

Democratization in Morocco

**The political elite and struggles
for power in the
post-independence state**

Lise Storm



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Democratization in Morocco explores the political games of the Moroccan democratization process in the period from independence in 1956 until 2006. By combining a great degree of political theory with empirical material on Morocco, the book sets out not only to analyse the strategies and actions of the various political actors but also to evaluate the level of democracy present in the country after the adoption of new constitutions in 1962, 1970, 1972, 1980, 1992 and 1996.

For a number of years, scholars have tended to agree that the democratic advances made in the Middle East during the past few decades can largely be attributed to a survival strategy by the various incumbent regimes. This book, however, demonstrates that in at least some instances, democratization has been more than simply a survival strategy – every so often, key figures within the political elite have taken the democratization process further than that strictly needed for them to stay in power. In the case of Morocco, it has been the monarch who on more than one occasion has moved the country further towards the democratic ideal than he necessarily had to and that sometimes even against the wishes of one or more of the established political parties. In fact, this book illustrates how the Moroccan political parties, like so many of their counterparts in the region, have become the main obstacle to further democratization as most of them have never honoured – or appear to have abandoned – the key function of political parties: popular representation. As virtually all the major political parties, including those of the moderate opposition, have been swallowed by the regime, very few are keen to push for regime change as this might jeopardize their current level of political power.

Written in a clear and structured manner, this highly topical read fills an important gap in recent scholarship on the pattern of democratization in Morocco, making it a very valuable contribution to students and researchers interested in the dynamics behind the Moroccan democratization and the role of electoral politics in North African and Middle Eastern politics.

Lise Storm is Lecturer in Middle East Politics at the Department of Politics, University of Exeter. Her main fields of research are democratization and party system theory, focusing mainly on experiences from Latin America and the Middle East.

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This book is dedicated to Kirsten and Simon – two remarkable people, my mother and brother – to whom I owe everything.

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Lise Storm
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Acronyms and abbreviations

A	Authoritarianism
Al-Adl	<i>Al-Adl wal-Ihsan</i> (Justice and Charity Society)
ADL	<i>Alliance des Libertés</i> (Alliance of Liberties)
Al-Ahd	<i>Parti al-Ahd</i> (The Covenant Party)
AI	<i>Amnesty International</i>
ALM	<i>Armée de Libération Marocaine</i> (Army of Liberation)
AMDH	<i>Association Marocaine des Droits Humain</i> (Moroccan Association for Human Rights)
ANDC	<i>L'Association nationale des diplômés-chômeurs</i> (The National Association for Unemployed Graduates)
BCL	Basic civil liberties (freedom of speech, assembly and association)
BD	<i>Bloc Démocratique</i> or <i>Kutla al-dimuqratiya</i> (Democratic Bloc)
BDIC	Broadened dictatorship
CCDH	<i>Conseil Consultatif des Droits de l'Homme</i> (Consultative Council for Human Rights)
CDT	<i>Confédération Démocratique du Travail</i> (Democratic Confederation of Labor)
CNI	<i>Parti du Congrès National Ittihadi</i> (National Ittihadi Congress Party)
DM	District magnitude
DZ	Democratization
ECHR	European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms
ED	Electoralist definitions
EP	Effective power to govern of the elected government
EPM	Expanded procedural minimum definitions
FAR	<i>Forces Armées Royales</i> (Royal Armed Forces)
FD	<i>Fidélité à la Démocratie</i> (Fidelity and Democracy)
FDIC	<i>Front Pour la Défense des Institutions Constitutionnelles</i> (Front for the Defense of the Constitutional Institutions)
FFD	<i>Front des Forces Democratiques</i> (Front of Democratic Forces)
FIDH	<i>Fédération Internationale des Ligues des Droits des l'Homme</i> (International Federation of Human Rights Organizations)
FLN	<i>Front de Libération Nationale</i> (National Liberation Front)

FPTP	First-past-the-post
HRW	Human Rights Watch
IAI	<i>Instance d'Arbitrage Indépendante</i> (Independent Arbitration Commission)
ICD	<i>Parti de l'initiative citoyenne pour le développement</i> (Citizen's Initiatives for Development)
ICJ	International Court of Justice
IDEA	International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
IER	<i>Instance Équité et Réconciliation</i> (Equity and Reconciliation Commission)
IFES	International Foundation for Election Systems
IMF	International Monetary Fund
Kutla	<i>Kutla al-Dimuqratiya</i> or <i>Bloc Démocratique</i> (Democratic Bloc) <i>Kutla al-Wataniya</i> (the National Bloc)
MD	<i>Mouvement pour la Démocratie</i> (Democratic Movement)
MDS	<i>Mouvement Démocratique et Social</i> (Democratic and Social Movement)
MENA	The Middle East and North Africa
MNP	<i>Mouvement National Populaire</i> (National Popular Movement)
MP	<i>Mouvement Populaire</i> (Popular Movement)
MPDC	<i>Mouvement Populaire Démocratique et Constitutionnel</i> (Popular Democratic and Constitutional Movement)
MRCD	<i>Mouvement de Revendication d'une Constitution Démocratique</i> (Movement for the Claim of a Democratic Constitution)
MSD	<i>Mouvement des Démocrates Socialistes</i> (Movement of Social Democrats)
NDIC	Narrower dictatorship
OADP	<i>Organisation de l'Action Démocratique et Populaire</i> (Organization of Democratic and Popular Action)
OAU	Organization of African Unity
OMDH	<i>Organisation Marocaine des Droits Humains</i> (Moroccan Organization for Human Rights)
PA	<i>Parti de l'Action</i> (Party of Action)
PADS	<i>Parti de l'Avant Garde Démocratique Socialiste</i> (Party of the Democratic Socialist Avant-Garde)
PAI	<i>Attachdid wa-l-Insaf</i> (Party of Renewal and Equity)
PCEID	Prototypical conceptions of established industrial democracy
PCM	<i>Parti Communiste Marocain</i> (Moroccan Communist Party)
PCS	<i>Parti du Centre Social</i> (Social Center Party)
PDC	<i>Parti Démocratique Constitutionnel</i> (Democratic Constitutional Party)
PDI	<i>Parti Démocratique de l'Indépendance</i> (Democratic Party of Independence)
PED	<i>Parti de l'Environnement et du Développement</i> (Environment and Development Party)

PFC	<i>Forces Citoyennes</i> (Party of Citizen Forces)
PGSU	<i>Parti de la Gauche Socialiste Unifiée</i> (Party of the United Socialist Left)
PI	<i>Parti Istiqlal</i> (Istiqlal Party or simply Istiqlal)
PJD	<i>Parti de la Justice et du Développement</i> (Party of Justice and Development)
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
PLS	<i>Parti de Libération et Socialisme</i> (Party of Liberation and Socialism)
PM	Procedural minimum definitions
PND	<i>Parti National Démocrate</i> (National Democratic Party)
Polisario	<i>Frente Popular de Liberación de Saguia al Hamra y Río de Oro</i>
PPS	<i>Parti du Progrès et du Socialisme</i> (Party of Progress and Socialism)
PR	Proportional representation
PRD	<i>Parti de la Réforme et du Développement</i> (Reform and Development Party)
PRGF	Poverty reduction and growth facility
PRV	<i>Le Parti de la Renaissance et de la Vertu</i> (Party of Renaissance and Virtue)
PSD	<i>Parti Socialiste Démocratique</i> (Democratic Socialist Party)
PUSN	<i>Parti de l'Union et de la Solidarité Nationale</i> (National Party of Union and Solidarity)
RCE	Reasonably competitive elections, devoid of massive fraud and with broad suffrage
RNI	<i>Rassemblement National des Indépendants</i> (National Rally of Independents)
SADR	Saharan Arab Democratic Republic
SAP	' <i>Sans affiliation politique</i> ' (without political affiliation)
SDIC	Status quo dictatorship
T	Transition to democracy
UC	<i>Union Constitutionnelle</i> (Constitutional Union)
UD	<i>Union Démocratique</i> (Democratic Union)
UGTM	<i>Union Générale des Travailleurs du Maroc</i> (The General Union of Moroccan Workers)
UMT	<i>Union Marocaine du Travail</i> (Moroccan Labor Union)
UN	United Nations
UNFP	<i>Union National des Forces Populaires</i> (National Union of Popular Forces)
US	United States of America
USFP	<i>Union Socialiste des Forces Populaires</i> (Socialist Union of Popular Forces)

Introduction

Context and theoretical considerations

In the 1960s and 1970s, scholars appeared to be in agreement that democracy is alien to catholic countries. One of these scholars, Lipset, contended that a link existed between democratic instability and Catholicism. Lipset's argument was that in Catholic countries, government was not secular; church and state were closely knit resulting in a political environment in which new issues of conflict became superimposed on the dominant schism between secularists and clericals. As a consequence, Lipset (1960: 72–3) maintained, secularists came to ally with the pro-democratic/anti-regime parties on the left of the political spectrum due to their shared opposition to the amalgamation of church and state, thereby creating polarizing, cumulative social cleavages rather than cross-cutting ones, leading effectively to diminished chances of compromise, one of the basic characteristics of democracy.

The influx of democracy in Latin America

In the 1970s and the 1980s, however, despite the bleak forecasts, the vast majority of Latin American countries began to move away from authoritarian rule towards democracy, a development that came suddenly and unexpectedly to most scholars.

According to Mainwaring (1999: 11–68), out of nineteen Latin American countries, nine underwent transition to democracy in this period, two had already made the transition by the beginning of the 1970s and another two followed in the 1990s. Moreover, all but one of the remaining six countries embarked on a transition¹ process towards democracy in the 1980s, moving from the classification 'authoritarian' to the status of 'semidemocratic' – countries that are not authoritarian but not fully democratic, either. Only one country, Haiti, remained authoritarian by the end of the 1990s despite a brief flirt with democratic reforms in 1991. Similarly, Loveman (1994: 105–89) asserts that by 1993, not a single country in Latin America or the Spanish-speaking Caribbean remained under authoritarian rule despite the fact that by 1979 more than two-thirds of these were governed by military dictatorships.²

Religion matters

Despite the unanticipated transition to democracy of the majority of Latin American countries, several scholars continue to maintain that a negative relationship between democracy and Catholicism does indeed exist. In the early 1990s, Lipset (1994: 5) stated that ‘historically there have been negative relationships between democracy and Catholicism, Orthodox Christianity, Islam, and Confucianism; conversely, Protestantism and democracy have been positively interlinked’.

Similarly, Huntington (1991: 75) writes that ‘historically Protestantism and democracy were linked with each other ... In contrast, Catholicism was associated with the absence of democracy or with limited or late democratic development.’

Although Huntington then goes on to say that this line of argumentation has now been fundamentally challenged by the sudden transition to democracy by a number of Catholic countries in the 1970s and the 1980s, support can still be found for Lipset’s proposition. Huntington states that one of the most influential factors in the transition to democracy of these Latin American countries was change within the Catholic Church (ibid.: 77). In other words, political compromise and democracy only became possible in Latin America when the Catholic Church effectively changed the social cleavage structure from overlapping to cross-cutting by adopting a position to the issue of church–state relations which was similar to that of Protestantism.

In an article from 2004, Bruce keeps the assertion alive. While falling short of implying that Protestantism created democracy and emphasizing that in many cases it has been an unintended consequence, Bruce contends that there is indeed a definite causal relationship between Protestantism and the development of democracy. In short, ‘religion makes a difference’ (Bruce 2004: 19).

Are Islam and democracy incompatible?

Religion matters not only to Bruce. Several scholars have argued – in the past as well as more recently – that Islamic countries are predisposed to authoritarian rule or that the two are virtually incompatible as democracy is seen as alien to Muslim societies (see, among others, Pipes 1983: 144–7; Huntington 1984: 193–218; Ajami 1992: 218; Kedourie 1992: 5–8; Lewis 1994: 57–8):

there is nothing in the political traditions of the Arab world – which are the political traditions of Islam – which might make familiar, or indeed intelligible, the organizing ideas of constitutional and representative government. The notion of a state as a specific territorial entity which is endowed with sovereignty, the notion of popular sovereignty as the foundation of governmental legitimacy, the idea of representation, of elections, of popular suffrage, of political institutions being regulated by laws laid down by a parliamentary assembly, of these laws being guarded and upheld by an independent judiciary, the ideas of the secularity of the state, of society

being composed of a multitude of self-activating, autonomous groups and associations – all these are profoundly alien to the Muslim political tradition.

(Kedourie 1992: 5–6)

Other scholars, while more sympathetic to the possibility of the emergence of democracy in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, tend to agree that Islam has considerable explanatory power when it comes to accounting for the lack of democracy and democratic development in the Arab world.³ However, this group of scholars stresses that any study of democratization in Muslim countries must take into account the complex nature of Islam, and hence, the diverse political positions taken by the different Islamic movements (see, among others, Binder 1988: 4–5; Esposito 1992: 184–9; Wright 1996: 64–75; Ghabbian 1997: 13–15; Tessler 1999: 262–89). Some Islamic organizations will invariably be opposed to democracy while others will be more neutral towards the issue or even in favour. As Tessler (1999: 282) states, ‘...for one thing, it is essential to differentiate between Islamist movements that are radical, extremists, or militant, on the one hand, and those that are moderate, pragmatic, or accommodationist, on the other’.

Academic shortcomings

Until the beginning of the 1990s – largely due to the reality that the countries of the MENA region lingered behind the rest of the world with regards to the development of democracy – scholars on the subject largely focused their attention on other regions, particularly when it came to work evaluating the quality of democracy and the dynamics of democratization. Taking a brief look at the literature on democracy and democratization that has been produced since the subject entered the heart of the academic debate of several disciplines in the 1950s, the fact that until the beginning of the 1990s, the MENA has been largely overlooked, becomes exceedingly clear.

Over the past four decades, numerous studies have been published on issues such as the relationship between democracy and modernization, democracy and political culture, and democracy and the strength of the state vis-à-vis society. In the 1970s and 1980s, the focus of these studies was on Southern Europe and Latin America, but by the late 1980s, the geographic focus shifted; with the transition to democracy of the countries in southern Europe and Latin America and the fall of the Berlin Wall, the post-communist countries in Eastern Europe found themselves at the core of the discourse, accompanied by many of the states in sub-Saharan Africa. Despite this vast continued interest in the study of democracy and democratization, Western academia never focused its attention on the Middle East. Consequently, as the 1980s came to an end, the character of democracy and democratization in the Middle East remained relatively understudied in comparison to other regions of the world.⁴

Since the beginning of the 1990s, however, within the field of Middle East

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studies, it seems that scholars have tried to make up for this neglect, generating several new studies on democracy and the prospects for democratization in the Arab world. Although sharing the same overall framework, the studies vary greatly when it comes to the focus of the analysis.

As mentioned above, several scholars centre their attention on the relationship between Islam and democracy, but many other issues are also extensively dealt with. Closely related to the Islam question is the civil society debate. Among the scholars linking the two debates is Gellner. In an essay comparing the status of civil society in the Marxist world and Eastern Europe to that of civil society in the Muslim world, Gellner (1991: 2) asserts that in the Muslim world, the aspiration for civil society is weak. Although not associating the absence or weakness of civil society in the Arab world as strongly with Islam as Gellner, many scholars do agree with Gellner that civil society in the Muslim world is far from vibrant.⁵

Linking the weakness of Arab civil society with the political economy rather than religion, scholars such as Bill and Springborg (2000: 173) and Luciani (1994: 130–55) have argued that the nature of socio-economic development in the Arab world has impeded the growth of civil society in the region. In a similar vein, but focusing on state–society relations from a class perspective, Waterbury (1994: 23–47) states that the intelligentsia and the private-sector bourgeoisie have entered into a pact with the state, which as in Latin America – most notably in Argentina and Mexico – has hampered the emergence of a democratic opening.

Two trends of thought focusing on democracy and democratization in the Middle East, which have not been mentioned so far, are those focusing on modernization theory and international political factors. Although a number of studies on the possible existence of a link between modernization and democratic development in the MENA do exist – among them Issawi (1956) and Lerner (1958) – the subject has been very much understudied. It must be noted, however, that the relatively small body of literature centring on the relationship between modernization and democratic development in the Arab world can to some extent be explained by the reality that this line of thought finds very little support among most scholars on democracy as well as among area studies specialists studying the Middle East.⁶

The role of international political factors in the development of democracy has not only been understudied when it comes to the countries of the MENA region. The subject is also highly understudied within the literature on democratization in general. The most recent studies focusing on the role of international political factors in the development of democracy in the MENA tend to focus on US and EU democracy promotion in the region. Most scholars on the field are sceptical of the outcome of democracy promotion, arguing that the positive results are sparse. However, the poor results do not come as a surprise to most due to the fact that, in general, the United States and the European countries have displayed a somewhat moderate, or even selective, commitment to democracy promotion in the Arab world.⁷

The vast majority of the studies on democracy and democratization in the MENA share the same analytical starting point. From the above brief review of the existing literature on the subject, it is clear that most studies centre their attention on one or more forms of structure in the shape of culture, state–society relations, modernization or international political factors. What are largely missing from the literature are analyses from an actor-oriented perspective.

Nonetheless, some studies do draw attention to the role played by individual actors, particularly the incumbent ruler, in the democratization process (Brand 1994: 148; Brynen 1998: 71–100; Korany 1998: 39–69). Despite the existence of a number of studies devoting some attention to the role played by individual actors in the democratization process, there is not a single study, which dedicates its unreserved attention to a comprehensive analysis of which actors work for or against the transition to democracy in the MENA in general, or in any specific case. Waterbury (1994: 34–9) deals briefly with the subject of softliners and hardliners⁸ in Algeria in his contribution to Salamé's anthology on democracy in the Middle East, but the topic is never thoroughly explored. Correspondingly, Kazemi and Norton (1999: 69–89) touch on the subject in an article titled 'Hardliners and softliners in the Middle East: problems of governance and the prospect for liberalization in authoritarian political system'. Although the title appears promising, the analysis only deals ephemerally with the issue of hardliners and softliners, focusing instead on the more structural aspects, particularly the concept of the *rentier* state.

The focus of this study

The contemporary debate on the compatibility of Islam with democracy seems to mirror that on Catholicism and democracy in the 1960s. However, contrary to the beliefs of many scholars, the majority of the countries in Latin America succeeded in undergoing transition to democracy, and many even underwent a second transition leading to the consolidation of democracy. Taking these developments into consideration, one must assume that the transition to democracy in the countries of the MENA is indeed a possibility, no matter how remote that possibility may seem. If scholars were wrong about the development of democracy in Latin America and other regions of the world, then why could they not be wrong about the MENA?⁹

This book takes the position that the development of democracy in the MENA cannot be categorically dismissed. Moreover, although these countries are lagging far behind the countries of most other regions, some democratic development has indeed taken place. Although it may seem to some scholars that the countries in this particular region are not moving towards democracy (see, for instance, Carothers, 2002a), I maintain that just because the movement has been rather limited and slow it does not mean it should not be studied.

The primary aim of the book is to examine the development of democracy in Morocco since independence, while a secondary goal is to contribute to the sparse body of literature focusing on political actors. Drawing on the large body

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of literature on political development in Latin America, the study focuses on the political games played by various political actors in specific democratic moments that have or could have brought Morocco closer to democratic rule.

Democracy and democratization

Because of the virtual jungle of definitions of democracy currently in use in academe today, I find it important to elaborate on the above statement that this book centres on specific democratic moments that have or could have brought Morocco closer to democratic rule. In short, I agree with scholars such as Collier and Levitsky (1996) who find it of utmost importance that scholars using the concept of democracy position themselves within the current debate on the concept by clearly defining which definition they are applying. Via the study of more than 550 definitions of democracy, Collier and Levitsky (1996: 17) found that the various concepts could be roughly divided into five categories on the basis of each definition's underlying defining and conceptual benchmarks:

- 1 *Electoralist definitions*: a country must hold elections with broad suffrage and devoid of massive fraud.
- 2 *Procedural minimum definitions*: elections alone do not make a democracy; a country must also give reasonably broad guarantees of basic civil rights to be classified as democratic.
- 3 *Expanded procedural minimum definitions*: for a country to be defined as democratic, it must not only hold elections with broad suffrage and devoid of massive fraud and give reasonably broad guarantees of basic civil rights such as the freedom of speech, assembly and association, it must also demonstrate that the result of the elections is, in fact, a government that has effective power to govern.
- 4 *Prototypical conceptions of established industrial democracy*: a country must not only hold reasonably competitive elections, respect human rights and guarantee the effective power to govern of the elected government; it also has to possess additional political, economic and social features associated with industrial democracy in order to be categorized as a democracy.
- 5 *Maximalist definitions and conceptions of democracy*: a country must have 'socio-economic equality, and/or high levels of popular participation in economic, social, and political institutions' if the country is to qualify as democratic, but these definitions often omit requirements concerning elections, human rights and effective power to govern.¹⁰

While I acknowledge the pioneering character of Collier and Levitsky's study and although I am also in concurrence with the two scholars that the concepts of democracy in use today can roughly be divided into the above five categories, the concept of democracy used in this book does not fall in any of the categories listed.

Rather than focusing rigidly on categories, this book adopts a more fluent

approach to democracy, which focuses on core democratic principles. These core democratic principles – or elements – correspond to the underlying principles of the first three categories above:

- the holding of reasonably competitive elections, devoid of massive fraud and with broad suffrage (RCE)
- the guarantee of and respect for the basic civil liberties (freedom of speech, assembly and association) (BCL)
- the effective power to govern of the elected government (EP) (meaning that it must not be subordinate to any non-elected elite).

It is important to underline here that in the concept of democracy applied in this book, the three core democratic principles are seen as of equal importance. In other words, a country that guarantees and respects the basic civil liberties is seen as just as democratic as a country that holds reasonably competitive elections devoid of massive fraud and with broad suffrage. However, a country that provides for all three core democratic principles is deemed as more democratic than a country that only provides for two, which in turn is seen as more democratic than a country that only provides for one. A country that does not provide for any of the core democratic principles is defined as authoritarian. If illustrated graphically, the concept of democracy adopted in this book takes the form depicted in Figure I.1.

The strength of this particular model for the study of democracy is not the core principles or elements with which it operates; rather, it is the reality that it centres on these core principles rather than categories of definitions.

Such a focus has several advantages to the commonly used models. First, by focusing on the three core democratic principles rather than on the categories of definitions, the study of democracy becomes much less rigid. The model applied here enables scholars to study democracy in countries that do not fit neatly into the categories without having to create new definitions of democracy. Rather than posing the questions of whether a particular country belongs to one category or another, or which attributes of democracy the country is missing in order to identify the definition that fits the description of the country's regime the best, the model applied in this book provides scholars with a tool for studying democracy in these countries in a more positive light. In this model, the focus is not on the elements of democracy missing or weakened, but on the core principles of democracy present.

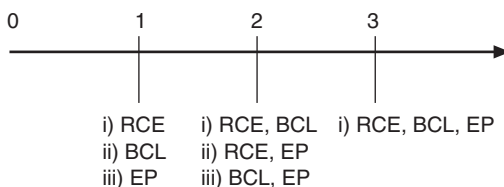


Figure I.1 The concept of democracy.

A further advantage of the model applied in this book is the way in which it portrays democratization as a motion up what can be labelled ‘the democratic continuum’. Any movement up the democratic continuum – as pictured in Figure I.2 – is defined as a process of democratization, regardless of how small it is. In other words, although an increase in the number of core democratic principles provided for in a particular country is the aim of the democratization process, such an increase is not imperative if a country is to be described as having undergone a process of democratization, since such processes do sometimes fail in producing the desired outcome. However, it must be noted that in order for such a democratization process to be deemed significant, it must lead to the provision of another core democratic principle. Finally, it is important to mention that whereas other models for the study of democracy tend to acknowledge a development leading to the provision of the core principle of the basic civil liberties of freedom of speech, assembly and association as evidence of liberalization rather than democratization, the model adopted in this book simplifies matters by doing away with the former concept and by attaching similar value to all three core democratic principles.¹¹

Regime types and actors

Regardless of the type of definition of democracy applied, evaluating the character of democracy in a given country only provides an idea of what the state of democracy was at the time of evaluation. If one thinks along the lines of photography, such an evaluation provides a snapshot of a particular situation. If the character of democracy is evaluated several times over a given period of time, the research produces a result, which is similar to that of a slide show: a series of snapshots.

The purpose of this book is, however, not only to provide a single snapshot of the character of democracy in Morocco, nor is it limited to producing a slide show; rather, the aim of this book is to produce something which resembles a series of short films; the focus is not only on a particular situation that can be depicted in a snapshot but also on the developments, the events and the actions of various actors, which lead to that particular situation. In order to be able to do so, the above theory focusing on democracy must be supplemented by democratization theory; that is, theory that focuses on how democracy emerges.

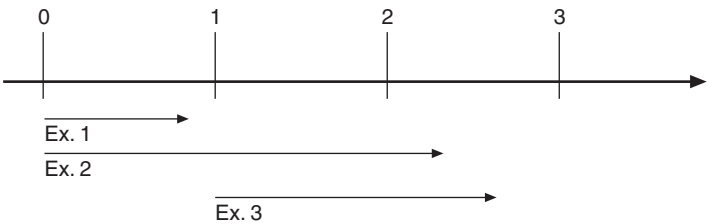


Figure I.2 Democratization*.

*Please note the examples shown are not exhaustive.

This book locates itself within the framework provided by the so-called transition school, which emerged with the sudden breakdown of several authoritarian regimes in Latin America in the late 1970s and 1980s. Although acknowledging the importance of macrohistorical structural factors – such as economic, social and cultural stratification – in the long term, scholars within the transition school assert that, in the case of transitions from authoritarian rule, these issues become less important.

The underlying assumption behind this contention is that during regime transitions, change is rapid and virtually omnipotent leading to a situation where ‘classes, sectors, institutions, and other groups’ are ‘... likely to be divided and hesitant about their interests and ideals and, hence, incapable of coherent collective action’ (O’Donnell and Schmitter 1986: 4). Focusing on macrohistorical structure when studying democratic transition would accordingly be somewhat meaningless since it would be virtually impossible to establish beforehand which groups would support or oppose transition to democracy. In short, the transition school alleges that behaviour of groups and individuals during regime change cannot be deduced from structural factors.

The strong emphasis of the transition school on using situation-specific concepts has led to the construction of several new concepts by scholars within the school. Among these purposely created notions for the study of transitions from authoritarian rule are the key concepts of hardliners (*duros*) and softliners (*blandos*), which highlight the school’s focus on political actors and the short-term political calculations of these (O’Donnell and Schmitter, 1986; Mainwaring *et al.* 1992).

Hardliners are defined as those actors within the regime who ‘... believe that the perpetuation of authoritarian rule is possible *and* desirable ...’, whereas softliners are those actors within the regime who have come to the conclusion that ‘... the regime they helped to implant, and in which they usually occupy important positions, will have to make use, in the foreseeable future, of some degree or some form of electoral legitimation’ and that ‘... if its eventual legitimation is to be feasible, the regime cannot wait too long before reintroducing certain freedoms ...’ (O’Donnell and Schmitter, 1986: 16).¹²

One of the core assumptions of the transition school is that whether transition from authoritarian rule will take place or not is determined by the strength of – and the relationship between – softliners and hardliners. As O’Donnell and Schmitter (1986: 19) put it, ‘... we assert that there is no transition whose beginning is not the consequence – direct or indirect – of important divisions within the authoritarian regime itself, principally along the fluctuating cleavage between hard-liners and soft-liners’.

Although several scholars have used the transition school’s concepts of softliners and hardliners, few have been as systematic and detailed in their use as Przeworski.¹³ Much like O’Donnell and Schmitter (1986: 10) who trace the beginning of democratic transition to ‘... the moment that authoritarian rulers (or, more often, some fraction thereof) announce their intention to extend significantly the sphere of protected individual and group rights – and are believed’, Przeworski stresses similar moments.¹⁴ Transitions to democracy are

a process, the states of which consist of strategic situations which I will also call “conjunctures”. Each strategic situation is characterized by the presence of particular political forces endowed with interests which involve different mixtures of conflict and coordination, by conditions which have been generated by earlier actions and by conditions that are exogenous. Change from one conjuncture to another occurs as an outcome of actions pursued by the actors.

(Przeworski 1992: 106)

In other words, democratization is the result of splits within the authoritarian regime and pacts between one or more splinter fractions and organized autonomous groups in civil society; it is a process which contains elements of both ‘from above’ (splits within the regime) and ‘bottom up’ (popular mobilization). However, regardless of whether the process is sparked from above or from below, the inner logic of the process is the same, the only difference being the speed of change, which is faster in processes initiated by popular mobilization (*ibid.*: 108–9).

According to Przeworski (1992: 110), the political opening taking a country further away from authoritarian rule ‘... is always intended as a process controlled from the above’. It is usually not a process prompted with the intention of bringing about a democratic regime; rather, the initiating fraction within the authoritarian regime typically aims at bringing about a less restrictive dictatorship (so-called ‘broadened dictatorship’) compared to the status quo, by carefully starting a process of democratization although keeping it under strict control.

In this process of splits and pact-making, Przeworski (1992: 117) identifies four groups of actors, building on the framework of O’Donnell and O’Donnell and Schmitter.¹⁵ Within the authoritarian bloc of the regime, Przeworski distinguishes between ‘hardliners’ who believe in, and aim at, preserving status quo and ‘reformers’ who seek to change the nature of the regime. It should be noted here, before moving on to the two opposition groups, that Przeworski does not always refer to the reformers as such – reformers are defined as liberalizers until the stage where they make it clear whether their true preferences are democracy or broadened dictatorship. Liberalizers preferring democracy are then labelled reformers, whereas those preferring broadened dictatorship – that is, letting more actors into the regime – continue to be referred to as liberalizers (*ibid.*: 112–17).

Within the opposition, Przeworski differentiates between ‘moderates’ and ‘radicals’. Although the difference between moderates and radicals can be difficult to identify, since moderates may have more radical goals than radicals, moderates can be distinguished by the fact that they are willing to enter into pacts with members of the ruling bloc (Przeworski 1992: 116). Accordingly, the initiation of a democratization process with the aim of departing from the status quo can only come about as a result of a pact between liberalizers/reformers within the authoritarian bloc and moderates within the opposition.¹⁶