www.geo.vu.nl/users/swim/pdf/swim18/Qurtobi.pdf>

maintenance.<sup>48</sup> At coastal sites, much of this waste is dumped into the sea. Near the phosphate plants at Safi and Jorf Lasfar, south of Casablanca, the accumulation of heavy metals in coastal waters is also a problem.<sup>49</sup>

## Natural Hazards

On 24 February 2004, the Rif Mountains region near the Mediterranean coastal city of Al-Hoceima experienced a magnitude 6.4 earthquake that killed 564 people and left hundreds of others homeless. The same region was struck by a less deadly 6.0 earthquake only ten years earlier. The Al-Hoceima region lies within a large high-seismic-hazard zone that encompasses all of the Rif Mountains and the Sebou River basin to their southwest.<sup>50</sup> The mountain villages in this zone are particularly vulnerable to high death tolls when earthquakes strike because many homes are constructed from unreinforced mud bricks and stones.<sup>51, 52</sup>



© dbern / Flickr.com  
A fragile village in the Rif mountains

Danger from earthquake activity lessens in the areas south of the Middle Atlas Mountains. Nevertheless, history has shown that no part of Morocco is completely safe from earthquakes. The most deadly Moroccan earthquake since 1900 occurred 750 km (466 mi) southwest of the 2004 earthquake in the coastal city of Agadir, in a region in which there was thought to be little to no seismic hazard. About one-third of Agadir's 35,000 residents were killed during this 1960 "moderate" earthquake.<sup>53</sup> When the possibility of finding survivors became highly unlikely and fears of disease grew, the decision was made to bulldoze and cover the entire old part of the city, corpses and all. The resulting burial mound is a lasting memorial to the tragedy and is referred to as Old Talborjt.<sup>54</sup> The new Agadir, rebuilt 2 km (1.4 mi) to the south has quickly become one of Morocco's largest cities, with a thriving economy based primarily on fishing and tourism.

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<sup>48</sup> Chemonics International Consortium. Findley, Meg. "IWRM Working Paper: Applying Appropriate and Sustainable Technologies Using Good Governance Practices." 1 March 2006.

<http://ridgetoreef.com/en/Article.aspx?id=50>

<sup>49</sup> *Water, Air, & Soil Pollution*, Vol. 178, Nos. 1–4. Gaudry, A. and S. Zeroual, F. Gaie-Levrel, M. Moskura, F-Z. Boujrhal, R. Cherkaoui El Moursli, A. Guessous, A. Mouradi, T. Givernaud, R. Delmas. "Heavy Metals Pollution of the Atlantic Marine Environment by the Moroccan Phosphate Industry, as Observed Through Their Bioaccumulation in *Ulva Lactuca*." January 2007.

<http://www.springerlink.com/content/4841314113724tx0/>

<sup>50</sup> U.S. Geological Survey. "M6.4 Earthquake of Al Hoceima, 24 February." 27 February 2004.

<ftp://hazards.cr.usgs.gov/maps/sigsqs/20040224/20040224.pdf>

<sup>51</sup> *Morocco*. Clammer, Paul. "Mediterranean Coast & the Rif: Rulings of Discontent [p. 202]." 2007. Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications

<sup>52</sup> U.S. Geological Survey. "M6.4 Earthquake of Al Hoceima, 24 February." 27 February 2004.

<ftp://hazards.cr.usgs.gov/maps/sigsqs/20040224/20040224.pdf>

<sup>53</sup> U.S. Geological Survey. "Historic Earthquakes: Agadir, Morocco, 1960 February 29 23:40 UTC, Magnitude 5.7." 19 January 2007. [http://earthquake.usgs.gov/regional/world/events/1960\\_02\\_29.php](http://earthquake.usgs.gov/regional/world/events/1960_02_29.php)

<sup>54</sup> *Morocco*. Sattin, Anthony. "The Souss, Anti-Atlas & Western Sahara: Agadir [pp. 368–69]." 2007. Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications

While droughts are much less deadly than catastrophic earthquakes, they have occurred much more frequently in recent decades and have had significant effects on Morocco's agriculturally reliant economy.<sup>55</sup> An increasing number of forest fires is a secondary effect when drought conditions set in over the country.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> World Bank. "Morocco: Country Brief." February 2004.  
<http://Inweb18.worldbank.org/mna/mena.nsf/5d1f9bb6c6c4c660852567d60065a6a0/a3c12c72a8890b3b8525680c00024df1?OpenDocument>

<sup>56</sup> Afrol News. "Drought Brings Recession to Morocco." 20 June 2005.  
<http://www.afrol.com/articles/16617>

# History

## Introduction

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



© Joline Anthea  
The Judiciary Basilica

Since the introduction of Islam in the late 7th century C.E., Morocco has been ruled by a nearly continuous line of sultanic dynasties, both of Arabic and Berber descent. In some cases these dynasties have extended over a large part of North Africa and much of Spain, while at other times only a small portion of modern Morocco was actually under dynastic control. Few Moroccan dynasties have been able to sustain beyond a century or two before new forces, often led by religious reformers, emerge from the southern deserts and mountains to carve the next chapter of Moroccan history.

## Early History

### *Morocco through the Roman Era*

Little is conclusively known about the earliest people who inhabited the area that is now known as Morocco. It is thought that the inhabitants of this region when the Romans first invaded were a mixture of nomadic groups who had earlier arrived overland from the south and east, and by sea from the north across the Strait of Gibraltar.<sup>57</sup> Collectively these groups of tribespeople referred to themselves as Imazighen (singular, Amizagh). During Roman rule, however, they were known as Mauri, from which the term Moors (referring to the Islamic population that inhabited southern Spain from the 8th through 15th centuries C.E.) eventually came.<sup>58</sup> During later Arab rule, these original inhabitants of northwest Africa became known as Berbers. The Berbers were by no means a homogeneous group, and even today three distinct dialects of the Berber language are spoken in different parts of Morocco.

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<sup>57</sup> *Historical Dictionary of Morocco*, 2nd Ed. Park, Thomas K. and Aomar Boum. "Berbers/Imazighan [p. 70]." 2006. Lanham, Md: Scarecrow Press

<sup>58</sup> Library of Iberian Resources Online. University of Central Arkansas. Glick, Thomas F. "Islamic and Christian Spain in the Middle Ages: Introduction. 4. A Question of Names." <http://libro.uca.edu/ics/intro.htm>

Prior to the Romans, however, Morocco's shores were first visited by Phoenician traders (from the area of present-day Lebanon) sometime during the early part of the first millennium B.C.E. Their ports included Lixus (near the modern-day northwestern Atlantic coast city of Larache), Tingis (Tangier), Sala (Rabat), Zili (Asilah), and Mogador (Essaouira).<sup>59</sup> Ultimately, all of these trading centers came under Carthaginian control.



© Katy Fentress  
Roman ruins in Volubilis

Carthage, located near Tunis, the present-day capital of Tunisia, was itself originally a Phoenician colony, but ultimately it became an independent maritime trading power as distant Phoenicia became more isolated from its western Mediterranean colonies.<sup>60</sup>

After Carthage's destruction by Roman forces in the Third Punic War (146 B.C.E.), most of the former Carthaginian settlements in Morocco were briefly independent of foreign control. Within a relatively short time, however, the Romans took control of the region, establishing the province of Mauretania Tingitana in 42 C.E., with its capital at Tingis (Tangier).<sup>61</sup> Unlike the Phoenicians and the Carthaginians, the Romans did establish something of a presence in inland areas—most notably, at Volubilis near the modern-day city of Meknès. The latter city became an export center for olive oil, wheat, and Barbary lions used in the gladiator events in the Roman Coliseum.<sup>62</sup> The Roman ruins at Volubilis, the best preserved in Morocco, are now a UNESCO World Heritage site.

### *The Pre-Islamic Era*

Mauretania Tingitana, one of Rome's most remote provinces, proved to be difficult to govern. Repeated inland Berber uprisings in the 2nd and 3rd centuries C.E. eventually led the Roman emperor Diocletian to abandon most of the province with the exception of a few strategic coastal settlements.<sup>63, 64</sup> Most of the last Roman outposts fell to the Vandals around 429 C.E. The Vandals were a central European tribe who swept through much of the western Roman Empire during the 5th Century C.E.



© Giovanni Dall'Orto  
Bust of Emperor Diocletian

Little is known about this period of Moroccan history, other than that the Vandals were defeated and stripped of their North African

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<sup>59</sup> Phoenician.org. Holst, Sanford. *Phoenicians: Lebanon's Epic Heritage*. "Phoenicians: Colonies." [http://www.phoenician.org/phoenician\\_colonies.htm](http://www.phoenician.org/phoenician_colonies.htm)

<sup>60</sup> The Megalithic Portal. Hogan, C. Michael. "Mogador—Promontory Fort/Cliff Castle in Morocco." 2 November 2007. <http://www.megalithic.co.uk/article.php?sid=17926>

<sup>61</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Tangier." 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-259477/Tangier>

<sup>62</sup> The Megalithic Portal. Hogan, C. Michael. "Volubilis—Ancient Village or Settlement in Morocco." 18 December 2007. <http://www.megalithic.co.uk/article.php?sid=14906>

<sup>63</sup> *Morocco*. Delgado, Kevin. "A Land of Changing Faces: Early History [p. 25]." 2006. Detroit: Lucent Books

<sup>64</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "North Africa: Later Roman Empire." 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-46476/North-Africa>

holdings by the Byzantine general Belisarius in 533–34 C.E. During the 6th and 7th centuries, the Visigoths briefly conquered the northern ports of Septa (modern-day Ceuta) and Tingis (Tangier), both of which lay across the Strait of Gibraltar from their Spanish stronghold.<sup>65, 66</sup> However, there is little evidence that the Vandals, Byzantines, or Visigoths showed any interest in any part of Morocco other than these few strategic northern ports of the former Roman province. Inland portions of Mauretania Tingitana and more southerly Atlantic ports are believed to have reverted to local Berber control after the Romans left.<sup>67, 68</sup>

## The Early Islamic Dynasties

### *The Umayyads*

In 682 C.E., 50 years after the death of the Prophet Mohammad, the first Umayyad Arab leader Uqba bin Nafi reached Morocco's Atlantic coast. The Umayyads, from their center in Damascus, were the first great Muslim dynasty to rule the Arab kingdom. Uqba bin Nafi eventually retreated to modern-day Algeria, where he was killed by local Berbers under the leadership of local "king" Kusaylah, who had converted to Islam, but opposed direct Arab rule of the region.<sup>69</sup>



The Arab Umayyads returned to Morocco, and eventually used its northern coast as a launching point for their conquests in Spain. Many of the Umayyad forces who first entered southern Spain in 711 B.C.E. were Islamicized Berbers. Nonetheless, Berber resentments against the Umayyads continued to fester. Some of the roots of these grievances were the preferential treatment that Arab troops received over Berbers and the required tributes paid by Muslim Berbers to Arab rulers, even though both of these practices seemed to contradict Islamic teachings.<sup>70, 71</sup>

The Umayyads ultimately faced insurrection from Berber forces in the mid 8th century. The Berber grievances were exploited by the Kharijites, a splinter group of Islamic

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<sup>65</sup> *A History of Medieval Spain*. O'Callaghan, Joseph F. "The Visigothic Era, 415-711 [p. 42]." Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press

<sup>66</sup> *Historical Dictionary of Morocco*, 2nd Ed. Park, Thomas K. and Aomar Boum. "Tanger [p. 330]." 2006. Lanham, Md: Scarecrow Press

<sup>67</sup> The Megalithic Portal. Hogan, C. Michael. "Chellah—Ancient Village or Settlement in Morocco." 31 October 2007. <http://www.megalithic.co.uk/article.php?sid=17910>

<sup>68</sup> The Megalithic Portal. Hogan, C. Michael. "Volubis—Ancient Village or Settlement in Morocco." 18 December 2007. <http://www.megalithic.co.uk/article.php?sid=14906>

<sup>69</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "North Africa: From the Arab Conquest to 1830." 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-46482/North-Africa>

<sup>70</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "North Africa: Kharijite Berber Resistance to Arab Rule." 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-46483/North-Africa>

<sup>71</sup> *Morocco*. Bing, Alison. "History: The Conviction of Power [p. 32]." 2007. Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications

adherents who rejected certain tenets of both the Sunni and Shi'a sects. Most important for the Umayyad revolt was the Kharijite belief that any Caliph could be deposed if his actions were not pious.<sup>72</sup> Surprisingly, the Berbers were initially successful against the better-armed Umayyad army, and by 747 C.E. Umayyad rule in the Maghreb was effectively at an end.<sup>73</sup>

### *The Idrisid Dynasty*

The first true Islamic dynasty in Morocco was founded in 788 C.E. by Idriss I (Idris ibn 'Abd Allah ibn Hasan II), an 'Alid and thus descendant of the Prophet Muhammad's daughter Fatima. He fled in 786 C.E. from Arabia to the area around Volubilis after suffering defeat in a battle against the ruling Abbasids. Shortly after arriving in the foothills of the Middle Atlas, Idriss I was proclaimed an iman (religious leader) by the local Berbers. He was able to unify much of northern Morocco under Islamic rule before his death by poisoning in 792 C.E. (thought to have been carried out by agents of the Abbasid caliph Harun al-Rashid).<sup>74</sup> Under Idriss I, work began on the new capital city of Fès, which was continued under his son and successor, Idriss II.<sup>75</sup>



courtesy of Wikipedia.org  
Site of the tomb of Idriss I

After the death of Idriss II in 828 C.E., the Idrisid-ruled lands were divided into principalities ruled by his many sons. Inevitably, quarrels broke out, and the dynasty began to unravel. By 917 C.E., the Fatimids, a Shi'a caliphate centered in modern-day Tunisia, conquered the last of the Idrisid state. Thereafter, and for the remainder of the century, northern Morocco was subject to continued battles for control among the Fatimids, Umayyads from southern Spain, and local Berber tribes.<sup>76</sup>

To the southwest of the Idrisid state was a Berber kingdom known as the Barghawata. Historical accounts disagree on the timing, but at some point Barghawata rulers introduced religious beliefs and innovations that were considered heretical to traditional Muslim practice.<sup>77, 78</sup> Far to the south of the Barghawata kingdom lay a clan of loosely

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<sup>72</sup> <sup>72</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Kharijite." 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9045282/Kharijite>

<sup>73</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "North Africa: Kharijite Berber Resistance to Arab Rule." 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-46483/North-Africa>

<sup>74</sup> *Historical Dictionary of Morocco*, 2nd Ed. Park, Thomas K. and Aomar Boum. "Idrisid Dynasty [p. 177]." 2006. Lanham, Md: Scarecrow Press

<sup>75</sup> *Morocco*. Bing, Alison. "History: Dynastic Dramas [p. 32]." 2007. Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications

<sup>76</sup> *Historical Dictionary of Morocco*, 2nd Ed. Park, Thomas K. and Aomar Boum. "Idrisid Dynasty [p. 177]." 2006. Lanham, Md: Scarecrow Press

<sup>77</sup> *Historical Dictionary of Morocco*, 2nd Ed. Park, Thomas K. and Aomar Boum. "Barghawata [pp. 52, 53]." 2006. Lanham, Md: Scarecrow Press

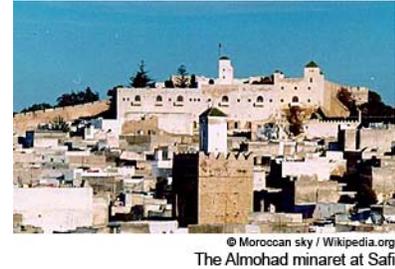
<sup>78</sup> *The Cambridge History of Africa*, Vol. 2. Levtzion, Nehemia. "The Sahara and the Sudan from the Arab Conquest of the Maghrib to the Rise of the Almoravids [p. 658]." 1978. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

affiliated desert Berber tribes known collectively as the Sanhajah. Separated from most of present-day Morocco by the Atlas Mountains, they had yet to play any significant role in the historical events occurring to the north. In the mid 11th century, however, they would swiftly emerge as the dominant force in the entire Maghreb region.

### *The Almoravid and Almohad Dynasties*

The Sanhajah were Muslims, but were very isolated from the traditional religious centers of the Islamic world. The southern Moroccan Muslim religious scholar ‘Abd Allah ibn Yasin arrived in the Sanhajah desert tribal area around 1036 C.E. and began instituting religious instruction under a strict interpretation of Islamic doctrine.

The newly found religious fervor among the Sanhajah eventually developed into a reformation movement that spread its message through conquest. Under their leaders Abu Bakr ibn ‘Umar and Yusuf ibn Tashufin, the Almoravids, as the Sanhajah Berbers came to be known, moved northward across the Atlas Mountains. In 1062 C.E., they established a military outpost at Marrakech, which later became their capital.<sup>79</sup> By 1092 C.E. the Almoravids had stretched their conquests as far east as western Algeria, and by 1110 C.E. as far north as the Andalucia region of Spain.<sup>80</sup>



Around 1117 C.E., Mohammed ibn Tumart, a Berber from the High Atlas region, returned to Morocco from a pilgrimage to Mecca and began publically criticizing Almoravid rule, particularly its interpretations of Islamic religious doctrine.<sup>81</sup> Needless to say, such criticism was not embraced by the Almoravid sultan, and ibn Tumart fled Marrakech and returned to his tribal area. His fellow tribespeople and other Berbers in the region through which he traveled quickly accepted ibn Tumart as the Mahdi (divinely guided redeemer). Ibn Tumart’s followers became known as the Almohads, and following his death in 1130 C.E. after an unsuccessful attack against Marrakech they initiated a series of conquests in the Atlas and Rif Mountains and western Algeria under the leadership of ‘Abd al-Mumin.

The Almoravids continued to battle the Almohads for another 16 years, but eventually the tide turned against them when Fès fell in 1146 C.E. A year later the Almohads conquered the Almoravid capital of Marrakech, marking the end of the Almoravid dynasty.

The Almohads quickly consolidated its control over the entire Maghreb region and, like the Almoravids before them, extended their reach into Andalucia. Christian crusades in

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<sup>79</sup> *Historical Dictionary of Morocco*, 2nd Ed. Park, Thomas K. and Aomar Boum. “Marrakech [p. 238].” 2006. Lanham, Md: Scarecrow Press

<sup>80</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “North Africa: The Maghrib under the Almoravids and the Almohads.” 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-46490/North-Africa>

<sup>81</sup> *Historical Dictionary of Morocco*, 2nd Ed. Park, Thomas K. and Aomar Boum. “Ibn Tumart [pp. 172, 173].” 2006. Lanham, Md: Scarecrow Press

the latter region severely taxed the Almohad forces, who over time also found themselves fighting off invaders to their east and south.<sup>82, 83</sup>

### *The Merenids*

The Almohad dynasty began to decline in the early 13th century. The initial Almohad goal to purify Islam and return it to a more puritanical form faded over time. Sufism, a mystical form of Islam, began to thrive, especially in rural areas. At the Almohad courts in Marrakech and Seville (in Spain), lavishly ornamented monuments were built and studies in philosophy and the sciences were encouraged.<sup>84, 85</sup> The final straw of sorts came in 1229 C.E. when the Almohad sultan al-Mamun, using Christian mercenary forces, took control in Marrakech and renounced the teachings of the Almohad founder Mohammed ibn Tumart.<sup>86, 87</sup>



© Mbenoist / Wikipedia.org  
Court of madrasa Bou Inania

The next forty years saw the regions of Almohad authority continually reduced in size by the Berber groups on the southern and eastern flanks of the empire. By 1248 C.E., the Banu Marin, a tribe of the Zenata Berber clan, moved northward from northern Algeria and conquered Fès. A little more than 20 years later, Marrakech fell to them as well, marking the end of the Almohad dynasty.

The Marinids, as the Banu Marin dynasty was known, did not represent a religious movement, unlike the previous two Berber dynasties. Their rulers also carried no lineage links to the Prophet Mohammad. For this reason, the Marinids found local resistance in their capital city of Fès, where many residents claimed Idrisid ancestry.<sup>88</sup> Perhaps in compensation for their lack of religious credentials, the Marinids established a number of *madrassas* (Quranic schools) in urban centers during their period of rule.<sup>89</sup> The Marinids also waged several campaigns to gain back the lost parts of the Almohad dynasty in

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<sup>82</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Almohads." 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9005862/Almohads>

<sup>83</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "North Africa: The Maghrib under the Almoravids and the Almohads." 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-46490/North-Africa>

<sup>84</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Almohads." 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9005862/Almohads>

<sup>85</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "North Africa: The Maghrib under the Almoravids and the Almohads." 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-46490/North-Africa>

<sup>86</sup> *Historical Dictionary of Morocco*, 2nd Ed. Park, Thomas K. and Aomar Boum. "Almohad Dynasty [p. 31]." 2006. Lanham, Md: Scarecrow Press

<sup>87</sup> Federal Research Division. Library of Congress. *Country Study: Algeria*. Toth, Anthony. "Islam and the Arabs, 642-1830: The Almohads." 1993. [http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+dz0019\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+dz0019))

<sup>88</sup> *Historical Dictionary of Morocco*, 2nd Ed. Park, Thomas K. and Aomar Boum. "Marinid Dynasty [pp. 237-238]." 2006. Lanham, Md: Scarecrow Press

<sup>89</sup> *Historical Dictionary of Morocco*, 2nd Ed. Park, Thomas K. and Aomar Boum. "Marinid Dynasty [pp. 237-238]." 2006. Lanham, Md: Scarecrow Press

Spain and the eastern Maghreb, but any territorial gains they achieved proved only temporary.<sup>90</sup>

The decentralized Marinid dynasty began unraveling in the second half of the 14th century. Marinid rulers were killed or deposed with great frequency during this period. By the early decades of the 15th century, the Marinid sultans were increasingly puppet rulers to their *viziers* (regents or advisors), who were Banu Watas Berbers. Ultimately, the Watas seized the sultanship after a revolt in 1465, ushering in the Wattasid dynasty that would last until the middle part of the 16th century.

## The Sharifian Dynasties

### *The Saadians*

The Wattasid period also was the beginning of European incursions into Morocco. The Portuguese were the first to arrive. They captured and established garrison forts at a number of Moroccan Atlantic ports as part of a naval trading network with West Africa that bypassed the lucrative overland trade routes that were the linchpins of inland Morocco's economy.<sup>91</sup>



© Robbie's Photo Art / Flickr.com  
An old Kasbah in the Dra'a river valley

In the Dra'a River valley south of the High Atlas Mountains, the Saadian family took the mantle of leadership against the Portuguese. For religious reasons, they were an appropriate choice because they claimed to be *sharifian* (descended from the Prophet Muhammad's cousin Ali) and their leader also had the approval of the Sufi *marabout* (holy man) Sidi Barakat. Religious legitimacy had been a problem that plagued all Moroccan dynasties that followed the Idrisids and thus was considered a primary necessity for any group hoping to lead a *jihad* against the Portuguese.<sup>92, 93</sup>

Before taking on the Portuguese, however, the Saadians first had to take back the parts of inland Morocco still controlled by the Wattasids. By 1525 they had captured Marrakech. The first major success against the Portuguese came in 1541 when they captured the southern port at modern-day Agadir. Shortly thereafter, the Portuguese began withdrawing their forces from most of their Atlantic ports.

After the Saadian victory against the Portuguese, the Wattasids were unable to stem the Saadian tide. Their capital of Fès fell in 1549. The Ottoman Turks increasingly saw the

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<sup>90</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Marinid Dynasty." 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9050958/Marinid-dynasty>

<sup>91</sup> *Morocco*. Bing, Alison. "History: Victory is Sweet: The Saadians [pp. 36–37]." 2007. Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications

<sup>92</sup> *A History of the Maghrib in the Islamic Period*. Abun-Nasr, Jamil M. "The Sa'diyans, 1530–1603 [pp. 208–210]." 1987. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press

<sup>93</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Islamic World: Consolidation and Expansion (1505–1683): Trans-Saharan Islam." 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-26940/Islamic-world#317380.hook>

Saadians as a threat to their plans for expansion in the Mahgreb, and in 1557 the Saadian sultan Muhammed al-Shaykh was assassinated by Turkish officers.<sup>94</sup> Conflicts, alliances, and assorted intrigues between the Saadian rulers and the Ottomans, the Portuguese, and various proxies continued for over 20 years thereafter, ending only at the Battle of Three Kings in 1578 C.E. In this battle, the reigning Saadian sultan, his deposed predecessor (and uncle), and the King of Portugal were all killed.<sup>95</sup>

### *Beginnings of the Alaouite Dynasty*

The Saadian successor after the Battle of the Three Kings, Sultan Ahmad al-Mansur, was to rule Morocco for the next 25 years in a rare period of general peace. His palace in Marrakech became noted for its opulence, funded in part by the sultan's heavy taxes on his people and the lucrative customs revenue from trade in sugar, which at the time was more valuable than gold in the cities of Europe.<sup>96, 97</sup> The sultan's coffers were also initially enriched by heavy ransoms paid for Portuguese nobles captured in the Battle of the Three Kings.<sup>98</sup> Later on, another source of revenue was tapped when the Songhay Empire (in modern-day Mali) was conquered in 1591 C.E. Soon after, a steady supply of gold and slaves were moving through Morocco from the Songhay capital of Tombouctou (Timbuktu).<sup>99</sup>

After Ahmad al-Mansur's death in 1603 C.E., a succession struggle led to disintegration of the Saadian Empire. By the mid 17th century, any semblance of a ruling dynasty in Morocco ceased to exist. This power vacuum helped spawn a number of local empires, such as the Republic of Bou Regreg in Salé-Rabat, a center of Atlantic Coast piracy. Out of this chaos ultimately emerged the Alaouites. Like the Saadians before them, the Alaouites claimed *sharifian* descent and came from the blistering hot and sand-blown southern side of the High Atlas Mountains. Their ascendancy was launched by Moulay Rashid, who captured Fès in 1666 C.E. and then Marrakech in 1669 C.E. However, his rule was short and ultimately overshadowed by the succeeding reign of his brother Moulay Ismail, one of Morocco's most famous (or infamous, depending on perspective) rulers.



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<sup>94</sup> *A History of the Mahgrib in the Islamic Period*. Abun-Nasr, Jamil M. "The Sa'diyans, 1530–1603 [p. 213]." 1987. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press

<sup>95</sup> *A History of the Mahgrib in the Islamic Period*. Abun-Nasr, Jamil M. "The Sa'diyans, 1530–1603 [p. 213]." 1987. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press

<sup>96</sup> *A History of the Mahgrib in the Islamic Period*. Abun-Nasr, Jamil M. "The Sa'diyans, 1530–1603 [p. 215–216]." 1987. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press

<sup>97</sup> *Morocco*. Bing, Alison. "History: Victory is Sweet: The Saadians [pp. 36–37]." 2007. Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications

<sup>98</sup> *A Traveller's History of North Africa*, 2nd Ed. Roberson, Barnaby. "The Saadian and Alaouite Empires of Morocco: Ahmad al-Mansour, 1578–1603 [p. 247]." 2001. Brooklyn, N.Y: Interlink Books

<sup>99</sup> *A History of the Mahgrib in the Islamic Period*. Abun-Nasr, Jamil M. 1987. "The Sa'diyans, 1530–1603 [p. 217]." 1987. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press

Moulay Ismail was ruthless and despotic by all accounts. Nonetheless, he ruled for 55 years, a period of prosperity and stability within Morocco. The stability came from Ismail's brutal form of law-and-order, enforced by his *'abid al-Bukhari*, an army of black slaves and the descendants of slaves, sworn to allegiance to the sultan. Eventually this personal army reached an estimated strength of 150,000 men. Moulay's *'abid* allowed him to depend less on shifting tribal loyalties to secure his military base.<sup>100, 101</sup>

### *Later Alaouite Sultans*

Following the death of Sultan Moulay Ismail, chaos once again erupted across Morocco, as numerous male offspring of the Sultan vied for power. True power during the first 30 years after Ismail's death resided more with the leaders of the *'abid al-Bukhari*, who became "king-maker" *viziers* much as was the case with the Wattasids during the last years of the Marinid dynasty. Following the script seen before in Moroccan history, that should have spelled the end for the Alaouites, but somewhat surprisingly the dynasty was able to weather the storm and re-emerge somewhat whole.

From 1757 to 1859, four Alaouite sultans ruled Morocco, all sons or grandsons of Sultan Moulay Abdullah, the most successful of Sultan Moulay Ismail's sons in forging a tribal coalition to overcome the power of the *'abids*. Even in this relatively stable period of time, transition periods between sultans were always difficult as tribal alliances were always tested during these periods.<sup>102</sup>

During the first three decades of the 19th century, Morocco under Sultan Moulay Sulaiman mostly isolated itself from Christian Europe. Trade with its neighbors to the north was limited to a very few essential imports, and the small number of Europeans in the country were restricted to a small number of port cities.<sup>103, 104</sup> From roughly 1830 onward, however, European nations began incursions into adjacent parts of North Africa as the Ottoman Empire hold on this region weakened.



courtesy of Wikipedia.org  
French troops disembarking on Mogador

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<sup>100</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "'Abid al-Bukhari.'" 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9003351/Abid-al-Bukhari?refresh=Y>

<sup>101</sup> *A History of the Mahgrib in the Islamic Period*. Abun-Nasr, Jamil M. "The 'Alawites, 1668–1822 [p. 227]." 1971. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press

<sup>102</sup> *A History of the Mahgrib in the Islamic Period*. Abun-Nasr, Jamil M. "The 'Alawites, 1668–1822 [p. 233]." 1971. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press

<sup>103</sup> *A History of the Mahgrib in the Islamic Period*. Abun-Nasr, Jamil M. "The Mahgrib and European Colonialism, 1830–1914: Morocco: the End of Isolation, 1830–1860 [p. 286]." 1971. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press

<sup>104</sup> *A Traveller's History of North Africa*, 2nd Ed. Roberson, Barnaby. "The Saadian and Alaouite Empires of Morocco: Decline, Fall and Partial Recovery of Morocco [p. 256]." 2001. Brooklyn, N.Y: Interlink Books

Morocco, while never a part of the Ottoman domain, still found itself a party to some of these proceedings, and the results were almost entirely negative for the Moroccan sultancy. In 1844, the French navy bombarded the ports of Tangier and Mogador (Essaouira) and their land forces defeated the Moroccan army near the western border town of Oujda in retaliation for Moroccan support of the rebel Algerian *amir* Abdul Qadir. A Franco-Moroccan treaty was hastily negotiated in which Morocco agreed to cut off any future assistance to the *amir*.<sup>105, 106</sup> Fifteen years later, in 1859, Spain attacked and then occupied the northern city of Tétouan. These events and others signaled the beginning of the end for Morocco's independence from European interests.

### *Onset of Colonial Rule*

European influence—most notably, French, Spanish, and British—increased dramatically during the latter part of the 19th century. France, in particular, aggressively pursued a policy of establishing colonial interests within Morocco. In 1904, the French and British reached an agreement that effectively relinquished French “rights and interests” in Egypt in exchange for a similar relinquishment by the British concerning Morocco. A few months later, the French and Spanish negotiated a separate agreement outlining their respective spheres of influence within Morocco.

The Moroccan Sultan Moulay Abdul-Aziz was in too weakened a position to wage much resistance against the colonial takeover. As the French and Spanish continued to encroach in Moroccan affairs, tribal insurrections increased against the Europeans and the Sultan himself, who was judged to be complicit by his acquiescence to the foreign powers. These internal attacks forced Sultan Abdul-Aziz to become even more dependent upon French and Spanish assistance in order to maintain his fragile base of power.



courtesy of Wikipedia.org  
Sultan Moulay Abdul-Aziz

By 1907 the French controlled Casablanca and were expanding their influence in other parts of the country as well, using tribal attacks on their nationals as a pretext for expansion.<sup>107</sup> 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 by this point. In 1912 Moulay Hafiz signed a treaty making most of Morocco a French Protectorate. The Spanish continued to retain protectorate status over both the sparsely populated southern region now known as Western Sahara and the northernmost region of Morocco (with the exception of the internationally administered city of Tangier).

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<sup>105</sup> *A History of the Mahgrib in the Islamic Period*. Abun-Nasr, Jamil M. “The ‘Alawites, 1668–1822 [p. 246].” 1971. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press

<sup>106</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Morocco: History: Decline of Traditional Government (1830–1912).” 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-46590/Morocco#487937.hook>

<sup>107</sup> *A History of the Mahgrib in the Islamic Period*. Abun-Nasr, Jamil M. “The Mahgrib and European Colonialism, 1830–1914: Morocco: the End of Isolation, 1830-1860 [pp. 302–303].” 1971. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press

## *French and Spanish Morocco*

Bringing Morocco under Colonial rule required the time-tested technique of “divide and conquer.” In southern Morocco, the French formed an alliance with Berber chief Thami al-Glaoui, who, as pasha of Marrakech, effectively served as a local enforcer for the French interests, making sure that other tribes in the region did not disrupt his feudal domain.<sup>108</sup> The French also left much of the Moroccan civic, governmental, and tribal institutions alone, although under a watchful eye. The medinas of the major cities were left as they were, with modern cities (*nouvelle villes*) built adjacent to them for the European French citizenry. Even the sultanate continued, under Sultan Mowlay Yusuf, who ruled as a figurehead authority from his palace in Rabat (the French administrative headquarters).



courtesy of Wikipedia.org  
Sultan Mowlay Yusuf

Moroccan infrastructure improved greatly during the 42 years of French control. New all-weather roads and railways improved connections between the larger cities. Dams and other hydraulic works were constructed to add irrigation capacity to the country’s agricultural sector. Southwest of Rabat, Casablanca became the country’s major seaport and economic focal point when its naturally poor harbor was substantially improved under a vast construction program. Electricity grids were also introduced, primarily to serve the new European communities rather than the medinas. Unfortunately, much of this development came at the expense of Moroccan taxpayers, most of whom did not immediately reap the rewards of this developmental and economic planning, which was oriented towards European needs.<sup>109</sup>

In northern Morocco, the colonial experience was quite different. Economic development was limited to only a few cities (Tétouan, Melilla, and Larache), and infrastructure improvements were piecemeal and often halfhearted. Fierce resistance from the Berbers of the Rif Mountains continued until 1926, keeping Spanish military forces on the defensive for several years.<sup>110</sup>

Sultan Moulay Yusuf died in 1927 and his third son, Sidi Muhammed (who ruled as Mohammed V), was chosen by the French to succeed him. Even though he had little authority, his stance in 1934 against French legislation, meant to further divide Moroccan

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<sup>108</sup> *A Traveller’s History of North Africa*, 2nd Ed. Roberson, Barnaby. “Colonials and Consuls: The European Conquest, 1830–1930: Morocco [p. 280].” 2001. Brooklyn, N.Y: Interlink Books

<sup>109</sup> *A History of the Mahgrib in the Islamic Period*. Abun-Nasr, Jamil M. “The Mahgrib, 1919 to Independence: Morocco: the French and Spanish Protectorates [p. 362].” 1971. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press

<sup>110</sup> *A History of the Mahgrib in the Islamic Period*. Abun-Nasr, Jamil M. “The Mahgrib, 1919 to Independence: Morocco: the French and Spanish Protectorates [pp. 362–365].” 1971. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press

Berbers from Moroccan Arabs, helped elevate his status among the small but growing number of Moroccan nationalists.<sup>111</sup>

### *World War II and Independence*

When most of France was occupied by German forces during 1940, Morocco came under the control of the collaborationist Vichy Regime in southeast France. Vichy rule in Morocco would be short lived, however. In November 1942 the Atlantic coast of Morocco 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 its subsequent operations against Axis forces.

In 1943, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt met in a suburb of Casablanca to confer on global military strategy. While in Morocco, Roosevelt and Sultan Mohammed V privately discussed Morocco's future, at which time Roosevelt expressed support for future Moroccan independence from France.<sup>112, 113</sup> Later that year, the Hizb al-Istiglal (Independence Party) was formed, and the party leaders soon publically called for an end to French rule.



US GOVT photo  
Mohammed V meets with President Roosevelt

After the war, the French did reclaim control over Morocco, but the persistent calls for independence by the Hizb al-Istiglal, supported by the Sultan, continued to threaten their authority. In 1953, the French, working with Berber chief Thami al-Glaoui, orchestrated Mohammed V's exile to Madagascar, replaced as Sultan by one of his distant relatives living in Fès.<sup>114</sup> The move quickly backfired on the French, as terrorist attacks by resistance groups operating out of the Spanish zone of Morocco began to escalate.<sup>115</sup> With another violent independence movement occurring to the east in Morocco, the French decided that they could not afford to fight two such battles against their authority at the same time. Mohammed V was brought to Paris from Madagascar in October 1955, and negotiations commenced on the terms of Moroccan independence.<sup>116</sup> He returned to

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<sup>111</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Muhammad V." 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9054162/Muhammad-V>

<sup>112</sup> *A Traveller's History of North Africa*, 2nd Ed. Roberson, Barnaby. "The Struggle for Independence, 1934–1962: The Second World War in Africa [p. 297]." 2001. Brooklyn, N.Y: Interlink Books

<sup>113</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Morocco: History: The French Zone." 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-214380/Morocco>

<sup>114</sup> *A History of the Mahgrib in the Islamic Period*. Abun-Nasr, Jamil M. "The Mahgrib, 1919 to Independence: Morocco: Traditional Elite and New Aspirations [pp. 376–377]." 1971. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press

<sup>115</sup> *A History of the Mahgrib in the Islamic Period*. Abun-Nasr, Jamil M. "The Mahgrib, 1919 to Independence: Morocco: Traditional Elite and New Aspirations [pp. 377]." 1971. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press

<sup>116</sup> *A Traveller's History of North Africa*, 2nd Ed. Roberson, Barnaby. "The Struggle for Independence, 1934–1962: Mohammed V and the Moroccan Independence Struggle, 1942–56 [p. 302]." 2001. Brooklyn, N.Y: Interlink Books

Morocco the following month, receiving a hero's welcome as the symbol of the country's fight for independence.<sup>117</sup>

The new nation of Morocco emerged over the course of the following year. On 2 March 1956, the French formally recognized Moroccan independence. A month later the Spanish government also recognized Moroccan independence and returned most of its northern territory. Finally, the international city of Tangier became part of the new nation in October.<sup>118</sup>

## Modern Morocco

### *King Mohammed V and King Hassan II*

The new Moroccan government was a monarchy, albeit one with a parliament and independent judiciary. However, the king (as the sultan was now known) had wide powers that allowed him great latitude to guide the military and political affairs of the country. As a *sharif*, he also was the country's religious and moral leader, an important counterbalance against threats to his authority that might arise from religious elements.

Mohammed V's rule as king ended abruptly with his death in 1961. He was succeeded by his eldest son Moulay al-Hasan (ruled as Hassan II). The new king and his cabinet quickly introduced the country's first democratic constitution, but subsequent elections were protested by various Moroccan political parties as having been rigged. A second constitution was introduced in 1970 and approved by voter referendum, although claims of election rigging once again arose. Eventually the claims of corruption and election fraud led to violent dissent that threatened the king's rule.<sup>119</sup> During the early 1970s Hassan II escaped several assassination attempts by military leaders, including a 1971 attack on his birthday party by a force of 1000 mutineers.<sup>120, 121</sup>



US GOVT photo  
King Hassan II and JFK

Hassan II ultimately weathered this rocky period, in part by directing national attention to the Western Sahara, which was slowly being relinquished by the Spanish. In 1975, the International Court of Justice ruled that Morocco's claim on the Spanish colony was invalid and that the Sahrawi, the residents of the region, should determine their political future by referendum. The Moroccan government responded by organizing a march of

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<sup>117</sup> *Political Leaders of the Middle East and North Africa: A Biographical Dictionary*. Reich, Bernard, ed. "Mohammed V [p. 344]." 1990. Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press

<sup>118</sup> *Morocco*. Delgado, Kevin. "A Nation Apart: Modern Morocco [p. 43]." 2006. Detroit: Lucent Books

<sup>119</sup> *A Traveller's History of North Africa*, 2nd Ed. Roberson, Barnaby. "Kings, Colonels and Presidents: King Mohammed V and King Hassan II, 1956–1987 [p. 312]." 2001. Brooklyn, N.Y: Interlink Books

<sup>120</sup> *A Traveller's History of North Africa*, 2nd Ed. Roberson, Barnaby. "Kings, Colonels and Presidents: King Mohammed V and King Hassan II, 1956–1987 [p. 312]." 2001. Brooklyn, N.Y: Interlink Books

<sup>121</sup> *Morocco*. Delgado, Kevin. "A Nation Apart: Modern Morocco [p. 47]." 2006. Detroit: Lucent Books

350,000 unarmed citizens into the Western Sahara desert.<sup>122</sup> This event was labeled the “Green March” by Hassan II, owing to the color green’s historic association with Islam. Morocco today occupies all of Western Sahara, although most countries (including the United States) have never recognized Moroccan territorial claims over the region.

Hassan II remained in power until his sudden death in 1999, and during his decades of rule the Moroccan government became one of the most important forces for political moderation in the Arab world. The king himself became one of the key mediators in disputes among Middle Eastern countries.<sup>123</sup>

### *King Mohammed VI*

Hassan II was succeeded by his eldest son, who took the royal title King Mohammed VI. During the nearly 10 years that he has been in power, the young king has become known as a force of modernization, which in some cases has antagonized religious conservatives within the country. Democratic reforms have slowly been implemented, and the rights of women within Morocco have also improved. Economically, Morocco remains a very poor country, and the king has been very vocal on the need to upgrade the status of the urban and rural poor. Economic liberalization has been pursued as one element to attract foreign investment dollars and help jumpstart the nation’s economy.<sup>124</sup>



US GOVT photo  
King Mohammed VI and President George W. Bush

Morocco has not been immune from Islamic fundamentalist terrorist groups during the current king’s reign. In 2003 Casablanca was rocked by deadly suicide bombings, and the following year several Moroccans were implicated in the train bombings that racked Madrid. These terrorist attacks triggered a government crackdown on militant groups operating within the country.<sup>125</sup> Despite these measures, however, Casablanca suffered from more suicide bombings in April 2007.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, U.S. Department of State. “Background Note: Morocco.” October 2007. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5431.htm>

<sup>123</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Hassan II.” 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9039467/Hassan-II>

<sup>124</sup> BBC News, International Version. “Country Profile: Morocco.” 15 January 2008. [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/country\\_profiles/791867.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/country_profiles/791867.stm)

<sup>125</sup> BBC News, International Version. “Country Profile: Morocco.” 15 January 2008. [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/country\\_profiles/791867.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/country_profiles/791867.stm)

<sup>126</sup> Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, U.S. Department of State. “Background Note: Morocco.” October 2007. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5431.htm>

# Economy

## Introduction

Over the last few years, Morocco's economy has been a mixed bag of strengths (decreasing budget deficits, low inflation, plentiful foreign exchange reserves, increasing foreign direct investment) and weaknesses (sluggish and inconsistent growth, high poverty and unemployment rates, large trade deficits). Numerous five-year plans have had fair to middling success in jump-starting the nation's economy over the years, although recently there have been indicators that sustained growth may be possible in the near future.<sup>127</sup> In recent decades, the traditional economic pillars—agriculture and phosphates—have been bolstered by an expanding industrial base and a burgeoning services sector led by tourism.<sup>128</sup> Nonetheless, the economy still finds itself very dependent on external factors, such as energy prices and climate change, that can cloud otherwise optimistic projections about the future.



© Julie Kertesz  
Spice merchant

## Industry and Manufacturing

Since the 1980s, the Moroccan government has worked to expand the country's manufacturing sector as a means to decrease the economy's reliance on agriculture and phosphate exports.<sup>129</sup> From an employment standpoint, the textile and clothing industry has become the most significant manufacturing industry, having generated 60% of Morocco's new manufacturing jobs since 1986.<sup>130</sup> Overall, the textile and clothing industry represented over 40% of Morocco's industrial employment in 2000, of which 71% were women.<sup>131</sup>

Morocco's low labor costs and proximity to the European market helped spur the growth of this industry. In early 2005, however, the industry was slowed by intense competition from China as textile and clothing trade quota agreements were phased out.<sup>132</sup> In response, Morocco's clothing and textile trade organization has encouraged local

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<sup>127</sup> Encyclopedia of the Nations. "Morocco: Economic Development." 2007.

<http://www.nationsencyclopedia.com/Africa/Morocco-ECONOMIC-DEVELOPMENT.html>

<sup>128</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Morocco: Economy: Services." 2008.

<http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-247619/Morocco?refresh=Y>

<sup>129</sup> MSN Encarta. "Morocco: 4. Economy. D. Manufacturing." 2007.

[http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia\\_761572952\\_4/Morocco.html#s14](http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761572952_4/Morocco.html#s14)

<sup>130</sup> European Commission. "Textile and Clothing Industry in the Mediterranean Zone." 24 July 2007.

<http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/textile/euomed.htm#textile> and Clothing industry in the Mediterranean zone

<sup>131</sup> International Labor Organization. "A Pilot Programme in Morocco to Boost the Textile and Clothing Industries' Competitiveness Through the Promotion of Decent Work." April 2004.

<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/dwpp/download/morocco/morinfoeng.pdf>

<sup>132</sup> International Herald Tribune. Crampton, Thomas. "Exploiting Morocco's Geography: Karim Tazi." 26 September 2005. <http://www.iht.com/articles/2005/09/26/opinion/rqa.php>

manufacturers to shift to European market niches in which a retailer's need for regular style changes places a premium on fast delivery.<sup>133</sup><sup>134</sup> A bilateral free-trade agreement signed in 2004 has also resulted in an increased market for Moroccan clothing in the United States.<sup>135</sup>

While Morocco may not immediately come to mind when considering the world's high-technology hubs, it is nevertheless true that the assembly of electronics components has been one of the country's fastest growing industries over the last decade. STMicroelectronics, one of the world's largest semiconductor manufacturers, has extensive operations in Casablanca and is one of Morocco's three largest employers.<sup>136</sup>



© Christian Guthier  
Microelectronics

Other important industries in Morocco include food processing, processing of phosphates (principally as phosphoric acid), cars and auto parts, cement, and handicrafts.<sup>137</sup> The latter category includes woven rugs and carpets, leather goods, ceramics, and woodwork. Morocco's handicrafts are primarily artisanal and generate income of over USD 6 billion for 2 million Moroccans.<sup>138</sup>

## Agriculture

Morocco's economy is heavily dependent on its agricultural production, which in recent years has suffered from periodic droughts. During normal years, the country produces about two thirds of its domestic needs for grains, primarily growing wheat, barley, and corn. Citrus fruits and early vegetables, such as tomatoes, French beans, and zucchinis, are key crops for export.<sup>139, 140</sup>

The Moroccan government has recently put forward an incentive program to increase the amount of acreage devoted to olive trees in order to take advantage of the fast-growing

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<sup>133</sup> United World. "Morocco: Sticking the 'Fibre Citoyenne.'" 15 October 2007. <http://www.unitedworld-usa.com/reports/morocco2007/textiles>

<sup>134</sup> Bilaterals.org. Reuters. Pfeiffer, Tom. "Morocco Textile Industry Adapting to Free Trade." 23 April 2006. [http://www.bilaterals.org/article.php3?id\\_article=4518](http://www.bilaterals.org/article.php3?id_article=4518)

<sup>135</sup> Embassy of the Kingdom of Morocco, Washington, D.C. "Main Sectors: Textile and Garment Products." 2008. [http://dcusa.themoroccanembassy.com/moroccan\\_embassy\\_economic\\_profile.aspx](http://dcusa.themoroccanembassy.com/moroccan_embassy_economic_profile.aspx)

<sup>136</sup> STMicroelectronics. "Corporate Environmental Report: ST in Morocco." 2008. <http://www.st.com/stonline/company/environment/report01/enrep9.htm#>

<sup>137</sup> Encyclopædia of the Nations. "Morocco: Industry." 2007. <http://www.nationsencyclopedia.com/Africa/Morocco-INDUSTRY.html>

<sup>138</sup> Embassy of the Kingdom of Morocco, Washington, D.C. "Main Sectors: Handicraft." 2008. [http://dcusa.themoroccanembassy.com/moroccan\\_embassy\\_economic\\_profile.aspx](http://dcusa.themoroccanembassy.com/moroccan_embassy_economic_profile.aspx)

<sup>139</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Morocco: Economy: Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing." 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-46577/Morocco>

<sup>140</sup> Maghreb Arabe Presse. "Early Fruit and Vegetables Exports Increase 46% Up to Early December 2007. 10 December 2007. [http://www.map.ma/eng/sections/economy/early\\_fruit\\_and\\_vege/view](http://www.map.ma/eng/sections/economy/early_fruit_and_vege/view)

expansion of the world olive oil market.<sup>141, 142</sup> In 1999 about 1000 hectares of Morocco consisted of olive orchards, but the government would like to see that amount increased to 1 million hectares by 2010.<sup>143</sup> To achieve this goal, it is expected that some of the land currently devoted to grain production will be converted to olive trees.<sup>144</sup> The rationale for this strategy is also tied to water issues, as some of the high-water-use cereal grains are grown in southern regions that are particularly susceptible to drought.<sup>145</sup>

Morocco's fishing industry is extremely important to the country's trade balance sheet. The country is one of the world's 25 largest exporters of fish and other seafood, much of which goes to countries within Europe.<sup>146</sup> The rich coastal waters of the Canary Current are the source of sardines, of which Morocco is the world's leading exporter.<sup>147</sup> Further from the coast, Moroccan deep-sea fishing boats catch cephalopods, such as octopus, squid, and cuttlefish, hake, sea bream, sole, and shrimp.<sup>148</sup> Most of Morocco's coastal fishing fleet operates out of Agadir and smaller ports to its southwest.<sup>149</sup>



Roughly one third of Morocco's agricultural income is tied to livestock.<sup>150</sup> The country is able to fill its meat requirements with local sheep and cattle herds and is trying to reach self-sufficiency in other dairy products, such as cheese and milk.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Boston Globe. Daley, Beth. "The Olive Oil Paradox. 14 August 2006.

<http://www.mindfully.org/Food/2006/Olive-Oil-Margins14aug06.htm>

<sup>142</sup> Olives101.com. Amara, Tarek; and Zakia Abdennebi. "North African Olive Farmers Press European Giants." 7 February 2007. <http://www.olives101.com/2007/02/07/north-african-olive-farmers-press-european-giants/>

<sup>143</sup> Olives101.com. Amara, Tarek; and Zakia Abdennebi. "North African Olive Farmers Press European Giants." 7 February 2007. <http://www.olives101.com/2007/02/07/north-african-olive-farmers-press-european-giants/>

<sup>144</sup> Millenium Challenge Corporation. "Morocco: Fruit Tree Productivity Project (\$300.90 million)." <http://www.mcc.gov/countries/morocco/index.php>

<sup>145</sup> Foreign Agricultural Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture. "Northwest Africa: 2006/07 Grains Well Established." 15 February 2006.

[http://151.121.3.140/pecad/highlights/2006/02/nwafrika\\_22feb2006/index.htm](http://151.121.3.140/pecad/highlights/2006/02/nwafrika_22feb2006/index.htm)

<sup>146</sup> International Trade Centre/World Trade Organization.

"Trade Performance HS: Exports and Imports of Fish, Crustaceans, Molluscs, Aquatic Invertebrates, nes [2005, in USD Thousands]." 2008.

[http://www.intracen.org/appli1/TradeCom/TP\\_TP\\_IC.aspx?IN=03&YR=2005&IL=03](http://www.intracen.org/appli1/TradeCom/TP_TP_IC.aspx?IN=03&YR=2005&IL=03) Fish, crustaceans, molluscs, aquatic invertebrates Ones

<sup>147</sup> Brazzil Magazine. Isaura, Daniel. "Morocco Becomes Brazil's Main Sardine Supplier." 1 April 2006.

<http://www.brazzilmag.com/content/view/5971/53/>

<sup>148</sup> Encyclopedia of the Nations. "Morocco: Fishing." 2007.

<http://www.nationsencyclopedia.com/Africa/Morocco-FISHING.html>

<sup>149</sup> Encyclopedia of the Nations. "Morocco: Fishing." 2007.

<http://www.nationsencyclopedia.com/Africa/Morocco-FISHING.html>

<sup>150</sup> Encyclopedia of the Nations. "Morocco: Animal Husbandry." 2007.

<http://www.nationsencyclopedia.com/Africa/Morocco-ANIMAL-HUSBANDRY.html>

## Banking and Currency

Morocco's currency is the dirham. In February 2008 one dirham was approximately equivalent to USD 0.13 (13 cents).<sup>152</sup> The dirham's exchange rate is set by the Bank Al-Maghrib, the nation's central bank, and is anchored to a collection of external currencies. The European Union (EU) euro is given heavy weight in this calculation, given Morocco's extensive trade with the countries of Europe.



© Chris Martin  
Bank al-Maghrib, Casablanca, Morocco

While this policy has helped Morocco maintain a very low level of inflation, there has been pressure to increase the flexibility of the currency exchange rate because of concerns that the dirham has become overvalued and is thus hurting Morocco's trade competitiveness.<sup>153,154</sup>

The Moroccan banking system has been liberalized in recent years, although competition on deposit and lending rates is still rather limited. In general, the nation's banks are considered sound. To further banking industry oversight, the nation's parliament passed a bill in 2005 that increased the Central Bank's supervisory roles over the banking industry and their lending practices.<sup>155</sup>

Since 2007, the Bank Al-Maghrib has authorized the country's commercial banks to offer financing products that do not involve interest and thus are considered to conform to Islamic *shari'a* (law).<sup>156</sup> To avoid the charging or receiving of interest, these products often take the form of a lease-to-own or installment purchases. Some others are similar to private-equity partnerships.<sup>157</sup>

## Trade

Morocco has consistently registered an overall trade deficit in goods in recent years, although its overall current account balance (which measures foreign currency inputs and

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<sup>151</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Morocco: Economy: Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing." 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-46577/Morocco>

<sup>152</sup> Bloomberg.com. "Currency Calculator." 2008. <http://www.bloomberg.com/invest/calculators/currency.html>

<sup>153</sup> AME Info. Standard Chartered Bank. Ofon, Abah. "Morocco's Dirham: Pressure Building for a Change." 15 June 2005. <http://www.ameinfo.com/62482.html>

<sup>154</sup> Bureau of Economic, Energy and Business Affairs, U.S. Department of State. "2006 Investment Climate Statement—Morocco." February 2006. <http://www.state.gov/e/eeb/ifd/2006/62366.htm>

<sup>155</sup> Bureau of Economic, Energy and Business Affairs, U.S. Department of State. "2006 Investment Climate Statement—Morocco." February 2006. <http://www.state.gov/e/eeb/ifd/2006/62366.htm>

<sup>156</sup> Magharebia.com. Lahcen, Mawassi. "Morocco Allows Commercial Banks to Market Islamic Banking Products." 23 March 2007. [http://www.magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en\\_GB/features/awi/features/2007/03/23/feature-01](http://www.magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en_GB/features/awi/features/2007/03/23/feature-01)

<sup>157</sup> Magharebia.com. Touahri, Sarah. "Islamic Banking Products Spark Interest in Morocco." 21 October 2007. [http://www.magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en\\_GB/features/awi/features/2007/10/21/feature-02](http://www.magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en_GB/features/awi/features/2007/10/21/feature-02)

outputs from other sources) has remained positive owing to tourism revenue and remittances from Moroccan workers in other countries.<sup>158</sup>

Morocco's biggest imports by broad category (and in descending order) are mineral fuels (mostly crude petroleum and natural gas), machinery, electrical and electronic equipment, cars and trucks, iron and steel, and cereal grains.<sup>159</sup> Roughly 30% of these imports come from France and Spain, with Saudi Arabia, Russia, and Italy the next three biggest exporters to Morocco.<sup>160</sup>

In terms of Moroccan exports, the largest product groups by value, in descending order, are unknitted clothing items, electrical and electronic equipment (mostly assembled semiconductors), inorganic minerals (phosphates), knitted clothing items, and seafood.<sup>161</sup> France and Spain again led the way, with over 48% of total Moroccan exports by revenue going to those two countries. The United Kingdom, Italy, and Germany are the next three biggest importers of Moroccan goods, but their combined share is only 15% of total Moroccan exports.<sup>162</sup>



© Antonio Caselli  
Textile merchant

## Investment

During the 1990s, Morocco instituted a number of reforms designed to create a framework and conducive environment for attracting foreign direct investment (FDI). Around the same time the government began privatizing a number of state-owned businesses, including the USD 2.7 billion sale of Maroc Telecom to Vivendi Universal and the USD 1.7 billion sale of the tobacco company Régie des Tabacs to Altadis. As a result of these actions, Morocco became one of Africa's largest recipients of FDI. Most of the investment to date has come from European companies, primarily as a result of the

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<sup>158</sup> Export Development Canada. "Morocco: Economics." October 2007.

[http://www.edc.ca/english/docs/gmorocco\\_e.pdf](http://www.edc.ca/english/docs/gmorocco_e.pdf)

<sup>159</sup> International Trade Centre/World Trade Organization.

"Trade Performance HS: Imports of Morocco (2005, in USD Thousands)." 2008.

[http://www.intracen.org/appli1/TradeCom/TP\\_IP\\_CI.aspx?RP=504&YR=](http://www.intracen.org/appli1/TradeCom/TP_IP_CI.aspx?RP=504&YR=)

<sup>160</sup> International Trade Centre/World Trade Organization.

"Trade Performance HS: Imports of Morocco – 00 All Industries (2005, in USD Thousands)." 2008.

[http://www.intracen.org/appli1/TradeCom/TP\\_IP\\_CI\\_P.aspx?IN=00&RP=504&YR=2005&IL=00](http://www.intracen.org/appli1/TradeCom/TP_IP_CI_P.aspx?IN=00&RP=504&YR=2005&IL=00) All industries&TY=I

<sup>161</sup> International Trade Centre/World Trade Organization.

"Trade Performance HS: Exports of Morocco (2005, in USD Thousands)." 2008.

[http://www.intracen.org/appli1/TradeCom/TP\\_EP\\_CI.aspx?RP=504&YR=2005](http://www.intracen.org/appli1/TradeCom/TP_EP_CI.aspx?RP=504&YR=2005)

<sup>162</sup> International Trade Centre/World Trade Organization.

"Trade Performance HS: Exports of Morocco – 00 All Categories (2005, in USD Thousands)." 2008.

[http://www.intracen.org/appli1/TradeCom/TP\\_EP\\_CI\\_P.aspx?IN=00&RP=504&YR=2005&IL=00](http://www.intracen.org/appli1/TradeCom/TP_EP_CI_P.aspx?IN=00&RP=504&YR=2005&IL=00) All industries&TY=E

privatization sales, but increasing amounts are also coming in from countries in the Persian Gulf region for tourism, oil, and property development.<sup>163</sup>

The Moroccan government has also established the Hassan II Fund, financed in part through privatization receipts, as a cash grant-giving program that provides financial support for companies investing in earmarked industries, such as electronics, information technology, and vehicle parts.<sup>164,165</sup> As a further incentive to attract investment, several free-trade zones have been

established in Morocco as well, with the largest located at Tangier. Here foreign investors who establish businesses on undeveloped land are offered a variety of tax breaks.<sup>166</sup>



© Cyrus Farivar  
Maroc Telecom building in Rabat

## Energy and Mineral Resources

### *Energy*

Traditionally the Moroccan energy production sector has been run by the government's Office National de l'Electricité (ONE), but privatization of the power-generating plants has decreased the state's ownership share significantly over the last decade. The government continues to control the transmission and distribution network for electricity.<sup>167</sup>

Morocco has limited petroleum and natural gas reserves that provide only very modest amounts of production. As a result, the country is the largest importer of petroleum and natural gas in North Africa. Exploration continues in offshore regions, as well as in Western Sahara. The concessions granted in Western Sahara have created a political firestorm because of the region's unsettled political status.<sup>168</sup>



© Mary Hodder  
Gas station

Morocco currently has two petroleum refineries. The largest refinery by far is at Mohammedia, located between Casablanca and Rabat, and it produces 80–90% of

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<sup>163</sup> United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. "Investment Policy Review of Morocco [pp. 3,4]." 6 February 2007. [http://www.unctad.org/en/docs/c2d76\\_en.pdf](http://www.unctad.org/en/docs/c2d76_en.pdf)

<sup>164</sup> United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. "Investment Policy Review of Morocco [p. 3,4]." 6 February 2007. [http://www.unctad.org/en/docs/c2d76\\_en.pdf](http://www.unctad.org/en/docs/c2d76_en.pdf)

<sup>165</sup> Moroccan American Trade and Investment Council. "Doing Business in Morocco." 25 February 2008. <http://www.moroccanamericantrade.com/business.cfm>

<sup>166</sup> Moroccan American Trade and Investment Council. "Doing Business in Morocco." 25 February 2008. <http://www.moroccanamericantrade.com/business.cfm>

<sup>167</sup> Energy Information Administration, U.S. Department of Energy. "Arab Maghreb Union: Morocco." April 2006. [http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/Arab\\_Maghreb\\_Union/Morocco.html](http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/Arab_Maghreb_Union/Morocco.html)

<sup>168</sup> Energy Information Administration, U.S. Department of Energy. "Arab Maghreb Union: Morocco." April 2006. [http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/Arab\\_Maghreb\\_Union/Morocco.html](http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/Arab_Maghreb_Union/Morocco.html)

Morocco's refined petroleum products. The smaller refinery is at Sidi Kacem, a railroad junction northwest of Meknès.

Morocco's two largest power plants are both coal-fired, using coal imported from the United States, Colombia, South Africa, and Poland.<sup>169</sup> A huge power plant near Sidi Kacem, using natural gas from a pipeline that runs from Algeria through Morocco to Spain, is currently under construction and is expected to supply 23% of Morocco's power production by 2010.<sup>170</sup> The country also has numerous hydroelectric facilities that provide a little less than one third of Morocco's energy production.<sup>171</sup>

Morocco has invested in wind power and thermo-solar plants as well, although these projects presently generate only a very small percentage of the country's electricity. Nonetheless, Morocco's 124 MW of installed wind-power capacity at the end of 2007 made it the second largest producer in the Middle East and North Africa, trailing only Egypt.<sup>172</sup> Morocco's first thermo-solar plant at Ain Beni Mathar, in the eastern plateau region south of the city of Oujda, is currently having its capacity upgraded. It, too, makes use of natural gas from the Algeria-Morocco-Spain pipeline.<sup>173, 174</sup>

### *Minerals*

Morocco mines produce a variety of minerals, including cobalt, copper, gold, iron ore, lead, manganese ore, mercury, barite, nickel, silver, and zinc. However, one mineral product—phosphate ore—dominates in terms of importance for the national economy. The government-run Office Cherifien des Phosphates (OCP) is the world's largest exporter of phosphate and controls all aspects of the industry within Morocco, including the creation of derivative products such as phosphate fertilizer and phosphoric acid. Phosphate processing takes place at two plants at Jorf Lasfar and Safi, coastal ports located between Casablanca to the northwest and Essaouira. Overall, Morocco is estimated to possess two thirds of the world's known phosphate reserves.<sup>175</sup>



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<sup>169</sup> MBendi. "Morocco: Electrical Power." 11 May 2006.

<http://www.mbendi.co.za/indy/powr/af/mo/p0005.htm>

<sup>170</sup> MBendi. "Morocco: Electrical Power." 11 May 2006.

<http://www.mbendi.co.za/indy/powr/af/mo/p0005.htm>

<sup>171</sup> PHARE Associates, LLC. "Power Generation Systems." 2008.

<http://www.phareassociates.com/MOROCCO-PowerGenerationSystems.pdf>

<sup>172</sup> Global Wind Energy Council. "U.S., China & Spain Lead World Wind Power Market in 2007." 6

February 2008. [http://www.gwec.net/index.php?id=30&tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=139](http://www.gwec.net/index.php?id=30&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=139)

<sup>173</sup> MBendi. "Morocco: Electrical Power." 11 May 2006.

<http://www.mbendi.co.za/indy/powr/af/mo/p0005.htm>

<sup>174</sup> PHARE Associates, LLC. "Power Generation Systems." 2008.

<http://www.phareassociates.com/MOROCCO-PowerGenerationSystems.pdf>

<sup>175</sup> Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. "Country Profile: Morocco." May 2006.

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Morocco.pdf>

## Standard of Living

Morocco's standard of living, as measured by indicators such as GDP per capita, educational and literacy levels, and life expectancy, is low. In the most recent Human Development Index published by the United Nations Development Programme, Morocco ranked 126 out of 177 countries on the basis of these criteria.<sup>176</sup> Illiteracy is one of the country's biggest problems, with only 52.3% of the Moroccan population over the age of 15 able to read and write and a wide literacy gender gap existing between men and women, particularly in rural areas. Unemployment and underemployment are also concerns. While the official unemployment rate is 7.7%, this number is significantly higher in urban areas, where the rate can be as high as 33% among youths.<sup>177</sup>



There are, however, signs of an increasingly robust economy. The GDP per capita has been increasing steadily over the last few years, and the unemployment and poverty rates have declined. (The latter rate is still high, however, at 15%).<sup>178</sup> Structural reforms instituted by the government have placed an emphasis on generating growth and generating jobs and seem to be paying dividends. However, as long as relatively high percentages of the GDP and employment base continue to be tied to the agricultural sector, periodic droughts will continue to cause bumps in the general trend of economic improvement.<sup>179</sup>

The illiteracy issue has become the focus of several governmental initiatives, with the overriding goals being to lower the illiteracy rate to 20% by 2010 and to eliminate illiteracy altogether by 2015. It remains to be seen whether these ambitious targets can be met. Nonetheless, there are reasons to be optimistic that improvement will occur. In January 2004 the Moroccan parliament passed a sweeping family law reform package that, among other things, raised the minimum age that girls may marry from 15 to 18. A similar family law reform carried out in nearby Tunisia in 1956 has been one of the reasons why that country today has a literacy rate for women that is nearly double that of Morocco.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> United Nations Development Programme. *Human Development Report 2007/2008*. "Morocco: The Human Development Index—Going Beyond Income." 27 November 2007.

[http://hdrstats.undp.org/countries/country\\_fact\\_sheets/cty\\_fs\\_MAR.html](http://hdrstats.undp.org/countries/country_fact_sheets/cty_fs_MAR.html)

<sup>177</sup> Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, U.S. Department of State. "Background Note: Morocco."

October 2007. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5431.htm>

<sup>178</sup> International Monetary Fund. "IMF Executive Board Concludes 2007 Article IV Consultation with Morocco." 9 August 2007. <http://www.imf.org/external/np/sec/pn/2007/pn0798.htm>

<sup>179</sup> Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, U.S. Department of State. "Background Note: Morocco."

October 2007. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5431.htm>

<sup>180</sup> Council on Foreign Relations. *Foreign Affairs*. Coleman, Isobel. "The Payoff from Women's Rights." May/June 2004. <http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20040501faessay83308-p20/isobel-coleman/the-payoff-from-women-s-rights.html>

## Tourism

Tourism generates Morocco's largest amount of foreign exchange and, along with remittances from Moroccan workers outside the country, helps offset the country's trade deficit. In 2005, tourism was responsible for over 10% of Morocco's GDP, and through governmental developmental assistance for tourism infrastructure improvements, it is hoped that this percentage may rise as high as 20% by 2010.<sup>181</sup> Much of the new development is taking place in coastal areas, where various foreign consortia have been licensed by the government to build large new resorts.<sup>182, 183</sup> The first of these is scheduled to open in May 2008 in Saïdia, a small village on Morocco's Mediterranean coast near the Algerian border.<sup>184</sup> New hotels with over 17,000 beds and 3,100 villas and flats are part of the Saïdia development, which has gathered criticism from some environmental watch groups because of concerns over damage to dunes, forests, and wetlands.<sup>185</sup>



The tourism sector benefits from Morocco's extensive coastal areas that are only short flights away from much of Europe. The cultural centers of Fès and Marrakech are also major attractions for those visitors looking for more than sea and sand. While Casablanca was the site of terrorist suicide bombings in 2003 and 2007, these attacks have so far not appreciatively affected the tourism industry.<sup>186, 187</sup> In fact, the number of tourists visiting Morocco in 2007 increased by 13% over the previous year, to 7.4 million people.

## Transportation

While Morocco has a relatively extensive transportation system, much of it is in need of repair and improvement. In 2005 the government secured a USD 286 million loan from

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<sup>181</sup> Jamestown Foundation. *Global Terrorism Analysis*, Vol. 5, No. 11. Chebatoris, Michael. "AQIM's Threat to Morocco's Tourism Sector." 7 June 2007.

<http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2373452>

<sup>182</sup> Magharebia. Touahri, Sarah. "Morocco Posts Highest Tourist Numbers in Four Decades for 2007." 4 February 2008.

[http://www.magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en\\_GB/features/awi/features/2008/02/04/feature-03](http://www.magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en_GB/features/awi/features/2008/02/04/feature-03)

<sup>183</sup> Reuters.com. Pfeiffer, Tom "Morocco's Shoreline Threatened." 12 December 2007.

<http://features.us.reuters.com/destinations/news/L11883322.html>

<sup>184</sup> Magharebia. Touahri, Sarah. "Morocco Posts Highest Tourist Numbers in Four Decades for 2007." 4 February 2008.

[http://www.magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en\\_GB/features/awi/features/2008/02/04/feature-03](http://www.magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en_GB/features/awi/features/2008/02/04/feature-03)

<sup>185</sup> Reuters.com. Pfeiffer, Tom "Morocco's Shoreline Threatened." 12 December 2007.

<http://features.us.reuters.com/destinations/news/L11883322.html>

<sup>186</sup> Jamestown Foundation. *Global Terrorism Analysis*, Vol. 5, No. 11. Chebatoris, Michael. "AQIM's Threat to Morocco's Tourism Sector." 7 June 2007.

<http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2373452>

<sup>187</sup> BBC News, International Version. "New Suicide Attacks Hit Morocco." 14 April 2007.

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/6555177](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/6555177)

the African Development Bank to finance improvement to the country's roads, railroads, airports, and ports.

A priority for the Moroccan government has been improvement of the country's rural road system. Not only are many rural areas not very accessible by roads, but also the existing roads in rural mountainous regions require frequent maintenance because of severe weather conditions. In 1995, the Moroccan began a 10-year program (Program National de Routes Rurales, or PNR) to improve rural roads, followed by a second 10-year phase (PNRR-2) beginning in 2005. The goals of the PNR-2 program are to build or upgrade 15,500 km (9,600 mi) of rural roads.<sup>188</sup>

Morocco's railway system is run by the Office National des Chemins de Fer (ONCF). It operates 1,907 km (1,185 mi) of track, 53% of which is electrified.<sup>189</sup> The Atlas Mountains effectively serve as a geographic barrier for the railway system, and Marrakech is the southern-most city served. Recent and ongoing improvement projects have included the laying of double tracks between major cities, improvement and expansion of train stations, and the purchase of new double-deck train cars. The passenger train system continues to be popular, transporting over 23 million people in 2006, a 12% increase over the previous year.<sup>190</sup>

Morocco has 25 airports with paved runways. The main international gateways are at Casablanca, Tangier, and Agadir. These airports and others are served by the 37 aircraft that make up the fleet of Royal Air Maroc, the national air carrier. A raft of European airlines, large and small, also serve the major airports, including those at Marrakech, Fès, and Rabat.<sup>191</sup>



© caribb / Flickr.com  
Boeing 767 of Royal Air Maroc

Morocco has numerous ports along its many kilometers of coastline. The largest and busiest of these is at Casablanca, although it ranks only 127th in the world in terms of container traffic.<sup>192</sup> A super port is now being constructed west of Tangier on the Strait of Gibraltar. When it is completed sometime in 2009, it will become one of the largest container ports in the Mediterranean.<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>188</sup> Euromed Innovation & Technology Programme. "Maroc: 2.4. Transport." 12 March 2007. <http://720plan.ovh.net/~siter/euromed/spip.php?article312&pays=Maroc>

<sup>189</sup> Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. "Country Profile: Morocco." May 2006. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Morocco.pdf>

<sup>190</sup> ONCF. "Conseil d'Administration ONCF." 22 February 2007. <http://www.oncf.ma/actualites/communiqués/2007/3.htm>

<sup>191</sup> Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. "Country Profile: Morocco." May 2006. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Morocco.pdf>

<sup>192</sup> Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. "Country Profile: Morocco." May 2006. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Morocco.pdf>

<sup>193</sup> World Business. Filou, Emilie. "Special Report: North Africa—Tangier's Global Bid." 6 June 2007. <http://www.worldbusinesslive.com/Career/Article/661530/special-report-north-africa-tangiers-global-bid/>

## Business Outlook

Since the early 1990s, the Moroccan government has been pursuing multiple strategies to grow the economy and generate jobs for a rapidly increasing population. Privatization has been a key component of this change. Various previously state-run industries, such as telecommunications, transport, water, and power, are now either fully or partially privatized.<sup>194</sup> These sales of state-owned properties have helped to pump foreign investment into the economy. In addition, legal, institutional, and regulatory reforms have been implemented as a means of further attracting foreign business interests to make investments in the country. The result has been an increase of jobs in Morocco, many of which involve transference of technology and advanced training rather than simply taking advantage of a low-cost labor pool.<sup>195</sup>



© Rebecca Weeks  
Tourists on a camel trek

The government has also been steadily implementing numerous economic structural reforms. For example, public expenditures have been reined in considerably, and the budget deficit as a percentage of GDP is now at 2.1%, down considerably from 6.2% in 2002.<sup>196, 197</sup> Not only does this drop in the deficit reflect a relative decrease in government spending, but it also reveals an increasing amount of incoming revenues, both from privatization proceeds and domestic sources.<sup>198</sup>

As a result of these and other economic policies, Morocco's short- and medium-term growth prospects now look good. Nonetheless, there are various factors that could adversely affect the economy's performance. One of these is the economy's vulnerability in the agriculture sector owing to the region's increasingly inconsistent rains. While Morocco's GDP surged by 9.4% in 2006, the following year saw only a 2.1% increase in GDP.<sup>199, 200</sup> The primary reason for this slowdown was a drought that severely cut into agricultural output and also forced increased imports of foodstuffs.<sup>201</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> Oxford Business Group. "Morocco: Country Profile." 2005.

<http://www.oxfordbusinessgroup.com/country.asp?country=27>

<sup>195</sup> United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. "Investment Policy Review of Morocco." 6 February 2007.

<sup>196</sup> Export Development Canada. Kassay, Ala. "Morocco: Economics." October 2007.

[http://www.edc.ca/english/docs/gmorocco\\_e.pdf](http://www.edc.ca/english/docs/gmorocco_e.pdf)

<sup>197</sup> Oxford Business Group. "Morocco: Country Profile." 2005.

<http://www.oxfordbusinessgroup.com/country.asp?country=27>

<sup>198</sup> Oxford Business Group. "Morocco: Country Profile." 2005.

<http://www.oxfordbusinessgroup.com/country.asp?country=27>

<sup>199</sup> Central Intelligence Agency. *The World Factbook*. "Morocco." 12 February 2008.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mo.html>

<sup>200</sup> Export Development Canada. Kassay, Ala. "Morocco: Economics." October 2007.

[http://www.edc.ca/english/docs/gmorocco\\_e.pdf](http://www.edc.ca/english/docs/gmorocco_e.pdf)

<sup>201</sup> Central Intelligence Agency. *The World Factbook*. "Morocco." 12 February 2008.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mo.html>

The strength of the Moroccan economy also depends on the country's products maintaining their competitiveness in the markets of Europe, whose nations (particularly Spain and France) have extensive trade relations with Morocco. Europe is also the source of most of the tourists that provide so much needed foreign exchange for the Moroccan coffers. While the Moroccan tourism sector is expected to continue to grow over the next 5–10 years, it is vulnerable to security concerns and to reduced discretionary travel during economic downturns.

### **International Organizations**

Even though it is an African country, one of the most important organizations affecting Morocco's economic development is the European Union (EU). In 1987, Morocco actually applied for membership in the EU but was quickly rejected on geographical grounds. This membership denial has not in any way lessened the importance of the relationship between the EU and Morocco, however. In 1996, an Association Agreement between the EU and Morocco was signed in Brussels that addressed numerous outstanding concerns, including trade access and immigration and migration policy.

One of the more prickly issues between Morocco and the EU has been access to Morocco's territorial fishing grounds. Spanish and Portuguese boats have long fished these waters, although their access became more of an issue in the 1970s when Morocco, like most coastal countries, began establishing Exclusive Economic Zones in their offshore regions. With Spanish and Portuguese accession to the EU in 1986, the negotiation of Moroccan fishing access agreements for Spain and Portugal came under EU auspices. During the 1990s and 2000s, there have been periodic suspensions of agreements between the EU and Morocco on access to Moroccan fishing grounds. During this time, the size of the Moroccan fishing fleet has increased greatly and has helped the national fishing industry become one of the country's major sources of exports. A new Morocco-EU fishing agreement was signed in July 2005, and it reflects substantial reduction in the amount of fishing allowed by EU (mostly Spanish) fleets in the Moroccan fisheries.<sup>202,203</sup>



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<sup>202</sup> Afrol News. 28 July 2005. "Morocco-EU Fisheries Deal Finally Renewed."  
<http://www.afrol.com/articles/16866>

<sup>203</sup> American University. ICE Case Studies. Martin, Jeremy. "Morocco, Spain and Fishing." January 1998.  
<http://www.american.edu/ted/ice/morspain.htm>

# Society

## Ethnic Groups and Languages

### *Berbers (Imazighen) and Tamazight*

When the Phoenicians, Carthaginian, Romans, Arabs, and others came to the Maghreb region, they were met by native tribespeople whose modern descendants are known as Berbers (although Berbers refer to themselves as *Imazighen*).<sup>204</sup> Where these people of the Maghreb originally came from and when they arrived are mysteries that anthropologists and archaeologists continue to speculate on, using what limited physical evidence has survived from ancient times. The best evidence suggests that Berbers did not come from a single area, but rather arrived in separate groups from the north, south, and west. A monolithic Berber culture has never existed; even today, Berbers from one area of Morocco may not fully understand the language of Berbers from another region of the country.



© Alexandre Baron  
Berber boys

The best modern definition of a Moroccan Berber is someone who is a native speaker of one of the three main Berber languages. In the Anti-Atlas Mountains, western High Atlas Mountains and the Souss Valley that separates the two ranges, *Tashelhit* is spoken by the Berber population. It is also spoken by Berbers in the southern parts of Morocco all the way to the Draa Valley. Berbers in the central and eastern High Atlas Mountains and the Middle Atlas Mountains speak *Tamazight*, which in reality is a variety of related dialects. It should also be noted that Berber languages in general are often collectively referred to as *Tamazight*, so the language dialects of this part of Morocco are often specified as *Central Atlas Tamazight*. Finally, in the Rif Mountains to the north, *Tarifit* is spoken by Berber tribespeople.

Much of the Moroccan population today is categorized as Berber-Arab. Most of these individuals are of Berber ancestry but speak Arabic as their first language. No reliable statistics exist for the percentage of Moroccans whose first language is a Berber one, but estimates have ranged from 40% to 60%.<sup>205, 206</sup> For many years in Morocco, school instruction in Berber languages was banned by the government. Recently, however, the

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<sup>204</sup> *The Berbers*. Brett, Michael; and Elizabeth Fentress. "Introduction [p. 5]." 1996. Oxford, England: Blackwell Publishers.

<sup>205</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Developing World*, Vol. 2. Leonard, Thomas M., ed. "Maghrib Peoples [p. 975]." 2006. New York: Routledge.

<sup>206</sup> *Tribe and Society in Rural Morocco*. Hart, David M. "Scratch a Moroccan, Find a Berber [p. 23]." 2000. London/Portland, Oreg: Frank Cass Publishers.

government has relented and allowed Berber languages to be taught in elementary schools. In fact, it plans to make such instruction available at all schools by 2013.<sup>207, 208</sup>

### *Arabs and Arabic*

Modern Standard Arabic is the national language of Morocco. It is used in all formal governmental oral and written communications and is the primary language of school instruction.<sup>209</sup> On the street, however, Moroccan Arabic is the language most often heard. Unlike Modern Standard Arabic, Moroccan Arabic, which is strictly a spoken language, typically follows a subject-verb-object order.<sup>210</sup> Other differences from Modern Standard Arabic are substantial enough to make Moroccan Arabic difficult for non-Mahgrebian Arabs to understand.<sup>211</sup>



© Greg Robbins  
Arab woman

Moroccan Arabic is the first language of most Moroccans living outside the mountain and desert regions, where Berber continues to be dominant. Arabic speakers in Morocco today may or may not be descended from Arabs who arrived in the region when Islam was introduced during the late seventh century C.E. Genetic analyses show no significant differences between Arabic-speaking and Berber-speaking Moroccans, so language and culture are the only two significant division lines between the Arab and Berber populations in Morocco.<sup>212</sup>

Geographic patterns are quite evident between the two groups. With the exception of Marrakech, all major Moroccan cities are dominantly Arabic speaking, while Morocco's mountain and desert regions are overwhelmingly *Tamazight* speakers (Berbers).

### *European Languages*

French continues to be an important language within Morocco and is commonly a Moroccan's second or even third language (after Arabic and/or Berber). It is most often used in business or intellectual discussion.<sup>213</sup> Code switching (alternating between Moroccan Arabic and French) is popular among many bilingual Moroccans. The country

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<sup>207</sup> BBC News, International Version. Dixon, Martha. "Moroccans Learn to Write Berber." 19 December 2005. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/4502772.stm>

<sup>208</sup> *Morocco*. Delgado, Kevin. "An Intricate Fabric: The People [p. 52]." 2006. Detroit, Mich: Lucent Books.

<sup>209</sup> *Multilingualism, Cultural Identity, and Education in Morocco*. Ennaji, Moha. "Language Use and Language Attitudes [p. 164]." 2005. New York: Springer.

<sup>210</sup> Center for World Languages, University of California, Los Angeles. Language Materials Project. "Moroccan Arabic." <http://www.lmp.ucla.edu/Profile.aspx?LangID=162&menu=004>

<sup>211</sup> *Moroccan Arabic Phrasebook*, 2nd Ed. Bacon, Dan; and Bichr Andjar, Abdennabi Benchehda. "Introduction [p. 9]." 1999. Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications.

<sup>212</sup> *European Journal of Human Genetics*, Vol. 8. Bosch, Elena; and others. "Genetic Structure of North-West Africa Revealed by STR Analysis [p.362]." 2000.

<http://www.upf.edu/cexs/reerca/bioevo/2000BioEvo/BE2000-Bosch-STRs-EJHG.pdf>

<sup>213</sup> *Multilingualism, Cultural Identity, and Education in Morocco*. Ennaji, Moha. "Language Use and Language Attitudes [p. 161-164]." 2005. New York: Springer.

also has a much smaller number of Spanish speakers, who are found primarily in the northern areas of Morocco, near the Spanish enclaves.

## Religion

Virtually all Moroccans are Muslims, and Islam is the state religion. Despite the special national status of Islam, however, the Moroccan constitution guarantees freedom of religion, and religious minorities are allowed to openly practice their faith (but not proselytize).<sup>214</sup> Christian and Jewish minorities have long existed in Morocco, but the current numbers are quite low. It is estimated that there are only 4,000 to 6,000 Jews now living in Morocco (mostly in Casablanca) after several waves of emigration to Israel following World War II.<sup>215,216</sup> A similarly small Christian population is mostly made up of expatriates.<sup>217</sup>



© Dominik Golenia  
Muslims during prayer

The vast majority of Moroccan Muslims are Sunni Muslims. Like in most North African nations, the Maliki *madhhab* (Islamic legal school) is followed. This is one of the four Islamic traditions of *Shari'a* (Islamic law) and is less reliant on the *Hadith* (the sayings describing the words and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad) and more open to analogical reasoning (*qiyas*) than some of the other *madhhabs*.<sup>218</sup> The Maliki *madhhab* also considers the traditional practices of the Muslim community in Medina as part of its Islamic legal interpretations. In Morocco, some Maliki rulings have extended legal interpretations to encompass local traditions as well, a difference from other Maliki-practicing regions.<sup>219</sup>

Islamic practice in Morocco has long been deeply influenced by Sufi mysticism. Many of Morocco's Sufi mystics became venerated as *marabouts*, or holy men, who possess *baraka* ("grace" or "divine blessing") even after death. In rural areas, the *marabouts* have often taken on the important role of tribal arbitrators as a result of their prestige.<sup>220</sup> Morocco's sultans and kings have also traditionally possessed *baraka* through their being *shurafa* (descendants of the Prophet Muhammad). For both the *shurafa* and *marabouts*,

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<sup>214</sup> Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of States. "International Religious Freedom Report 2007: Morocco." 14 September 2007. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2007/90217.htm>

<sup>215</sup> Jewish Virtual Library. Bard, Michelle. "The Jews of Morocco." 2008.

<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/anti-semitism/morocjews.html> [retrieved 29 February 2008]

<sup>216</sup> Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of States. "International Religious Freedom Report 2007: Morocco." 14 September 2007. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2007/90217.htm>

<sup>217</sup> Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of States. "International Religious Freedom Report 2007: Morocco." 14 September 2007. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2007/90217.htm>

<sup>218</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Malikiyah." 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9050335/Malikiyah>

<sup>219</sup> *The Muslim World After 9/11*. Lal, Rollie. "The Maghreb [p. 149]." 2004. Santa Monica, Calif: Rand Corporation.

<sup>220</sup> *The Berbers*. Brett, Michael; and Elizabeth Fentress. "Pastoral Berbers [p. 226]." Oxford, England: Blackwell Publishers.

their *baraka* could be passed on to their descendants, which has created *maraboutic* and *sharifian* religious lineages in many rural areas of Morocco.<sup>221</sup>

### Traditions: Celebrations and Holidays

As would be expected in a country in which Islam is the state religion, all major Islamic holidays are celebrated throughout Morocco. These include Eid al-Fitr (end of Ramadan fast), Eid al-Adha (Feast of the Sacrifice), Eid al-Mawlid (birth of the Prophet Muhammad), and Fatih Muharram (Muslim New Year). All of these holidays are tied to the lunar calendar and thus their dates vary from year to year. These holidays are oriented around family meals and feasts.



© MarocStoun / Flickr.com  
Sheep to be sacrificed during Eid al-Adha

While they are not national holidays, *moussems*, which are annual celebrations of local *marabouts*, are popular regional events. These celebrations run the gamut from small observances centered on a market day to huge colorful events that attract hordes of visitors. Some *moussems* are also tied to harvest festivals. Most *moussems* are held in rural areas, although some of the better known ones occur in cities. Falling in the latter category is the *mousssem* of Sidi Ben Aissa, which takes place in Meknès the day before Eid al-Mawlid.<sup>222,223</sup> This event is noted for its pageantry and circus-like atmosphere, featuring illusionists, medieval-style jousting tournaments, and much music and dance.<sup>224</sup>

Morocco also celebrates a number of secular holidays, most of which are tied to recent events in the country's history. These include the Green March of 350,000 Moroccan volunteers into Western Sahara in 1975; the accession to the throne of the current King Mohammed VI in 1999; the "return" of southern Western Sahara to Morocco from Mauritania (Allegiance of Oued Eddahab) in 1979; the request by Moroccan nationalists in 1944 for independence from France (Independence Manifesto Day); and the return from exile in 1956 of Sultan (later King) Mohammed V (Moroccan Independence Day).

### Cuisine

Moroccan cuisine reflects multiple influences, among them Berber, Arab, Spanish, and Jewish. The midday meal is typically the day's main meal, except during the fast period of Ramadan. In wealthy families, the meals are usually elaborate multi-course affairs. In less affluent households, the number of courses may be reduced to simply a grain dish

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<sup>221</sup> *Jihad and Its Interpretations in Pre-Colonial Morocco*. Bennison, Amira K. "Introduction [p. 5]." 2002. London: RoutledgeCurzon.

<sup>222</sup> AsiaRooms.com. "Ben Aissa Festival Morocco." <http://www.asiarooms.com/travel-guide/morocco/morocco-festivals-&-events/ben-aissa-festival-morocco.html>

<sup>223</sup> WorldReviewer.com. "Moussems of Sidi Ben Aissa." <http://www.worldreviewer.com/experiences/festival/moussems-of-sidi-ben-aissa/11121/>

<sup>224</sup> WorldReviewer.com. "Moussems of Sidi Ben Aissa." <http://www.worldreviewer.com/experiences/festival/moussems-of-sidi-ben-aissa/11121/>

and a meat dish. All Moroccans, however, will generally end their meal with sweet mint tea, the national drink. It is from Chinese gunpowder tea that has been rolled into pellets, with bits of mint added. It is then heavily sweetened with sugar after steeping.<sup>225</sup>

The signature grain dish is couscous, which is made from semolina wheat that has been shaped into small granules. Couscous is usually the last dish to be served and is typically draped with a meat or vegetable stew. Moroccan meat dishes may include beef, lamb, chicken, or seafood, but all are generally heavily spiced. Typical Moroccan food spices are cinnamon, cumin, turmeric, ginger, paprika, cayenne, black pepper, sesame seeds, and anise seeds.

Among the many signature Moroccan dishes are *basteeya* or *bastilla* (chicken served in a thin pastry dough and topped with cinnamon and powdered sugar), *meshoui* (whole roasted lamb sprinkled with cumin and salt), *harira* (thick soup made with beans, vegetables, rice, and a host of spices), and *djej emshmel* (roasted chicken served with a spicy sauce, lemon, and olives).<sup>226</sup>



© Matt Ravier  
Bastilla

## Arts

### Music

Music pervades the rituals and celebrations of Moroccan life and is often accompanied by dancing and storytelling. Numerous musical styles reflect the numerous cultures and traditions that have influenced the North African region. At one end is classical, which is not to be confused with European classical music. Moroccan classical orchestras play compositions written in the 10th to 15th centuries in Andalusia (southern Spain). The lyrics are either in classical Arabic or the Andalusian dialect, and the complex music is played with several instruments rarely used in non-Muslim countries.<sup>227</sup> These include three types of stringed instruments (*rebab*, *kemanjah*, *oud*), a type of tambourine known as a *tar*, and sometimes a funnel-shaped clay drum (*darbuqa*).<sup>228</sup>

A more modern variant of Moroccan classical music is *griha*, in which the lyrics are in modern rather than classical Arabic or rarely spoken Andalusian dialects. *Griha* melodies are often played on the viola or two-



© Ted Swedenburg  
Moroccan orchestra

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<sup>225</sup> Morocco. Delgado, Kevin. "Life in the Crossroads: Food [pp. 75-77]." 2006. Detroit, Mich: Lucent Books.

<sup>226</sup> Sally's Place. Sosa, Elaine. "Ethnic Cuisine: Morocco." <http://www.sallys-place.com/food/cuisines/morocco.htm>

<sup>227</sup> Morocco. Delgado, Kevin. "Life in the Crossroads: Music [p. 72]." Detroit, Mich: Lucent Books.

<sup>228</sup> AlBab.com. Moroccan Gateway. "Music." <http://www.al-bab.com/maroc/cult/music.htm>

stringed mandolin and accompanied by rhythmic clapping.<sup>229</sup>

Berber music relies heavily on percussion instruments, with the melody played by flute or *rebab*. There is considerable room for improvisation in the music, including unexpected instrumentation such as the bagpipes or oboe, but the rhythms and lyrics always contain some traditional elements. The music is often performed using a call-and-response motif, in which the lead singer poses a question that is answered by a female chorus.<sup>230</sup>

### *Film*

Morocco for many years has been a favorite site for American and European movie producers looking for desert settings or Middle Eastern backdrops that can be shot in a relatively safe environment. In recent years, however, an indigenous film industry has begun to garner attention. While only an average of less than four Moroccan films were made per year from 1969 to 1998, there has been a dramatic increase in recent years. Since 1999, the Moroccan film industry has been averaging 12 films a year, (20 alone in 2007), and the government would like to expand this number to 40 by the year 2020 by making available funding for mid-budget films.<sup>231, 232</sup>

As part of the goal to promote Morocco as a regional filmmaking center, a major worldwide film festival is now held each year in Marrakech. As new films emerge from Morocco, controversies have sometimes arisen over their content. For example, one of the most successful recent Moroccan movies, the 2006 release “Marock,” involved a relationship between a Jewish boy and Muslim girl that garnered harsh criticism from one of the Islamist political parties within Morocco.<sup>233</sup>

### *Al-Halqa*

In the central squares of many of Morocco’s cities, a unique form of street theatre known as *al-halqa* has entertained and spellbound the masses for centuries. The *al-halqa* is hard to describe precisely, as it involves the display of numerous arts and talents that can range from the sublime to the bizarre. The massive central square of Marrakech, Djemaa el-Fna, has long been known for its vast array of *halaqi* (“entertainers”). Each *halaqi* is surrounded by a circle made up of the audience, and over the course of a few meters one may hear the elaborate tales of storytellers, see the ancient art of snake charming, or



© Martin and Kathy Dady / Flickr.com  
Snake charmer

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<sup>229</sup> *Morocco*. Delgado, Kevin. “Life in the Crossroads: Music [pp. 72-73].” Detroit, Mich: Lucent Books.

<sup>230</sup> *Morocco*. Delgado, Kevin. “Life in the Crossroads: Music [pp. 73-74].” Detroit, Mich: Lucent Books.

<sup>231</sup> Variety.com. Wilson-Goldie, Kaelen. “Moroccan Filmmakers Shatter Taboos.” 21 November 2007.

<http://www.variety.com/index.asp?layout=festivals&jump=features&id=2840>

<sup>232</sup> Euromed Cafe. Touzani, Maryam. “Report.” 20 December 2007.

<http://www.euromedcafe.org/newsdetail.asp?lang=ing&documentID=12387>

<sup>233</sup> Christian Science Monitor. Gauch, Sarah; and Ursula Lindsey. “Two Arab Movies Push the Bounds of Cultural Candor.” 14 June 2006. <http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/0614/p01s04-wome.html>

watch the undulating moves of cross-dressing belly dancers. Nearby, Gnaoua musicians, descendants of slaves from western Africa, may be performing trance-like music using drums and castanets. The cultural importance of *al-halqa* was underlined by UNESCO in 2001, when the Djemaa el-Fna became the first World Heritage Site for oral history and tradition.<sup>234,235</sup>

## Traditional Dress

When dressing traditionally, both Moroccan men and women wear the djellaba, a loose fitting robe that has a hood in the back. The most common type is the *machzania* djellaba, which is worn as outerwear for protection from sun or heat.<sup>236</sup> This type of djellaba has long sleeves and a V-shaped neck opening, which women will usually close with a clasp.<sup>237</sup> In general, women are more likely to be seen wearing a djellaba, and their djellabas are in darker colors than those of men.<sup>238</sup>



© Pierre-Yves Dansereau  
A man wearing a djellaba

A variation of the djellaba is the kaftan. The principal differences between these two are that the kaftan does not have a hood, it is only worn by women, and it is usually more stylish than the djellaba. Kaftans are often worn by women at weddings and other celebrations.<sup>239</sup>

Two common types of traditional headwear are still worn by men in Morocco. One of these is the fez, a conical felt hat flattened at the top. Up until the 19th century, all fezzes were made in the Moroccan city of Fès because of the local berries that were used as dyes to give the fez its characteristic red color.<sup>240,241</sup> The other popular form of headgear among Moroccan men is the kufi skull cap, which is knit and usually displays elaborate geometric designs.

Moroccans are also known for their comfortable footwear. Both men and women may be found wearing unheeled leather slippers known as belgha (or babouch), with yellow being the traditional color of men's belgha.

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<sup>234</sup> School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University. Coletti, Elisabetta Anna. "A Living Page from 'Arabian Nights.'" Spring 2001.

[http://www.journalismfellowships.org/stories/morocco/morocco\\_nights.htm](http://www.journalismfellowships.org/stories/morocco/morocco_nights.htm)

<sup>235</sup> *Morocco*. Bing, Alison. "Arts, Crafts, and Architecture: Theatre and Dance [pp. 57-58]." 2007.

Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications.

<sup>236</sup> *Morocco*. Delgado, Kevin. "An Intricate Fabric: The People [p. 59]." Detroit, Mich: Lucent Books.

<sup>237</sup> BikeAbout.org. "Moroccan Clothing." 2004. <http://www.bikeabout.org/resource/djellaba>

<sup>238</sup> TheTravelSource.net. "Culture/Dress/Artisan."

<http://www.thetravelsource.net/TravelInfoPages/culture.html>

<sup>239</sup> TheTravelSource.net. "Culture/Dress/Artisan."

<http://www.thetravelsource.net/TravelInfoPages/culture.html> [retrieved 5 March 2008]

<sup>240</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Fès." 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9034128/Fes>

<sup>241</sup> Canton Free Masons. "The History of the Fès." [http://www.cantonfreemasons.com/the\\_fez.htm](http://www.cantonfreemasons.com/the_fez.htm)

## Folk Culture and Folklore

Singing and dancing are characteristically how Moroccan Berber tribespeople have expressed their culture, stories, and traditions. For over 40 years, Marrakech has been the site of an annual folklore festival (now called the Marrakech Festival of Popular Arts) that has showcased many aspects of Berber culture. Some of these traditions, such as the spectacular fantasias in which Berber horsemen perform war charges in flowing robes, have survived primarily for the entertainment of tourists. Nonetheless, the Marrakech festival has helped expose to the outside world much of the traditional Berber culture, while aiding in the preservation of many Berber traditions.<sup>242</sup>

Morocco's many rural *moussems* also play a similar role for the local Berber populations. One of the more well known of these is the *moussems* in the small Middle Atlas village of Imilchil, which has long been an event in which local Berber tribespeople come from their mountain villages to trade, sing, and dance and young Berber men and women come to find someone to marry.

The Berber languages have only recently developed a written script, and thus the published collections of Berber folk and fairy tales have mostly been transcriptions produced by outside researchers.<sup>243</sup> One of the more well known of these stories is tied to the origin of the Moroccan almond trees.<sup>244</sup> It comes from the southern Moroccan village of Tafraoute, which is the country's almond producing capital and the location of a yearly almond blossom festival that attracts musicians, dancers, and local story-tellers.



© E. Zanwan  
Almond orchard

## Sports and Recreation

The most popular sport by far in Morocco is football, which in the United States is known as soccer. The national team, known as the *Lions de l'Atlas* (Lions of the Atlas), has had periodic success in international competition. Morocco was the first African country to reach the second round of the World Cup in 1986, and it won the championship of the African Nations cup in 1976 and was runner-up in 2004.<sup>245</sup> Morocco put in a strong



© Charles Roffley  
Soccer training outside Marrakech

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<sup>242</sup> Morocco. Sattin, Anthony. "Marrakesh: Festival of Folklore [p. 307]." 2007. Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Productions.

<sup>243</sup> Journal of Language and Popular Culture in Africa, Vol. 3, No. 1. El Aissati, Abderrahman. "Book Review." 26 February 2003. <http://www2.fmg.uva.nl/lpca/jlpca/vol3/elaiissati.html>

<sup>244</sup> WalaVita Dental Care Plant Library. "The Almond Tree." <http://www.walavita.de/english/quality/plantlibrary/printversion.php?name=almond-tree>

<sup>245</sup> Morocco2010.org. "Football Players." 2003. <http://www.morocco-2010.org/en/ambassadeurs.asp>

bid to host the 2010 World Cup, narrowly losing to South Africa in the voting by Fédération International de Football Association (FIFA) officials.<sup>246</sup>

Women's football is also slowly gaining in popularity in Morocco. Organized leagues have sprung up, and there is now a national team. While there is increasing acceptance among many Moroccans for the participation of women and girls in what has up until recently been a male pursuit, opportunities for young women to pursue the sport professionally continue to be limited.<sup>247</sup>

Track and field has, since the 1980s, been a sport that Moroccan athletes have excelled in. One of these athletes, undoubtedly Morocco's most famous, is Hicham El Guerrouj. In the 2004 Olympics, he was the gold medalist in both the Men's 1,500 Meters and the 5,000 Meters, an Olympic feat only matched by legendary Paavo Nurmi, considered by many to be the greatest middle-distance runner of all time. El Guerrouj is also the current world's record holder in the mile.<sup>248</sup>

Another famous Moroccan track-and-field athlete is Nawal El Moutawakel, who became Morocco's first Olympic gold medalist in 1984 when she won the Women's 400 Meter Hurdles. She also became the first Muslim woman and African woman to win an Olympic gold medal. Today she is Morocco's Minister of Youth and Sports.<sup>249</sup>

Tourism has helped foster the development of tennis clubs, golf courses, and popular surfing beaches in big cities and resort areas. While none of these sports are pursued by the masses, some Moroccans have made names for themselves on the international scene, particularly in tennis. Foremost among them is Younès El Aynaoui (ranked No. 14 in the world in 2003).<sup>250</sup>

## Gender Issues

Moroccan is a traditional Muslim society that is undergoing changes and attitudes in how women's role and rights are defined, especially within the family. One recent piece of legislation stands out in this regard. In 2004 a new Moroccan family code (known as Mudawana) was enacted. The new Mudawana was pushed through parliament by King Mohammed VI, who took great care



© Daniel Meyer  
Young women in Rabat

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<sup>246</sup> BBC Sport. "SA Wins 2010 Vote." 15 May 2004.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/sport2/hi/football/africa/3716521.stm>

<sup>247</sup> The Global Game. Matuska, Nicole. "Morocco: Players on a Masculine Stage." 1 October 2007.

<http://www.theglobalgame.com/blog/?p=276>

<sup>248</sup> IAAF.org. "King of Middle Distance, Hicham El Guerrouj Retires." 23 May 2006.

<http://www.iaaf.org/news/Kind=2/newsId=34753.html>

<sup>249</sup> IAAF.org "Nawal El Moutawakel-Bennis (MAR)."

<http://www2.iaaf.org/InsideIAAF/Structure/Council/MoutawakelBennis.html>

<sup>250</sup> ATPtennis.com. "Younes El Aynaoui (MAR)." 2008.

<http://www.atptennis.com/3/en/players/playerprofiles/?playernumber=E121>

to consult with religious authorities and make reference to Islamic law when drafting the new provision. Earlier attempts in 2000 to reform the Mudawana by Socialist Prime Minister Abderrahman Youssoufi had precipitated protests by Islamicists, eventually forcing the king to step in and use his authority as the country's spiritual leader to ensure that all changes were based on Shari'a (Islamic law).<sup>251</sup>

The new Mudawana provides numerous legal protections for women that previously did not exist. Married women are no longer legally required to obey their husbands. Polygamy, while not banned, was put under strict legal restrictions that make it nearly impossible. Women were given the right to initiate divorce if legal conditions for it were met. The man's right to divorce his wife by repudiation (also known as the "triple talaq") became subject to civil divorce court proceedings. The minimum age for girls to marry was increased from 15 to 18. These and other provisions of the new Mudawana give Morocco one of the most progressive family codes in the Arab world.

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<sup>251</sup> Christian Science Monitor. Rachidi, Ilhem. "After Struggle, New Equality for Moroccan Women." 24 October 2003. <http://www.csmonitor.com/2003/1024/p09s01-wome.html>

# Security

## Introduction

Morocco is fighting a deadly battle with extremist elements either living within the country, or originally from Morocco and now living in Europe. Despite the Moroccan government's extensive counter-terrorism efforts, the country's largest city, Casablanca, has been the victim of two suicide bombing episodes, with the most recent coming in 2007.



© Holly Hayes  
Slums near the Hassan II mosque

While many of the Moroccan terrorist leaders have come from middle class backgrounds, the foot soldiers who ultimately carry out the attacks have largely been recruited out of the slums of Casablanca and other Moroccan cities. Thus, one facet of Morocco's counter-terrorist efforts has been to improve the plight of the country's desperately poor and cut into the large unemployment rates in urban areas.

Many Moroccans over the last several decades have emigrated to Spain, France, and elsewhere in Europe to fill labor needs. While the overwhelming majority of these Moroccans have never had any connections to terrorism or Islamic extremism, a few, including some European nationals of Moroccan heritage, have been implicated in several high-profile terrorist activities. One such attack was the deadly train bombings in Madrid in 2004, which at first were blamed on Basque terrorists, but ultimately found to be carried out by a terrorist cell having roots in Morocco.

Beyond terrorist concerns, Morocco's largest ongoing security problem is Western Sahara, which has evolved from a guerilla war to a lingering political stalemate that continues to complicate its relations with its North African and European neighbors.

## Military

Morocco has one of the largest armed forces in Africa, largely because of the continued dispute over Western Sahara. Recent estimates place the number of active-duty personnel at fewer than 200,000, of which 175,000 are army, 7,800 are navy, and 13,500 are air force. The country also has a paramilitary force of 50,000 active-duty personnel that are divided between the Gendarmie Royale (GR), Auxiliary Forces, Customs, and Coast Guard. While the GR is part of the Moroccan armed forces, it serves as the country's main police force in rural areas. Urban areas in Morocco are policed by the Direction



US NAVY photo  
Moroccan Panther helicopter

Générale de la Sureté Nationale (DGSN), or General Office of National Security, which is part of the Ministry of Interior.<sup>252</sup>

The exact number of Moroccan Royal Armed Forces serving in Western Sahara is not known, but a recent estimate by Forecast International, an American firm specializing in strategic military analyses, estimated the Saharan troop strength at nearly 150,000.<sup>253</sup> If accurate, this estimate would imply that over half of Morocco's active military is stationed in Western Sahara.

## U.S.–Morocco Relations

The United States and Morocco have a long history of good relations, going all the way back to 1787, when the two nations concluded a Treaty of Peace and Friendship. Morocco was also the first nation to seek diplomatic relations with the United States (in 1777). In more recent times, the two countries have continued their strong relations. Morocco was one of the first Arab countries to denounce the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks against the United States. It also supported the United States and coalition forces in the Persian Gulf War of 1991. In June 2004, President Bush designated Morocco a major non-NATO ally of the United States, in recognition of the longstanding good relations between the two countries and of Morocco's efforts to fight international terrorism.<sup>254</sup> That same year a bilateral free-trade agreement between the United States and Morocco was negotiated, which went into effect in January 2006.



USAF photo  
USAF and RMAF Air traffic Controllers

Morocco has also actively supported United States efforts in Middle East peace negotiations. In the 1970s, Morocco began a political dialogue with Israel that ultimately helped in paving the way to the Camp David peace accords between Israel and Egypt in 1978.<sup>255</sup> In 1986, as part of an attempt to rekindle the Middle East peace process, King Hassan II met with Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres, becoming only the second Arab leader since Egyptian President Anwar Sadat to meet with an Israeli leader.<sup>256</sup> These and later face-to-face talks between Moroccan, Israeli, and Palestinian leaders ultimately did not lead to sustained progress in reaching an Israel–Palestine peace accord. Nevertheless, they did establish Morocco as one of the few Arab countries that was willing to risk internal and external criticism by investing itself in the discussions.

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<sup>252</sup> Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. "Country Profile: Morocco." May 2006. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Morocco.pdf>

<sup>253</sup> TelQuel Online. "Armée. La Grande Bavarde." 16 May 2006. [http://www.telquel-online.com/226/maroc2\\_226.shtml](http://www.telquel-online.com/226/maroc2_226.shtml)

<sup>254</sup> BBC News, International Version. "US Rewards Morocco for Terror Aid." 4 June 2004. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/3776413.stm>

<sup>255</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Morocco: History: Foreign Policy." 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/bps/home#tab=active~checked%2Citems~checked%3E%2Fbps%2Ftopic%2F392604%2FMorocco&title=Morocco> – Britannica Online Encyclopedia

<sup>256</sup> *The Middle East and North Africa 2003*. "Morocco." 2003. London/New York: Europa Publications.

The U.S. position on the situation in Western Sahara has been that the two parties—Morocco and the independence-seeking Polisario Front—should continue to work with the United Nations and each other to negotiate a mutually acceptable solution. The U.S., like most countries, does not recognize Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara. As a result, the free-trade agreement between Morocco and the United States does not apply to Western Sahara.<sup>257</sup>

## Relations with Neighboring Countries

### *Algeria*

Virtually all of Morocco's land borders are with Algeria. Unfortunately, these borderlands have become a symbol of the political stand-off between the two neighbors since the 1960s. During the early part of that decade, the two countries fought a brief war over the status of an iron-rich region on the Algerian side of the border. While that dispute was eventually settled through negotiations in the early 1970s, and relations between the two countries began to normalize, Morocco's assertion of control over the Western Sahara during the latter half the 1970s set off a new round of conflict between the two countries when Algeria supported the Polisario Front.<sup>258</sup><sup>259</sup> Since 1994, the Morocco–Algeria border has been closed at the only two crossing points: near the eastern Moroccan city of Oujda and, further south, at the small town of Figuig. However, the closed border has not stopped the cross-border flow of drugs, guns, gasoline, food, medicines, and people, all of which continue to be smuggled between the two countries.<sup>260</sup>

Despite this long history of strained relations, there have been some positive developments in Moroccan–Algerian relations during the last decade. During the 1990s an international pipeline was constructed that linked the natural gas fields of Algeria with Morocco and ultimately Spain and Portugal. In 2004, Morocco lifted its visa requirements for Algerian nationals, and Algeria did the same for Moroccan nationals the following year.<sup>261</sup>



© NPJB / Flickr.com  
Sahrawi refugee camp in Algeria

However, with no end to the Western Sahara impasse on the near horizon, the border

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<sup>257</sup> United States House of Representatives. “Letter from Robert B. Zoellick to Congressman Joseph R. Pitts.” 20 July 2004. <http://www.house.gov/pitts/temporary/0407191-ustr-moroccoFTA.pdf>

<sup>258</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Algeria: History: Foreign Relations.” 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/bsp/browse/alpha/a#tab=active~checked%2Citems~checked%3E%2Fbps%2Fto pic%2F15001%2FAlgeria&title=Algeria%20--%20Britannica%20Online%20Encyclopedia>

<sup>259</sup> BBC News. “Algeria Sticks by Morocco Allegation.” 4 September 1999. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/438393.stm>

<sup>260</sup> Reuters.com. Pfeiffer, Tom. “Brisk Business at ‘Closed’ Algeria-Morocco Border.” 3 December 2007. <http://www.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idUSL2328753420071203?feedType=RSS&feedName=worldNews>

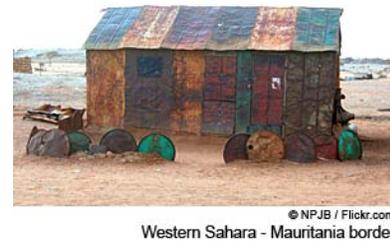
<sup>261</sup> Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, U.S. Department of State. “Background Note: Algeria.” October 2007. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/8005.htm>

between the two countries is not likely to open any time soon. Meanwhile, near the Algerian oasis town of Tindouf, only 50 - 60 km (31 - 37 mi) from the Moroccan border, a refugee population of between 90,000 and 165,000 Sahrawis from Western Sahara continue to wait for an end to the conflict.<sup>262</sup> Tindouf is also the operational base for the Polisario Front.<sup>263</sup>

Both Algeria and Morocco, along with Mauritania, Tunisia, and Libya, are members of the Arab Maghreb Union. This organization was to have become a regional economic union, but rivalries and conflicts between the members, highlighted by the Algerian–Moroccan impasse over Western Sahara, have stalled its development.

### *Mauritania*

Mauritania is Western Sahara’s neighbor to the east and south and thus is a critical player in the ongoing conflict over the disputed territory. For a short period of time during the late 1970s, Mauritania claimed the southern one third of Western Sahara as its own. However, a costly war against the Polisario Front led to attacks against Mauritania’s vital rail links to its iron mines at Zouerate, threatening to cripple the Mauritanian economy.<sup>264, 265</sup>



© NPJB / Flickr.com  
Western Sahara - Mauritania border

Eventually a coup in 1979 led to the new Mauritanian military-backed government signing a peace treaty with the Polisario Front and renouncing its territorial claims over the southern Western Sahara.<sup>266</sup>

Following Mauritania’s pull-out, Morocco subsequently occupied the southern region of Western Sahara. Relations between the two countries reached a low point in 1981–1985 when Mauritania accused Morocco of assisting in a coup attempt. Morocco countered that the Polisario Front was being allowed to stage attacks in Western Sahara from bases in Mauritania.<sup>267</sup>

Since 1985, the two countries have restored relations and have opened a border crossing between southern Western Sahara and the Mauritanian port of Nouâdhibou, although the

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<sup>262</sup> U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees. *UNHCR Statistical Yearbook 2006*. “Table 5. Refugee Population and Changes by Major Origin and Country of Asylum, 2006.” December 2007.

<http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home/opendoc.pdf?id=478ce34a2&tbl=STATISTICS>

<sup>263</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Tindouf.” 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9072555/Tindouf?refresh=Y>

<sup>264</sup> Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *Country Study: Mauritania*. “The Economy: Mining.” 1988. <http://countrystudies.us/mauritania/46.htm>

<sup>265</sup> *Morocco Under King Hassan*. Hughes, Stephen O. “War in Western Sahara [p. 253].” 2001. Reading, England: Garnet & Ithaca Press

<sup>266</sup> Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *Country Study: Mauritania*. “History: The Haidalla Regime.” No date. <http://countrystudies.us/mauritania/22.htm>

<sup>267</sup> Arab German Consulting. “Mauritania—History.” 1999. <http://www.arab.de/arabinfo/maurihis.htm>

road travels through a region that is still infested with landmines.<sup>268</sup> Landmines are still a problem along the entire Mauritanian–Western Sahara border as a result of the war waged by the Polisario Front against Morocco and Mauritania during the 1970s.<sup>269</sup>

## *Spain*

Spain is a vital Moroccan trading partner, ranking number two among all countries both in imports from and exports to Morocco.<sup>270</sup> It is also an important source of foreign investment in Morocco. Despite these economic connections, however, relations between the two countries have at times been frosty, bordering on hostile. Territorial disputes and illegal immigration from Moroccan shores have been the primary catalysts for these strained relations.

Although Spain mostly left North Africa when Morocco became an independent nation in 1956, it did continue to hold on to several small islands and land-based territories on the Moroccan Mediterranean coast. The largest of these Spanish territorial possessions are Ceuta and Melilla, which combined share 9.6 km (6.0 mi) of land border with Morocco. Offshore, Spain also administers the islands of Peñon de Vélez la Gomera, Peñon de Alhucemas, Islas Chafarinas, and Isla Perejil (which is known as Tura, or “empty,” in the Amizagh (Berber) language). All of these Spanish administrative regions are claimed by Morocco, which Spain continues to administer on the basis of its argument that they have been under Spanish control for several centuries.<sup>271</sup>



© Pedro Rodríguez  
Moroccan soldier at Melilla

Although Isla Perejil has been populated only by goats in recent times, it was the subject of a heated Moroccan–Spanish territorial dispute in 2002.<sup>272</sup> When some Moroccan navy cadets landed on the island and set up a base, Spain countered by sending in their naval and air forces to retake the island. The Moroccan cadets were removed from the island with no shots fired, but diplomacy was required to finally defuse the dispute.

As coastal patrols have reduced the number of boats trying to smuggle undocumented, mostly sub-Saharan immigrants into mainland Spain and the Canary Islands, both Ceuta

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<sup>268</sup> Travel Guide Morocco. “The Road from Dahkla to Mauritania.” <http://www.hansrossel.com/travel-information/morocco/travel-from-morocco-to-mauritania.htm>

<sup>269</sup> Reuters AlertNet. IRIN. “Mauritania: Donor Funds Needed to Clear Landmines.” 19 December 2007. <http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/IRIN/338599924c1ec6dd6646dccb4b032b05.htm>

<sup>270</sup> International Trade Centre/World Trade Organization. “Trade Performance HS: Exports and Imports of Morocco – 00 All Industries (2006, in USD Thousands). 2008. [http://www.intracen.org/appl1/TradeCom/TP\\_TP\\_CI\\_P.aspx?IN=00&RP=504&YR=2006&IL=00 All industries&TY=T](http://www.intracen.org/appl1/TradeCom/TP_TP_CI_P.aspx?IN=00&RP=504&YR=2006&IL=00 All industries&TY=T)

<sup>271</sup> BBC News, World Edition. “Q & A Spain v Morocco.” 18 July 2002. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/2136782.stm>

<sup>272</sup> CNN.com. “Tension Grows Over Disputed Island.” 18 July 2002. <http://archives.cnn.com/2002/WORLD/europe/07/17/spain.morocco/index.html>

and Melilla have become increasingly popular alternatives for illegal entry into Spanish, and thus EU, territory.<sup>273</sup> For this reason, Spain has constructed two razor-wire fences separated by a patrol road along the border of both regions and has recently added a third fence at Melilla. The Moroccan government has protested the construction of the new Melilla fence.<sup>274</sup>

### France

France maintains close political and economic connections with its former protectorate. It is Morocco's number one trading partner, its leading investor, and, along with the United States, its strongest supporter within the United Nations Security Council for using Morocco's recent proposal offering limited autonomy for Western Sahara as a starting point in continuing negotiations with the Polisario Front.<sup>275</sup> France also hosts the largest number of Moroccans living outside the country, with an estimated population of 800,000 to over 1,000,000 Moroccan migrants.<sup>276, 277</sup> According to the French government, 350,000 of these Moroccans hold French dual citizenship.<sup>278</sup> Because of these continued strong ties between the two countries, French continues to be a very popular second language for Moroccans and is commonly spoken in government, business, and higher education circles.



© Milamber's\_portfolio / Flickr.com  
A French café in Casablanca

### Terrorist Groups and Activity

Morocco, while a generally moderate Islamic country, has suffered several violent attacks carried out by Islamist extremists since 2003. As a result, a multifaceted program against the spread of terrorism and extreme ideologies has been put into place. On the enforcement side, the government has actively worked to halt the spread of such groups through stepped-up investigations and rapid detention of suspected terrorists. Economically,



© Nick Brooks  
IED in Western Sahara

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<sup>273</sup> European Commission. "Technical Mission to Morocco: Visit to Ceuta and Melilla on Illegal Immigration [p. 5]." 18 October 2005. <http://www.migreurop.org/IMG/pdf/rapport-ceuta-melilla-2.pdf>

<sup>274</sup> Jamestown Foundation. *Global Terrorism Analysis*, Vol. 4, No. 11. Daly, John C. K. "Spain Alarmed by Recent Terrorist Attacks in North Africa." 24 April 2007.

<http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2373345>

<sup>275</sup> Global Policy Forum. Reuters. Ahmed, Hamid Ould. "W. Sahara Independence Movement to Review Strategy." 5 December 2007. <http://www.globalpolicy.org/security/issues/wsahara/2007/1205scindec.htm>

<sup>276</sup> Migration Policy Institute. de Haas, Hein. "Morocco: From Emigration Country to Africa's Migration Passage to Europe." October 2005. <http://www.migrationinformation.org/Profiles/display.cfm?ID=339>

<sup>277</sup> Embassy of France in the United States. Barnier, Michel. "France-Africa Relations." 31 May 2004. [http://www.ambafrance-us.org/news/statmnts/2004/barnier\\_morocco053104.asp](http://www.ambafrance-us.org/news/statmnts/2004/barnier_morocco053104.asp)

<sup>278</sup> Ministère des Affaires Etrangères et Européennes. France-Diplomatie. "France-Maghreb Relations." No date. [http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/country-files\\_156/north-africa\\_5493/france-and-maghreb\\_5495/france-maghreb-relations\\_8837.html#sommaire\\_3](http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/country-files_156/north-africa_5493/france-and-maghreb_5495/france-maghreb-relations_8837.html#sommaire_3)

reforms intended to improve the socio-economic conditions of Morocco's poor and unemployed have been promoted. Finally, the government's Ministry of Religious Endowments and Islamic Affairs has supervised revisions to religious curricula, dismissed Imams promoting extremist ideology, and promoted religious tolerance through moderate sermons delivered daily via closed-circuit television networks in 2,000 mosques.<sup>279</sup>

### *Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group*

Morocco's most deadly terrorist attack to date was a coordinated series of suicide bombings carried out against Jewish-related targets in Casablanca on 16 May 2003 that killed 45 people, including 12 bombers. The group that is thought responsible for these bombings is the Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group, known by its French acronym GICM.<sup>280, 281</sup>

The GICM seems to primarily consist of small independent cells in Western Europe and Morocco. The GICM cell that carried out the 2003 Casablanca bombings is thought to have been organized by Moroccan Karim al-Mejjati, a former medical student with Al Qaeda connections. According to Moroccan counterterrorism officials, Mejjati provided explosives training for a cell of radical youths recruited out of the Casablanca slums.<sup>282</sup> He was killed in a 2005 raid on his safehouse in Saudi Arabia.



© Uaxuctum / Wikipedia.org  
Memorial to victims of the Madrid bombings

The GICM is also thought to have been associated with the Madrid train bombings in May 2004 that killed nearly 200 people. Several of the individuals involved in those attacks were from the northern Moroccan city of Tétouan, including the second-in-command, Jamal Ahmidan.<sup>283</sup> Most of the Tétouan participants later died in a suicidal explosion as Spanish police closed in on their hideout. The cell responsible for the train bombings was thought to have been led by GICM leader Hassan el-Haski, who later was

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<sup>279</sup> Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, U.S. Department of State. Country Reports on Terrorism 2006. "Chapter 2. Middle East and North Africa Overview." 30 April 2007.  
<http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2006/82733.htm>

<sup>280</sup> Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, U.S. Department of State. Country Reports on Terrorism 2006. "Chapter 6. Terrorist Organizations." 30 April 2007.  
<http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2006/82738.htm>

<sup>281</sup> United Nations Security Council. "The Consolidated List of the United Nations Security Council's Al-Qaida and Taliban Sanctions Committee." 14 March 2008.  
<http://www.un.org/sc/committees/1267/pdf/consolidatedlist.pdf>

<sup>282</sup> Washington Post. Whitlock, Craig. "Odyssey of an Al Qaeda Operative." 2 May 2005.  
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/05/01/AR2005050100947.html>

<sup>283</sup> New York Times. Elliott, Andrea. "Where Boys Grow Up to be Jihadis." 25 November 2007.  
[http://www.nytimes.com/2007/11/25/magazine/25tetouan-t.html?\\_r=1&pagewanted=all](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/11/25/magazine/25tetouan-t.html?_r=1&pagewanted=all)

captured in the Canary Islands.<sup>284</sup> Overall, 14 of the 28 defendants who were ultimately tried for the Madrid bombings were from Morocco.<sup>285</sup>

More recently, some terrorism experts believe that GICM has been working as a faction within the Algerian-based Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb organization, although others feel that there is little evidence of a unified front.<sup>286, 287</sup>

In March and April 2007, Casablanca was once again the site of several suicide bombings, but fortunately there were very few non-bomber fatalities this time around. The March bombing, which was a premature explosion in an internet cafe, occurred just hours after a top GICM leader was taken in custody in Casablanca and only days after the GICM's military chief was also arrested.<sup>288</sup>

## Issues Affecting Stability

### *Western Sahara*

Africa's longest running political standoff, the battle over the future of Western Sahara, continues to dominate Morocco's relations with neighboring countries. While the conflict has been a war of words rather than of bullets and bombs since the early 1990s, the lack of progress in reaching a mutually satisfactory outcome continues to generate threats of a resumption of military action by the Polisario Front.<sup>289</sup> In addition, the continued impasse over Western Sahara has forced the Moroccan government to continue to support an expensive military and civilian presence in the region, siphoning off budget revenues that otherwise could be used on economic initiatives.<sup>290</sup>



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Polisario troops

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

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<sup>284</sup> Guardian.co.uk. Sturcke, James. "Madrid Bombings: The Defendants." 31 October 2007. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2007/oct/31/spain.jamessturcke>

<sup>285</sup> BBC News, International Version. "Madrid Bombings: Defendants." 31 October 2007. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4899544.stm>

<sup>286</sup> New Statesman. van Traa, Julie. "Bomb Plot Interrupted." 26 March 2007. <http://www.newstatesman.com/200703260015>

<sup>287</sup> Council on Foreign Relations. Hansen, Andrew. "Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (aka Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat)." 7 February 2008. <http://www.cfr.org/publication/12717/>

<sup>288</sup> The Terror Finance Blog. Brisard, Jean-Charles. "Alleged Mastermind of Moroccan Terrorist Plot Arrested." 15 March 2007. [http://www.terrorfinance.org/the\\_terror\\_finance\\_blog/2007/03/alleged\\_mastermind.html](http://www.terrorfinance.org/the_terror_finance_blog/2007/03/alleged_mastermind.html)

<sup>289</sup> Maghreb Arab Presse. "Polisario's Threat to Resume Armed Conflict Undermines Peace Efforts, Parliament." 12 December 2007. [http://www.map.ma/eng/sections/politics/polisario\\_s\\_threat\\_t\\_1/view](http://www.map.ma/eng/sections/politics/polisario_s_threat_t_1/view)

<sup>290</sup> International Crisis Group. "Western Sahara: The Cost of the Conflict [p. i]." 11 June 2007. [http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/middle\\_east\\_\\_\\_north\\_africa/egypt\\_north\\_africa/65\\_western\\_sahara\\_\\_\\_the\\_cost\\_of\\_the\\_conflict.pdf](http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/middle_east___north_africa/egypt_north_africa/65_western_sahara___the_cost_of_the_conflict.pdf)

Morocco has proposed that Western Sahara become a region of limited autonomy within Morocco, but the Polisario Front has remained steadfast in its stance that a referendum must be held on the question of independence.<sup>291</sup>

The Sahrawi, the native Berber tribespeople who inhabit Western Sahara, are now split between a large refugee population in Algeria and a smaller group that still remain in Moroccan-controlled Western Sahara. The latter group is rapidly in danger of becoming a minority in Western Sahara due to the influx of Moroccans into the region.<sup>292</sup> There is also a small population of Sahrawi (mostly Polisario Front troops) living in Western Sahara to the east of the Berm, a heavily mined sand wall built by Morocco in the mid 1980s that separates Morocco-administered Western Sahara from that part of Western Sahara controlled by the Polisario Front.

The United Nations has long been involved in trying to help monitor the ongoing ceasefire. Since 1991, the United Nations Mission for the Referendum on Western Sahara (MINURSO) has had teams of observers on both sides of the Berm. This mission was originally envisioned to be a joint civilian/military operation to assist in implementing a Western Saharan referendum on self-determination. It was anticipated that once the ceasefire took place, the MINURSO team would only be in the region for 26 months.<sup>293</sup> Seventeen years later, they are still there.

### *Poverty*

Many of the suicide bombers who have carried out attacks since 2003 have been recruited from the *bidonvilles* (slums) of Casablanca and other cities. Sidi Moumen, a suburb outside Casablanca that contains many of these *bidonvilles*, has become well known as a breeding ground for poor, socially alienated youth that are easily attracted to extreme ideology and, in some cases, violent action. While increased security crackdowns in Sidi Moumen have been able to break up several terrorist cells, many of the root problems—poverty, under-education, and unemployment—have yet to be addressed there.



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The Boukhareb in Fez

Disaffected youths, with little or no opportunity to escape their dismal surroundings, are particularly vulnerable to the enticements of extremists offering ideology that provides spiritual license and rewards to those willing to take up the

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<sup>291</sup> International Crisis Group. “Western Sahara: The Cost of the Conflict [p. 3].” 11 June 2007. [http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/middle\\_east\\_\\_north\\_africa/egypt\\_north\\_africa/65\\_western\\_sahara\\_\\_the\\_cost\\_of\\_the\\_conflict.pdf](http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/middle_east__north_africa/egypt_north_africa/65_western_sahara__the_cost_of_the_conflict.pdf)

<sup>292</sup> International Crisis Group. “Western Sahara: The Cost of the Conflict [p. i].” 11 June 2007. [http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/middle\\_east\\_\\_north\\_africa/egypt\\_north\\_africa/65\\_western\\_sahara\\_\\_the\\_cost\\_of\\_the\\_conflict.pdf](http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/middle_east__north_africa/egypt_north_africa/65_western_sahara__the_cost_of_the_conflict.pdf)

<sup>293</sup> Peace Operations Policy Program, George Mason University. “United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara.” November 1994. <http://www.gmu.edu/departments/t-po/peace/minurso.html>

cause.<sup>294</sup> Material rewards, such as food, clothes, or offers to pay for a funeral or for legal or medical costs, are also provided by some Islamist groups.<sup>295</sup> These efforts help establish bonds and effectively work to contrast their charitable work with the government's lack of similar support.<sup>296</sup>

### *Drug Trafficking*

The rugged Rif Mountains of Morocco are notorious as a source of cannabis cultivation. Farmers there have been growing the crop since the 15th century. As a result of this cultivation, Morocco for many years was the world's largest supplier of hashish, most of which went to Europe. However, government crackdowns in recent years have reduced production by 50%. Further reductions in cannabis cultivation are hindered by the difficulty in finding a replacement crop that yields the same economic value, even though only a small fraction of the street value of Moroccan hashish goes to the Rif growers. Furthermore, as supply decreases, the value of the remaining cannabis acreage increases in the face of no decrease in demand from the European market.<sup>297</sup>



© dberm / Flickr.com  
A farmer's marijuana field in the mountains

A significant security concern about Moroccan drug cultivation and trafficking is that it provides a profitable revenue source for local and European terrorist cells. As covert funding through charities and non-governmental organizations becomes more difficult due to increased scrutiny by counter-terrorist agencies, traditional criminal activities such as drug trafficking and robbery have become an increasingly used method for some terrorist organizations. Both the 2003 bombings in Casablanca and the 2004 Madrid train bombings are thought to have been at least partially funded by Moroccan hashish dealers.<sup>298, 299, 300</sup> The ultra-extremist Takfir doctrine, in which one may carry out crimes

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<sup>294</sup> BBC News, International Version. Smith, Tamsin. "Young Moroccans Face Choice of Terror." 28 July 2004. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/3930349.stm>

<sup>295</sup> BBC News, International Version. Smith, Tamsin. "Young Moroccans Face Choice of Terror." 28 July 2004. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/3930349.stm>

<sup>296</sup> U.S. News and World Report. Omestad, Thomas. "The Casbah Connection." 1 May 2005. <http://www.usnews.com/usnews/news/articles/050509/9morocco.htm>

<sup>297</sup> BBC News. Hamilton, Richard. "Morocco's War on Cannabis." 9 March 2007. Hamilton, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/6426799.stm>

<sup>298</sup> Jamestown Foundation. Mili, Hayder. *Global Terrorism Analysis*, Vol. 4, No. 1. "Tangled Webs: Terrorist and Organized Crime Groups." 12 January 2006.

<http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2369866>

<sup>299</sup> Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life. Los Angeles Times. Rotella, Sebastian. "Holy Water, Hashish, and Jihad." 24 May 2004. <http://pewforum.org/news/display.php?NewsID=3446>

<sup>300</sup> New York Times. Elliott, Andrea. "Where Boys Grow Up to be Jihadis." 25 November 2007. [http://www.nytimes.com/2007/11/25/magazine/25tetouan-t.html?\\_r=1&pagewanted=all](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/11/25/magazine/25tetouan-t.html?_r=1&pagewanted=all)

if the proceeds are used to fund jihad against infidels, has been used as the justification for such funding techniques.<sup>301</sup>

## Outlook

For Morocco, the fight against terrorism is critical to the country's economy. Tourism revenue, foreign investment, and even remittances from Moroccans working abroad—the major sources of Moroccan foreign exchange—could seriously be affected by fears about internal Moroccan security against terrorism and potential activities carried out abroad by Moroccan terrorists. For example, since the Madrid bombings in 2004, immigration from Morocco has increasingly been seen as a security issue within the European Union, particularly in Spain.<sup>302</sup> The Spanish and Moroccan governments have developed better relations since the 2004 attacks and are now cooperating more closely on matters such as counterterrorism and illegal immigration.<sup>303</sup>

Despite these concerns about Islamic fundamentalism further taking hold in Morocco and spawning an increasingly violent wave of terrorist activities, there are some positive signs. A terrorist attack at the level of carnage that occurred in Casablanca in May 2003 has not recurred, in part because of the disruption of several terrorist cells before they were able to carry out their plots. The government has seriously clamped down on extremist mosques and imams since May 2003. In addition, money has been channeled into programs that address poverty issues and spur economic development. New housing has been funded to replace slum neighborhoods.

The ongoing standoff in Western Sahara, in addition to its costs and the strain it puts on Moroccan foreign relations, also affects Morocco's efforts to fight terrorism. In particular, the impasse hinders the development of closer relations between Algeria and Morocco and the freer exchange of information between the two countries about terrorist networks operating within their borders. In addition, Morocco's resignation from the African Union (AU; formerly the Organization of African Unity) over the Western Saharan issue has resulted in Morocco not being able to participate in continental counter-terrorism efforts coordinated by the AU.<sup>304</sup> With the Sahel region to Morocco's south increasingly



© Saharaiak / Flickr.com  
Moroccan riot police in Western Sahara

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<sup>301</sup> Jamestown Foundation. Mili, Hayder. *Global Terrorism Analysis*, Vol. 4, No. 13. "Jihad Without Rules: The Evolution of al-Takfir wa al-Hijra." 29 June 2006.

<http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2370047>

<sup>302</sup> Migration Policy Institute. de Haas, Hein. "Morocco: From Emigration Country to Africa's Migration Passage to Europe." October 2005. <http://www.migrationinformation.org/Profiles/display.cfm?ID=339>

<sup>303</sup> International Herald Tribune. McLean, Renwick. "Juan Carlos' Visit Focuses on Immigration and Terrorism: Spain-Morocco Ties on the Mend." 20 January 2005.

[http://www.ihrt.com/articles/2005/01/20/spain\\_ed3\\_.php](http://www.ihrt.com/articles/2005/01/20/spain_ed3_.php)

<sup>304</sup> Jamestown Foundation. *Global Terrorism Analysis*, Vol. 4, No. 8. Black, Andrew. "The Importance of the Western Sahara to Maghrebi Security." 20 April 2006.

<http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2369969>

becoming a concern as a terrorist pipeline, such regional cooperation is increasingly important in the fight against terrorism. As Moroccan Interior Minister Chakib Benmoussa has stated, “What is going on in the Sahel worries us a great deal.”<sup>305</sup>

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<sup>305</sup> Los Angeles Times. Rotella, Sebastian. “Morocco’s Unlikely Group of Terrorism Suspects.” 27 February 2008. <http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-morocco27feb27,1,1672033.story>