WHAT EXPLAINS THE RESILIENCE OF THE MOROCCAN MONARCHY IN THE ARAB WORLD AND WITH WHAT MEANS DID IT WITHSTAND THE ARAB REVOLT OF 2010?

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WHAT EXPLAINS THE RESILIENCE OF THE MOROCCAN MONARCHY IN THE ARAB WORLD AND WITH WHAT MEANS DID IT WITHSTAND THE ARAB REVOLT OF 2010?

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Abstract

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Author's Note

The Arab Spring changed the lives of millions, marked the downfall of despots and propelled the Arab world into a new era. An unprecedented social movement promising change threatened established leaders who had become avaricious and complacent in ruling for the greater good. The likes of Gaddafi and Ben Ali fell after years of rule, shocking the entire political sphere.

I watched in awe the unfolding of this fascinating event that rapidly changed everything for so many. As a child growing up in Morocco, in an Arab kingdom, politics was somewhat a taboo, a dirty word, something even adults would only whisper about. Yet, the Moroccan monarchy under the rule of Mohammed VI faced the most challenging of hurdles during the Arab Spring, calling into question how the country prevented tumbling into chaos during such a time of uncertainty. This thesis seeks to understand why and how the monarchy resisted.

Throughout this work, my journey took me from quiet libraries to vibrant protests, from long rainy nights of readings to an interview with the former prime minister.

The first chapter of my work directly addresses the new form of demonstration brought about by the Arab Spring and its omnipresent role: live, unfiltered social media channels which could not be tampered with by state-owned media. Following this, Chapter 2 covers the literature review, followed by Chapter 3 which discusses the theoretical framework, and then by Chapter 4 which explains my methodology. The remaining chapters discuss my fieldwork, the part I enjoyed the most. I used an ethnographic approach to understand the protesters, survey the Moroccan people, and interview political insiders.

This quest was terrifying, thrilling, and life changing. I grew with my work and I hope it grew with me, and can shed light on how the monarchy survived such a pivotal moment of change in history.

Pour toi Papa

Chapter 1: Introduction

What seemed to be the start of a new political phase in the Arab world began in Tunisia in 2010, followed by Egypt in 2011 and eventually by Libya, Syria, Yemen, and Bahrain. Little did these countries know that the revolution would change the course of their future and identity, including their political, social, and economic systems. What had particularly occurred in Egypt, the largest Arab country carrying a great deal of influence in the region, reflected years of injustice, patience, and silence. The immediate triggers for these countries' uprisings appeared to be an accumulation of political, economic, and social factors that had been building up over the years, which ultimately resulted in an act of tremendous proportion and significance that affected the Arab world as a whole. The revolution, which captured global attention, shifted powers from the few to the many, from individual work in offices to collective revolution in squares, encouraging the use of open-source networks. Although poverty and unemployment across the region were major sources of civil unrest in the protests, they were not the only factors which led to the Arab Spring.

In fact, the uprisings during the Arab Spring were the result of many different factors, which reveals the true force behind the changes that occurred in the Middle East and North Africa. One of the main sources of fuel which was poured on the already ignited fire across the region was corruption by the ruling elite, which resulted in widening income inequalities and a marked contrast between poor people and those who enjoyed luxuries in developing economies.

Fast forward to one of the Arab countries that seemed to only be slightly scathed by the Arab Spring, if at all – Morocco. Due to its stable monarchical system, Morocco has almost always succeeded in overcoming political instabilities instigated by dissidents throughout the population. For a long time, Morocco has delighted in a reputation for being a standout among the steadiest regimes in the region, with the exception of protests in 2016 and 2017 in the northern Rif territories against the central power following the grisly demise of a fisherman in

Hoceima. (Reuters, 2019). However, even the Rif demonstrations transformed into initiatives for advancement, improved administration, and respect for the lower classes throughout Morocco. (The Guardian, 2016)

With the recently demonstrated ability to contain crises after demonstrations, it is important to look back and understand how Morocco escaped radical changes in government driven by the Arab Spring compared to so many other countries. As elsewhere in North Africa and the Middle East, the youth-driven revolts in Tunisia and Egypt sparked a torrent in Morocco's political scene. After initial protests, on 20 February 2011, a development came to fruition requesting that the government take command over the nation's social, financial, and security strategies. From the Islamist Justice and Development party to the Socialist Union of Popular Forces, Morocco's (to a great extent co-picked and maturing) ideological groups stayed calm and separated themselves from the youthful development. At the core of the protesters' requests was the role of the King, who since independence has been responsible for all senior legislative and military arrangements. Particularly under King Hassan II (1961–1999), the government's tacit centre of influence, called *Makhzen*, frequently had a plan of action to repress dissidents, often with violence, amid the supposed "Years of Lead." (Menin, 2014)

In contrast to neighbours in the East, the 20 February movement did not explicitly request the expulsion of Mohammed VI from the throne or for the complete dissolution of government. While Morocco's security apparatus has been associated with savagery against dissenters around the nation, its notoriety has never been as terrible as that of its partner in Tunisia, or even Egypt. (Menin, 2014) Thus, the movement requested basic protected changes instead of a fundamental shake-up. Indeed, even the movement's central requests – for example, the decision of the executive by the parliament, not by the King – had just been transparently discussed in the press and international institutions and thinktanks throughout the most recent two decades.

Thus, the Arab uprisings met a specific political field that decided the result and future prospects of change in Morocco. However, the way in which these demands were received and then communicated back to the people lies within a large player: the media.

The Media Revolt Within the Arab Spring

The starkest similarities shared amongst the countries involved in the revolution lie in their Arab identity and authoritative style of government regime; therefore, the reason behind these differences is not necessarily what sparked the revolts but in how the authorities reacted to them. In Egypt and Libya, the authorities dealt harshly with protestors, and political figures condoned the discrimination and violence police forces were exerting upon citizens. (Chenoweth, 2011) Furthermore, presidents were not communicating with their citizens, exacerbating the frustration, particularly in Libya. (Morris, 2014) These two countries' economies suffered greatly as a consequence of these protests. In contrast, although Morocco's protests during the Arab Spring were both brutal and discriminatory, the King kept citizens informed about the reforms he was planning to implement. This communication was not only in the form of verbal speeches, but also as articles in magazines and through social media channels which were largely free and accessible to a majority of Moroccan citizens.

This thesis analyses which major factors contributed to how the Moroccan monarchy remained in power following the Arab Spring unlike other Arab regimes, and why monarchies are more resilient in the region in general. The protests of the Arab Spring stemmed from a desire to have a more realistic "democracy" and to answer the needs of the people. The media has had a significant impact on how people communicate and connect, uniting people's interests, concerns, and visions for the future. In Morocco, censorship of the media is well known and has, historically, allowed authorities to influence the dissemination of controversial reports and stories. (Tayebi, 2015) This is an important strategy used to control levels of content and discontent among the populace, allowing the government to better gauge public sentiment on various issues. The strategies of authorities manipulating media sources should be determined and then analysed, as they may be used by heads of states in the future during times of civil unrest and internal instability. The Moroccan case study is important in understanding this significance as it withheld upheaval of power during the most momentous period of civil unrest in the Middle East and North Africa and can be used to predict future usages of social media censorship in the future.

This research aims to explore the argument that Morocco did not undergo significant political changes during the Arab Spring compared to other Arab countries. This thesis hypothesizes that the preservation of the monarchy was influenced by several factors that are unique to the Moroccan case, including patriarchal characteristics of the monarchy that has been carried out

over the last six decades, the subsequent effects on the status of women, the economic structure of the country, elite co-optation, and the open communication between citizens and authorities via the media. This hypothesis will be analysed by examining many aspects related to one another, involving Morocco, the monarchy, the media, and theoretical literature about democracy and the media. These aspects will be explored through qualitative research involving journals and peer-reviewed works, such as books, articles, and interviews.

The influence of the media should be first elaborated, followed by its importance during the Arab Spring, when social media served as a medium of information for citizens, and more traditional media served as a powerful tool for the authorities. This is a key point in the research of this subject. The subject will then flow to the Moroccan governmental authority and the way it managed to survive the Arab Spring unlike other countries. This thesis analyses the relationship between the media and the King of Morocco, Mohammed VI and his regime. Many events were reported in the media on 20 February 2011, the day of the protests in Morocco, which ought to be discussed as examples to the theories mentioned before. These protests should not only be mentioned but also thoroughly analysed because of the important role they played in the evolution of the Moroccan Arab Spring, and how the media, whether social or censored through television channels, had a huge role to play. This shows the link between media and democracy, or the democratic way the country dealt with the Arab Spring, which is a concluding point for this research.

Throughout the research, real-world examples will be provided to concretely link the arguments and theories demonstrated in the literature review and theoretical framework to facts. These examples may be of Morocco or they may be of surrounding Arab countries involved in the Arab Spring to illustrate the application of these theories and comparison of countries to explore the monarchical survival in the Arab Spring. This research will also emphasise the importance of the outcome of these media revolts since the strategies used by Morocco could be used again in future times of unrest. These strategies of using media channels, if proven to be a long-term solution, could be the solution to political unrest throughout the globe. There are no studies available that have this argument as their main content and therefore this work would be a contribution to the current literature.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter will first examine the literature discussing the resilience and sustainability of despotic regimes in the Arab world. We will further look to understand why, when those variables are controlled, what other reasons can be found to explain why some regimes were toppled while others remained in power. Particularly, we will examine what factors allowed countries such as Morocco, Jordan, and Bahrain – all monarchies – to remain resilient to the protests of the Arab Spring. The literature review will analyse the meaningful differences between Arab republics and Arab monarchies. This chapter will then move on to discuss the specific qualities of Arab monarchies that may have contributed to their resilience. Finally, the chapter will focus on the case of Morocco and will include a comparative case study with the Kingdom of Jordan since this is the only other monarchy in the region to have been affected by the protests of the Arab Spring.

Part I: The Resilience and Sustainability of Despotic Regimes in the Arab World

This section will consider some of the work dedicated to understanding what factors have contributed to sustaining Arab despotic regimes over particularly long periods of time. This literature explains, to some extent, what specifically allowed the Moroccan monarchy to remain in place during the tumultuous period of protesting in 2011. This discussion involves Arab political structures, political feminism, and Arab authoritarianism, which are all subjects that can be further explored to explain, specifically, if there were exceptions to these demands in the Moroccan case to explain its capacity to firmly remain in place throughout the Arab Spring.

A: The socio-political structure of Arab authoritarian regimes (elasticity of social pacts and political polarisation)

Oliver Schlumberger, with contributions from many European, Arab and American authors, published *Debating Arab Authoritarianism: Dynamics and Durability in Nondemocratic Regimes* in 2007, a collection of essays that seek to determine the reason behind the resilience and sustainability of despotic regimes in the Arab world. He presents several arguments to show just how such systems can sustain themselves against political dissent and the many pressures

that threaten them. Below are some of the arguments that are most relevant to the topic of this thesis.

Steven Heydemann, one of the contributors to Schlumberger's work, argues that one of the factors behind the resilience of Arab authoritarian systems is the very nature of the *social pacts* that characterise these countries. Heydemann defines social pacts as sets of agreements taken collectively at a national level, in which employers and labour forces define their expectations concerning economic stability, and equity of distribution and job security, respectively. Moreover, social pacts also encompass far less formal sets of concepts and help to determine matters such as whose interests are to be taken into consideration when making socioeconomic policies, or which mechanisms are available to the state and members of society to take action. For the author, it is these relationships, when synthesised at the national level, and through years of practice and evolution, that give their formal structure to the relations between the regime and its citizens. Heydemann argues that the elasticity of their social pacts is what saved Arab authoritarian regimes from crumbling at the slightest strike from a dissident movement. He further argues that whereas Arab authoritarian regimes often exhibit high resistance to change, they can adapt to some change by a quality that he coined 'bounded adaptiveness'. In Middle Eastern regimes, formal institutions such as unions and political parties restrict the ruler of the country in the scope of his actions, as he cannot *completely* disregard the formal sets of rules. However, these formal institutions give the authoritarian regime grounds to take advantage of more informal ways of putting plans to work. The author points out that such informal ways of governance are not only present, but that it is their combination with formal mechanisms of governance (i.e. formal institutions) that give birth to new patterns of bargaining between regimes and citizens. In other words, providing structure to disorganised politics.

In the same book, author Eva Wegner explores the effects of including Islamists in the political process by taking the case of Morocco as an illustrative example; as Wegner argues, Morocco was successful in implementing Islamists (i.e. PJD, or *Parti de la Justice et du Dévelopement*) into its political process. She argues that from the standpoint of monarchical Middle Eastern regimes, the fragmentation of political forces allows for more control and manipulation. In this context, the introduction of a strong political entity (i.e. the Islamists) could destabilise the equilibrium of political players already on the scene, and be a threat to the supremacy of the

regime in place. From the standpoint of the Islamists, however, the challenge is to temper their demands and make concessions in order not to be repressed by the regimes, but at the same time keep most of their identity (represented here by their demands and actions) in order not to alienate their supporters. The Islamist party PJD originated from the Movement of Unity and Reform (MUR), a social movement that was itself a product of the dismantling of the violent, revolutionary Islamist group called Ex-nihilo. The PJD, in this case, was entirely dependent on the MUR's support for financing and structuring its various activities. Even when the MUR would have withdrawn from political activities, it still dictated to some extent the ideological grounds that would shape the PJD's decisions and ideals.

In its interactions with the regime, the PJD has overall preferred to compromise its political strength for long-term inclusion in the political scene of Morocco. This, however, has not tarnished the support of the masses for the party as it has been able to enlarge its electoral support. The Islamist group abstains from taking action or using speech that goes against the interests of the Palace, in a strategy that aims for slow, gradual change instead of revolutionary constitutional reforms. This strategy has been applied since the party's creation and has allowed it to survive and accumulate increasing power, since, as the author implied, being included by the monarchical regime was the only viable route for the survival of the party. The PJD example in Morocco shows that it is possible to include a group – in this case, the Islamists – that would otherwise be considered a threat to an authoritarian regime into the political scene, with it potentially even contributing to the regime's sustainability and survival as we have seen in other Middle Eastern and North African states.

B: The culturalist argument: Islam and authoritarianism

This section will argue that while Islam is not necessarily and inevitably associated with authoritarianism, it remains an influential factor on the level of democratisation within a country. This is relevant in understanding the Moroccan case as it partially explains the formation and justification of the monarchy, its existence and transformation throughout time, and most importantly how religion has played an important factor in keeping the monarchy in place, even during the Arab Spring. This section will also discuss women's rights in the Arab world, and how the inferior status of women, on the whole, in Muslim societies appears to be a factor which accounts for part of the link between Islam and authoritarianism. Women's rights and how they

feel about their status in their country is particularly important in the success of revolutions, which is why the status of Arab women ought to be understood in their role in the Arab uprisings.

Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Regimes and Resistance is a book edited by Marsha Pripstein Posusney and Michele Penner Angrist in 2005, taking the form of a collection of essays from various scholars, and seeking to enlighten its readers on the reasons behind the endurance of authoritarian regimes in the Middle East. The authors bring to the reader's attention that, in the context of post-independence from European colonising powers, most Middle Eastern countries have shown promise for the pluralisation of the political sphere, which could ultimately lead to a parliamentary form of governance, distributing power among most of the political players on the scene. Virtually all other countries in the Middle East fell into the grasp of dictatorships due to policy polarisation and the lack of symmetry in the mobilisation of the political actors. Furthermore, in his book *All in the Family: Absolutism, Revolution, and Democracy in the Middle Eastern Monarchies,* scholar Michael Herb (1999) points out that leaders of such authoritarian states have greater manoeuvrability than the parliaments of their countries because of the intrinsic and often constitutional imbalance between the executive and the parliamentary branches of the government. Leaders of such states often pose a series of obstacles that bar opposing parties from making demands for a more democratic form of governance, such as tampering with electoral results, or shaping the way elections are held to their advantage, and even by artificially dividing the political scene in such a way that no political actor could appear as an alternative to the leader. The author also provides an illustrative example where Morocco's first king, Mohammed V, preferred to consult with a group of international experts to define Morocco's electoral system, one which would be most beneficial to his regime's interests.

Later in the book, it is argued by Posusney that Islam should not be viewed as a truly central component of political life in the Middle East. Islam, although essential in the case of Arab regimes, is not a determinative factor in the case of authoritarianism. This explains why protests may emerge to demand social change while at the same time accepting religion to be intertwined in their government, allowing religious authoritarian regimes to maintain in power. Authors note that while authoritarian leaders promote Islamic values to be introduced and maintained in the

public sphere, they at the same time have to discourage their most daunting opponents: Islamists. Islamists, in this particular context, are organised groups of people that want the public and often private spheres of society to be ruled by the precepts of Islam, and, as such, constitute a barrier to democratisation. These Islamists are, in most cases, the most influential and vocal opponents of the authoritarian regimes in the Arab world, and therefore often represent the only viable and realistic alternative to the historical, authoritarian regimes ruling these countries. More moderate actors' voices go unheard over the overwhelming voices of the Islamists. For this reason, there is very little enthusiasm concerning potential democratic reforms or even the development of a more meaningful and powerful parliamentary system that truly voices all of society's members' demands. Therefore, Arab citizens wishing for democratic reform do not subscribe to the Islamists' agenda and often find themselves alienated from political life and feel their views are ignored by their leaders and the formal institutions that are supposed to represent them.

Many Arab countries saw the rise of Islamists as leaders of government after the events of the Arab Spring. Lans Berger in his article "Sharī'a, Islamism and Arab support for democracy" written in 2019 describes a "short lived peak" of Islamist political ascendancy, including: Egypt's parliament and presidency which was controlled by the Muslim Brotherhood; the takeover of parliamentary seats by the an-Nahda party in Tunisia and the Moroccan Justice and Development party in Morocco; the Muslim Brotherhood's Justice and Development Party winning elections in Libya in 2012; and the Green Algeria Alliance securing a majority of seats in Algeria's parliamentary elections in 2012." (Berger 2019) It is interesting to note that, as detailed in the previous discussion concerning the book *Debating Arab Authoritarianism*, Morocco is considered to be one of the few successful cases of integrating Islamists into its political life beyond this short-lived peak post Arab Spring. Thus, the relationship between Islam and authoritarianism both pre-Arab Spring and post-Arab spring is important in understanding the resiliency of the monarchy which will be further discussed under the sub-section "The Moroccan monarchy".

Culturalism has been one of the main approaches used to explain the persistence of authoritarianism in Arab countries, mainly linked to the Islamic faith of their citizens. The theses that point out the incompatibility of this with democratic values stem from the work of Lisa Wedeen called "Conceptualising Culture: Possibilities for Political Science" in 2002, which

states that the failure of democracy in Muslim societies is because Islamic culture and society are inhospitable to liberal and Western concepts. However, the theses that link Islam and authoritarianism have been strongly debated in recent years. In the case of democratic culture, it has been shown that there is no less support for democracy among those who profess the Islamic faith, even though the principles of liberal democracy are foreign to the Muslim political tradition. This is famously explored in a study done on Islam and authoritarianism by Stephen Fish in 2002. His study, using standard regression analysis, found in a cross-country analysis that Muslim countries had lower Freedom House[1] scores (which measure how countries rate on democratic indices) compared to non-Muslim countries. This relationship was also analysed by Daniela Donno and Bruce Russett in 2004, whose main set of regressions yielded a similar conclusion, while another set taking cross-sections at different points in time shows mixed results. A study done by Alfred Stepan and Graeme B. Robertson in 2003 uses a different statistical technique and show that in the developing world, differences in the level of democracy in Muslim and non-Muslim countries are not significantly different. (Pryor, 2007)

In a subsequent study done by Fish, he further analysed the positive relationship between economic development and democratic attainment to see if this were to explain the disparity of democratic attainment scores between Muslim and non-Muslim countries. Fish found in his research that good economic performance may protect fledgling democracies, while bad performance may generate popular dissatisfaction, alienate powerful social groups, and damage the cross-class alliances that stabilize democracy. (Fish, 2002) He also found that authoritarian regimes may be vulnerable to bad economic performance that may lead to democratization. He found that overall, higher economic development is associated with better FH scores, higher ethnic fractionalization with worse FH scores, higher economic growth with better FH scores, and OPEC membership with worse FH scores (supporting the idea that the abundance of oil may conduce authoritarianism). Fish found that ethnic composition does not influence regime type, and the Islam variable remains highly significant in substantive and statistical terms in all specifications. The study concluded overall that there is no link between democratic deficit and

[1]Freedom House is a nonprofit which publishes research and reports on a number of core thematic issues related to democracy, political rights, and civil liberties.

Islam, however, Muslim countries are far poorer than others. Underdevelopment therefore explains the relationship between Islam and authoritarianism.

This is further backed by Wedeen, whose work on the determinants of democratisation shows that when the variable religion (whether Islam or not) by geographical area is controlled, this variable loses its explanatory power (Wedeen, 199, 114, 2002). Likewise, Wedeen has disputed "Arab democratic exceptionalism". It should be noted that there is religious homogeneity in the Maghreb countries, while religious diversity is much greater in the Middle East, especially in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Bahrain, Kuwait, Jordan and Yemen.

The academic literature of political development has also classified the economic, social and cultural conditions as determinants of democratisation. However, it is not believed that these can be considered requirements for democracy; rather that certain conditions that can favour or hinder the processes of political change. Studies on Arab democratic exceptionalism have explained the persistence of authoritarianism through various factors, including Islamic and Arabic culture which was covered by Weeden, as well as economic and historical issues (Stepan, Alfred & Robertson, 2004: 151). These include colonial heritage and the artificiality of borders defined after processes of independence; institutional factors; and political culture, explained by the immobility of Arab societies and the subjection of civil society of such countries to the state. Some of these theses have collapsed with recent popular mobilisations and political reform in Arab countries.

Among these explanations lies an interesting determinant on democracy and Islam which is how Muslims within the Middle East view Sharia. The primary sources of Islamic law are the Holy Book (The Quran), the Sunnah (the traditions or known practices of the Prophet Muhammad), Ijma' (Consensus), and Qiyas (Analogy). Therefore, there is inconsistency in how Muslims interpret Sharia in terms of religion or societal norms. This was further explored following the Arab Spring due to the nature of protests and widespread demand for more democratic institutions. In a study done by Largs Berger in 2018, he analysed the difference of those who view Sharia as the word of God versus Sharia as the human attempt to interpret it and its impact on support for democracy. Using data from the Third Wave of the Arab Barometer (interviews from 2012 and 2013) and an ordinary lease squares regression, Berger found that the insistence

that Sharia establishes a set of clearly defined laws, which explicitly represent the word of God as opposed to the human attempt to interpret God's message, is linked with a weaker preference for democracy and lower support for religious freedom and gender equality which are considered vital provisions of effective democracy. Berger notes that thus there is this no coincidence that the only successful transition toward democracy in the MENA region occurred in Tunisia when the new leader of the (formerly Islamist) al-Nahda part announced that the party would depart from Islamism to embrace a more Muslim-democratic model.

Part II: The Resilience of Arab Monarchies

This part will be dedicated to the following questions: What brought the unrest? And why did some governments fare better than others in terms of their ability to maintain power post-Spring? This will help to find answers as to why monarchies have proven to be more resilient to other forms of governments in the region.

A: What brought on the unrest?

The economic situation of authoritarian regimes in the Middle East and Gulf regions, such as Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Oman, allowed the break-up of localised social protest movements with promises of wage increases, increased public investment and aid to the unemployed. On the other hand, there are coexisting cases of low-intensity protests such as in Mauritania, Morocco and Iraq, with much more intense and revolutionary processes such as those in Yemen, Egypt or Syria.

In Egypt, at the beginning of the protests, Coptic Christians were divided in their support of the regime and the demonstrators, just as the Jewish community was in Tunisia. Thus, religious cleavage was not present at the origin of the social contestation movement. In Syria, the Alawi minority exercises political control over the country, which is mostly Sunni. The other Islamic and Christian minorities have traditionally been for the regime they perceive as their protector. The main opposition groups are the Sunni Islamists and the Kurdish movements (of Sunni religion). After the start of the Arab Spring, Syrian citizenship was granted to Kurds who had been excluded from the population census, and 48 detainees who had been arrested the previous

year were released. (Al-Jazeera, April 8th, 2011) Nevertheless, with the persistence of the protests, the regime returned to repressive measures against these groups.

Historically, Yemen is marked by political, social and religious fragmentation. The Yemenis are divided mainly between two schools of Islam: the *zaidismo*, which belongs to the Shiism, and the Sunni *shafiismo*. There is also a Yemeni Jewish minority. However, the opposition movement has transcended ethnic and religious differences and has a mainly political character. In the eyes of many, the small Gulf monarchies (Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Oman, and Qatar) have become a byword for opulence linked to oil, an executive dominated by large families, and lack of effective political democracy (Bellin, 2012: 129). It is to forget, however, that these states are at a turning point in their history. The drying-up of oil reserves threatens the cash economy (Kuhn, 2012: 66). In addition to this fundamental geo-economic problem, the Gulf states are a political power scramble. The high proportion of migrant workers, without political or civil rights, has become an economic and political issue at the same time.

Part II: The Specificities of the Moroccan Monarchy

How can we explain the resistance of the Alawite political regime to the challenge of change that the Arab Spring brought to the region? What political actors or parts of society with influence on the political regime can we identify? Which are potentially the greatest challenges the regime faces today? The robustness of monarchist institutions presupposes regime stability, however Morocco's regime is a special case. The literature discusses Morocco as a regime of soft authoritarianism, with the *Makhzen* as the major ally, a power apparatus that represents the central administration with the capacity to hinder any political initiative that goes against its interest (Boukhars, 2014: 20). This part will further discuss the specificities of the Moroccan monarchy that contribute to the current understanding of its resilience. This discussion will lay the theoretical ground for empirical research.

The Moroccan monarchy: The ultimate symbol of unity

The nature of the monarchy in Morocco is that of divine right. The popular belief surrounding the monarchy is that it is directly sanctioned by a sacred decree. This effectively binds the sovereign to his subjects through an unbreakable oath of allegiance, the *bay'a*, which is renewed

every year through a ceremony based on centuries of tradition and Muslim custom. Some view the bay'a as the "sturdiest pillar of Morocco's political system" which alludes to the image of a regime embodying a government is representative of popular power rather than the absolute monarchy it actually is. (The Economist, 2009) This relationship between the people and their king effectively places the latter above any divisions that may destabilise the fabric of society. In such cases of instability, the king generally remains a symbol of unity and allegiance for all members of Moroccan society, a promise that after the storm there will be calm and order again. This is one of the arguments advanced by the supporters of the regime in place, that without the king as a symbol of unity, disputes between different social classes within the country could lead to a catastrophic break in the nation-state. This is similar to the status of the Saudi-monarchy and the loyalty to the country has towards Saudi royals.

The relevance of the Moroccan case is based on its singularity, since it is the only country in the Maghreb where, after its independence, a monarchy has reinstated the Alawite dynaisty that had reigned in Morocco since the seventeenth century. Throughout time, the monarchy has established trust and a national, unified identity for Moroccan people. The Moroccan regime has attributed the failure of the expansion of past protest movements and to the special connection between the Moroccan monarchy and its people. (Boukhars, 2014: 21) Political, international, and social characteristics and conditions, including emotion, explain this phenomenon.

Furthermore, this has laid the foundation for a strong bond between the people of Morocco and the King which has continued to develop through foreign conflict, establishing relations with the country's elite, alliance with the media, foreign relations, and finally, its civil-military relations. These are the underlying, historical factors that explain the resilience of the monarchy which will be discussed in this section.

Development of ruling entity in Morocco:

The development of the ruling entity in Morocco in modern day was reinforced during Morocco's fight for independence from France during the 1930s to the 1950s. Throughout this period, opposition groups used the Alawite family as a symbol of unity for the Moroccan people. This was strategic for the current sultan in place, Mohammed V who had been exiled by France in 1953. (Sater, 2010: 20-21) He capitalized on his exile by appealing to rural groups that once

opposed him to rally around the idea of Moroccan nationalism. He later built upon these relationships as king which would prove to serve him later.

King Hassan II ascended to the throne and left a legacy that had undoubtedly strengthened the monarchy as well as solidified the nation. He was known to have consolidated the independence of his country, ensured political stability during his reign, and established the foundations of the economy and social development initiatives. However, he did so while ruling with a sort of iron fist which left little room to question or oppose his authority during an otherwise tumultuous time in the region. After decades of accepting the soft authoritarianism from King Hassan II, the reign of Mohammed VI began on 23 July 1999 with the hope of seeing some change of political tendency towards a true democratic transition in the North African country. Changes were expected not only within the political sphere but as well as in economic and social ones as well throughout the kingdom. However, the first initiatives of "change" by the monarch were based on the interests of a regime that was not willing to allow any sort of transformation that could possibly relegate it to the background.

Early dependency of notables:

Rulers of any nation have to rely on an intricate web of bureaucracies and delegates so that the machinery of the government works properly, and so the ruler stays in power. They have to make sure that the armies, the tax collectors and other various and vital actors within the state apparatus remain loyal to the regime in place through the constant distribution of resources from the treasury of the Crown to the pockets of these key actors. This is especially true for authoritarian and totalitarian regimes, for the rulers in these kinds of regimes have to rely on the constant allegiance of their generals and tax collectors for the maintenance of the power in place. Attempts of mutiny and revolt could happen within the state's own ranks if the key actors are dissatisfied with their situation and see it as more profitable, albeit dangerous, to topple the regime and take the place of the ruler.

Within this framework, it can be easier to understand the relationship between the king and the 'notables' on whom the regime in place bestowed much more power to in the mid-1960s. The

monarchy took it upon itself to reverse the allegiances that shaped colonial Morocco for its own gain. To do so, it relied on an intricate web of notables throughout the territory, who were respected figures of authority in their respective regions. By swaying these key actors under the favour of the Palace, through the granting of favours and the like, the king was able to tighten his grip over large parts of the territory, by extension. This relationship between the king and his notables is reinforced in the collective mentality of the whole Moroccan community through the diverse forms of ceremonial displays of loyalty by the notables during ceremonies conveyed by the local media to the general population, such as hand-kissing and prostration. This in turn undoubtedly cements the king as the ultimate patron of the notables, who have completely submitted to their leader.

This brings to light some of the factors that shaped the reinforcement of the Moroccan state apparatus of repression against political dissent, and the creation of a social coalition with the sole purpose of consolidating the king's power and legitimacy. Among these factors that immediately after the country's emancipation from colonial France, the crown sought to establish absolute authority over the armed forces, a task brought to fruition in haste by 1960. The haste came from the fear that rising actors could potentially represent a danger for the Palace, such as the Istiqlal's (nationalist party) left-wing led by the young Mehdi Ben Barka, which was supported by the country's trade union. By retaining a monopoly on the means of force and by the manipulation of wealth and economic rewards, the Palace was able to effectively control strategic decision-making and also to remain an arbiter standing above the quarrels of political parties and the divisions of the different ethnicities and social classes that make up Morocco's population.

There is a pattern that exists within the political relationships between the prince and his servants in Morocco, exemplified by the notables. At the heart of this relationship emerges a pattern that indicates the roles of the two parties. Things such as service, gift exchange or closeness between the two parties are arranged in a certain way so as to define positions of authority and submission. Any deviation from that pattern on the part of the servant would be considered an affront to the Crown itself. This system allows the Crown to remain at the centre of political life within the country, with the elites constantly battling each other, through constant upheaval of the 'master/disciple' relationship detailed above, for maximum closeness to the king. This

instrument is the key to the Crown's grip over specific regions of the country, and allows for a greater centralisation of power. If a specific notable refuses to play the game of closeness, this would be considered an affront, revealing yet another tool of power in the hands of the king: the royal pardon. This key tool allows the dissidents to return to a state of obedience, and such reversals only add to the Crown's legitimacy and prestige.

Abdellah Hammoudi's work and ideas addressing the nature of the Moroccan regime gives us an image of Morocco in which the general population is indeed not free from the persecution of its highest level of command. In this picture, we can see how the king remains the ultimate decision-maker, with his power of command extended to all parts of the country by the numerous traditionally powerful and well-known families as well as tribal leaders who vow allegiance to him. At the same time, we can see how the king's image is embedded in the minds of the masses as the legitimate leader of the faithful in the eyes of religion, which makes it extremely difficult for any potential revolutionaries or opposition forces to claim legitimacy over the throne.

The transition of the Moroccan state towards democracy or participatory government also contains certain encouraging elements. Since the eruption of the Arab Spring in 2010, Morocco has been the only country in North Africa to enjoy true governance. It is the only nation in the Arab region that has successfully contained jihadist terrorism and halted the expansion of Salafist Islamism. On the other hand, the 20 February movement that emerged in 2011 successfully promoted a new constitution, approved in a referendum that same year (Bellin, 2012: 131).

While improvements in women's rights were written in the new 2011 constitution, the search for gender equality, which is common to the Tunisian case, is far from materialising in Moroccan politics. The Islamist cabinet that formed after the general election of November 2011, for example, included only two women, while with the change in October 2013, six female ministers entered among 39 (Bellin 133). Finally, there is a factor that is lulling the greater Moroccan progress: the conflict with Algeria for the sovereignty of Western Sahara, which makes it difficult for Morocco to re-join the African Union and, consequently, impedes regional integration.

According to researchers, there are certain conditions for the development of political Islam or the Islamist movement in Morocco. The opening of the political system and the ineffectiveness of the traditional secular opposition are both causes of the exacerbation of the same. Misery, inequality and political authoritarianism are all factors that promote Islam as more and more adept but are not the most direct cause of the phenomenon; the origins of the Islamist phenomenon go back to the time of the country's independence (Bellin, 2012: 137). They also enter a field that the Alawite monarch has traditionally used for his political legitimacy: the religious. Morocco is, according to its constitution, a constitutional, parliamentary, democratic and social monarchy. The king is the protector of the rights and freedoms of the citizens and appoints the ministers and the provisional government. He also has the prerogative to call elections.

The 2007 election results represented an essential change in Moroccan parliamentary policy, since up until then it had been the political left, represented in the parties of the socialist court, which symbolized the country's politics. However, after 25 November 2011, when Moroccan Islamists (Justice and Development Party or PJD) won simple majority legislative elections, political Islam came to play a role as a protagonist in Moroccan politics through lawmaking and sustaining a national Islamic identity while avoiding extensive influence from western progression. (Tobin, 2012: 98). The main legal Islamist party in Morocco is the PJD. It has origins in radical sectors linked to the Muslim Brothers that emerged in the early 1970s, and is a group which attempted to enter the system through the institutional path (Tobin, 2012: 104). This strategy of entry into the PJD system was compromised following the terrorist attacks in Casablanca in May 2003. The post-revolt constitutional reform process, with which the monarchy attempted to defuse the protest movement, was supported by the PJD which reinforced national unity behind an Islamic monarchy.

The words democracy and sacredness are not compatible in the mind of the Moroccan king, which sums up what some think of the reforms carried out by Mohammed VI. The Moroccan regime continues to have large democratic deficits. Furthermore, in the competitive authoritarian governments many traditional elements survive, and religious values and institutions are of great importance. This is why Eva Bellin in *Reconsidering the robustness of authoritarianism in the Middle East: Lessons from the Arab Spring* in 2012 emphasises the importance of the religious

factor to justify the solidity of authoritarianism in the Middle East. It defends the fact that Islamic culture is a hinderance for countries in becoming more democratic institutions. And it also adds other determining factors, such as the existence of a weak civil society, which is the case in Morocco, which would lead to the consequent ineffectiveness of democracy.

The king still dominates the state yet remains very popular. His granting of more rights to women and his efforts to combat poverty yielded positive results. Critics say he is an astute politician, but most Moroccans give him credit for the stability of the country. The monarch can also take advantage of the calm by positioning Morocco as an investment centre for European manufacturers. Tax incentives and good logistics have attracted investors. Car production, led by Renault, a major French producer, has more than doubled since 2011. The aeronautics industry has also taken off (Boukhars, 2014).

The process of Islamisation in the form of politics and crafting a national identity has increased the complexity of the monarchies in the Arab world. So far, this situation has created more advantages than disadvantages to the stability of the *Makhzen*, since it has divided the main sectors of the Islamist opposition, and with that, reduced the challenge to the regime. But the wave of democratisation has put Islamists at the forefront. Although the response to the regime could come from abroad, from the good relations between the Moroccan monarch and the major world powers throughout history, on issues as relevant as the current crisis of refugees, it can be seen that Morocco has been able to align among the victors in a general way (Tobin 107). This has helped the country to maintain a vision in the long run of foreign relations at all times. Almost uninterrupted support from countries such as the United States, France and Saudi Arabia has generated a great deal of legitimacy from the outside, leading to greater stability.

A regime's reaction to social mobilisation is handled with certain caution. On his ascent to the throne, Mohammed VI tried to appear in national and foreign public opinion as a monarch committed to change and the social modernisation of his country. Later in his ruling, the balance or the materialisation of such commitment leaves much to be desired in some areas, such as freedom of the press, human rights, or repression of social protest. In fact, it continues to be repressed insofar as it impairs the open-minded, modern, and democratic image that the *Makhzen* intends to convey of itself.

The Moroccan society had reached a degree of mobilisation at the end of the reign of Hassan II not well perceived from the *Makhzen* (Hollis, 2012: 67). Thus, the most populous demonstrations in the Alawite kingdom have been since 1999, in matters considered important by Moroccan society, such as support for the Palestinian cause, defending women's rights, and the re-Islamisation of society. This claim manifested only the ideological complexity of the Moroccan citizenship, a palpable sign of the evolution that the country was undergoing.

Arab society has historically been viewed as fragmented and divided according to ideological lines that curb any aspiration to formulate national demands and mobilisations for political changes. Both Islamists and liberals promote their causes by showing their disagreements on almost every issue, from human rights to the integrity of polygamy, and also by including them in state institutions, in the form of the Consultative Council. In the main state educational and judicial institutions, the Islamists are left free, but in the areas of the economy, foreign affairs, culture and the pan-Arab media, the regime enrols people with liberal tendencies as clients and beneficiaries of their generosity (Campante, Filipe & Chor, 2012: 161). The positioning of Islamists and liberals in different spheres guarantees the continuity of the policy of 'divide and conquer'. As a result, Islamists and liberals spend most of their time attacking one another rather than working on a common agenda of political reform in monarchies such as Morocco.

The monarchy was strengthened instead of being weakened by the regional imbalance created since the Arab revolts began: a Saudi-sponsored imbalance in Egypt through financial intervention in Syria and Iraq through indirect interventions (rebel groups and pro-Saudi agents) in Bahrain by sending ground troops and launching military attacks in Yemen (Kamrava, 2012: 68). These interventions helped to show the Saudis the power of their government, the illusory nature of political change in neighbouring countries, and their high cost in the short term. In this way, Saudi internal stability seems to be inversely proportional to the instability of the region around the kingdom (Khondker, 2011: 678). Violence in these countries was enough to intimidate local Saudi actors and to stifle any beginning of mass protests similar to those in other parts of the Arab world.

Saudi intervention in the Arab countries took many forms: from oil diplomacy, to counter revolutionary tactics of support from previous regimes, to direct military attacks. All represent

survival strategies that worked to repress riots and social unrest. The stability or contestation to a regime is marked, to a great extent, by the legitimacy which it enjoys in a certain period of time. Morocco, in contrast, is now considered a stable regime, which is progressively introducing economic, political and social changes, although in some cases, these only serve to preserve institutions as they are (Campante, Filipe & Chor 168). The monarchy is deeply rooted in Moroccan society because of its long history, the role of the army as a nexus between the king and the people, and the progressive inclusion of certain demands arising within society, among other reasons.

Those in charge of any ministerial department emphasise this idea of normalcy. They reproach the media, especially foreigners, who do not know how to portray the day-to-day or the efforts of the government to improve the standard of living. And they lament that the spokespersons and minority sectors are criticised. In order to fully comprehend the Moroccan situation, it is essential to analyse the political structure and environment and sources of loyalty, especially from those who hold the most power in the country.

The Moroccan monarchy: Elite co-optation

Abdellah Hammoudi's most influential book, *Master and Disciple: The Cultural Foundations of Moroccan Authoritarianism*, published in 1997, identifies many important points about the Moroccan kingdom and its fight to remain unified. This work helps us better understand the cultural grounds upon which the Moroccan monarchy, from the times of the sultans to that of the kings, was able to remain the centre of decision-making and the ultimate symbol of unity for the country.

For Hammoudi, it seems that the foundation of authority derives partly from the support of the privileged classes, who keep the system in place for reasons of personal material gain. Merouan Mekouar builds upon Hammoudi's idea of the monarchy's system of meritocracy in his 2018 article "Beyond the Model Reform Image: Morocco's Politics of Elite Co-Optation".

Mohammed resumed his father's strategy of establishing close relations with the nation's political and economic elite. Mekouar cites Guazzone and Pioppi (2009: 6) and Boukhars (2011: 53) to explain the neo-liberal policies that Mohammed VI enacted during his rule which served

as a guise for true democratic reform. They authors "the adoption of neo-liberal policies in the form of privatisation, liberalisation, and administrative deregulation and the concomitant retreat of the state from the delivery of public goods" which allowed the monarchy to establish two things. First, it separated some financial responsibilities between the state and authorities, and produced "a new generation of business elites dependent on the state for regulation, arbitration, and access to economic opportunities." (Mekouar 2018: 3) This drastically improved the economic status of those close to the king including loyalist families and those historically against the monarchy which reinforced the monarchy's resilience further during Mohammed VI's reign. (Mekouar, 2018: 3)

The case of de-liberalization in Morocco:

Another significant phenomenon that the literature reveals about the resilience of the Moroccan monarchy is the case of de-liberalisation in the country and the impact of international relations. This particularly relates to western countries and their fight against global terrorism, which has significantly strengthened the monarchy's role in these plans and has subsequently prepped the regime well to defend itself during the Arab Spring. Following the ascension of Mohamed VI to the throne, along came a belief that the country would experience a wave of democratisation following initiatives started by his father as well as increased ties with the west. However, although Morocco did become more involved with western countries, in particular France and the US, the supposed transition from a complete system of authoritarianism to a "hybrid" regime did not occur. In fact, authoritarianism continued to flourish throughout the kingdom. (Collins, 2013)

Literature from Collins (2013) and Wyrtzen (2011) discuss Morocco's willingness to support Western regional interests has allowed the king to extend his system of meritocracy and elite co-optation even beyond the kingdom's borders, particularly with superpowers and their campaigns against terrorism and peace processes in the Middle East and Africa. Morocco's unique geographic location and long history of stability and peace in an otherwise tumultuous region (in comparison to the Middle East, North Africa, and sub-Sahara Africa) made it an appealing partner for Western powers. Morocco took advantage of its position to create a "diplomatic niche" for these powers in exchange for complete freedom in carrying out its

domestic rule as it pleased, free from outside pressure to create genuine liberal or democratic reforms. (Collins, 2013: 3) The king did carry out small reforms for the lower classes such as sub-par housing and rural electrification, as well as providing access to new renting options for the emerging middle class which proved to be useful during the Arab Spring as the king gained loyalty of those who were most primed to protest. (Merkouar, 2018: 5) Nevertheless, the regime made sure that these reforms involved a form of "liberalisation" which would never threaten the monarchy's monopoly on power, or actually strengthened its authoritarian rule as previously discussed. (Collins, 2013: 3)

This sort of diplomatic role which allowed the king to increase his authoritarianism was especially true during the global war on terrorism (GWOT). As it turns out, several Arab countries were given a certain leeway in their own authoritarian rule and thus developed significant power and political influence in the region while teaming up with the west to combat terrorism. (Collins, 2013: 6) After 9/11, despite the global pro-democratisation campaign by the Bush administration, the priority to stop authoritarian regimes in the MENA region shifted to "stopping" terrorism by rooting out extremist groups with the help of the very same authoritarian regimes they hoped to democratise. The cooperation during the GWOT campaign between the US and Morocco, for example, included "enhanced interrogation" which "was outsourced to MENA countries that received 'extraordinarily rendered' suspected terrorists." (Collins, 2013: 6) After Morocco experienced its own domestic terror attack in 2003 in Casablanca, the previous focus on reforming the monarchy's totalitarian rule shifted away from the palace and gave certain privileges to the monarchy to hone in on domestic terror threats without limitations, similar to the US' own strategy of overstepping citizens' rights in the name of national security. (Wyrtzen, 2011: 6)

Morocco has also played a significant role in furthering US regional interests in the Arab-Israeli conflict, even as early as the 1990s when King Hassan II established close relations with the Morocco has also played a significant role in furthering US regional interests in the Arab-Israeli conflict, particularly in the 1990s when King Hassan II established close relations with the Clinton Administration who relied "implicitly" on Morocco. (Collins, 2013: 13) Even before then, Morocco had sporadically engaged with Israel in the 1960s and 70s, helped the US broker a

peace treaty between Israel and the Palestinians during the 1993 Oslo Accords, and most recently in 2020, has established diplomatic ties with Israel. (Collins, 2014: 13-14) It is evident now more than ever that the support for Israel which started with Hassan II and continued with Mohamed VI has been to prevent the POLISARIO movement in the Western Sahara from developing. (Collins, 2014: 18) As a strong ally in the region, the Moroccan monarchy has faced little international pressure to scale back on its authoritarian measures in ruling as a result of its cooperation with western regional interests and initiatives.

Civil-military relations:

Another way the Moroccan monarchy has expanded and maintained its power is through its civil-military relations. The diverse apparatus of power at the hands of the monarchy (which comprises bureaucracies inside the *Makhzen*, the institution which governs every aspect of civil government) and the Royal Military Household (in charge of the military forces including the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, the Royal Gendarmerie, and the Royal Guard) was kept in a constant state of rivalry, with the king standing as an indispensable mediator, which facilitated a dependency on favours done by the palace to keep the different networks' allegiance only to the king himself. This relationship between the king and the bureaucracies in the state apparatus ensures that the king is capable of crippling any coalition that might represent a danger for his supremacy. In order for the king to keep this relationship going, he has to constantly keep those networks loyal to the monarchy through a constant distribution of resources to prevent any key actors from mutiny, as in the case of the *coups d'état* of 1971 and 1972.

Previous literature discusses the role of the monarchy in civil-military relations in long persisting regimes such as in Jordan and Morocco. One study finds that both monarchies are similar in their historical legacy regarding state formation, the attraction of a monarchical system to a majority of the population, and the control that the monarchy maintains over its military. (El Kurd, 2014: 3) El Kurd also confirms previous literature that both monarchies have subordinated their militaries and politicized them in a way that has strengthened the central regimes and kept at bay threats of possible military takeover or betrayal. El Kurd also reinforces evidence of the international institutional methods which have allowed the monarchy to maintain its control, as

discussed in the de-liberalization section in this chapter. (El Kurd, 2014: 8) To understand the case of Morocco in depth, the very beginnings of the military ought to be discussed.

Establishment of FAR and Coup proofing

Following the coup coups d'état attempts in 1971 and 1972 against King Hassan II, those involved were put on trial, or otherwise thrown in prisons which bordered on human rights abuses to prove as an example to others of what was to come to those who try to overthrow the monarch in Morocco. The following policy steps of depoliticisation and coup proofing allowed tight monarchical control over the military. Furthermore, further literature shows that institutionalisation has allowed the Moroccan army to be governed by a clear set of constitutional and legal norms, principles, and procedures with a system based on meritocracy, allowing the state and civilians to prevent any struggles of power between the military and Moroccan civilians. (Saidy, 2018)

The Moroccan army was founded by King Mohamed V during his reign in postcolonial France. It was a very small army and was placed under the direct supervision of his son, Hassan. In order to endow it with a legal corpus, the alliance was initially codified by a wave of military legislation, starting with the Dahir (Decree) in 1956 which established the *Forces Armées Royales* (Royal Armed Forces, FAR), and then with another Dahir the same year which created the Department of National Defence the nations national defence administration. (Saidy, 2018: 97) The FAR was created to secure the authority of the king and has proved to do so since the rule of Mohammed V. The name *FAR* actually implies that to be a loyal servant of the Moroccan Army you are also a loyal servant to the Alawite throne. (Saidy, 2018: 98)

The FAR became the beacon for national independence and was meant to ensure sovereignty and contribute to the economic and social development of the new independent state. At the same time, the newly developed relationship between the armed forces and palace was established to help deal with the challenges the makhzen faced in the newly independent state. During this time, the country was facing issues regarding poverty, regional and ethnic divisions (Arabs and Berbers), the shortage of financial resources for development and infrastructure, and the

establishment of certain key institutions like national banks. (Saidy, 2018: 98) The monarchy was working to find solutions to these problems, and looked to the army since it was perceived as experienced, competent, and capable of carrying out successful programs of national infrastructure development such road building, electrification, and the development of running water facilities in urban and rural areas. (Saidy, 2018: 98) This allowed the king to place its trust in the army which spurred the king to reorganise the army.

This defense administration and the role of the army by means of what scholars commonly call a 'coup-proofing' strategy. It was based on five elements: initiation of a process of legitimisation of the political regime; building parallel security institutions, review of the defence legislation and army recruitment policy; and use of the Western Sahara conflict as nationalist cement. The implementation of this coup-proofing was particularly hard, given the history of strong army involvement in politics after independence. (Saidy, 2018: 100) Therefore, although the principle of civilian control over the military is clearly stated in the Constitution, which establishes a coherent regime of civil-military relations, in practice, all decisions are concentrated at the top of the state – the king and his entourage. The design and conduct of Morocco's defence policy is therefore based on two main features: the king's monopoly and the weak role of parliament and the government. (Saidy, 2018: 103)

Transparency is the best way to build public consensus on a government and the services provided by the armed forces, and a successful defence policy relies on transparent decision making procedures. This goes together with the growing role of civil society in the process of democratisation. Traditionally, defence policy in Morocco has been surrounded by opacity: there is never any dissemination of information to the general public, and no publication of official documents such as white papers on national security strategy. However, in this regard, there have been two major developments. First, the new 2011 Constitution improved access to information by stating in article that

"citizens have the right of access to information held by the public administration, the elected institutions and the organisms invested with missions of public service. The right to information may only be limited by the law, with the objective of assuring the protection of all

which concerns national defence, the internal and external security of the State, and the private life of persons (…).” (Saidy, 2018)

Another unique aspect of Jordanian and Moroccan society and their monarchs are their close ties to local tribes, or mercenary armies in military policy. (El Kurd, 2014: 15) The regimes maintain a careful balance between maintaining control over the military and preserving their loyalty, creating an illusion of dependability and professionalism across the country. The overall strategy of the monarch in Morocco, and similarly in Jordan, is to spread decision making amongst the authority, and maintain power that is much more expansive compared to other regimes in the region. (El Kurd, 2014: 3, 38) Specifically in Morocco, the king completely abolished the office of the minister of defence, and “actively promoted Islamist thought within the armed forces by appealing to the authority of his lineage”, appealing to the divine right in which justified the establishment of the monarchy in the first place. (El Kurd, 2014: 29) This was done to counter secularist movements and members of the military who were aware of class inequalities that were involved in attempted coups. In fact, since the attempted coups of 1979, the control of the defense forces were transferred directly to the king through the Interior Ministry which then became the “core” of the elite. (El Kurd, 2014: 40) The king has also maintained control over internal and external security operations restricting independence or power of the military, whilst maintaining direct oversight over the armed forces to avoid attempts of politicization or insurrection. Finally, the king made initiatives to recruit Arab soldiers over native Amazighi Moroccans to ensure their majority, while also increasing the number of military units to prevent power from concentrating in small groups. (El Kurd, 2014: 90) This has proven to be especially helpful in maintaining the loyalty of the army to the monarch, but further steps were taken even further to prevent future coups.

On the whole, the fight against corruption reflects that there is a deep interaction between the political, military and economic structures in the Moroccan context. It is used by the Makhzen not only for building military capacity, but also for promoting the image of the King as a reformer and for the renewal of the military elites because the retirement will allow younger officers to move up the ranks from a new generation educated and formed in national military institutions. (Hamoudi, 2012, 204-9.)

The Arab Spring and Feb 20th Movement:

The reasons as to why the monarchy and its army embraced a pro‑reform movement without suppressing protesters during the Arab Spring are multiple. First, the internal security services (police and auxiliary forces) were able to limit the number of protests, control the riots, and repress activists involved in them without military assistance of any form. Second, the protests launched by the February 20 youth movement, inspired by the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions, remained firmly 'horizontal' without any hierarchical structure and did not pose a threat to the survival of the monarchy – something that would have required the intervention of the army. Indeed, regime change was not on the agenda of this movement. The protesters only called for a parliamentary monarchy in order to limit the king's powers, end corruption, and bring about social justice, employment, and dignity. Third, the protests did not degenerate into mass violence leading to the formation of armed rebel groups intent on toppling the regime and overtaking some areas by force, as in Yemen, Syria and Libya. Fourth, King Mohamed VI responded realistically and quickly after 17 days of protests by announcing constitutional reforms, followed by early legislative elections. In general, the Arab Spring demonstrated the loyalty of the Moroccan army to the regime and its degree of institutionalisation. Unlike other Arab countries, no disintegration or defections occurred. (Saidy, 2018: 107)

Military siding with protestors:

The literature shows that there in the case of the Arab Spring, if the military sided with protestors as opposed to the regime, a regime change would occur. This was the case in Tunisia and Egypt specifically. A large argument as to why the Jasmine Revolution was so different from the rest was that security forces sided with protestors. Ben 'Ali has refused to surrender to the demands of Tunisians and instead ordered brute force such as air strikes against dissidents. However, the military refused to respect his wishes and urged him to step down which happened two days after his initial request. (Chenoweth, 2011) The military was a critical source of Ben 'Ali's power, thus once he lost authority over his citizens and then over his security forces he was forced to leave his position and flee the country.

In the case of Egypt, the army was expected to remain largely neutral throughout the Arab Spring, or in the very least there would be no violence or deaths resulting from the protests that dominated Tahrir Square. After weeks of trying to supress the millions of protestors who had gathered to demand Mubarak's ousting to no avail, the military followed Tunisia's steps and urged him to back down. (Chenoweth, 2011) When the military or security forces are able to relate or sympathize with protestors in some capacity, repression ordered or even initially carried out can certainly backfire. Despite being able to repress their fellow countrymen in the early stages of protesting in Tunisia and Egypt, they were unable to resort to direct violence or complete suppression, which ultimately led them to ousting the leaders.

The key factor to mention in Egypt is that the protestors refused to physically threaten policemen or resort to violence during the protests which had permitted the military from remaining neutral. A study shows that out of over 100 major nonviolent uprisings between 1900 and 2006, nearly 90% of them faced the opposite: violent repression. (Chenoweth, 2011) In the protests where demonstrators were met with violent repression, nearly 50% of those movements succeeded in their goals due to the backlash, both domestically and internationally, the regimes received for using violence against nonviolent protests. (Chenoweth, 2011) When compared to movements and campaigns that did resort to violence, they had only succeeded in their fight to overturn oppressive regimes 25% of the time. (Chenoweth, 2011) This speaks to the importance of publicity, as repression may only backfire when non-participating citizens are aware or even when the international community is aware of human rights abuses against nonviolent demonstrators. The key to this is that the violence must be documented, which has resulted in harassment, suppression, expulsion, and sometimes even the deaths of journalists during revolutions, such as in Syria. Regimes may also go to lengths to shut down internet, electricity, or censor social media in order to ensure that the documentation of their abuses is not shared or distributed.

Part III: The Power of Media

For decades now, the media has become a powerful source of communication between authoritarian figures and citizens. Media is defined as the main means of mass communication

(especially television, radio, newspapers, and the Internet) regarded collectively. While social media offers citizens a platform to express their discontent with the state and to gain support from others who share the same sentiment, more traditional forms of media such as newspapers and television news channels are monitored by political leaders in authoritarian regimes.

There are many ways for political leaders to convey a message or spread disinformation about opponents to citizens with success. For example, political groups, lobbyists, or politicians themselves may use an indirect approach by spreading messages using syntax to influence citizens' beliefs. This is done in the way they phrase ideas, or in the type of press they allow journalists to publish, these are both ways in which they are able to influence peoples' beliefs. This is a particularly powerful tool if political figures know that certain news will cause fear or unrest, as they are able to filter news pieces and distribute information to citizens in a delicate manner. The negative aspect of this theory comes when authoritarian regime leaders use these tools to dictate what their citizens should know about and keep them in the dark about very important subjects. For example, in Morocco, politicians that are in favour with the monarchy will only have good media and politicians that are going to be let go only have negative media coverage; this is exactly what happened when Abdelilah Benkirane fell out of favour and Saad Eddine El Othmani took his place as prime minister.

This practice has often been debated to define it as either ethical or unethical. Many declare that to lie is to be unethical, but to twist the truth by using different synonyms is actually ethical. There are many technicalities that make this 'spin-doctoring' acceptable; two words can technically be synonyms but not have the same connotations. In research conducted by the authors Qadeer and Shehzad, the concept was explained in a very simple way. They stated as an example: "instead of sneaked-in, tramp, and dictatorial, one should write entered quietly, homeless unemployed, and centralised authority" (Qadeer et al., p.26, 2017). With this example, it is clear to see that accusing someone of being sneaky as opposed to describing someone as simply being quiet do not have the same connotations. In the same way, it is simpler for authorities to call one of their own clumsy or air-headed instead of admitting that a mistake has been made. This is what usually leads to citizens revolting against repressive states, since they want the media to start showing real problems; in other words, they want to be aware of everything that is going on in their country, not only what the authorities want them to see and in

the way they want them to see it. Citizens believe that they should truly know who they are electing and what mistakes they are making to ensure they vote for capable politicians who will listen to their demands and help the country grow.

Since it is print media such as newspapers that reach the majority of citizens in a community, political forces are obliged to form partnerships with heads of these media sources, informing them of the messages they want to send out, while the print media formulates the subjects with the connotations needed. However, over the years, print media has twisted messages from political forces to shape the ideas they want to convey (Qadeer et al., 2017). This has created much disagreement between citizens and authorities since ideas are no longer being formulated as they should. In Morocco, some reporters have even decided to become independent in order to not have to abide by such censorship requirements. In 2016, seven journalists, Abdessamad Ait Aicha, Hicham Mansouri, Maria Moukrim, Rachid Tarik, Hicham Khreibchi, and Maati Monjib, faced jail-time because they created an app called Story Maker, where citizens could anonymously share news; the government thought it could pose a threat and facilitate protests such as the ones that happened on 20 February 2011.

In his book of 1928, *Propaganda*, Edward Bernays explains how the media can affect the way people think and shape their tastes, desires and values. Bernays insists that power comes with the control of information; he states that controlling information pushes the individual to behave and think in the way that society expects them to. It is through media networks that most ideas are transmitted, which gives the people who control information the upper hand on the way the population in a certain country or society will perceive situations and issues, depending on how they are presented. He goes on to state that any type of government, whether a monarchy or a republic, is in need of public acceptance due to the power of the large numbers that can lead to revolts where the public becomes dissatisfied or frustrated by its leaders' actions. Bernays insists on the power that comes with the control of information and specifies the role of paramount importance played by information channels in shaping the thought and behaviour of a whole community. Moreover, Bernays claims that this power of media over the masses is a tool that enables democracy, adding another voice that allows citizens to be more aware and reaching the mass as a whole, conveying one standardised message. Through this process, information can

flow easily and reach more ears, thus creating awareness and spreading ‘knowledge’ across the country.

However, this last point can only be true if basic freedom-of-speech rights are preserved and political intent is not part of the conveyed message. If this is not the case, the media becomes a tool in the government’s hands, which as stated above, is a controversial issue when it comes to the ethical side of such practices.

***Arab Spring and Media - Mohammed VI’s open communication with citizens*:**

There is no doubt that the late Hassan II had established a strong bond with his citizens during his reign via mass media channels. This was particularly done through television and radio to fortify the “sacred legitimacy” of the Moroccan monarchy to the masses, or nonelite in Morocco. (Hafez & Sylomovics, 2013: 266) The soft authoritarianism that Hassan II was known for, which demonstrated the obvious submission of government officials to the regime, was done in order to solidify the public’s acceptance of the regime. This was done via the media by streaming the rituals notables were expected to perform when dealing with the palace, such as hand kissing, forms of prostration, and demonstration of court etiquette. (Hammoudi, 1997: 43) This laid the foundation for establishing a strong connection between the palace and the public, and notably the king, via the media which would serve Hassan II’s son during his reign and especially during the Arab Spring.

When the Jasmine revolution launched in 2010, activists in Morocco quickly put out a call to action, or protests, to join the movement on February 20th. The main concerns of those involved in the Moroccan protests included issues of unemployment, class inequality, corruption at all levels of government, and police brutality. However, an overturning of the monarchy was not on the list of a majority of protestors in Morocco. (El Kurd, 2014: 52) Almost immediately, or at least within a few days of the February 20th movement, the king went to the media to announce intended changes on a constitutional level, or constitutional reform, that was meant to appease protest demands. The king had also invited those in the current government to become involved and provide recommendations on the constitutional changes. Although protestors were not willing to take part in the reformation process, the announcement via the media significantly

reduced protest activity. (El Kurd, 2014: 53) The military as well as other affiliate organizations did not express discontent with the regime or makhzen which served to establish trust between the king and his people during the Arab Spring.

The Media as a Government Tool

It is important to note that the media in the Arab world as a whole has historically been used as a tool for authoritarian regimes in power to gather support and shape public opinion in a way that is favourable to them. This has almost become a 'tradition'; journalists at local Arab news outlets have long had their reporting skills and abilities hindered by following the status-quo and withstanding the manipulation by the regimes in place. As such, local Arab journalism had failed to develop alternative voices to that of the regimes they supported; they had become hostage to the politics of the ruling elite. The laws in place did not offer protection for journalists to express even remotely dissident views, and freedom of speech was tolerated to the extent that it did not criticise the powers in place. In Egypt, during the uprisings, the local media outlets, which followed government directives, purposefully misrepresented the scale of the protests going on in the streets of the country. They referred to the participants as thugs, criminals and even agents of foreign actors working only for the disruption of the country.

To understand the state of media institutions in the Arab world prior to the uprisings, it is interesting to look at country-specific state regulations of media. This helps to identify the restraints put in place in law on the freedom of the press to express itself freely. In a perfect world, the press should act as a watchdog; it is intended to keep watch over the actions of the government and ensure that heads of state, public officials and other people in positions of authority do not abuse their power at the expense of the population. In the Arab world, however, the legal landscape is laid out in such a way that the press generally acts as a megaphone for state propaganda.

Arab journalists have to be fairly vigilant and sensitive to the political landscape of their countries. There is, as mentioned earlier, a lack of legal protection for journalists that step over the line, coupled with the notion that national leaders do not welcome transparency and accountability. Matt J. Duffy explores in an article, published for the prestigious Berkley Journal,

the legal landscape surrounding press freedom in six Arabian Peninsula countries. He writes that the penal codes of these countries criminalises defamation, but also critical and insulting statements against heads of state. He also finds that all these countries have outlawed the spread of 'false news'. On the surface, this may seem as a positive clause to ensure that news outlets only report the 'truth'; however, in practice, this policy has been used to crush emerging news stories that are, in fact, genuine. It has been argued that regulation against false news provides governments with far too much opportunity to confine journalism to the status quo.

Prior to the Arab Spring, the main alternative to local media and news outlets in the Middle East and North Africa was regional Arab satellite television, with channels such as Al Jazeera. These offered a window for the public to bypass censorship and government-led propaganda. It is not to be forgotten that citizens had the use of social media to communicate with each other about their discontent. What should also be remembered is that Morocco was rated 'selective' by the OpenNet Initiative (ONI) for its restriction of Internet tools; these would be the tools used by citizens during their time of need. At the time of the unrest, the government was able to disseminate and shape information as it wished, especially when it came to revolts and citizen discontent.

Nonetheless, it was mainly through social media channels that the Arab Spring began, being a complicated tool to control. It is through this same device that Arab people were able to express their malcontent and give voice to their ideas, by 'hiding' behind screens to bring together a rising movement, and to realise that these thoughts and positions were commonly shared with fellow citizens. This resulted in societies being able to make their voices heard as each individual realised other people shared his or her views.

In Morocco, the state reportedly keeps a close eye on the content shared by Moroccans (*Morocco Country Report | Freedom on the Net 2017*, 2017). More than that, unofficial orders are said to be given to media companies to avoid practices such as whistleblowing or reporting controversial matters. In fact, this report suggests that the state maintains citizens' silence through fear, as many journalists have faced juridical punishments that caused them to go to prison for 'defamation' or 'slander', thus forcing journalists and normal citizens into a form of self-censorship (*Morocco Country Report | Freedom on the Net 2017*, 2017). One can say that in

Morocco, when the media fails to influence the public opinion, other measures are taken in order to keep the peace and violate freedom of speech in some way – mainly through censorship, whether direct or indirect.

Media Censorship in Morocco

Censorship in the Moroccan media has long been correlated with news about certain political subjects. Since Morocco is a monarchy that has been ruled by the same families for centuries, there are numerous subjects that remain taboo for the printed press. Social media, however, has been an uncensored means of communication for citizens that are discontented with certain Moroccan political decisions. Within this section, the censorship of Moroccan media will be analysed in a broad manner as an introduction to the media and the Arab Spring. It will set the basis of what limits were to be considered before the Arab Spring and why this may have led to dissatisfied citizens. This subject is analysed through critical reasoning and based on true events that took place in Morocco.

Every country in the world is rated on the extent of freedom of speech it applies in its economic, political and social realms. Because much of the Arab Spring in Morocco took place online through citizens' use of social media, it is necessary to assess the amount of censorship used on the Internet in Morocco. The ONI is a system based on the collaboration between Harvard University's Berkman Center, the University of Ottawa's SecDev Group and the University of Toronto's Citizen Lab (The Guardian, 2012). It evaluates the extent of censorship each country applies to the Internet to calculate how free it is in its subjects of speech. The ONI takes into consideration four categories for each country and evaluates them on a scale ranging from almost 'no evidence of filtering' to 'persuasive filtering' (The Guardian). These four categories include the subjects of political, social, conflict and security, and Internet tools. Political matter includes information on the current government or its policies, including different human rights and laws (The Guardian). Social matter includes content that would be negatively regarded by the general population; these subjects could be about drugs, sexuality and such (The Guardian). Conflict and security subjects would include military content; for example, disputes between countries or armed conflicts (The Guardian). Last but not least are Internet tools that are a means of

communication for people or a service provided by the Internet that may be blocked by a country (The Guardian).

The ONI group scale is a great way of ranking Morocco against other countries. Morocco was ranked with two on a scale of three in social content, conflict and security, and Internet tools, meaning it is selective with the information; the closer to three a country is, the more conservative it is in its media content. Political content filtering in Morocco came up with zero as a score, meaning there was no evidence of filtering of political information at all. Although this could be construed to be false information, there is a good reason for it: only 41.3% of Moroccans are Internet users and only a small percentage of those people are actually active on political websites.

Although the Moroccan media is now much more open after the death of King Hassan II, "the nation's media continues to face harassment, censorship, prosecution, hefty fines and jail time for 'offending' the king, the monarchy, the nation, territorial integrity (particularly in respect to the Western Sahara), God, or Islam" (Morocco). That is, Morocco has no concrete laws to censor the press about political affairs, but it can accuse reporters of trying to incite protests by speaking against the monarchy, which is against the law. Therefore, it can be said that reporters simply know not to speak against the monarchy because of previous reporters' cases. Morocco was ranked 122 out of 173 countries by Reporters Sans Frontières because of its history of shutting down newspapers, blocking websites, refusing to allow coverage of trials, and discouraging the movement of the press (Morocco). This information goes against the one of the ranking of Morocco's political press censorship, since it clearly shows that it does censor by the means stated above. Morocco's lack of transparency in the press played a big part in the protests during the Arab Spring because of its rigid control over the media.

Along with there being illegal subjects to write about in the press there are also some subjects that remain taboo simply because authorities have decided them to be. Subjects that can be penalised for being broached in the media in Morocco include those that are "prejudicial to Islam, the monarchy, territorial integrity, or public order" (Belkassem). This covers any subject ranging from criticising who is in power to anti-Muslim comments or texts. The punishment of such press by the authorities could include jail time and heavy fines along with having to answer

to a court. The punishment varies on the gravity of the statement written about in the press and especially on the amount of attention it received. For instance, if it was related to a newspaper article, the authorities would be much more inclined to clamp down on it than if it were to be found on the Internet with a few hundred views. Nonetheless, this restricts Moroccans' freedom of expression, which causes tension between the authorities and citizens.

In the early 2000s, Morocco took numerous juridical measures against many journalists. Most of them were accused of defamation when, in most cases, there was nothing but reporting of unethical practices by highly influential political figures (*Morocco: Censorship, criminal prosecution of journalists on the rise*, 2016). This habit of arresting reporters who are simply doing their jobs by reporting the truth is another indicator of the high level of censorship present in Morocco and is mainly meant to prevent the unethical behaviour of certain political figures from being exposed to the public. Another measure can be to discourage journalists to question the ethicality of the highly positioned in the social scale, thus creating a sort of policy of fear that diminishes the risk of scandals and leaks of information that the state decides is 'better kept secret'.

Morocco has, however, made a huge step forward in terms of freedom of speech. As stated before, during the reign of King Hassan II very little to no freedom of speech was allowed in the so-called 'years of lead', when censorship in Morocco reached its peak. People at the time could barely think about expressing their discontent towards the system in place, as the holiness of the Throne was never allowed to be doubted. Back then, the monarchy had total control over citizens' behaviour and punishments were far more severe than they are now. This formed the basis of censorship in Morocco. Although this censorship has partly decreased, it is still omnipresent in the kingdom and is still closely related to the 'sacred' monarchical institution.

In the case of Morocco, although the state does not block or erase content from the Internet, complete control is kept over the content shared and the existing websites located in Morocco (*Morocco Country Report | Freedom on the Net 2017*, 2017). The same report suggests that the Moroccan government is given the legal right to delete and clean content that is deemed an invitation to violence or to disrupt the public order by the anti-terrorism law, which was passed a few years back. In other words, the Moroccan state has always tried – successfully – to filter

content shared through media tools and to keep control over what should and should not be made public. In fact, it has evolved and learned how to adapt and control new media channels, namely the Internet and social media. Through legal restrictions and business-related influence, the Moroccan authorities and, more specifically, the monarchy, have put in place for many decades a strong system based on fear and smart alternatives to control what can and cannot be said.

The Moroccan Monarchy and the National Press

The Moroccan legal landscape does offer protection to certain freedoms of expression. However, the country's legal texts are vague and do not offer clear lines between what is legal and illegal to state. In general, any reporting that is deemed as offensive towards the monarchy, public officials, or questions of national security puts the reporter at risk of legal action. In addition to the restrictive legal landscape of freedom of expression in Morocco, the press as an institution is owned by a variety of actors, mainly political and monarchical ones, which will be explored in the following paragraphs. These facts were acquired from credible sources to determine the owners of the variety of actors playing a role in the suppression of media coverage. Much investigation happened after the Arab Spring to eventually put an end to the vast amount of censorship conducted by the government.

An investigation led by Le Desk and the non-governmental organisation Reporters Sans Frontières (RSF) revealed the major players in the media sector in Morocco, but also the interests that they share. According to the Media Ownership Monitor, nine out of the 36 media companies affiliated with the most influential media outlets of the country are linked, either directly or indirectly, to the state, the government or the monarchy. The latter has perhaps the most links to the press sector, with its ownership of the Societé Nationale d'Investissement (SNI). The SNI has holdings in four main media companies, three of which are among the five most important of the media sector (SOREAD, EcoMedias and Radio Méditerranée Internationale). The study led by Le Desk and RSF showed that the ownership over national media may be pluralistic, but it is far from diverse. This means that the main owners of these outlets constitute a cartel of shared interests at the junction of the worlds of politics and business. The investigation also showed that the royal family and the state mainly dominate the television sector. Similarly, radio is vastly dominated by the state, even though small companies began to occupy a minority during the past

decade. The printed press, on the other hand, is divided between Arabic papers largely owned by journalists, and French papers, owned mainly by the national heavyweights of the Moroccan business world. Lastly, online media remains the most fragmented in terms of ownership.

The study led by Le Desk and RSF demonstrated that while the Moroccan state has not held a monopoly over television and radio outlets since 2005, it still captures the majority of public audiences in Morocco. The state-owned SNRT gathers 26.73% of audience through its radio stations and 8.67% through its television channels (SNRT, 2017). SOREAD, owned at 72% by the Ministry of Economics and 20% by the SNI, has 5.6% of radio and 33% of television audiences through the national TV channel 2M (Maghreb Radio, 2017). It is clear that with these shares at play, much refinement can be done with the press that needs to become public. It is evident that a newspaper with a 72% share by the Ministry of Economics is not likely to publish unfavourable coverage of the Minister of Economics. Although there are no laws that clearly define what should and should not be mentioned in a newspaper, the owners of the newspapers are able to do what they wish with the information that is printed.

The property-related factor mentioned above ensures that a part of the media authorities will certainly and always stand by the state in all circumstances. There are, on the other hand, independent media outlets, but due to other reasons they have little to no impact or freedom to convey messages without being closely watched by the authorities.

Independent media networks may be tempted to offer alternative news and opinions to that of their mainstream counterparts on their respective platforms. However, since the independence of Morocco, they have had to be careful to not cross the ‘red lines’ of the Moroccan interpretation of freedom of expression. These red lines are, in great over-simplification, not to undermine the territorial integrity of the country, the monarchy, the king himself or the religion of Islam. These subjects are extremely broad and therefore restrict the subjects covered by independent media outlets to a large extent. Many journalists are wary of even mentioning the king’s name, while others know how close they can get to the line because of failed experiences in trying to print something in the past. However, since the success of many Arab countries’ revolutions during the Arab Spring, the Moroccan government and sovereignty proposed an immediate change in

the country's constitution to allow for more general freedoms and human rights for the Moroccan population – seemingly a great step forward.

The vague legal landscape surrounding free speech in Morocco has made the country a flourishing environment for the state's and the monarchy's ability to censor the voices of the 'watchdog' media. The media is, in principle, supposed to report on the shortcomings of state policies and the issues affecting society as a whole. In the eyes of the state and the monarchy, the role of a 'watchdog' is more akin to threatening the stability of the country than it is a necessary mechanism for maintaining its well-being and for providing criticism when it is due. According to an article by Freedom House written in 2017, conventional and online news outlets receive unofficial state-issued directives to silence certain voices and promote others, and not to report on any issues deemed too controversial. Events in recent years have demonstrated many times the danger of engaging in dissident speech in Morocco. There are many instances of journalists and high-profile activists being under investigation for the highest charges in an attempt to keep them silent, as mentioned previously. Which proves once again that an upper hand has the control over the 'red lines' defined implicitly by the state and the monarchical institution. In Morocco, freedom of speech is a very relative notion, especially when it comes to questioning the legitimacy of the monarchy and the royal family more specifically.

Overall, it may not be said that true freedom of expression was achieved in the 2011 reissue of the Moroccan Constitution. The new texts did make some advancements in the right path to free speech and other liberties, but decidedly not enough. The bulk of the Moroccan media apparatus, including television, radio and printed press, is still in the hands of the government or the monarchy, either directly or indirectly. The few remaining media organisations that might still be considered independent remain subject to the limits of the 'red lines' that were previously described. These red lines have often been crossed, but it is common knowledge that if a reporter does not suffer any consequences for their actions, the red line was actually meant to be crossed to make citizens react. The reason behind the decision of the authorities to let negative press come out is what really should be analysed.

It is interesting to note that even with these restrictions on free speech, the Moroccan government still have not blocked or filtered any websites that may harbour any politically, socially or

religiously divergent views of the status quo. For example, there are many websites one can access in Morocco that treat rather negatively the question of Morocco's claim over the territory of the Western Sahara. The fact that Morocco censors most of its negative press by shutting down websites and deleting articles, for example, but also leaves some websites up on certain issues, makes this appear to be more of a strategy performed by the government and monarchy than ever before. The authorities know that major issues such as the Western Sahara debate need to be left public because they are already being discussed by the whole world; forbidding their citizens to have a part in the debate would provoke much discontent towards the authorities. Lesser issues, which have remained inside the sphere of influence of the country's government, are easier to hide from the public domain.

It should come as no surprise to learn that in Morocco, the government and the monarchy have long made use of propaganda in an effort to influence the opinions of the general public. This was more or less easy in 1966, when Morocco had an 85 per cent illiteracy rate. A 1969 study on the use of propaganda language among the ruling elites of Morocco reveals the type of discourse and some of its constraints after the first decade of Moroccan independence. The study shows that even the most anti-monarchical party at the time could not and did not refer to the monarchy in a negative manner in any written documents found to date. However, it was made clear that even at the time the spread of corruption and oppression incited the people to seek change. It seems, however, that the idea of true democracy among the public was then almost blasphemous. The king is, before anything else, the 'leader of the faithful'. As such, the monarchy remains uncontested, and is relatively absent from formal debate in the country. Even pro-monarchy players preferred not to debate this fact against opponents through fear of being accused of disloyalty.

The monarchy has thus an evident close relationship with the national press, a relationship that gives the monarchy an extra tool and a powerful one in keeping control over the masses. Knowing the major role that social media has played in the rise of the Arab Spring, the monarchical institution of Morocco had in its possession a significantly potent gear to face the domino effect created by the Arab Spring through the use of social media censorship. With its ownership of the most-viewed press by the public and experts in every media firm working for it, it was able to influence, to a certain extent, the ideas and emotions of its citizens. Although it had

a strong position in controlling the media, protests still occurred because it may have been possible to control almost all of the press, but it was impossible to control all social media outlets. Because the Arab Spring hit almost all Arab countries and so much chatter was going on online about the subject, this issue reached a catastrophic extent and had too many people involved on the subject, but at the same time the government had to maintain its censorship in an attempt to instigate calm.

Social Media and the Arab Spring

The use of social media throughout the world is in a state of continuous growth, thanks to the many new users it attracts daily. At the beginning of 2011, the Middle East registered one of the largest portions of new users to social media networks such as Facebook and Twitter. It was also during that same year that people in Arab countries started using social media in a novel manner, as tools of social and civil mobilisation online. Social media was used both by pro- and anti-government activists in the wake of the Arab Spring to organise public demonstrations and to circulate relevant news and information. Empirical evidence shows that the number of Facebook users increased drastically in those Arab countries where major protests took place. Moreover, it has been found that Facebook pages calling for demonstrations during the Arab Spring were all successful, save one in Syria that called for staging a protest on 4 February 2011 (Mourtada & Salem, 2011).

To say that there is a direct causal relationship between the existence of the pages and the ensuing protests may not be precisely correct, as a few countries that saw large numbers of protests were not significantly penetrated by Facebook or other social media. Thus, for a large portion of protestors, social media was not a decisive tool at their hands. However, it may have been more of a tool for a substantial core minority of protestors that in turn used more traditional means to rally massive numbers of participants afterwards. Social media users may have been relatively rare, but they were able to reach and mobilise those without access to Facebook or Twitter. In other words, even though a lot of people in Morocco, for example, did not have access to the Internet, social media only had to reach a certain number of people and the rest was left to word of mouth and face-to-face discussions among Moroccan citizens. In this way, it was

harder for political forces to filter information since only half of the people were still online when the information was censored and the damage had already been done for the majority.

Moreover, these new channels allowed Arab communities to realise the extent of the power and the threat they held when they stood together. Their large numbers allowed them to share the burden of the fear from potential repercussions, through the anonymity of the collective. Therefore, social media can be considered as a weapon in the hands of the people in the countries that witnessed the effects of the Arab Spring.

On the other hand, if the initial number of Facebook users in Arab countries was minimal, it expanded to double or even triple the original amount in most affected countries during the protests of 2011. In April 2010, the total number of Facebook users in the Arab world was 14,791,972. One year later, in April 2011, that number had risen to 27,711,503. In a survey conducted by the Dubai School of Government and distributed to Egypt and Tunisia through Facebook, it was found that the relative majority of respondents believed that Facebook and Twitter were used primarily to spread information about the events of the Arab Spring and organise the activities of the activists (Mourtada & Salem, 2011). It was quite normal for this to occur since any other media was censored by the authorities and therefore citizens felt alone in their discontent. Once people started posting their ideas on Facebook and Twitter and received positive feedback, it became a way that the authorities could not totally reach them.

Social media played a major and substantial role in launching debates centred on politics and the lack of democracy in Arab countries during the Spring. Research suggests that media networks such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube were used to carry out online discussions on the state of politics in the Arab world. There was a key demographic group that was the vanguard of social media-led revolution: these were young and educated individuals living in urban areas, and a large portion of this group was women. One of the issues that attracted the most attention in Morocco during the Arab Spring was the subject of women's rights, which was led by this demographic. Through the use of social media, this group made sure to raise awareness for their cause. They used social media to spread awareness, to be more precise, on the actions of government officials and heads of states (Hussain & Howard, 2011). They were somewhat protected because there was no law against the information they were spreading, but it did anger

many authorities. No authority can own a social media network, however, and therefore the Moroccan government struggled with restricting information during the Arab Spring.

On one occurrence, for instance, Tunisian activists published a video on YouTube showing the wife of the Tunisian President Ben Ali using a government jet solely for the purpose of personal shopping in Europe (Yester, 2009). Bloggers and social media users also used these Internet-based tools to communicate ongoing events to the international community and, in particular, to Western-based reputable news outlets, such as CNN, the BBC and Fox News. These organisations then wrote news stories informed directly by individuals and groups on the ground thanks to social media, and this in turn helped to spread the news among the people of Arab countries themselves. As such, if the people of Arab countries did not receive the information from local players, they had a good chance of hearing it from internationally recognised news organisations (Hussain & Howard, 2011).

The main reason for the success of the use of social media as a rallying tool during the revolutions of 2011 was the presence of large groups in these Arab countries' demographic make-up; groups that were young and relatively knowledgeable in the use of recent technologies, including social media. The government in Morocco had censored and suppressed news outlets in their favour, providing the populace with a strong incentive to seek more credible sources of news and information elsewhere, such as on the Internet. The use of Internet-based tools to debate and organise militants also allowed women, a group that would have otherwise not been as included in those dealings, to join the political discussions. The Arab Spring was a great time for women to speak out for their rights in Morocco because of the use of social media across the country. Subjects about women are usually ignored in Morocco because there are old laws in the system that repress women to this day. During the Arab Spring, a lot of Moroccan women joined each other on social media to speak louder than they ever had before.

The involvement of women in Morocco during the Arab Spring was very surprising since women had not had much of a voice before then. Social media allowed women to speak their minds in a safe environment where no physical harm could come to them. They were able to test the waters by posting different negative news about family laws that exist, which were unfair towards a woman with children, or common laws that would allow men to treat women like

objects; for example, there used to be a law stating that if a woman was raped, she had to marry her rapist. This law and many others were protested against during the Arab Spring and many people were brought together thanks to social media groups. This use of media changed the role of women in Morocco in such a positive way that these methods should be studied for future protests.

In the wake of the Arab Spring, people regularly shared information on ongoing events in their respective neighbourhoods on Twitter and Facebook. Critics coined the sharing of these stories as a democracy virus or democracy meme, as their spread inspired movements in places far apart that would have otherwise not been affected to the same degree. This detail is of paramount importance when it comes to explaining the spread of revolutionary movements throughout the Arab world. Social media has allowed individuals and groups in other countries to hear from the success and failures in Tunisia and Egypt, where the Arab Spring initially began, and to discuss similar issues they find in their own countries. Democratisation movements had existed in the Arab world prior to the rise of social media and other important communication technologies, but with these new tools, movements were far more efficient in spreading information and organising networks of dissent (Hussain & Howard, 2011).

The speed through which information is transmitted these days through social media and the hyper-connectivity of modern society resulted in a very quick spread of this ideology among Arab countries, as they could relate to the events happening in other countries and follow their development almost hour-by-hour. This closeness to the events has brought Arab populations closer in terms of standing up together for important causes because of this new way to share their discontent. Their feelings are not only now shared but most importantly inspired from their neighbours, which forms a stronger unity. They are shared because Arab countries usually follow a certain set of similar laws and political habits that are common across these countries. Therefore, citizens across Arab countries give each other advice and comfort each other with similar stories in their respective countries; it provides hope that there may be another way to be ruled.

It is through a similar process that the Arab Spring almost threatened Morocco. The first signs of malcontent shown by the Moroccans were through the use of social media channels such as

Facebook and others. Through these platforms, Moroccans were for the first time able to speak up without feeling threatened by any form of repression, discovering a new form of freedom of speech through which they realised how numerous were those who were dissatisfied by the current conditions. In fact, the 20 February movement (also referred to as M20F) was created through an event on Facebook. A planned demonstration on 20 February 2011 was indeed the initial forerunner of the effects of the Arab Spring on the Moroccan community. This protest was the largest one in decades and included citizens chanting their discontent against the government and monarchy. This was particularly serious because for the first time in a long time the authorities had somewhat lost a little bit of control through the spread of information on social media.

Business elite control of the media

This elite co-optation also spread its roots to the media, Merkouar (2018) naming it as a sort of "clientelistic logic." Mekouar cites a study done by Benchenna et al. (2017: 10–11) which examines the main shareholders in Morocco's media sector. They conclude that the Moroccan elite who largely benefitted from the neo-liberal policies mentioned previously were those who also owned the media in Morocco. This includes "Fahd Yata, the son of Ali Yata (a former communist opposition leader and founder of one of the country's main economic magazines); Moulay Hafid Elalamy, the current industry and commerce minister; and Aziz Akhannouch, the current agriculture minister – all of whom own some of the country's most renowned publications" (Benchenna et al. 2017: 10-11). This comes as no big surprise as owning shares of the media sector allows these businessmen to protect their own interests, to utilize channels of political communication, and to "add business competence as one of the qualities required to become an established politician" (Benchenna et al. 2017: 10). (Mekouar, 2018: 5)

Establishing trust via the media

This is important in understanding who controlled the media, especially in terms of their relation to the monarchy, since the media served as a crucial point of communication both to and between citizens during the Arab Spring, Mohamed VI also projected himself via communications to the

public that he was the “sole architect of most if not all of the county’s economic, social, and political achievements.” (Merkouar, 2018: 5) In Morocco, the king has a far-reaching and pervasive presence in the media and proposes that he is the main actor in initiating real reform, while taking full credit for any positive outcomes yet blaming political leaders and local administration for failures that occur. (Merkouar, 2018: 5)

Merkouar goes on to list several projects the king has recently taken credit for in the last two decades and made apparent via the media, including: “(i) reforming the family code and thus improving women’s rights in the country, (ii) spearheading an ambitious equity and reconciliation committee, which officially turned the page on human rights abuses committed by his father, and (iii) implementing an ambitious constitutional reform project designed to empower the country’s political institutions.” (Merkouar, 2018: 5) His credit does not stop at social rights and progression, however, as the king has apparently (a) led major infrastructure projects which helped quadruple the length of the country’s highway network, (b) removed the quasi-totality of Morocco’s urban slums, and (c) revitalised the core centres of the country’s major cities.” (Merkouar, 2018: 5) The palace also makes sure to have a say over popular music festivals, religious events, and socio-cultural projects as well.

While the efforts that the king makes sure to broadcast to his citizens appear to be well-intended in bringing legitimate progress to some of the country’s problems, Mekouar discusses an alternative reasoning in which the king is attempting to strengthen his relations which those of the elite classes in Morocco through a “systematic logic of economic transfer.” (Merkouar, 2018: 6) Thus, in reality, the democratic reforms that the king has claimed have had little to no effect on the real solutions needed for domestic challenges and have instead targeted the economic and political elite and have been used to “depoliticise and bureaucratise the king’s former opponents by rewarding them with attractive salaries and public status”. (Merkouar, 2018: 6)

This favoritism and priority of business and political elites by the king unsurprisingly reveals several cases of corruption at all levels of society, and especially in senior administrative levels dependent on connections with the palace. (Merkouar, 2018: 7) Cases of collusion are widespread throughout the kingdom, with examples including “the allocation of public land

below market price to regime associates" as well as "the acceptance of blatant conflicts of interest at all levels of business and administration." (Merkouar, 2018: 7)

Needless to say, favours and acts by the regime did not apply to the majority of Morocco's population. The increase in corruption levels and spike in economic inequality led the underprivileged classes to express their frustration in the form of minor strikes and other demonstrations, only to be ultimately repressed by the upper social classes. Mekouar discusses that "most of the state resources have been redeployed in the form of public–private partnerships for the benefit of the king and his allies" which sheds light on why the majority of protests have happened in rural regions of Morocco. (Merkouar, 2018: 7) This also complements the fact that those same underprivileged classes continue to hope that a new distribution of wealth will bring social equity to all citizens of the country. A study done by Ahmed Hidass in 2010 shows that the popular medium in Morocco is radio and television broadcasting, since radio sets are affordable for Moroccans (there was one receiving set for evert two inhabitants in Morocco in 2010) and television, with the help of satellite channels, serves as the main source of entertainment for the average Morocco. (Hidas 2010) In 2010, approximately five million Moroccan households were equipped with TV sets and satellite receivers, which shows how important broadcasting had become in the country at the start of the Arab Spring. (Hidass, 2010)

The king capitalized on this fact, perhaps knowing how image, sound, and live effects have permeated people's minds through broadcasting, by protecting his reputation via the media in both radio and television. He has done so by claiming credit for successful social projects, while shifting responsibility on to local administrators for failed ones. This may explain why perhaps a large part of Moroccan citizens do not necessarily have qualms with the monarchy itself but with the unequal distribution of social services and benefits from large projects and policy change. Furthermore, the monarchy has used online media channels to its advantage by delegitimizing and defaming "all those who advocate for meaningful reform and threaten the supremacy of the palace." (Mekouar, 2018: 9) This is done in order to remove rare political opponents or leaders of uprisings from the public eye and to further isolate the possibility of future institutional alternatives. This has made it difficult for small pockets of opposition to envision any sort of

leadership that would be capable of taking over if a regime change were to happen, such as what resulted from uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt. (Mekouar, 2018: 9)

Morocco and the 20 February Movement

The events that unfolded during the Arab Spring led directly to the launch of a social movement in Morocco, which was named after the day of its creation, 20 February 2011. Here again, social media played a major role in the initiation of the 20 February movement, as it had first emerged from Facebook in a call for peaceful demonstrations against the amount of control over the government the monarchy had. Then, the movement began using social networks not only to organise marches, but also as a platform for sharing flaws in the regime of the country, with the help of photos and videos. Thanks to its use of new technologies embodied in social media, the M20F movement was able to bypass the country's traditional authoritarian roadblocks. Censorship and the promotion of official narratives was no longer possible for the authorities, as different participants in the movement began producing dissenting political content.

The 20 February movement's demands were numerous and generally revolved around the creation of a true democratic constitution, the impartiality of the judiciary system and accountability for those public officials guilty of corruption. Nonetheless, the true source of power in the country, the monarchy, was left alone. The movement did not call for the abolition of the monarchy, but for it to remain in place to give all power and sovereignty to the people. It was not possible for the activists' views to be broadcast on television or published in the newspapers; therefore, they turned to social media. Many young activists resorted to secret groups on Facebook and Twitter that brought to light all the subjects that were being debated between citizens and the authorities. These groups included daily news about the Arab Spring and organisations for peaceful demonstrations.

The 20 February movement started with the initiative of young activists who produced a video made up of different men, women and children explaining why they wanted their voices to be heard. When this video went 'viral' on social media, they took the initiative to make other videos to mobilise the Moroccan community. Once this took off, many Facebook pages and groups were created, along with Twitter accounts and websites. Many different citizens, regardless of age,

gender or social class, gathered to have their voices heard since they were tired of the partly authoritarian regime taking over their lives. The authorities, to the frustration of the citizens, were deliberately concealing all negative aspects of the government that the public was discontent about.

Activists started pages such as *Mamfakinsh*, or 'we will not give up', to provide updates on news of the Arab Spring (Brouwer et al.). Other pages included news about upcoming protests and the subjects they would involve. One woman filmed police brutality during the first peaceful protests to show the public the extent of the harshness being used by the authorities. This video went viral and created even more unrest, which meant that the people in charge were not in a very positive position (Brouwer et al.). The only reason she was able to post this video is because of the availability of private Facebook groups and websites that the government did not know about at the time. Many protests were only accomplished through private Facebook groups; citizens were strict with who they let inside the groups to ensure the authorities would not know what was going on and where.

Overall, the movement was not as powerful as it could have been. M20F was found to rely more on boycotts and similar means than participation through existing institutions. What was revealed thereafter was that the monarchy was more interested in instigating changes so minor that it maintained much of its absolutist power in hand. The regime in place perceived the creation of extensive political reforms as a danger for its very existence. Many in the M20F movement denounced the frailty of the reforms and even qualified them as 'facade democracy'. While social media helped citizens greatly by reuniting them and letting them form movements such as the one held on 20 February during the Arab Spring, the traditional press media remained on the authorities' side by calming the public with the reforms they said they were going to try to implement.

It is thus due to a sort of 'cowardice' demonstrated by the press media authorities, who stood by the ruling power instead of fulfilling its role to be transparent and to serve the citizens, that the monarchical institution and the state as a whole were able to evade the threat represented by M20F and the wave of influence resulting from the Arab Spring climate. A well entrenched system that has been present ever since Morocco's independence, combined with a historical

background that played in favour of the monarchy, ensured that Morocco succeeded at maintaining its stability at the expense of tangible progress and useful reforms.

To this day, the freedom of speech promised by the 2011 constitution seems like a long forgotten utopia that was withdrawn as the wave of anger abated, as attested by the case of Abdessamad Haydour, a 24-year-old who 'insulted' the king on a YouTube video and was only released after the intervention of Humans Right Watch (Piser). Although the constitution promise could be considered as a significant step towards progress in terms of freedom of speech, its results are yet to be effectively realised. The monarchical institution's fear of a movement that would shake the stability and question its own legitimacy is the biggest concern of the authorities.

Although its real concern should be directed towards the wellbeing of its citizens, Morocco's authorities are concentrating on their own well-being and are not concerned with their citizens as much as they say they are. Perhaps the authorities will be able to keep controlling its citizens indefinitely through the national press, or perhaps social media will catch up and not much will be able to be done about the information that is spread. Then again, maybe another strategy will be created to control social media and therefore its evolving citizens.

Conclusion

The Arab Spring was a time for citizens in Morocco to speak up about important political issues that would have been taboo in the past. The only problem with speaking out was the fact that the government was filtering out all of the information it thought might cause unrest. This in turn angered citizens since they needed a way of communicating their views about the country. Citizens were not feeling like it was their country anymore; they felt like the country only belonged to those in charge. Other than that, from what they could see, the authorities did not want the public to vocalise their thoughts and possible solutions to the problems within the country. This changed once there was a means of communicating their true discontent with the laws and political standards in Morocco.

Social media helped citizens stand together and peacefully protest about the negative aspects of the monarchy and government that they wanted to change. This enabled the government try to censor the press even more, release false information, and use physical force during the protests.

The censorship of print media outraged the public further and encouraged them to seek out platforms on social media to gather receipts on their discourse. Every unfair event that occurred during the Arab Spring was either broadcast through videos on Facebook and websites or was written about by activists on the same platforms. The effect that social media had on the Arab Spring was perceived as positive by citizens because they were able to stand together and voice the reasons for their discontent. This enabled authorities to twist words into what citizens wanted to hear and, although not much changed, thanks to the M20F not much harm happened either, compared to other Arab countries during that period.

On the other hand, the reforms implemented had very little to no real effect on the daily life of the Moroccans. The monarchical institution agreed to a new constitution that would give more power to the government and less to the king himself, which was very successful at faking and conveying an image of democracy. Everything was ethical, since upon the analysis of the king's speech on 9 March 2011, much propaganda was used to distract the public with the news they were all waiting to hear. The help of the national press was one of the main contributors to appeasing the Moroccans' demand. Although Moroccan media does not get much attention for its tactics in influencing its citizens, it is important to remember the citizens' state of mind at the time. Although citizens wanted to have somewhat of a democracy and were fighting for their rights, they also wanted everything to continue smoothly. The majority of citizens, although they expected change, also wanted to avoid conflict and civil war as they were very receptive to the new constitution and calmly accepted the status quo. The domino effect that took place in neighbouring countries caused great anxiety and fear of the unknown. People wanted change but not at the detriment to their livelihoods; thus avoiding chaos and potential civil war, as happened in many other countries, such as Libya and Egypt. They were willing to fight for what they wanted but to a certain extent, which was a great determining factor of how influenced they were by the national media.

All in all, although Morocco has succeeded in maintaining its political stability, real reforms are yet to be implemented, as the constitutional changes decided in 2011 were in reality only a public relations move from the state in order to ensure first the least possible harm and then create an illusion of change that would calm the atmosphere. Nonetheless, the rise of a type of movement such as M20F has taught the Moroccan people that it is through collective initiatives that they can potentially move forward with their country. The movement was apparently the first of

many, as in May 2018, Moroccans gathered their power of large numbers once again to boycott famous brands selling common products such as bottled water and milk that they judged to be overpriced. This shows that even though the results of the Arab Spring were not direct and tangible, these events have had a subconscious effect on the Moroccan community as a whole, showing them a new tool to express their dissatisfaction and force their way into a real democracy.

Conclusion

The literature review is focused on the characteristics favouring the sustainability and resilience of undemocratic Arabic regimes, giving specific detail to the Moroccan monarchy. The literature revealed that there is a strong relationship between Islam and authoritarian regimes in the Middle East, which will need to be taken into consideration when analysing the findings from the ethnographic research completed. The survey of the literature has shown that scholars attribute the resilience of Arab autocracies to multiple factors, including historical rentierism, structure and dependency on notables, institutional flexibility, and elite co-optation. Furthermore, another significant factor that is discovered in the literature is the relationships the monarchy has with its military, and the subsequent control it maintains through its security forces. Nonetheless, the elements that stand out the most are the legitimacy and patriarchy that are specific to monarchies such as Morocco and which contributed, as part of this complex power structure, to help it withstand the revolts. These factors are not sufficiently nor satisfactorily elaborated on in the case of Morocco – in relation to the Arab Spring – and this is what the next chapters are meant to contribute to.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

This chapter will discuss and build upon the theories related specifically to the resilience of Arab monarchies during the Arab Spring, including the patriarchal characteristics of

monarchies, the subsequent effects on the status of women in these countries, as well as the economic structure of the Arab countries which impacted their status in the aftermath of the Arab Spring. These theories will be used to evaluate the findings from the ethnographic surveys which will assist in filling in the gaps in which these theories leave behind.

How can the resilience of Arab monarchies be explained?

To begin with, the classical proposals for the typology of political regimes often do not take Arab countries into account. Thus, researchers have great difficulties in locating these cases within the categories established by political science (Joffé, 2011: 507). Second, many of the present Arab states constitute hybrid regimes, combining elements of both democracy and authoritarianism, without the academic community having succeeded in providing satisfactory theoretical and empirical procedures for operating with these intermediate categories. An interesting contribution to the definition of Arab political regimes is one that considers some Arab autocracies to be less absolute than others and affirms the existence of a continuum that runs from full autocracy (less pluralism) to liberalised or pluralist autocracy (more pluralism) (Ross, 2011: 5).

The resilience of monarchical regimes during the Arab Spring can be attributed to some existing endogenous factors, one of the main ones being the fact that all the present monarchies in the MENA region can claim a degree of legitimacy in their administration of power. In general, the survival of monarchical regimes depends on their institutional flexibility in the careful management of supporters of the coalition regime and society as a whole (Johnstone, Sarah & Mazo, 2011: 67). Hereditary monarchies such as Kuwait, the UAE, or Morocco are characterised by structural factors that played a significant role in their resilience and which ensured institutional flexibility towards the management and governance of the monarchies, their supporters, and societies at large. Although the monarchies vary in their relationships between the administration and society, they all display a disciplined form of coalition contributing towards resilience in a significant way (Salamé, 2011: 108).

However, the first and possibly the most significant factor in the context of the Arab Spring is that the eight existing monarchies today are capable of promoting a degree of legitimacy in

government that traditional proponents of democracy cannot contest. The impact of the legitimacy of monarchical resistance to modern shifts in government (away from authoritarianism or hybrid regimes) can be examined in three ways: by the role of contemporary Arab monarchies in the formation of state and nation-building; through the role of historical, divine or religious legitimacy claims; and finally, the consequences of the nature of exemplary differences between monarchies and republics (Johnstone, Sarah & Mazo, 2011: 78).

One of the main justifications of monarchies in the Arab world is religious in nature. Monarchs have a tendency to rely on historical or religious legitimacy to justify government and maintain a degree of popularity and immunity. The authoritarian presidents of the republics lack this legitimacy, which puts them at a disadvantage – mainly to their homologous monarchs in the context of trying to remain in power during the Arab Spring. Despite the various processes and causalities of public demonstrations in Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, governments which had no legitimacy in the eyes of the people served as a common driving force to overturn them. This led to a unified and vigorous revolt that resulted in the overthrow of the regime. Consequently, it was easy to imagine the state without the regime of a president, while monarchies tend to be a part of the political and social DNA of the country and therefore more difficult to envision a separation between the monarchy and existence of the country.

Traditional monarchies are characterized by both historical and religious form of legitimacy. Subsequently, a constant loyalty towards these forms of legitimacy ensures that their rule gains and retains a high degree of popularity and immunity. On the other hand, the presidential republics do not portray such forms of legitimacy. Using the Arab Spring as the point of reference, the lack of such forms of legitimacy places republics in a disadvantaged position in comparison to their monarchical counterparts. For example, Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya all embraced a presidential administrative form of governance, which was a major contribution towards their failure to be maintain power during the Arab Spring. During this period of political revolution in the Arab world, these nations' presidents lacked legitimacy in the people's eyes, which they believed could be the driving factor for the Arab Spring (Chenoweth, 2011). Additionally, in all the aforementioned Arab states, the presidency has been in control of the countries' resources and authority ever since the new regimes were put into place. Therefore, the pattern of men maintaining political control clearly demonstrates the degree of dominance of

patriarchs in the Arab region. As a result of the political environments created by these presidents, it was clear that the republics would be considerably affected by the unrest and protests. On the other hand, the monarchies embraced their indigenous political beliefs and strategies to the end. The maintenance of a legitimate political arena ensured Morocco, as well as other monarchies, survived the political unrest in 2010. Oman, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates are the states in which monarchical status ensured their survival, through a distinct form of legitimacy and unquestioned authority that disinclined the population to provoke chaos and disturb national unity. In addition, it is important to note that legitimacy affiliated with patriarchy was dominant in the nations. Perceived legitimacy, as demonstrated by the monarchical administration, played a major role towards their resilience in various ways. The impact of legitimacy can be measured by the role of current Arab monarchies in forming the state and building the nation, the role of a divine, traditional, and religious definition of legitimacy. Additionally, the impact of legitimacy can be illustrated by highlighting the paradigmatic differences between the monarchies and republics (Mernissi, 2011: 120).

Modern Arab monarchies have played a major role in the enhancement of legitimacy. Notably, the monarchies portray legitimacy by ensuring both state formation and nation building. According to a study by Lisa Anderson, a monarch's strength lies in mastering activities of nation building and state formation. (Anderson, 2011) From European colonial times, the Arab monarchies have ensured effective state creation, positioning legitimacy as their core value. Additionally, the monarchies have formed national brands characterised by a well-structured royal form of governance and a royal family demonstrating a high level of legitimacy, which have trumped ideas of efficiency and fairness.

Taxation

A major point of divergence is invoked when discussing taxation in Arab States. Scholars such as Lisa Anderson and Peter von Sivers make the argument that Middle East and North Africa (MENA) countries have been undertaxed. The reason behind this would be quite straightforward; regimes that obtain considerable income from their own subjects or citizens are held responsible by those taxed. In fact, Anderson's analysis following the Arab revolutions maintains: "Governments that control large revenue streams that are independent of local labour are able to

diffuse or control opposition. That is, governments in rentier states, such as the large oil and gas exporting countries of the region, may distribute resources so as to both bolster acquiescence and strengthen coercion, thereby surviving political protest. Where there is no taxation, enhanced distribution appears to divert calls for greater political representation. This was the approach for regimes as otherwise diverse as Saudi Arabia, Algeria, and Oman" (Anderson, 2011: 7). Subsequently, the major point developed by several renowned researchers, including Michael Herb and the President of the American University of Cairo, is that Middle Eastern states have lived off rents rather than conventional taxation revenues. (Herb, 2005) This is especially true in the case of Algeria, Saudi Arabia, and Oman, and while Libya is an exception to this analysis, it still holds a firm truth. The rent format allowed non-taxation or minimal taxation, which did not obstruct the relationship between the citizen and the regime. Furthermore, the structure of unemployment in the country is that citizens are employed mainly by the state instead of private entities, thus generating loyalty. (Herb, 2011) It did not raise unwanted questions and kept those intrinsic adversarial components associated with taxation at bay.

Furthermore, Arab regimes misled their nationals through indirect taxation. In reality, "state extraction can take different forms so that it is difficult to predict citizen reaction to different combinations and levels of taxes, sudden price shifts, diminutions of entitlements, inflation taxes, subsidies, or differences in the quality of public goods" (Entelis, 1997: 22). Civilians could not question or hold accountable the extracting state when unaware of its extraction. The meaning and perception of a rentier state has more to it than a simple buy-off. In fact, "a rent is not merely an income for landlords, but generally a reward for ownership of all natural resources... Rent is reserved for the income derived from the gift of nature… in this broad sense it exists in all economies, albeit in different degrees" (Beblawi and Luciani, 1987). The simple fact of being born in a land that perspires oil makes livelihoods effortless. Humans were not born equal and merit had no value. Hence, taxation, or lack of it, only further established this societal unbalance that ultimately played a pivotal role in triggering thoughts of revolution among those who were not born in the same circumstances.

As political waves kept on sweeping across various continents during the "third wave of democratization" authoritarian regimes were threatened. Notably, as other continents were experiencing periods of democratic revolution, the Arab region was facing a decline in the same

field (Sanborn and Thyne, 2013). Ultimately, Arab regimes barely gave their citizens a taste of the democratic ideal that populations were longing for. As a result, this thesis depicts through the lenses of political scholars the wide range of reasons why the region demonstrated resilience to authoritarianism. Various perspectives include the institutional structures of the region, the powers possessed by the states involved, patriarchal dominance, the cultural factors affecting the implementation of democracy, and the existence of crude oil in the area.

Patriarchy

As later illustrated in this thesis, patriarchy and its cultural components is one of the main factors behind ensuring that the monarchs were able to withstand the Arab Spring (Benmamoun, 2012: 29). The inclusion of this form of traditional societal approach in analysing the Arab Spring demonstrates why Morocco was relatively less affected by these particular political events. However, it is also evident that patriarchy is part of a larger and more complex power structure that has succeeded in maintaining the status quo. This thesis focuses critically on the impact and the position of patriarchy in the Arab region as depicted during the Arab Spring. Additionally, the historical nature of the Arab states portrays an administrative platform that highly prioritises legitimacy. Therefore, as later illustrated, the impact of patriarchy has been linked to the legitimacy level demonstrated by the administrative regime.

For the purpose of this research, it is important to note that as events unfolded during the Arab Spring, various factors allowed some regions to be resilient from the revolution while others were not. As later discussed in this thesis, modern monarchies such as Oman, Jordan and Morocco survived and held on to their native leadership cultures as a result of these factors. Some of these factors include the taxation system in some of the Arab countries where citizens are undertaxed. The taxation system in the region raises various questions on the effectiveness of authoritarianism. The introduction of authoritarianism in this thesis highlights the differences between pseudo republics and monarchies, and which of the two better serves the needs of its citizens. As Herb argues, republics apply rentierism for individual benefit and not towards the advantage of the nation (Herb, 1999). In Morocco and Jordan, where rentierism is not practiced by the authority, efficient leadership characterised by legitimacy is evident.

Legitimacy in the monarchies is put into place on the basis of history and the popular belief that the monarch was divinely chosen. These factors direct research towards patriarchy in the Arab region, which was among the main reasons why Morocco weathered the political storms during the Arab Spring. This work aims to depict the interrelationship that emerged between patriarchy and political stability during the Arab Spring. It would be important to note that citizens were, and remain, dominated across the political, social and economic sectors within Jordan and Morocco. Arguing that these two countries have shown resilience to the Arab Spring simply because they are patriarchal societies is not sufficient given that all Arab societies are patriarchal societies. However, it is indispensable for this research to interact with the social and cultural background of these countries in order to fully understand them. Granted, all Arab societies comprise deep-rooted patriarchal complexities; yet it is through understanding the complexities of Morocco and other monarchies that we understand their resistance to change and popular pressure. Even though it is easy to ask why other states have not survived the Arab Spring even though they have patriarchal societies, it is more challenging to use this aspect as an explanation of Morocco's resistance to change. Additionally, the social setting in this nation does not give women the same opportunities in decision-making processes as their male counterparts. Furthermore, an analysis of Moroccan resilience cannot be complete without focusing on other, similar forms of governance. We shall focus on the Kingdom of Jordan as a measure of comparison.

This work rekindles the debate about monarchical resilience in the Arab world and goes to the heart of the monarchical problem in the region, with a renewed focus on the recent uprisings in the Arab world since 2010. After the revolutionary military coups of the 1950s and 1960s across the Arab world, particularly in Egypt, Libya, Syria and Iraq, the monarchies in Morocco and Jordan, as well as those of the Gulf, experienced a degree of stability that the 'pseudo republics' did not witness. Many scholars invoked the rentier argument, which implied that the monarchies that happened to survive could simply 'buy off' their populations with generous welfare schemes and buy political loyalty with the vast resources and wealth they enjoyed. However, this argument is unconvincing, given that the Libyan monarchy under King Idriss offered generous patronage and was indeed a rentier state before it was overthrown by the young Muammar Gaddafi in 1969. Furthermore, the monarchies of Morocco and Jordan are hardly rentier states; although in some respect Jordan is considered semi-rentier by various scholars (Kechichian,

2008). Nevertheless, Morocco lacks the oil and gas resources of its wealthier neighbours, leading to questions on how and why this regime remained in power. What is more, it also cannot be neighbourhood or demonstration effects, since Morocco is the only monarchy in its immediate neighbourhood; in fact, it is the only monarchy in a sea of hereditary republics. Something else must be at play.

C: Patriarchy – Janus-faced factor

Patriarchy is particularly interesting here, in the sense that it is both a factor for resilience and a trigger for the Arab Spring itself, as another reason behind the protests was gender inequality. (Johansson-Nogués, 2013) 'God of the family' is the literal translation of the father role in the Arab family. This denomination reflects the power and responsibility which males are entitled to. The grandfather, the father, and the son are by birth promised to rule, and regardless of social class, intellect, or education, having a male identity entitles men to have more than women. This gendered favouritism is certainly not exclusive to Arab societies, yet it is essential in understanding its complexities and perceptions of power. In many ways, the male is offered the kingdom of his family, in the same way that Arab kings are offered their countries to rule by the public accepting them. The contingency lies in the 'offering' rather than the 'earning'. Consequently, this begs the question: what about the grandmother, the mother and the daughter? Pawns in an unending chess game, only very few are promoted to queens. This social struggle was certainly an indisputable reason, among many others, for the several women to partake in the 2011 revolution. (Johansson-Nogués, 2013)

In fact, academics will certainly dispute the reasons behind the late Arab awakening. They will dwell on the "high rates of unemployment for the educated classes, neoliberal policies of privatisation and union-busting, corruption in high places, soaring food and energy prices, economic hardship caused by the shrinking of employment opportunities in the Gulf oil states and Europe and decades of frustration with petty, authoritarian styles of governing. In their roles as workers and professionals as well as family caregivers, women have suffered directly from all these discontents and more, while watching their children and husbands suffer, too" (Cole and Cole, 2011). As a consequence, women were a driving force behind the outbreak, taking full responsibility for their civic duties and standing up against decades of injustice. Various studies from world institutions have demonstrated the aptitude of women in the workplace. According to

educational statistics, women's involvement has been noticeable. "Growth among females from 1999 to 2008 include Palestine (adjusted GPI of 0.89 to 1.18), Lebanon (1.00 to 1.15) and Tunisia (0.97 to 1.32). Despite the growing enrolment of women, none of the 14 countries with data have achieved gender parity. In most countries, women are more likely than men to pursue higher education." (UNESCO, 2010: 26)

Contrary to popular belief in the west, the woman's role in Arab societies has much developed in the twenty-first century. One of the founding policies of the new young king of Morocco in 2004 was a complete reform of the Family Code. Living up to his reputation as king of the poor and the disadvantaged, and implementing a new direction for the kingdom, Mohammed VI focused the first ten years of his reign on improving the condition of those in need. His father's tenure did not resonate with social or societal improvement for Morocco. Hassan II inherited a new country, with territories not fully recouped, survived two *coups d'état*, and his legitimacy was never guaranteed. In this unstable state, power, leverage and punishment were the three hands that made the Moroccan clock tick. Those in power had leverage and feared punishment. Those with leverage sought power. Those that faced punishment would never see power or leverage again. All were under the weary eye of the king, who had power and attempted to remove the leverage of others through punishment. All in all, it was a tumultuous period that resounded with survival more than anything. It was a different time.

The new king symbolised a new era. Not limitless legitimacy, but a more stable one. The clamour of the Moroccans in the street for the new king was a testament to his father's work and an acceptance of his new leadership. It was a more stable state and to Mohammed VI's credit he pursued much needed social reform. The role of women in society was at the forefront of this change. Traditional practices that undermined women such as discouraging women from working or partaking in politics were deemed outdated and 'unfashionable' in this new Moroccan kingdom (Boukhars, 2011). Religion is deeply ingrained in Moroccan culture and identity as a whole. Without Islam, Morocco, as we know it, would cease to exist. The kingdom is not a secular one; on the contrary, religion is the basis of its existence. *God, the nation, the king* are the last words of the national anthem and rightly so define the kingdom. In short, there could be no nation or king without God (*Allah*). Therefore, laws regarding women were very much based on religion or an interpretation of religion. For example, Islam permits polygamy

and, as such, many women suffered when their husbands remarried, without having any say. The new monarch wanted to change this. His family reform (*Moudawana*) instructed that:

> *"The woman has the right to stipulate a condition in the marriage contract by which her husband will refrain from taking another wife, as Omar Ibn Al-Khattab, may God be pleased with him, is quoted as saying: 'The intersection of rights is in the conditions'. In the absence of such a condition, the first wife is summoned to obtain her consent, and the second wife must also be notified and consent to the fact that the husband is already married to another woman. Moreover, the first wife has the right to petition for divorce for harm suffered." (Moudawana: 2004)*

This reform was a turning point in the lives of Moroccan women. The monarch brought concrete change without impeding or changing Islamic belief. Polygamy became highly unachievable through legislation. Consent of all involved parties was required and the paperwork became deliberately cumbersome. Consequently, the patriarchal society where women were subservient to their male counterparts was slowly beginning to change.

Canadian novelist and environmental activist, Margaret Atwood, reminded us in 1986 that "context is all". Understanding the position of women in Jordan would not be achievable without grasping the concrete reality of the Hashemite Kingdom. Similarly to the Moroccan ruling family, the Hashemite family pride themselves on being direct descendants of the Prophet Mohammed and were governors of Mecca for centuries (Bergh, 1999). In a region where religion is the essence of life and where Muslim values are crucial to societal behaviour, the people are ultimately attached to a monarch that is a descendant of the Prophet; it is even a matter of pride. Therefore, to understand Jordan and the position of women more precisely, one must understand the quintessence of the country – Islam. The latter is omnipresent in Jordanian life. From birth to death, the religion imposes itself on all facets of society. This is neither a moral nor a theological debate that seeks to evaluate the benefits or wrongdoings of religion, but rather a consideration of how religion shapes the life of Jordanians and Moroccans. For the majority of the population, religion represents, through its restrictions and spiritual belonging, a constitution of life. It dictates birth, death and citizenship, and instructs a moral code. Consequently, matters that might seem outdated or averse to Western thinking, such as polygamy, are very much indoctrinated in

Muslim societies. *Surah* (verse) *Nisa* of the *Qur'an* instructs Muslims to: “Marry woman of your choice in twos, threes or fours but if ye fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly, (with them), then only one” [Al-Qur'an 4:3]. Also, the same *Surah* states that “it is very difficult to be just and fair between women” [Al-Qur'an (4:129)].

Moral codes are not universal and, to many, polygamy denotes backwardness and an inequalitarian system. Nevertheless, it is essential to put it in its context. The attachment of the people to religion is what makes them adhere to this constitution of life. Indeed, “while polygamy is allowed in Jordan for Muslim men, amended laws obligate the judge to verify that the husband has the financial means to maintain his new wife. In addition, the courts are now required to inform the second wife of the first marriage and notify the first wife of her husband's second marriage. If a man can satisfy all such financial and legal requirements, he can be legally married to up to four wives at one time” (Abu Hassan, 2004). This clearly demonstrates the ambition of those in power to not alter the Islamic teachings, yet at the same time give women a certain security and an amount of decision-making that was not present before. Through regulation of the marital process, both Morocco and Jordan have demonstrated great initiative in protecting women’s rights yet remaining within their cultural and religious sphere. The handling of such a sensitive issue certainly played a great role in stabilising both societies and protecting those in power from social unrest, unlike in Libya, for instance, where this specific matter was among the major factors of the social outburst. In fact, “in terms of legislation, the biggest setback has probably been the annulment of Gaddafi-era legislation virtually banning polygamy. On the eve of Gaddafi’s murder in October 2011, NTC Chairman Mustafa Abdul Jalil called for polygamy to be legalised, claiming that banning it ran counter to Sharia. In 2013, the law was struck down and polygamy became legal again” (Al-monitor, 2015). Similar efforts in Tunisia were made by Habib Bourguiba Since after independence from France in 1956, who gave Tunisian women the right to vote, abolished polygamy, allowed women the right to divorce, and made child marriage illegal. (Reuters, 2011) The distinction between Morocco and Jordan versus Libya and Tunisia is very clear. Whereas the Hashemites and Alawites sought social change through reform without damaging the religious understanding that forms part of both nations, Gaddafi and Bourguiba governed in a solitary and obtuse manner where their beliefs dictated the law.

All in all, the situation of women in the Arab world has improved throughout the years, yet there is still a long way to go. Jordan and Morocco have particularly addressed these gender-based issues through the respective reigning families. The monarchies in power have promoted the rights of women as a clear indication of modern governing. The new family reform (*Moudawana*) was considered an indication of change and brought an array of positivity to Moroccan women. Indeed, the new monarch's early reign was synonymous with social reform and improving women's rights played a part. Proclaimed the 'King of the Poor', Mohammad VI sought to defend facets of society that required his help, including women who were and remain a big part. In a culturally patriarchal society, where religion is omni-present in all spheres of life, gender matters are at the forefront of any political agenda. Polygamous practices became less common, and for better or worse, that empowered women. The Hashemites, similarly, pursued social reform to breathe new air into Jordan. In fact, at the forefront was the emblem of the first lady. Not only was she entrusted with concrete socio-political affairs, but she also became a symbol of modernity that greatly improved the image of women in the Arab world. Through this approach, both countries, somewhat subconsciously, protected the stability of their respective states. Women play a major part in any society; thus, improving their rights was essential in modern monarchies. Furthermore, this was done while keeping in line with Muslim beliefs that are deeply inherent within the identity of both nations, consequently allowing a sphere of adaptability to modern times that was not witnessed in neighbouring countries. Ultimately, this was the downfall of those 'imaginary republics' and part of the force that maintained the monarchies.

Status of Women in Authoritarian States

The question of the status of women in Arab societies is also considered an important factor in analysing what has supported authoritarianism in the MENA region. The Arab uprisings revealed the importance of a more "inclusive approach to transitional processes" and how these protests motivated women to use their positions in society to spur both political and social change that would affect them. (Von Rohr 2011) In fact, the success of several uprisings would not have been possible without women including in Egypt, Tunisia, Yemen, and Libya. (Von Rohr 2011). This is relevant to the discussion of which revolutions were successful in regime change with the help

of Arab women, particularly in the context of how they felt about the status of their rights and equality inspired their participation in protests.

World-renowned Egyptian feminist writer Nawal El Saadawi gives a personal account of the inhumanity behind the Arab World's patriarchal system in her book *The Hidden Face of Eve: Women in the Arab World*, published in 1977. The book is mainly written as a collection of anecdotal stories that were witnessed by El Saadawi herself or relayed to her by different people she encountered during her career as a doctor. She sharply denounces Arab leaders' lack of zeal when it comes to women's educational opportunities. Moreover, she decries male-based prejudice by which women are denied equal rights in ownership, divorce, and so on. In a sense, she is presenting a vision of the Arab world in which the religion of Islam is not the main source of women's oppressive social circumstances. Instead, she argues that Islam can be the potential saviour of women in the Arab world, as it has never put women beneath men and is to be seen as a tool for women's emancipation. She also cites a number of verses from the *Qur'an* and the *Hadith* to support her claims.

El Saadawi also argues that barbaric practices such as female circumcision, which she and her sister had undergone surgery for, does not come from Islamic teachings, or at least not directly. She argues that this practice is in fact merely a precaution to hinder women from experiencing sexual desire. The reason behind this is the importance of female virginity in Islam and, therefore, the Arab world in general. In this view, women are seen as potential sources of scandal and shame to the family – particularly if they engage in extramarital sex when they come of age. By resorting to circumcision, parents believe that they are protecting their daughters from future temptation. This practice, although less used today, nonetheless remains one of the main relics of the patriarchal systems that rule the Arab world, from which it still cannot emancipate itself.

It would be interesting to see whether, after the Arab Spring, practices such as that of female genital mutilation and the overtly sexist rules dictating property ownership, the right to vote, or even dating dynamics are still as widespread as they were prior to the Arab Spring, despite having been made illegal or, at the very least, unacceptable. The problem is that such practices are deeply entrenched not only in the cultures of Arab countries, but also even more so in the minds of those who do not wish to change a set of systems that they see as working perfectly

well in their communities, and who see such systems as the essence of their identities. Nawal El Saadawi attempts to show these traditionalists the errors of their ways, to demonstrate that true Islamic identity is one where women are seen not as commodities, but as human beings with rights equal to those of men.

One indicator that may offer insight to the status of women in the Arab world both during and after the Arab Spring is the United Nations Development Program's Gender-Inequality Index (GII), which evaluates progress towards gender equality and development. This index measures inequality in achievement between women and men in three dimensions: reproductive health, empowerment, and the labour market. From 2008 (approximately two years before the Arab Spring) to 2019, there was an overall trend of improvement in the GII scores of Egypt, Morocco, Syria, Yemen, Tunisia, Jordan, Bahrain and Libya. While this may initially seem indicative of progress in gender-equality development in the region, all eight countries fell in their GII ranking from 2008 to 2019 with the exception of Egypt and Bahrain, who remained in the same place and improved by one ranking respectively. Furthermore, Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, and Jordan improved their HDI score, but fell in their HDI world ranking, with the exception of Morocco. Syria, Yemen, and Libya dropped in their HDI value as well as their ranking, most likely due to the conflict and war each country faced in the past decade. Overall, this is indicative of how although there has been an overall world improvement in GII scores, the data pulled from the MENA region countries shows that they are not improving at the same rate as the rest of the world.

Table 1: Human Development Indicators of Arab Spring Countries (2008/2011)

Country HDI Rank 2011	Gender Inequality Index 2008 Rank	HDI Value 2011	Inequality adjusted HDI value 2011	Inequality adjusted HDI rank 2011	Gender Inequality Index 2011	Gender Inequality Rank 2011	2011 Global Gender Gap rank and score
113, Egypt	0.714, 108	0.644	0.489	85	---	---	123, 0.5933

130, Morocco	0.693, 104	0.582	0.409	90	0.510	104	129, 0.5804
119, Syria	0.687, 103	0.632	0.503	80	0.474	86	124, 0.5896
154, Yemen	0.853, 138	0.462	0.312	108	0.769	146	135, 0.4873
94, Tunisia	0.515, 56	0.698	0.523	72	0.293	45	108, 0.6255
95, Jordan	0.616, 76	0.698	0.565	61	0.456	83	117, 0.6117
42, Bahrain	0.512, 55	0.806	--	--	0.288	44	110, 0.6232
64, Libya	0.504, 52	0.760			0.314	51	--

Table 2: Human Development Indicators of Arab Spring Countries (2019)

Country HDI Rank 2019	Gender Inequality index 2019 and Rank	HDI Value 2019	Inequality adjusted HDI value 2019	Inequality adjusted HDI rank 2019	Gender Inequality Index 2019	Gender Inequality Rank 2019	2020 Global Gender Gap rank (out of 153) and score
116, Egypt	0.449, 108	0.707	0.4974	125	0.449	108	134, 0.629
121, Morocco	0.454, 111	0.686	--		0.454	111	143, 0.605
151, Syria	0.482, 122	0.567	--		0.482	122	150, 0.567

179, Yemen	0.795, 162	0.470	0.321	175	0.795	162	153, 0.494
95, Tunisia	0.296, 65	0.740	0.596	96	0.296	65	124, 0.644
102, Jordan	0.450, 109	0.729	0.622	111	0.450	109	138, 0.623
42, Bahrain	0.212, 49	0.852	--		0.212	49	133, 0.629
105, Libya	0.252, 56	0.724	--		0.252	56	

This is interesting because the continued inferior status of women may explain why authoritarian regimes have been able to survive for such a long period of time in the MENA region. In fact, relating back to study done by Fish in 2002 which explained the link between Islam and authoritarianism with underdevelopment, there is another hypothesis to explain the success of authoritarianism in the MENA region: subordination of women. Indicators which justify this claim include the difference between male and female literacy rates, as the gap in literacy rates between men and women is, on average, over six percentage points larger in Muslim countries than in non-Muslim countries. (UNDP Report, 2011) A second indicator includes the difference between sex ratios in Arab countries. This is significant because a deficit of females relative to males often stems from ‘‘various forms of lifelong discrimination against girls and women, particularly inferior nutrition and health care early in life and during childbearing years,’’ as well as from ‘‘sex-selective abortions or infanticide.” (WHO Report, 2011) Evidence from a 2011 World Health Organization and UN report done in 2011 reveals that there is a substantial difference between Muslim and Catholic countries in sex ratio. Finally, the Gender Empowerment Measure by the UNDP measures women’s incomes, status in the workplace, and presence in the legislature. UNDP measures show that women’s status is, on the whole, inferior in Muslim societies, which appears to account for part of the link between Islam and authoritarianism.

Women and decision-making

After the Arab Spring, many authorities tried to neutralise the integration of women into the decision-making process. In this case, the Arab states embraced an integrated form of culture,

with the patriarchal system taking the better share. Therefore, discrimination has become an important part of the integrated culture in an attempt to protect itself by keeping women in their 'natural place' within the social reality (Amram, 2011: 87). However, where patriarchal culture takes extreme forms in the economic and institutional sectors, interpretations of religion, which are often not correct, play a major role in ensuring rationalised and normalised progress regarding discrimination against women.

The ability of the patriarchal culture to protect itself in the Arab region has ensured that men gain unchallenged dominance in the decision-making process. Men apply the culture by giving to the society what they believe is right regarding the law and religion. At times, this system helps men, in the framework of a patriarchal society, to use a wide range of strategies for co-opting women by direct and societal forces at various times (Amal Al Kharouf, 2003: 28). The natural differences between men and women have become part of individual perception on authorities. Additionally, the natural implications have become part of the collective human consciousness. In this case, biology perceives women as a reproductive vessel, which is coercive and compulsory. Arab nations implement various laws, highlighting much harsher punishments on female wrong-doers than for their male counterparts (Vasconcelos, 2015: 58). Additionally, the other factors do not have the same effect on the men as compared to their impact on women in society. Automatically, this situation gives men extra power and legitimacy to take control over the women in all sectors of their lives. The control includes that of women's bodies and minds. Normalisation of discrimination propels the success of the control, mostly portrayed within family law. Consequently, normalisation stretches to the economic, social and political fields at large (Al Kharouf, 2003: 91).

In Fatima Mernissi's book *Women and Islam: An Historical and Theological Enquiry*, published in 1991, she tries to delve deeper into the place of women in Arab/Muslim societies which explains why, even in the midst of revolution, change and progress is difficult. Mernissi reminds us that the political state in Morocco, in particular, makes being a Muslim not just a personal choice of belief, but a national identity based on Islamic law. This would explain why subjects living in Islamic monarchies are more susceptible in accepting the status of their government since social norms are tied to religion. This is also reinforced by the study done by Berger in

2018 on how Muslims viewed sharia and its relation to how likely they were to want a more democratic form of government.

According to the data and statistics presented by various social indicators such as the Global Gender Gap Report and the Gender Inequality Index, it is clear that women in the Arab region are more disadvantaged than in any other continental region across the globe (Amram, 2012: 34). The reports suggest that women in this region face discrimination in all aspects of human life, including economically, socially and politically. A woman's share in the Arab region is relatively low compared to women in other parts of the world (Amram, 2011:14). In most cases, it is a share of the men's average income. Despite the fact that parts of the region is privileged in its oil wealth, urbanization, and literacy levels, females continue to own the smallest shares of these resources. Not only are women discriminated against in decision-making and governance, they are also denied the basic constitutional rights laid out in the respective monarchies. It is notable, however, that the division of labour by gender is still prevalent in the Arab region, despite the fact that it is diminishing in most parts of the globe. In the monarchies, men embraced culture and were able to stick to the traditional ruling regimes, allowing the monarchies to survive the political protests in the region. The resilience of the culture demonstrates that the patriarchal gender contract stills dominates this region, which is reinforced by scholars such as Deniz Kandiyoti and Souad Joseph. Consequently, women in some parts of the region remain victims of gender-based discrimination and second-class citizenship despite efforts to advance women's rights.

Chapter 4: Methodology

Part I: Descriptive Approach and Political Ethnography

There can be no research without method, according to Michel Beaud (Beaud, 2006). Method is needed for theoretical reflection, just as it is necessary for fieldwork (surveys, studies of a social reality, etc.). This chapter will discuss the methodology of political ethnography, as well as the interviews, surveys and empirical research that was conducted. In order to carry out this research, I engaged in a process of direct description or what is customarily called ethnographic work, which will offer a purely objective picture and allow for later in-depth analysis. It is common practice in social sciences today to use the "ethnographic" concept to qualify fieldwork (Hugues, 1996). For researchers in these sciences, the term refers to fieldwork during which they collect information and data that are summarised in an academic journal or serve as material in theory development, as they provide a sort of "insider" position, and from there progress to analytical results (Hugues, 1996). During the analysis phase, the results of various research exercises are closely linked to the way in which the researcher presents his research within the framework of this collective, as a "field of investigation" or as a form of interaction (Hugues, 1996). The recurrence of the term 'interaction' in this dissertation is not fortuitous. The ethnographer is not only a witness to informants, but also integral to interactions throughout the research process, thus involved in the joint construction of a given situation, to quote Erving Goffman. Field experience is sometimes experienced as isolation or, as Lévi-Strauss calls it in *Tristes Tropiques*, as a "chronic deracination" (Goffman, 1973).

Therefore, beyond the difficulties faced in the field by all researchers, ethnographers consider this experience primarily as a particular form of social interaction that alters the researcher through the energies, strategies, and attitudes he puts forth in order to gain access to the field, experience it, and negotiate one's way in it, and from there to reflect on the process of building knowledge and offer analysis. The relationship to the field can only be structured through a relationship to oneself and to others. Thus, in its practical dimension, the ethnographic work prompts us to raise questions about our personal representations and our own cultural, linguistic,

and political references. As a role-player, ethnographers try to paint a clearer picture of the reality as it is and steer the investigation while at the same time not intervening too much to avoid influencing the behaviour of the investigated subjects or biasing the information given.

Any empirical work gives rise to the description of a set of objective facts. However, this description is a construct of reality, which means that there are as many constructs as empirical research works. Through his field, the researcher seeks to build his objectivity or, at the very least, to clarify his subjectivity, and to reflect on the situations of interaction and on his own attitude during the fieldwork. He seeks to understand and describe a given social reality without demonstrating bias. The relationship between learning and understanding is in fact intrinsic to fieldwork. Ethnographic researchers are marked by their field experiences and the relationships that link them to each other.

The History of Ethnographic Approaches to Anthropology in Morocco

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s local anthropologists, started to "read, reread, (and) scrutinize" anthropological studies done on Morocco, which sparked a debate on the standing of the "local anthropologist" and their relationship to foreign anthropologists producing cultural and social information on Morocco. (**Ait Mous, 2015)** Using an ethnographical approach as a native researcher is a double-edged sword. On one hand, Moroccan anthropologist Hassan Rachik argues that being 'in' and being familiar with a society and its symbols does not necessarily give immediate access to knowledge. (Rachik, 2012) Far from being a source of ethnographic comfort, the proximity of the native ethnologist is a test, a source of cultural stress that is no less trying than the one experienced by the ethnologist evolving within totally foreign societies. The legitimacy of an ethnographic experience is linked to this ability to collect field data that reflects both the reality of the role-players and the observer's own viewpoint. Therefore, the observer's own viewpoint may interfere with the objectivity of the research conducted and introduce a possible element of bias.

On the other hand, an ethnographer native to the country in which he is studying also comes with its strengths. First and foremost, it allows the researcher easier access to information due to the elimination of not only the language barrier but also the cultural one. Instead of seeing out the

"best ethnographic situation," Rachik searches what "any such situation could possibly allow for in terms of the degree or range of observation." (Ait Mous, 2015) For example, Rachik remarks that those who do not speak the native would "interact less with people" and favor "external description" of the country being observed. (Ait Mous, 2015) Second, much time is saved by removing the need for intermediaries. Being "in" is therefore an advantage in order to conduct successful research from this lens. As an anthropologist native to and living in Morocco, Rachik has aimed to "interpret what has been written about Moroccans, their character, their soul, their mentality, and their ethos" which is what I aim to do in my own research. (Rachik, 2012)

One of the tools that helped me tremendously in my interactions with the subjects observed was my field journal. The purpose of the journal was to record the observations, reflections and interrogations that I collected, in order to measure their evolution and the progression of my fieldwork. The challenge was to develop some form of reflection on my experiences and my observations. Although free in form and in the angle of approach to the subject, the comments were based on my progress reports and relate to the research experience *per se*. My field journal also allowed me to memorise my own reactions towards the objects of my observation. Through my journal I was able to keep track of not only the data gathered but also of my first impressions regarding the said information. This same journal made it possible to note the dates and the places of my interviews. Time and space are two very important notions to define during my field research, as time alters space and vice versa.

My field research required me to get a general idea – and sometimes a very specific one – on the situations encountered, the interactions with the surveyed environment and the learning of new social codes. The writing of my field journal was done at an uninterrupted rhythm, in order to ensure the quality and richness of daily entries and based on the efforts put into maintaining my field journal. This entailed deciding beforehand the goal to pursue, the people to meet, the questions to ask and how to formulate them, but also the course of the interview and how to present the work. This also required knowing how to establish the link between what I am looking for and the tools I am using in this research project.

Part II: Survey Process

In order to conduct research with various respondents from different backgrounds, carrying out a survey and trying to reach out to the most diversified segments of people seemed to be the most adequate method to follow. For this reason, I created a multiple-choice-question survey with answers as varied as possible and made it public on the Internet to reach out to as many people needed to obtain a variety of viewpoints from different backgrounds. I chose this approach to vary the type of respondents with the intention of getting results that could be generalised, or at least limit the bias that could emerge from targeting a limited set of respondents with similar situations and/or backgrounds. Before moving on to the discussion of the questionnaire method and interviews, I will describe in this section the survey method that I followed.

Survey Format and Explanation

Multiple-choice questions are usually used in surveys to get a specific statistic on searched-for answers. This facilitates statistical analyses as opposed to open questions, which would require a whole team to analyse and categorise the answers. Multiple-choice questions are also convenient for respondents who have busy days and need a quick and efficient way of answering the questions. They are formed with the question and multiple answers, depending on the question, with researched, most-probable answers the respondents would give.

The pros of posing multiple-choice questions in a survey are numerous and that is why I chose to use them for this research. First and foremost, as mentioned above, they are very quick to understand and answer, and therefore make the job easier for the respondent (ConstantContact). Multiple-choice questions also make it easy for analysts to use the data for statistical research. Questions that are not easily understood or that the respondent would not know how to answer always have an option to skip the question.

The cons related to posing multiple-choice answers are mostly linked to the respondent of the survey. One of the most negative aspects of multiple-choice questions is that the answers are limited, while most of the time in surveys, answers could vary from person to person (SurveyMonkey). Therefore, although open-response questions are difficult to analyse and express in statistical data, they do allow the respondent to give the exact answer they wish. This

is why much research was conducted before setting those answers to make sure that the respondent would find their answer in the choices.

Surveys bring numerous advantages to a piece of research with this level of specificity. While researching sources at the start of the project, it was very clear that not many were available on the subject that was targeted. There are very few government-funded associations focusing on social issues in Morocco, as is the case in many developing countries. Those that do exist as for the most part self-funded, which often leads to such associations acting out of self-interest and cutting funding for 'extra' research that would actually benefit social matters.

The survey conducted provides this research with relevant data on Moroccans and the Arab Spring. Surveys of this nature have never been attempted, even though Morocco was clearly affected by the Arab Spring. This piece of research will become part of Morocco's growing resources, supporting and helping similar projects in future. Contributing to a developing country's available resources is an important task, as the data given needs to be unbiased and diverse enough. This survey makes reliable data available to readers and further expands Morocco's research on social and political issues.

Survey Methodology

In order for the survey to work as it should in an unbiased manner, the appropriate method of surveying had to be chosen. The survey was uploaded online to have the maximum reach possible with the most diversity. This was the most obvious solution; however, determining where exactly to place the survey was crucial to its success. For example, opting to disseminate the survey only through social media would exclude much of Morocco's population, as much of the population dos not have access to these channels (discussed in Chapter 3). Therefore, the survey was also sent via email to a random set of people accessed through the help of personal contacts, 40 years of age and older, working and living in Morocco. Most Moroccan citizens who do not have social media accounts belong to this age range, which is why it was picked for the study. Reaching all ages allows a diversified response set on life experience in Morocco during the Arab Spring period and the events that occurred in the Kingdom relative to media coverage.

The first strategy involved a number of people sending the survey to Moroccan relatives and friends of all ages to acquire the most unbiased answers possible. The group of people that received this survey comprised citizens of the Amazigh region, as well as the north, east, west and south of Morocco. The cities of origin of these people included, but were not limited to, Midelt, Casablanca, Tangier, Agadir, Rabat, Ifran, Fes, Chefchaouen, Marrakesh and Erfoud. These people also belonged to various social classes as the Arab Spring did not affect all of them equally. The survey was dispersed through email and social media channels, including Facebook, Pinterest, and Instagram. These were used since they have the greatest percentage of users in Morocco (Statcounter).

Enough time needs to be given for the surveys to be taken seriously and not just to complete them (Elon University, n.d.). Therefore, a period of two weeks was allowed for all the responses to be sent back and analysed. This period was 15–29 October 2018. The period was selected as there were no public holidays during that time and therefore it was safe to assume that the majority of citizens would have been in the office or at university checking their emails and social media accounts frequently. It was also chosen to make sure enough responses were given in order to have a large enough group of participants. This larger group of participants gave greater breadth and depth to the survey's data and meant it was less inclined towards a certain type of answer. The diversity of the participants' ages also made it difficult to find a time when all participants would be available to answer the survey.

Much research was required to determine and construct the questions in the survey. The most important factor to consider was how a participant reads and understands a question. A model was formed in psychology to show a person's cognitive response to questions. It was found that people first interpret the question, then retrieve information from the question. This is followed by forming an opinion or judgment about the question; the person would then format their response and finally edit their response according to what they believe the question is leaning towards (Shaughnessy, 2015). Therefore, while formatting the questions, every step of a person's cognitive response to a question was followed to make sure answers were unbiased. There were to be no vague questions or answers available in the multiple-choice selection, to ensure the respondents knew what they were answering. The vaguer the question, the more the answer will be based on opinion instead of facts (Shaughnessy, 2015).

The questions posed in the survey were for different purposes and are therefore varied in nature. This was to ensure that all respondents can reply to different questions if they are unable to answer some. Another reason for the range of questions was to obtain the most information possible about the Arab Spring from the survey. This varied method of asking questions is effective, since the respondent is not completely sure of what the survey-maker wants as answers; it makes the survey seem more arbitrary than for a specific purpose. This also helps the data to be more credible, as the answers will certainly be more honest.

It is very important for every survey to have an aim so that the person setting the questions can retrieve a certain type of needed data. This survey was aimed at various interlinked subjects that should be covered throughout this research. The questionnaire was formulated to find out more about the media coverage of certain countries compared to others, the benefits compared to the disadvantages that the Arab Spring brought to different countries, as well as popular opinion on the Arab Spring and its outcomes. Moroccans were exposed to the Arab Spring in their country only for a short period of time, a fact that renders them particularly suitable for this type of survey; they were affected by it but their country and government did not undergone significant changes because of it. They were exposed to the information while having lived through the uncertainties at the same time. Moroccans are, in fact, the perfect population group to target, knowing that they had at some point a Damocles sword above their heads labelled 'Arab Spring'. They were worried by the images of neighbour countries suffering the atrocities resulting from rebellion in countries such as Libya, Egypt, and Tunisia.

The sample size of the survey needed to be large enough to have a general idea about what the Moroccan population thinks about the Arab Spring both in Morocco particularly and as a general term. 216 respondents answered the questions on the survey seriously. Many surveys were excluded because of a lack of seriousness in the answers and therefore would have affected the survey negatively since the answers were unrelated to its content. The survey was also translated into two other languages besides English (French and Arabic), due to the fact that Moroccans are generally not English speakers. These languages were used since they are the main languages used between Moroccan citizens. One should also point out that a special Arabic dialect spoken only by Moroccans (Darija) was used. The survey was made available in three different languages to ensure that all respondents completely understood what they were answering.

The responses of the survey were easily collected since the format was in multiple-choice style. Therefore, the number of respondents that answered a specific answer was divided by the total number of respondents to the survey. This gave the percentage of each response, giving its own weight to the question. From this percentage, many statistical analyses can be done by simply plugging in the numbers into a formula. This was the best method of weighing responses, especially after the surveys had been filtered to exclude the ill-considered answers that did not contribute to depicting a clearer idea of how Moroccans conceive the Arab Spring and its outcomes, and whether those outcomes have had a destructive or a constructive impact. Results will be discussed in Chapter 6.

Part III: Interviews

The goal set out in the interview process is to acquire a first-hand knowledge drawn from a lived experience and to refine the current representations of the research topic in this disseration. I also resorted to the questionnaire method, representing an important step in my methodological choice of a predefined research problem. I recently consulted the book: *Le questionnaire en questions, retour d'expériences d'enquêtes réalisées au Maroc (*Questionnaire in questions, feedback from surveys conducted in Morocco) prepared by Jamal Khalil in collaboration with Abdellah Zouhairi (2017 LADSIS editions). The authors explain "the use of the questionnaire as a research tool and its main users in Morocco, recalling that before setting on this course, the researcher must start by defining his/her problem, which is similar to a pre-established programme, but he must also remain open to the changes that will crop up along the way." (Khalil & Zouhairi, 2017) Furthermore, the authors revisit a very important aspect: namely that producing correct data is an essential condition for the success of the questioning process, but that this cannot be achieved without a trust relationship between "the interviewer and the interviewee". This can only be established through respect and an effort to appease any tensions. The outcome can be considered successful if the interview turns into a sort of conversation rather than a classic question/answer (dull) interview.

In order to determine the factors that contributed to Morocco being spared from the movement of the Arab Spring, interviews were conducted with two well-placed individuals: Abbas El Fassi, ex-prime minister and former ambassador of the Kingdom of Morocco to Tunisia, then to

France; and Mohamed El Ouafa, ex-minister of Education and also former ambassador to Brazil, India, and Iran. The decision to have those two political figures as interviewees was driven by their background and knowledge of Moroccan politics, but also mainly because of their presence within the Moroccan government during the period when the Arab Spring began.

In fact, during the year 2011, both interviewees were in post – Mr. El Fassi was prime minister at the time, while Mr. El Ouafa was the Minister of Education. Consequently, both played roles of paramount importance during that particular period. This is why I chose to interview those two particular political figures, given their background and implication in the events that happened in Morocco during the Arab Spring.

Abbas El Fassi, who was the Moroccan prime minister from 15 October 2007 to 29 August 2011, as mentioned above, is one of the best-suited persons to interview on this subject due to his position in goverment. It was during this exact period (starting from 2010) that the Arab Spring was initiated. It all started in Tunisia, when Mohamed Bouazizi, the merchant struggling to enjoy his basic rights as a human being and citizen of Tunisia, set himself on fire to express his discontentment with his country's situation. And herein lies another reason for choosing Mr. Abbas El Fassi as an interviewee, who was himself appointed, as formerly mentioned, ambassador of the Kingdom of Morocco to Tunis. His knowledge of both Moroccan and Tunisian culture and social situations provides us with a clear insight into the differences between Morocco and Tunisia, and could shed light on the major factors that made the two countries react differently to a phenomenon that appears to directly concern both countries to a seemingly similar extent.

In addition to his knowledge of Tunisian society, given the experience he acquired while representing Morocco in Tunis, Abbas El Fassi was also at the centre of what seemed to be the beginning of the Arab Spring in Morocco, with the movement of 20 February 2011. He was the head of the government during the change of constitution of March 2011, and could bring a clear insight into the situation within the Moroccan government by clarifying how it reacted to and perceived the demands of those movements that were asking for reforms that might have led to revolts and rebellions. Abbas El Fassi is thus one of the best sources available to answer the

questions surrounding Morocco's escape from the domino effect that pushed many Arab countries to collapse internally and fall into civil war.

Both interviews took around six hours in total, equal in length. A questionnaire was used to try to guide the interview to prevent it from deviation towards other subjects that do not necessarily help to answer the main research question. Mr. Abbas El Fassi's interview helped determine the role played by the Moroccan government at that time to appease the rising tensions and avoid the Arab Spring. The interview with Mr. El Ouafa came to confirm the first interview's conclusions and also gave credit to the Moroccan people's responsiveness and understanding.

During the course of the two interviews, new factors and parameters emerged as reasons behind the Arab Spring's limited repercussions on the Kingdom of Morocco. Both interviewees emphasised the importance of the monarchy's legitimacy and the historical background surrounding a relationship described as 'special' between the king and the people, which itself stressed the main points of difference when compared to other countries that endured the Arab Spring. In addition to the previously mentioned governmental efforts, all these elements were of considerable weight in answering the main question of this research, and were of help when conducting the research, especially in drawing conclusions.

Part IV: Describing the Field of Ethnography

It is often considered of great utility from an ethnographic point of view to position oneself within one's research, and to bring to the fore the key elements that would enable the reader to understand the research subject and the motivations behind the choice of a subject. To this end, I will present, in the remainder of this chapter, the significant steps and stages that marked this research journey, as well as my relationship with the field. I will begin by explaining the personal motivations that triggered this research on youth mobilisation practices, and from there other categories of social mobilisation in order to demonstrate why was Morocco was exempted from the Arab Spring. My second step will be to examine the successive stages of field access, then I will talk about myself, now a doctoral student, and what stimulates my pursuit of discovery and study. Subsequently, I will endeavour to describe my first encounters with certain members of the mobilised youth, including activists from the 20 February movement. Lastly, I will address a

host of questions that arise from the field itself and that relate to the researcher's everyday life among the subjects he studies and the ensuing problem of distanciation-proximity.

Revisiting a past that was rocked by protest actions led by young people and that constituted a milestone in my youth triggered the inquisitiveness that prompted me to conduct this research, not only as a dissertation piece on the political protest practices of certain groups, but also as a study of certain aspects of unionist and civil society organisation of which they form part. To me, these motivations provided the gateways necessary to access my research field, that of the 20 February movement, and through it address the aspect we now commonly label as *the Moroccan exception* as compared to other Arab Spring uprisings.

I was then confronted with new questions. How do young people engaged in an uprising transcend the partisan framework to engage in an extraordinary mobilisation? How was the revolt movement constructed? And by whom? What are the profiles of the uprising's youth? How did political Islam become the most credible mobilising force among Moroccan youth (e.g. the political party of al-'Adl wa al-Ihssan's)? How do different representations of Islam respond to the myriad demands of diverse politico-religious groups? It was from these questions that the present work of research was born.

I decided to carry out an ethnographic study of the protest movement in Morocco and to describe both the circumstances of this movement's emergence and its practical perspectives, in the hope that with a better understanding of the threat itself and its origin, one could explain Morocco's immunity from the Arab Spring. Beyond the interest in public expressions of contestation, the choice of this subject allows me to study the interface between several expressions of political action organisation. How did this model of uprising give birth to a new form of Moroccan political action? But the most crucial element of this work is to answer the following question: in what way was Morocco an exception, and why?

The decision to begin with this sort of question seems relevant to me as it provides an opportunity to broaden my research on the mobilisation of young people and its various expressions to cover the current non-institutional political landscape. This two-pronged interest also shows that the revolt movement in Morocco is very influential, extending into several politico-religious spaces. In this sense, it becomes even more interesting to study the process

behind the emergence of the protests and youth mobilisation to better understand the roots of this growing influence.

Throughout my journey creating this work, my director of studies and professors alike have encouraged me in my endeavours, since it was relevant and my findings would be of great interest to them. At first, my idea was to focus on all the monarchies that evidently resisted the Arab Spring; yet the more work I put into this, the more I realised that it made more sense to focus on one country – namely, the Kingdom of Morocco. In truth, it was during an annual progress review (APR2) that this idea was suggested by the assessor, Dr Tarik Sabry. Given my Moroccan background, the suggestion rapidly took hold and became a great insight into the way forward. Also, the Moroccan exception had a singularity that was not found in other countries affected by the Arab Spring phenomenon. I then made the acquaintance of various influential players of the youth movement in Rabat-Salé and Casablanca. This made the project even more tangible and I became quasi-obsessed with the following question: how did this model of revolt create a new form of Moroccan political action? Does this new type of political action have any link of significance with Morocco being an exception of the Arab Spring? Could it be the main reason why Morocco has been able to avoid the Arab Spring and its consequences?

Once my research subject was set, the questions arose. How should I construct my field? What are the different steps I have to take to access my field? How do I manage my dual status of observer/actor and researcher? How do I manage my position of researcher from within and from outside? How should I initiate my first meetings with members of the movement? After describing the impact that my own experience had on my motivations and in light of those questions, I will discuss the relationship that I have developed with my field of research.

I first positioned myself as an external observer, but I quickly gave up this position for two reasons. First, external observation without actual practice of the group's activities led me to question the methodological relevance of external observation. In addition, the activists quickly pointed out the difficulty of understanding their practices without first-hand experience. Following their invitation, I began my first observations by demonstrating with them in public places. I thus experienced the transition from the status of researcher to that of a player in full action for the sake of the research and in order to be fully emerged in the situation, living it as

they do. Proximity was quickly established. This proximity allowed me to observe and live these practices as a member. Some activists had clearly cautioned me to speak only with the head militants, claiming that ordinary activists were often ignorant and may feed me wrong information about the movement. Conversely, I chose to live daily with all members of the group, without setting any distinction. This is how I was able to access different life stories and avoid control, to be able to characterise the functioning of the group in its spontaneous and daily production. My ethnographic work starts with the premise that every social fact is an objective achievement from the self-organisation that each individual achieves in the accomplishment of his daily activities. Although I first embarked on this experience with a preconception of neutrality, I began to question where I stood. Although other activists and members of the studied group were fully aware of my neutrality, they acted as if I was one of them. This quick integration and my total immersion among the activists was at times overwhelming and pushed me at times to agree in some ways with their objectives. However, for the sake of neutrality and well-conducted research, I separated myself from any personal feelings and opinions while transcribing my experiences in my journal to get rid of any bias that would hinder the findings.

In order to take ownership of my field, my approach consisted of favouring the descriptive dimension of observable practices. This choice guided me towards adopting observation by immersion. This method's contribution compares to none other in the approaches adopted in this ethnographic study. I will argue that choosing this method to describe the practices of a militant group is better adapted to this kind of investigation. Great importance will be given to the description of these actions. Describing an action and the context of its production sheds light on two key axes that are crucial to understanding the studied group and its coherence – the group as a collective of individuals. Trying to understand the tools used by individuals makes their world observable. Garfinkel (Amiel, 2010: 22) explains that his research is "directed to the tasks of learning how members' actual, ordinary activities consist of methods to make practical actions, practical circumstances, common sense knowledge of social structures, and practical sociological reasoning analysable" (Amiel, 2010: 22).

How can we describe and analyse the methods used by these players on a daily basis? How do they define their actions towards each other and towards actors outside their world? What degree of description would allow us to detect the methods of a group and its ordinary activities? My

approach is therefore to describe and understand these practices in the same way that the players of these actions do. To understand and describe the methods used by individuals, descriptive ethnography requires engaging in the anthropology of the shared experience. In my case, becoming a member of the group I was studying was one more step in the embodied experience. I secured a privileged observation vantage point: that of a fully-fledged member of the group. This position was certainly dictated as a methodological requirement and an expression of my own desire to eagerly discover more about the movement through an insider's point of view, but it was also an explicit request made by the studied group; probably in an attempt to convince me to join them. Together, these three elements make integration into the group beneficial, both epistemologically and methodologically.

For the most part, this research describes the practices observed during these field productions. This prompts me to start by presenting my relationship with my field, the choice of my positions, the stages I experienced to access the youth's organisational space, as well as my first contact with members of the group under study. This approach also allows me to describe in detail the behaviours of the studied members and the self-introduction modalities. I am convinced that the field transforms the researcher's outlook and that each field has its own rules, constraints and opportunities. The first premise is that each field is sovereign: the researcher bows to the demands of his field, thus moving away from the use and 'consumption' of pre-established concepts in social sciences.

Tradition has it that all research begins with an initial period during which the researcher is guided by a question or an interest in a theme. In my case, my interest in this work began with informal discussions with young activists in Rabat and Salé, with whom I got in contact mainly through the Internet and mutual friends, and then by reading the press covering the subject, without necessarily finalising the issue. This was familiarisation with a new field using exploratory interviews. The aim was to broaden the perspectives of defining the boundaries of my field study, inspired by the reflections of authors who worked on the same issue, to build, *in fine,* a relevant and coherent study problem (Quivy & Van Campenhoudt, 2006). In order to find a thread for my research that would lead to clear answers to my main interrogations, an approximated question had to be formulated to represent a start. At that stage, and even though the problem had not yet been specified and definitively circumscribed, I was able to consider the

following research problem as a starting point: what circumstances came together to make Morocco an exception at the time of the Arab Spring?

Beyond direct observation of the 20 February movement and meetings with young people, I am currently embarking on a work of well-targeted review grids that will make it possible to quote preceding works and to later formulate reflections and use adequate concepts. Bibliographic research has become a necessity in order to carry out my research and to gain insight into my research topic. My research field is politically very sensitive since it questions the political and ideological motivations of the 20 February movement elements, profiles of members and their activities, and also the Moroccan political landscape with its multiple complexities. To this end, I would like to present the key steps of my access to the field and to elaborate on the methodology used throughout my ethnographic research.

For the most part, this research describes practices observed during these field productions. This impels me to start by presenting my relationship to the field, my positioning choices, how I experienced the phases leading up to my access of the group under observation, as well as my first contact with the group members. This approach also allowed me to describe in detail the behaviour of the members studied and how I projected myself; to ultimately understand and be able to analyse the minds and circumstances that led this group of people to protest and express their discontentment. I am convinced that the field alters the researcher's gaze and that each field has its own rules, constraints and opportunities. In principle, each field is sovereign: the researcher complies with the demands of his field (Rachik, 2014), thus moving away from using and ‘consuming’ ready-made concepts in social science.

By immersing myself among the activists, living their way of life and getting closer to their ideology, the final objective was to better understand the role played by the side of the people in Morocco’s exception from the Arab Spring. The role of the government being answered by interviews, I wondered if governmental efforts were the only factors affecting the Moroccan situation and thought that the activists must have had a certain level of responsiveness and understanding in order for the reforms put in place by the government to be accepted and for the situation to dissipate smoothly. This is why I chose to immerse myself within a group of activists

– to judge their levels of understanding and ability to compromise. Through this fieldwork, I expected to match the findings of the interviews and draw meaningful and coherent conclusions.

Stages of access to the field

My access to the field took place over four important phases:

Negotiation

Access to the field is certainly the object of constant negotiation, even for the smallest parts of the field. Negotiation is therefore a crucial step, even a mandatory one, from the very first steps in the field. In ethnomethodology, the negotiation process is already part of the observation, even before the fieldwork kicks off. I negotiated my participation in activities but also turned down invitations to participate in other actions that did not fit into my own vision of the world; actions that I judged too extreme or that would be of no benefit to the research. How does one enter into negotiations in a manner that would guarantee a certain positive response? In my opinion, the introduction of oneself is necessary during the negotiation. I introduce myself, I present my research and I ask the observed subjects the limits that 'they' would like to set for my observation exercise as a researcher, to avoid any problems in adherence to instructions. However, it is difficult to know who to negotiate with, since one cannot negotiate with all the members of the observed group, especially as I only got in contact with them through the use of social media and did not know them on a personal basis. Approaching the group was a delicate process; convincing them of my neutrality and proving my good intentions was a challenge at the beginning.

Mistrust and vigilance

In order for me to conduct research with no bias, as mentioned before, I opted to avoid extremist groups and chose a more moderate one – but one that also had a significant number of members. The members of the studied group were suspicious of my movements in the space under study, of my observations and of my presence during formal meetings. In short, they were suspicious of my research. They made me understand that the internal elements of organisational order should not be disclosed in my thesis. For my part, I was suspicious of control, I was aware that my

territory should be marked and respected. This reciprocal wariness marked a large part of my fieldwork. On my side, I sought to build my status as an internal observer. On their side, practices unfolded in their social context, built independently of my presence. The degree of vigilance fluctuated according to the situations and the nature of activities. Mistrust and wariness undermine fieldwork: *"The installation of the clinician or ethnographer in the field is never definitively granted; it can be challenged at any moment.*" (Lapassade, 2001)

Trust

After a long period of negotiation, a certain degree of trust was established with the members of the group, granting me access to various activities. The purpose of this access was to collect as much information and make as many observations as possible to describe them, but also to understand practices in their natural production environment. Trust takes different forms and depends on the situation, on the interlocutors and on the relationship established with the group members. It is interesting to mention the link between the established trust and the identity of the researcher who wishes to join the group.

Indeed, my field showed me that a researcher from abroad can quickly gain the confidence of the top hierarchy and of ordinary activists. As a Moroccan, however, it took me some time to gain that trust. Once acquired, trust allows the sharing of practices and spaces, it determines the degree of acceptance by the researcher's observed subjects and the ethical commitments of the latter towards them. Trust allows the researcher to become an important part of his research subject and a social role-player. It leads to the members' opening up to or even collaborating with the observer, who becomes a member, integrating into the group with the purpose of observing it from the inside.

Permission and prohibition

Both permission and prohibition were used simultaneously throughout the fieldwork. Despite approval from the top hierarchy, the field was not made any easier. Permission and prohibition were used alongside the authorisation to access the group. Subordinates of the top hierarchy would call me to order whenever I ventured into the private zone. Conversely, the members under study can also become supporters/contributors to the researcher's work. Once the

researcher secures the permission to investigate, the members can be mobilised to accomplish tasks in his favour. They agree to do interviews, to answer questions, to identify other people for him, and so on and so forth. The denial of access to information and parts of the field may, in contrast, isolate the researcher. The very same group members may become hostile to any collaboration with the researcher.

The coexistence of the permissible and the forbidden means the existence of a certain hierarchy. To produce the permissible and the forbidden is to also produce order and authority. The one who is denied something is subordinated by the person who engages in the act of denying, thus contributing to the creation of the hierarchical order. Accoring to Garfinkel (2001), order is an endogenous phenomenon towards which the members of a social group gravitate and to which they contribute through the continuous accomplishment of their daily activities. Order formation takes shape in the ordinary social organisation that is observable by all. The author states that the presence of order is perceivable through the members' interactions, and that it is possible to take note of the way individuals do and say what they do and say when they act together as a way of detecting the 'methods' they use to carry out, at the very moment they do so, the practical activity in which they are engaged (Garfinkel, quoted by Ogien, 2008). What interests me most in the descriptive approach is first and foremost to understand the way in which an order exists in the actions and patterns ordinarily manifested. To analyse this question of order structure in my group, it is essential to take into consideration the concepts of endogeneity and externality. This brings me to the problem of the researcher's position on the 'inside' and the 'outside' of the studied group.

Out groups / in groups

The relationship between the researcher as an individual and the group he is studying is one of the problems of classical political sociology. The issue takes different dimensions depending on the research field and the researcher's methodological choices. I will use the terms '*in groups*' and '*out groups*' to better describe this articulation between being inside and outside the group. My observer-researcher status is the result of a long process of integration into the group and meticulous observation. It would have been impossible for me to study protest practices without practising them, as stated by the observed actors.

“We mean by participation the researcher’s mode of presence within the observed environment,” writes Henri Peretz, an idea I much agreed with while conducting the in-groups (1998: 50). The experiment conducted by William Foote Whyte (1996) to embed himself into the field of his research was of tremendous inspiration to me. The author moved to Norton Street (a neighbourhood of Boston) to conduct participant observation work for three-and-a-half years. How did William Foote Whyte manage to be accepted by Doc’s gang, the ‘Norton club’? His field experiment sheds light on the life of the gang, the issues of trust it raised, the role of a potential informant and the researcher's inside/outside position. The work of William Foote Whyte is often portrayed as typical of the Chicago School’s research methods.

The Chicago School’s research methods were chosen for this analysis because of its expertise in the subject. Since the 1920s, scientists have been researching social behaviour in different environments while using various methods to form the Chicago School. Its social research theories are based on whether it is appropriate to simply state that a community can be defined by looking at a group of individuals residing there and their characteristics, or whether the community changes how the individuals behave. If the first were deemed appropriate, simple data about the community members would be enough to create an analysis. However, if the second were deemed appropriate, then integration into a community would be necessary to properly analyse the community’s traits that seem to influence each individual. I chose to conduct both analyses to make sure my results would be reliable.

It should be noted that the times of my presence in the observed environment varied according to my appreciation, or lack thereof, for the activities. Thus, my observations are more or less detailed. However, becoming a member of the group under study is necessary to understand this group. Blumer (1969) emphasised the need for the researcher to ‘become a member’ of the group or institution he is studying if he wishes to gain insight, from within, into the “point of view of the members” (Coulon, 1992: 14). There is a known adage that says ‘if you truly want to know somebody, live with them’ – and I believe what Blumer is stating can be summarised as such. Cited by Coulon, the same Blumer speaks of the methodological position that the researcher must take up, arguing that the researcher can only have access to the private phenomena embodying the subjects’ meaningful social productions if he shares [...] the world he set out to

study (Coulon, 1992: 14). This quotation indicates the difficulty behind trying to integrate into such groups and the devotion that is needed to do so.

Joseph Kessel (2008: 32) gives us the following account:

"I received from these people what I could not learn from the books, articles and documents I frantically devoured before my departure (into the field): first-hand experience."

This is the reason why part of my work will be devoted to the study of the different categories the individuals in my group belong to. The best way to build or rebuild knowledge of social realities, Bernier (2009) tells us, is to start from the common-sense knowledge that all individuals have their own peculiar reality. This was great advice before integrating into a group, since it is a fact that I found to be extremely true.

Out groups, or the fact of being outside the group, refers to the position of the researcher, who needs to stand apart from his group while continuing to observe it. In this sense, I agree with Clavel (1992: 103) when he writes:

"For the researcher, while certain obstacles are removed as a result of spatial proximity and common social constraints, the distance has to be built, it is not granted as in a society that differs from that of the ethnographer." But to observe from the outside does not mean relinquishing one's membership. I have at times engaged in observation without participating in the activities of the persons under study. When a person is alone, they are more apt to acting as they usually do than when a colleague or friend accompanies them. Small gestures and different facial expressions are more easily caught when observing two people having a conversation. A lot of the truth about the situation they were in and their sentiments about it came out while I was observing groups from afar.

Being part of a group opens up a debate about the importance of the emotions and feelings developed by the actors during protest actions in which the participant-observer takes part. When I was spending all day with these group members, I paid close attention to their stories and the hardships they lived through over the years and their stories truly started to affect how I felt about the situation I was in. I started out being distant and logical about what I was hearing, but after a couple of days the energy within the group simply took over me. I started going home at

night with a lot of anxiety and anger about the situation these people were in and whether what they were asking for was ever really going to come true. It was then that I knew that I needed to step back and try another strategy to my social research, and started to observe the group from a small distance.

Being outside the group made it then possible to maintain a distance, which is a crucial element for the researcher to analyse the group's activities with pure logic. But how does the observer-participant simultaneously manage distanciation and immersion at the same time? How does he find his place in this simultaneity? In a presentation, Lapassade (2001) traces the stages of participant observation:

"Participant observation is a research mechanism of which the main characteristic, at least in its classical representation – the Chicago School – is attempting to make work, together, field observation – which involves a certain amount of distance – and participation, which, on the contrary, implies the immersion of the researcher in the population he is studying."

This clearly defines the controversy to the theory I mentioned earlier. It was intensely confusing to me which methods I was to use to ensure I integrated into the group and, at the same time, remain an outsider to clearly, and with an unbiased manner, analyse the community at hand. This confusion led me to more research on social scientists and their methods to accomplish such integration. Through this research I found that the first key to accomplishing such integration is by making sure that the group truly feels like the researcher is one of them. When true trust is established, there is more room for deviation from the group, since many doubts that may have once existed will have been banished by this trust.

For Bogdan and Taylor (1975), participant observation is research characterised by a period of intensive social interaction between the researcher and the subjects in their environment. Being within the group commits the researcher to a process of permanent exchange with the group's different categories. The subjects required me to think as they did, and to position myself as they did when it came to making choices in the political field. It proved to be very helpful, since they tended to open up to me more when I agreed with them about their ideas. This task seemed to be easy at first, but it took an unexpected turn when excessive agreement became a red flag to them, especially since the matters at hand were always political ones. That is when I started to include

some of my opinions in arguments, while making sure they were subtle and unimportant to bigger subjects. This seemed to also foster trust because they could actually see a unique personality.

Lapassade (2001) emphasises the usefulness of the researcher for his group when their interests are crosscutting:

"The ethnographer will sometimes have to don the cloak of a clinician for a moment, when he is asked, for example, to give his opinion about a problem, and even his help in solving it." According to Schein (2003), the ethnographer will not really be accepted by the group as long as he is not perceived as willing to provide some help. Because of my academic background and research history in the subject, I was able to truly be of help. It was always crucial to remain modest and humble when giving advice, almost as though a question was asked and it was their idea to take it.

This was an opportunity to seize, because, as Adler and Adler (1987) state, the researcher makes the most of the opportunity given to him by his already acquired status, thanks to his position as an element of the situation. My academic status allowed me to be *de facto* in the observed situation. Lapassade (1991: 25) notes that:

"The more people think we are well informed on a subject, the less willing they are to spontaneously express their opinion on this subject. The researcher must not display his skills, he must allow the subjects to speak freely, say what is on their minds, without seeking to correct, even if what they say sounds absurd." It goes without saying that the observed subjects in my field, taking advantage of my status as 'naïve' but also well-informed, showed me certain practices while keeping others concealed.

Taking this context into account is crucial to understanding and unveiling the methods used by this group to build its social world. The crucial part played by the member who introduces the researcher into the studied group was addressed by William Foote Whyte (1943) in a particularly interesting way. His introduction to his field in Corverville – an Italian immigrant district in Boston – was facilitated by the intervention of a social worker who introduced Doc, the

ringleader of a gang of young people, who in turn was to introduce him to the gang and to the whole neighbourhood (Derez, 2009).

For my part, a young man called Omar, who I had met during a sit-in of the 20 February movement in Rabat, where we spoke for hours and became friends, agreed to guide me throughout the public demonstrations because he wanted to show me what we had been speaking about. He walked by my side, informed me of the identity of the leaders and explained to me the group's operation mode. Finally, he showed me ways to observe from a distance if the police were to intervene so that we would stay safe. These actions are a set of methods by which the group members build their social world since they are daily dangers for them. Here is a list of the observable actions to identify my group in-situ: the harmonious organisation of demonstrations, step by step; the positioning and functions of the leaders; the sharing of time; the individual and collective interventions; the arrival of the movement's spokespersons and their pivotal position, which provides them with a comprehensive vision of the group.

The actions produced by the players, following a specific pace and trajectory, could not be maintained outside the context of their production. As an outsider observer to the group, arriving with fantastical ideas about the field, I discovered a space filled by actors who were carrying out activities and who projected the image of the activists fulfilling methods. This brings me to the fundamental element of my approach, namely that the ethnologist does not place himself above the social reality he intends to study:

"The ethnomethodological approach is therefore a clean break from the sociological tradition. This means its rejection of any position giving the sociologist a privileged point of view on the world [...] The sociologist cannot conduct his investigation outside the understanding of common sense and the underlying expectations that are his as a (competent) member of the society to which he belongs." (Dupret, 2006: 14).

For the researcher to be a competent member, he must master common-sense knowledge and make sure that his own ideas do not get in the way of the analysis. It is also crucial to be able to form one's character depending on the community one is analysing without this change affecting one's real person. In my case, the member's status granted to me by the movement guided me towards a broader understanding of the leaders' lives by allowing me to engage in permanent

interactions with them. My personal opinion had to be left aside while engaging with the leaders, since they hold such esteem.

This journey, which allowed me to understand the meaning of the practices thanks to familiarisation with the social realms of my group, is in fact a type of ethnomethodology.[2]

Garfinkel believes that the identification of members is recognisable by the way in which they maintain the orderliness of their activities and the procedures put in place to implement these arrangements: the activities through which the members organise and manage the situations of their daily life are identical to the procedures used to make these situations 'accountable' (Garfinkel, 2007: 51).

My status as an observer, my role within the group, my regular presence and the trust placed in me by the leaders made the activities of my group accountable and intelligible. This situation allowed me to understand the social reality of my group and the deployment of situated practices: "Ethnomethodology is aimed at the praxeological analysis of social reality, that is, to describe how practices unfold in a situation and thereby make themselves observable and intelligible" (Dupret and Ferrié, 2007).

Over time, I became aware that I was an integral part of the situation I was describing: I shared the same language and methods as the members. I first formulated my description in Darija[3], a description full of meaning and reflexivity. Then I translated the actions and the discourse into English during the drafting phase. This reflexive passage between the language of raw ethnography and the language of ethnographic writing marked my first experiences with the transcription and translation of my field.

[2] Ethnomethods are processes implemented by actors to make sense and account of the social order, to know it, to recognise it, to produce it and to transform it.

[3] Moroccan dialect, not an official language of Morocco but widely spoken through society. Mainly derived from Arabic, it also has Berber, French and Spanish roots.

Managing everyday life between the researcher and the observed community

Other questions challenged me. Yet, the aim is not to overload the examined thematic axes, but to briefly explore the various problems generated by the field itself. The issue of the observed group's everyday life, and therefore also mine, piqued my interest. How does one manage one's daily life as a disciple-researcher? Having a different life at home at night as the one I was living during day was quite difficult to handle at the beginning of the experiment. How to dovetail the daily life of the observed group with the researcher's daily activity? The researcher-observer examines the behaviour of the actors and, with his tools, he reconstructs the daily thought of the group. In social science,

> *"the thought objects constructed by the social scientist, in order to grasp the social reality, have to be founded upon the thought objects constructed by the common-sense thinking of men…living their daily life within their social world. Thus, the constructs used by the social sciences are, so to speak, constructs of the second degree, that is constructs of the constructs made by the actors on the social scene, whose behaviour the social scientist has to observe and to explain." (Schütz, 1987: 11)*

The daily life of the observed group makes ordinary activities regular. This limits my need to resort to approximation and extra-contextual imagination in my description. Some common practices observed among the members make it possible to understand this relation to everyday life as well as its management. There is a harmony that is particular to the observed group in view of its normative functioning which, on a daily basis, gives meaning to the members' activities. The main thrust is that:

> *"Any social setting [should] be viewed as self-organising with respect to the intelligible character of its own appearances as either representations of or as evidences of-a-social-order. Any setting organizes its activities to make its properties as an organised environment of practical activities detectable, countable, recordable, reportable, tell-a-story-aboutable, analysable – in short, accountable*." *(Garfinkel, 2007: 95)*

It is, therefore, this self-organised world within the observed group that caught my attention, as well as the way in which practices are made observable and relatable when closely observed. Still, a question arises: how does one manage the need for distance with the group, in order to describe it objectively in its daily life? This distancing seems to me to be twofold: in relation to the informants and to myself as a participant researcher sharing the same language and same culture as the observed group. Contrary to what one can imagine, familiarisation does not automatically give access to knowledge. The native ethnologist in me had to go beyond the norms and social codes shared with the members to see beyond my habitual cultural and linguistic territory.

Would my intensive participation make it difficult to distance myself from the analysis of my field? During my descriptive writing work, I felt at times the need to isolate myself from the group. On the field, once I isolated myself, the words began to flow freely. Reviewing the activities of a day and part of the night and making them intelligible are tasks that require taking a step back. When writing, am I not describing a space/time of which I no longer form part? Is it enough to call on my memory and the notes of my field journal to replicate the meaning of the group's activities as they were produced?

In the tradition of the Chicago School, it is recommended that the researcher simultaneously practise, in the field, participation and distancing, and avoid 'going native', while at the same time living the lives of the individuals observed (Lapassade, 2001: 16).

Back to the issue of the distance to observe towards the subjects studied, (Paquot, 2013), Colette Pétonnet reminds us the different limits needed between the researcher and group member to make sure the analysis is accurate; the following passage explains this perfectly:

> *"The anthropologist must maintain a distance from the 'studied population'. He/she must not fill in administrative papers to help the mother, enrol one of the children in school, stay for dinner – at least not immediately – avoid any familiarity while showing great respect to them. It is these principles of 'participant observation' and 'life stories' that she [Colette Pétonnet] applies in her various 'fields' in Val-de-Marne where she tracks the 'elsewhere'."*

My field transcends these principles and teaches me that, although engaged in a direct observation process, each field remains sovereign and produces its own logic. This is why ethnomethodology radically rejects the introduction of rules, principles and concepts that would be valid for all fields. On the contrary, it stresses the importance of understanding the rules and principles at play between the individuals, rather than seeking to apply and respect them. Of course, it is not to be forgotten to set some types of limits, such as no emotional involvement at least at first. It is better to test the waters slowly than to jump in the water not knowing what is in there.

Finally, the scope of my role within the group was decisive in categorising my distance or proximity to its members, as Lapassade stated brilliantly in the following passage:

> *"The problem can also be formulated through the categorizations applied to the researcher's role on the field. These categorizations show that it is possible to construct myriad types of relationships that lie between participation and distanciation." (Lapassade, 2001: 17).*

I spent one year alongside actors in the Moroccan political scene (M20F protesters, civil society activists, associations, etc.), constructing a field that never stopped spawning new questions and themes to explore. The personalities and different views that can be found in the political realm are extremely unique. A leader may be so sure of what their citizens want and the citizens may be so sure of what their leader thinks, but both can be so wrong. It was very inspiring to immerse myself in such diversity but also very challenging to try to keep my head above water and not lose myself in my devotion to the study.

The space-based approach to contestation

One question raised my concerns: the study of the space-based approach to contestation. The centrality of the protest space was one of the first observations to draw my attention in Rabat and Casablanca; these majestic places, heavily loaded with history and symbolism, were taken up by young demonstrators to make their voice heard. The streets of the capital of Morocco and the country's economic capital were completely filled with young protestors expressing their

demands to the government. On some days the protests were friendly, but on others the police would chase protestors down the streets and only screams would be heard.

“Tahrir Square in Cairo, Kasbah Square in Tunis, Taghyir Square in Sanaa, the Manama Pearl Square, Al-Chajara Square in Benghazi, Green Square in Tripoli, etc. The Arab revolutions have turned these ‘ordinary places into extraordinary ones’. In the Tunisian, Egyptian, Bahraini, Libyan, and Yemenite ‘uprisings’, all the dynamic forces converged within the physical space of the encampment, allowing for the interpretation of this action mode as an effective extension instrument of mobilisation” (Combes et al, 2015). Thus begins the book *Les lieux de la colère, occuper l’espace pour contester de Madrid à Sanaa*. (Places of Wrath: Space Occupation as a form of Challenge from Madrid to Sanaa). The relevance of this collective work’s contribution to understanding the notion of ‘occupied’ space during uprisings is very meaningful. The occupation of these majestic squares by demonstrators created a new socio-anthropological configuration and allowed for a better understanding of the new protest dynamics. Public sites with historical significance were taken over while being inscribed in the making of new history. Methodologically speaking, I am interested in the description of the notion of visibility through the protesters’ use of these places, highly symbolic in the collective memory and in history, and even more so when these sites are photographed or filmed. Undeniably, the political sociology of social movements has amassed a considerable number of works when it addressed the impact of spatial analysis in the description of these movements, similar to other social and human sciences: (Henri Lefebvre: 1974; Torre: 2008, Warf, Arias: 2009), etc., without forgetting the Chicago School from the 1930s. My contribution addresses, among other things, this aspect of the protest space. My political approach confers importance on the microscopic description of the space. It is possible at this stage to espouse the approach of Frédiric Sawicki and Jean-Louis Briquer (Sawicki and Briquer, 1989), which combines the analysis of the physical space with its symbolism. Again, in terms of methodology, it is very interesting to borrow the expression of Laure Bereni, who explains her understanding of the space taken up by women’s protests by naming it “the space of the women’s cause”. In my case, I name the M20F youth mobilisation spaces described below as “the spaces of youth anger”.

From the virtual to the real: A new political experience to describe

My methodological approach also focused on observing websites that cover social movements in Morocco and how the Internet played a decisive role in setting up the protest. In fact, traditional media channels and the Internet have played a very important role in spreading the 'Arab Maghreb and Middle East Spring'. Starting from Tunisia with the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi, the young fruit-and-vegetable vendor harassed by the local police services, the outburst of indignation and the call for solidarity with these popular classes, going beyond the borders of Tunisia to reach populations in the Middle East and the Maghreb, in our case Morocco was targeted by social media and Western news channels. This information spread so successfully on social media networks because, first and foremost, there is a limited amount of censorship on posts and therefore more subjects can be covered. Another reason social media proved to be a successful way to spread information was because most of the people affected by these protests, that is to say average citizens, are on social media networks and leaders of these countries are usually not.

Experiencing an unprecedented moment in its protest history, Morocco witnessed the emergence of a wave of mobilisation carried forward by a youth movement. The Internet is the movement's space of expression, but also of its repression. Indeed, the Internet helped raise awareness of the movement's demands; Moroccan activists seized this political space of expression and dissemination to organise the movement by launching a call for protests on 20 February 2011. Mainstream media channels did not relay the messages of this movement; rather the opposite as 'fake-news' or rigged demonstrations organised by the *Makhzen* were diligently at work to discredit the movement on the Web. The transition from the virtual world to reality takes place during the demonstration of 20 February. The 'digital revolution' had allowed the emergence of a new and freer form of self-expression, and the horizontal dissemination of statements (through tools such as Facebook). Organisation was part of this and allowed activists to become role-players, as opposed to mere spectators of the political play. 20 February was "a rendezvous, a date that comes out of virtual organisation into the real world".

Part V: The 20 February Movement

This chapter does not seek to reveal the whole history of this movement, but rather to provide an explanatory background that would make it possible to contextualise the political process initiated by the monarchy and its allies when confronted by the 2011 protests. This section will also assess the importance of this movement to the whole of this research.

In a regional context marked by revolt and the historic collapse of three political regimes, one after the other, namely those of Ben Ali in Tunisia, Mubarak in Egypt and Gaddafi in Libya, the Moroccan monarchy responded through the implementation of fundamental reforms. Following in the footsteps of protest movements in the above-mentioned countries, a movement emerged in Morocco under the name 20 February movement, a name born out of the twitter hashtag *#20February,* which referred to the first date of protests in 2011. However, this movement did not achieve the same impact as other movements did elsewhere, and I will come back to that point later. The following section is an attempt to describe and analyse the context in which the 20 February movement was born, to better understand the mobilisation of the monarchy and its allies, in an attempt to adapt to the regional and local situation.

20 February Movement: Insights and perspectives

The 20 February movement of the Arab Spring in Morocco was the most influential in the country; apart from daily protests and minor involvement of the police, this movement was the one that made leaders take notice. In his article on the 20 February movement, Joseph Hivert (2013) explained the motivations behind the mobilisation of the movement's youth and the collective demobilisation, from the angle of the individual disengagements of one category of players. Let us first address the mobilisation since the country was in the grips of an unprecedented experience in its protest history, with the rise of a tide of dissent driven by a movement of 'young people', the M20F. Buoyed by the impact of a political action that combined the streamlining of demands and the provisional pause of the divides existing between the groups, this collective engagement managed to sustainably federate multiple players and political organisations within a single unified action. Organised as co-ordinators or local chapters in more than 90 cities around the country, the M20F gathered young activists from the Moroccan

Association of Human Rights (AMDH), Attac-Maroc, the Alternative Movement for Individual Freedoms (MALI), the youth leagues of non-governmental parties such as Annahj Ad Dimucrati (the Democratic Path), the United Socialist Party (PSU), the Democratic and Socialist Vanguard Party (PADS), but also part of the youth leagues of the Socialist Union of Popular Forces (USFP) and the Justice and Development Party (PJD). The latter was the party that would eventually win the elections and a few months later, the PJD leaders announced they had no involvement with the movement and called their militants to withdraw. The Party's youth league issued a statement of support on 17 February 2011, but withdrew it immediately to align themselves with the decision of the party's secretary general, Benkirane, who had expressed both his support for the monarchy and his refusal to take part in a protest movement (Tourabi, 2012). Activists from unrecognised but tolerated organisations such as *al-Adl-wa al-Ihsane* (Justice and Beneficence) and the Al Badil al-Hadari (Civilizational Alternative) also joined the coalition (Desrues, 2012).

A text by Zakaria Rhani sheds more light on this:

"On the subject of the rise of the M20F, two divergent explanations are often put forth. While some players, particularly those who at some point in their history were associated with political, religious or civil society organizations, see the movement as part of a long-standing tradition of activism, others, mostly young independent ones, saw in the Tunisian and Egyptian uprisings the temporal matrices of this genesis". Thus, if for the former the M20F was a milestone in a history of old activism – and even, for some of them, its logical crowning – for the latter, it was a whole new story that had begun to take shape with and in the Arab uprisings, as of December 2010.

Certain categories of citizens supported or joined the movement, either in a personal capacity or motivated by political, unionist or civil society affiliations. These categories mostly comprised less fortunate citizens, since they were most affected by the new reforms: students, women of the lower and middle classes, and employees of the state. Common demands revolved around social justice and the right to access healthcare, education and employment, the fight against clientelism, corruption and the privatisation of public services, as well as the recognition of the Amazigh and Hassani languages and cultures. The two key demands, however, were the establishment of a parliamentary monarchy and the instatement of a democratic constitution drafted by a constituent assembly elected by the people. Contrary to other protest movements in

the region that targeted symbols of power such as Ben Ali, Gaddafi and Mubarak, the 20 February movement did not target the person of the king, which made the Moroccan experience an exception. But the king's entourage was nonetheless targeted, with demonstrators denouncing the stranglehold some of his closest advisers, including Mounir Majidi, his private secretary, had on the country's economic affairs, and the presence on the political arena of his close friend, Fouad Ali Al Himma.

Several studies and essays have traced from various analytical angles the many characteristics that marked the birth of this movement: Vairel (2012); Desrues (2012); Bennani-Chraïbi & Jeghllaly (2012); Samoui & Wazif (2013); Rhani (2016); Mouna (2014), etc. It had been a long while before that since Morocco had experienced such unity among its citizens. Also, most monarchies wouldn't have reacted this way to such protests against its government's laws. This is one of the major reasons why this protest, and the king and government's reaction to it, sparked such curiosity in research.

For Mohammed Tozy (2011):

"The 20 February movement initially served as an electric jolt that restarted the reformist process that had been addressing issues considered taboo, such as the immoral nature of the collusion between business and power." This is one of the reasons why this movement came as a shock to most leaders in the country.

Other slogans of a political nature were chanted and translated different aspirations: "the *Makhzen* must leave", "down with government", "change the constitution", "free the media", "reform justice", but also "fight debauchery", etc. These types of slogans were once so impossible to say that citizens trembled at the idea of anyone saying such provocative statements about the monarchy. However, once the masses started singing these slogans, it was clear that these were issues that would not be easily dismissed

The movement made it possible to maintain the pressure during the proceedings of the commission and to sometimes alter the balance of powers within this commission." For substantial segments of youth, the movement achieved its main objective, which was to vanquish

fear, cause political powers to backtrack, and to defend the dignity and freedom of expression, including the right to protest, etc.

The movement was mostly led by young people because their generation embraced technology and the fast spread of information. These people, unlike older adults, had been raised with the power of the Internet and the knowledge of what it could do for nations. Therefore, frustrated with having the freedom and power of the Internet limited to them by their country, knowing the difference between their laws and the laws of the youth in Western countries, and seeing the impact of the revolts in the first countries hit by the Arab Spring, they decided to start a community to fight those rights and to finally say what was once forbidden to say. People of all ages were interested in the movement, but the core and reason for the movement resided in the youth of Morocco. Once they started being demonised for their protests, it only made them more vocal. This power was what sparked the start of the reforms in Morocco.

Jean-Noël Ferrié (2012:81) points out:

"The Movement was hoping for a contagion that never materialised. More importantly, it created an opportunity for the monarchy to accelerate reforms based on explicit claims, and to benefit from the media coverage of a movement which, though not specifically representative of the 'population', had managed to assert itself as embodying some of its aspirations."

Thus, reforms emerged as a necessity in order to enforce a consensual policy and, implicitly, avert the major crises experienced by other countries in the region. Morocco had not seen such revolts since 1983, when people were physically forced to go back home if they did not want to go to prison or encounter even worse punishments. At that time, citizens were too scared to speak up against their leaders since freedom of speech was not then a known phenomenon in the country. With the rise of technology and the extent to which the revolts affected economies in Arab countries, the Moroccan monarchy knew that responding to these revolts in a calm and logical manner was the new, more effective action to take. Although leaders did set reforms for citizens, it took many attempts to try to minimise the actions of revolts of the citizens to restore order.

Fighting the M20F at all costs

A broad and hostile campaign was waged against the M20F. The Internet was fully utilised in this offensive. Individuals and bloggers with no known political affiliation but claiming monarchical patriotism, activists and political figures such as the Minister of Youth and Sports, all used blogs, social networks such as Facebook and discussion forums on various websites, to discredit the M20F. Photo montages and fake videos were posted on YouTube and Daily Motion. Some attributed to the M20F supporters' actions that are condemned by Islam (such as drinking alcohol), or that took them outside the community of Muslims (converts to Christianity) or outside that of patriots (support for the Polisario Front and Algeria). This campaign peaked on the eve of 20 February, when Maghreb Arab Press (MAP) announced the cancellation of the marches scheduled for the following day (Desrues, 2012).

Although the M20F was far from being an Islamist movement, the country of its roots is an Islamist one. All citizens of Morocco are considered to be automatically Muslim; therefore, any Moroccan that performs acts discouraged by Islam is considered as a delinquent and criminal; the same goes for Moroccans who have decided to convert to another religion. Although, for example, bars are legal in Morocco, Moroccans are by law (albeit an unenforced law) not allowed to be served alcohol in them. This has helped the Moroccan authorities bring in many powerful men and women because they were caught drinking or performing adultery, and it especially helps them to demonise groups of people. This was the case with the M20F when the authorities attempted to uncover the un-Muslim behaviour of the supporters of the movement and publicise them in the media for the public to see and try to stop them.

It is also worth remembering that any act against the Moroccan country by a Moroccan citizen is considered to be an act against Islam. Since Morocco is a monarchy, all acts of revolt are taken as defying the king, who is one of the descendants of the Muslim prophet, Mohammed. Therefore, any act against the king is as if the group was against the leader of Muslims. This is a very sensitive accusation that the M20F supporters were very afraid of at the beginning because of the possible repercussions that could happen, especially knowing that it was not their intention at all. All that the supporters wanted was to have the reforms they were asking for, not to become a republic.

The M20F was thus virulently attacked, accused of atheism to delegitimise it religiously – and of separatism to delegitimise it politically. It was portrayed as a movement that undermined the country's religious identity and its sacred values and norms. The magazine *Le Temps* (issue of 23–29 July, 2011) titled its front page*: 20 February: Eating during Ramadan,* accusing the M20F militants of calling for the non-observance of the fast in Ramadan, which amounted to 'stigmatising' them as seriously reprehensible attitude in the eyes of the majority of Muslims. Observing the fast during the month of Ramadan being unanimously perceived as a religious obligation, the M20F was thus placed, in terms of religion, outside this unanimity and that community.

The magazine did not stop at that. It labelled the movement's activists as 'neo agitators':

"Because they believe that they are defending 'legitimate' causes, they break loose from all obligations and attack state assets and private property. In the face of this new 'ideological climate', peddled in the media by the whirling dervishes of 20 February, the State must not procrastinate too much: it must deal with a firm hand. Order and authority are not open for debate. The tumultuous events shaking the Arab world must not prompt us to stand with our arms crossed before the emergence of these new hubs of radicalism."

This cast doubts on the movement; labelling it as radical categorised it politically as an instigator of anarchy. Along with these attacks, it is not surprising that the M20F also suffered from structural weaknesses. With many media outlets bringing out lies about who the supporters of the M20F, it was difficult to keep unity among the group. In times of stress and chaos, it is hard to have one voice leading the movement, and what happens is many voices with different opinions start leading sub-groups.

Mohammed Tozy reveals one of these weaknesses:

"Unfortunately, this was a movement that sorely lacked in structure, composed as it was of several political sensitivities. The absence of structure in the 20 February movement and the ideological disparities within it rendered it ineffective at the time of crucial arbitrations, on the eve of the finalisation of the constitutional reform text. This explains why the Justice and Development Party (PJD), associated with conservative groups, emerged as the sole winner in

the final arbitrations that introduced certain ambiguities about the interpretations of the constitutional text and that were to be produced in the future".

As a result of the media pointing out the fact that the supporters of the M20F were not unified in what they were protesting against, authorities saw it as a weakness. As mentioned above, authorities underestimated the movement at first and did not take it with much seriousness. The supporters' actions were now considered as juvenile because of the unstructured revolts they were holding. Fortunately, this was only one view of this disorganisation. Many other theorists believed that this 'disorganisation' was actually an effective way of voicing the extent of the discontent citizens were experiencing.

Rhani, for example, does not share this point of view since he does not perceive divergence as a weakness but as a strength because of its diversity:

"This movement's heterogeneity was rarely considered as incapacitating, although it was recognized as difficult to manage on the ground, especially in the presence of components with diverging ideological and socio-political inclinations. The M20F, as underlined by many interlocutors, 'is a popular movement that does not practice exclusion, as long as the participants respect its platform and its democratic and peaceful ethics'" (Rhani, 2016).

The demonisation of the M20F took other forms, more or less official. In her editorial for the Centre Jacques Berque, sociologist Hassna Houssein explains:

"Talking about the 20 February movement to the effect that it comprised subversive and disobedient young people who almost project themselves outside the framework of the national pact on these grounds alone. A similar notion is found in the speech of Prime Minister Abdelilah Benkirane in Doha, at the 9th Al-Jazeera Forum (5 May 2015), in which he said that 'We do not know these people who demonstrated' throughout Morocco. This denial was equally discernible when he argued that 'poverty does not exist in Morocco" (Houssein, 2015).

For his part, the famous preacher Abdel Bari Zamzmi, known for his fatwas on 'sexual matters', says: "The demonstrations that followed the king's speech of March 9 are *haram* [unlawful]". The other Salafi Sheikh, Fizazi, after his release from prison, participated in supporting the royal call and taking position against the M20F through televised debates and meetings, which,

according to him, should have purged itself of its atheist components, making reference to the radical left.

A few weeks after the eruption of the protests, and upon his return from Saudi Arabia, Abderrahmane Maghraoui, organised a large rally in Marrakech in support of the royal reforms. On 21 June 2011, he issued a manifesto in which he urged Moroccans to say ‘yes’ to the new constitution, which he said reinforced Islamic values and identity – even though he considered that the place of the Sharia in law was not yet clearly specified (Rhani, 2016).

Soon after the March 9 royal speech announcing the reforms, specifically the referendum on the new Constitution of 2011, the M20F was subjected to another form of violence: the creation of a group dubbed the ‘Young Royalists’, labelled by the M20F as *baltagia* – a term borrowed from the Egyptian protesters and designating the militias working for the police with the assignment of ‘breaking’ demonstrations. In Morocco, the ‘baltagists’ would take up position in the locations designated for the M20F demonstrations, chase away the militants from some public places, often carry knives, but also the portraits of the king and the flags of Morocco, as one can see in many YouTube videos (URL in the references section). While the M20F's protests were often violently suppressed, as the same YouTube video shows, the ‘baltagists’ wore T-shirts with the inscription ‘yes’ to the constitution and, contrary to their rivals, were protected by the police. I witnessed several scenes of police violence against the M20F, while the young royalists drove around in vehicles all over the city of Casablanca, engaging in propaganda for the king and the constitution, and exhorting people to vote ‘yes' to the latter.

But the turning point for the M20F was the political decision to advance the date of the legislative elections scheduled for 2012 to 25 November 2011, subsequently resulting in the electoral triumph of the PJD. In fact, Dupret sees in the PJD’s victory a successful outcome of a well-controlled reform (Dupret, 2012). 25 November marked the victory of the PJD, but this victory was the culmination of a well-controlled reform process, if not largely initiated by the monarchy thanks to what I believe was a series of ‘disarming’ actions. This victory of a ‘politically correct’ party with an Islamic frame of reference contributed to the acceleration of constitutional reforms and led to the halt of street demonstrations by part of the population, including supporters of the M20F.

Everybody involved in this movement, whether they were for or against the M20F, had different opinions on the matter. Without them realising it, Morocco became unified by the revolts that were happening since everyone was finally focusing on the same cause. Something that was significantly different between Morocco and Egypt was the fact that the authorities actually began to take the supporters' claims into consideration, whether or not they were against it. No matter how divergent the M20F were in their demands, they all had a common basis of wanting a new constitution to grant them new rights. This is why it should not be forgotten that, although M20F members were considered as atheists against the monarchy, it all went quiet when the new constitution was announced and the PJD, an Islamist party, won the election. After that, it was difficult for people to still believe that the supporters of the M20F were against Islam and the monarchy.

According to Talidi Belal, a PJD official, multiple factors were behind this victory: political 'cleanliness'; the credibility of party officials and their success in leading the opposition; the organisational strength and effectiveness of the political agenda; the political acumen to read the situation and to devise designs; the resistance discourse denouncing the multiple forms of corruption (*fassad*) and despotism (*isti'bdad*); the protest dynamics experienced in the Arab world, and the weakness of other political formations (Belal, 2012). In the same context, the withdrawal of the *Jama'at al-'Adl wa al-Ihssan* from the M20F profoundly weakened the movement. Several factors were behind this decision, including divergences with other components of the movement which, according to the *Jama'at*, imposed a ceiling on demands (parliamentary monarchy), when everyone knew of al-'Adl's call for a national dialogue around the issue of constitutional reform. In an open letter, Sheikh Yassine, the movement's leader, called for the establishment of a constituent assembly where all sensitivities would be represented to draft a new constitution. In his letter, he denounced "the hoarding of national wealth and the stranglehold of the royal institution and its immediate entourage on the national economy and on public money" (Desrues, 2012). He also demanded real solutions to society's ailments. But above all, the *Jama'at* did not want to endorse the victory of the PJD, which continued to negotiate reforms with the authorities, indirectly harnessing the influence and pressure of the M20F demonstrations. In other words, as Rhani explains:

"By exiting, the *Jama'at* was more likely seeking to further weaken the PJD's position in its negotiations with the '*Makhzen*', and thus diminish its chances of political success ('to ensure that the PJD does not instrumentalise the *Jama'at* in its confrontation with powers')." (Rhani, 2016).

Other less significant explanations consist in claiming that, on the one hand, *al-'Adl wa al-Ihsan* realised its limited capacity of mobilisation mobilisation and did not want its rivals to expose this weakness, and that on the other hand, the *Jama'at* did not want the M20F to die in its hands (interview with Omar, 2011).

On 9 March 2011, the king delivered a speech in which he announced constitutional reforms of great magnitude, which were to be adopted by referendum in July of the same year. The reactions following the speech were diverse: a revolution of the king, the modernisation of a monarchy growing to great extents towards a parliamentary monarchy, a Moroccan exception, a historic discourse, the dawn of a second monarchy, a roadmap for democratisation, etc. But for others, the royal speech embodied the defusing of the 20 February movement.

Thus, Dupret and Ferrié (2011) believe that "the announcement of constitutional reforms in the royal speech of 9 March served to disarm the 20 February movement by proposing a major reform of the constitutional architecture, i.e. the organisation of the relationship between the governing and the governed".

For its part, the royal speech was addressed to the people and political players in the name of unabashed patriotism. Here is an excerpt from the royal speech of 9 March 2011:

"*I call on everyone to be mobilised in order to ensure the success of this crucial constitutional undertaking, to show determination, commitment and a keen sense of purpose, and to put the nation's best interests above all other considerations. I should like to say how proud I am of the sincere patriotism shown by my loyal people across the Kingdom, by committed political parties and trade unions and by our ambitious youth. I hope the broad national debate will cover issues that are of crucial importance for the nation and the citizens.*"

Addressing the nation, the monarch made use of the argument of higher interests, seeking to neutralise in this way the demands of the M20F. Since the King of Morocco, Mohammed VI,

usually only holds speeches on known dates of the year for extremely important matters, it was shocking for citizens to see him giving a speech about the M20F demands. Supporters were very grateful of this initiative from such a prestigious entity that this immediately quieted the movement. Then again, there is no greater authority than the king to take charge of the reforms for the country.

In another excerpt from the same speech, the king asked that the new reforms be not only respected but revered:

"*The sacred character of our immutable values, which are unanimously supported by the nation – namely Islam as the religion of a state which guarantees freedom of worship; Imarat al-Muminin (Commandership of the faithful); the monarchy; national unity and territorial integrity; and commitment to democratic principles – provides solid guarantees for a historic consensual agreement and a new charter between the Throne and the People.*"

A new pact of allegiance was therefore imperative in the new reform, calling on new allies to counter the M20F. In doing so, the Moroccan monarchy sought to renew and expand the bases of this allegiance, with the arrival on the political scene of new Sufi allies of a high calibre and his majesty's neo Salafists, all considered as a counterpoint to the M20F.

Conclusion

This chapter reveals the methodological processes and approaches adopted, shows the link between the lived experience, memory, and intuitiveness and how it gives rise to sufficiently strong motivations to question, and how to transform this experience into a social science research project. It also emphasised how fieldwork altered my vision as a researcher and suggested a way of proceeding with this research. Moreover, this chapter has clarified the relationship between the surveys that will be conducted, the participant observations and the interviews as well as with what actually happened within the country at that time.

Since my fieldwork was greatly diversified, I was able to extract information about the movement from people in extensively different living situations. The interviews were conducted with great political leaders, which helped me see the movement through the eyes of the people

that were in charge of maintaining a peaceful country, but at the same time quite distant from the hardships the supporters of the movement were facing. Participant observations with the insider and outsider group formulations seemed to be a great experience to have, because it allowed me to perceive the intensity of emotions linked to the wishes of these reforms as a drive that pushed them to success. Last but not least, the surveys conducted were used as a tool to reach people at great distances to see how the movement affected them.

Everything behind the movement, such as the impact of the media and different opinion leaders, was also discussed to link the fieldwork I experienced to what was happening in Morocco in the opinion of foreigners. Although the leaders I interviewed had great information to provide as did the group members and survey-takers, it is always wise to assume that there is some human bias in all answers. Therefore, the facts simply helped put together theories that were deduced from my fieldwork into reality.

The methodology partly shows how Morocco survived the Arab Spring much more easily than many other neighbouring Arab countries. The analysis conducted in this chapter helps to identify the different traits in significant actors of the movement along with the real situation they were in but especially why these traits of these different actors helped to differ Morocco from other Arab countries. It is not enough to say that the leaders of the country responded quickly and that is why the Arab Spring went over smoothly in Morocco. Many smaller phenomena in the revolts made it so the whole country was focusing on the same subject.

Chapter 5: Results and Discussion

Survey Results

The present survey reveals interesting insights on the opinions of the people of Morocco towards their country, its leadership, their legitimacy, and the effect of the extraordinary event that was the Arab Spring on all of these elements. The sampling used to make this survey possible was a non-probability sampling method and, more precisely, a convenience sampling. The survey was given to a number of friends and family members in Morocco, who in turn passed the survey to their acquaintances. The data revealed in this survey mostly reflects the opinions of the

Moroccan middle class, with both males and female participants. The bulk of the initial respondents, those who were initially sent the survey, are university students mostly living in Morocco, or that have lived in Morocco for most of their lives but have gone abroad for their studies. Because the survey was mostly done through convenience sampling, it would be difficult if not impossible to ascertain its validity in the fact that it may not be representative of the Moroccan population as a whole. Nonetheless, it is revealing of a few elements that will be detailed in this paper.

This survey was led in total respect of the general ethical rules surrounding social research. The people who participated in the survey were guaranteed anonymity as they were never required to provide any personal information other than the contents of the questionnaire. They were also guaranteed that the responses they gave would be used solely in the context of the study that was to be conducted. Some people directly declined participating in the survey and were not asked a second time in an effort not to intrude on anyone's privacy. Moreover, the participants were all above the age of 18, so no parental consent was needed for any underage participants (‘Ethical Concerns in Research’).

Upon reading and analysing the data gathered in this survey, we can synthesise a certain number of conclusions relative to the opinions and perceptions some Moroccan middle-class citizens have towards the Arab Spring, its meaning and its consequences on the lives of Moroccans as a whole.

First, we can see that the Arab Spring is still a controversial subject in Moroccan political and social discourse, even six to seven years after it began in 2011. In fact, 10% of Moroccans still hear about it in the news or elsewhere daily, whereas more than half the respondents have contact with the subject weekly or monthly. This means that the Arab Spring is remains an important subject that still has an effect on the lives of Moroccans, even if only slightly perceptible, as about 34% of respondents report that their daily lives have been somewhat affected by the effects of the Arab Spring.

The survey reveals some interesting insights on the opinions of the Moroccan people prior to and during the Arab Spring. Revolutions may be common in the grand scale of history, but many scholars, politicians, and journalists regarded the Arab Spring as a black swan event, meaning an

event somehow unprecedented and almost impossible to predict in advance. As Elena Ianchovichina argues in her article, the events of 2011 satisfy the criteria of a black swan event. The onset of the Spring was a worldwide surprise, as the MENA region was thought to be relatively stable in comparison to other developing countries. On the other hand, the impact of the Arab Spring was immense, with governments overthrown, civil wars started and the onset of a massive migrant crisis (Ianchovichina, 2018). A relative majority of 36.4% of Moroccans questioned in the present work's survey argued that prior to the start of the Arab Spring, they thought that such an event was somewhat probable, whereas a similar proportion of respondents (32.4%) argued it was improbable but not impossible. As such, it can be understood that while the Arab Spring was an extraordinary event almost impossible to predict, a large portion of Moroccans at least recognise its possibility. Perhaps this was due to their perception of discontent in the region that was not captured or at least not fully by standard indicators. During the initial days of the Arab Spring revolts, there was a feeling of uncertainty that gripped not just the Arab region, but the entire world as to what was going to be the outcome of the revolutions. In the survey conducted here, the general consensus was that political changes were inevitable, that the Moroccan leadership could not dare leave issues that plagued the country unaddressed. However, the relative majority of respondents (34%) argued that the ensuing political changes would be minimal and aimed mainly at calming the unrest rather than addressing the issues fully and honestly.

One of the most striking qualities of the Arab Spring revolts is the amount of people that participated in them, and the numerous ways they used to further the movement. It is revealed that the bulk of the participants of the Arab Spring were the youth, who led and kept the movement alive through tools such as social media (Hussain & Howard, 2011). In the context of the survey, half the respondents expressed the fact that they did not participate "very much" in the events of the Arab Spring, whereas 32.3% of the respondents argued that that they did participate but only in a limited way. This would mean that the most vocal and determined militants were only a minority in the events of 2011. Conversely, the bulk of the population would have participated in minimal ways without much engagement, but still they must have supported the movement or at least recognised its legitimacy because counter-protests were practically non-existent (Radi, 2017). Still, in the context of the survey, it is apparent that most of the participation in the Arab Spring was led through social media. A staggering 77.6% of

participants in the Arab Spring mostly did so through social media, which stresses the immense importance of networks such as Twitter and Facebook in the organisation of events and for the centralisation of the movement. 12% and 7.2% of respondents still argued the participated mainly through protests and associations, respectively. However, it can be argued that social media was a *sine qua non* condition to the success of protests because of their ability to communicate and organise events quickly, and to be able to receive news from local and non-local environments as soon as these are published.

The survey also reveals the feelings of the Moroccan population much after the end of the Arab Spring. Here, there is a unanimous consensus that the policies adopted by the government after the end of the Arab Spring did not *completely* address the grievances of the citizens. In the opinion of the bulk of respondents, barely any demands were actually met by the new national constitution of Morocco. This parallels a previous question where the majority believed the new constitution was an effort at calming the passions of the citizens without making any true change. It appears that the Moroccan leadership was in a sense forced to make changes, but in doing so it was of paramount importance to be as conservative as possible in an effort not to upset the general order of things (Ferrie & Dupret, 2012). Moreover, it seems that the majority (almost 80%) of the population surveyed here does not think the country would have its interests better served without the monarchy and the cohesion it brings to Morocco. The Moroccan monarchy has been characterised by many scholars as a sort of glue that keeps the nation from falling into chaos, as it is argued in the book *Le Maroc au Present.* It seems that many in the Moroccan population do regard the monarchy as an indispensable part of the country's identity. This represents a stark contrast to another set of responses about who most benefited from the outcome of the Arab Spring. Among the top responses were the people (39.4%) and the monarchy (36.7%).

It seems that the Moroccan people perceive the fabric of their society as incapable of surviving without the spiritual guidance of the monarchy, while still maintaining that the monarchy has gained more than it has lost after the Arab Spring. The constitution of 2011 called for a more democratic country, implying that the monarchy would have to relegate some of its powers to the people, meaning to the parliament through the transformation of the country into a constitutional monarchy. Still, a substantial portion of respondents to the survey felt that the monarchy not only

gained power after the Arab Spring, but that it is the actor that has most gained from it. This underlines the notion that the Arab world prior to the Arab Spring, where it was thought that the countries of that region were mostly stable without much risk for violent uprisings. This perception was vastly misguided and obviously did not take into consideration some indicators that pointed towards what would later become the Arab Spring. It could very well be that the present notion that the demands of the 20 February movement were mostly met is false, and that there is still in Morocco a massive underlying feeling of resentment that could lead to further destructive repercussions to the structure of the country. Recent events in the Rif region of the country support this assertion, with many of the people of the Rif participating in protests that get subsequently shut down by the police, which brings even more unrest to one of the most unstable regions of Morocco (Poujol, 2017).

The monarchy is perhaps the most powerful actor in the Moroccan political, social and religious scenes and has been so for the largest part of the country's past. Participants were mostly aware that the revolts of 2011 had little chance to lead to the rise of proper democracies in the Arab World, as only 8% of the respondents believed this would lead to a better freedom of expression where criticising the powers in place would not lead to criminal persecution. It so happens that there are still 'red lines' in place that keep the press and the citizens from criticising the monarchy in particular (Bennamate, 2015).

Part II: Participant Observation

I observed general assemblies in Rabat on 5 January 2015. The information that I gathered from the M20F activists and through my direct observations on site during demonstrations and sit-ins shows the homogeneity and importance of occupying space to publicly express oneself. Using data collected within a survey context, I will show how ethnographic observation – by placing actions within their context – offers a relevant analytical framework for understanding political action in a context of illegality, i.e. to report on a social situation where protesters occupy a space in defence of a cause.

Presentation of Interviews

I will start by presenting excerpts of a film that documents the beginnings of the protests by the 20 February movement in Morocco. The film, entitled *My Makhzen and I*, was directed by Nadir Bouhmouch[4] and the following are some excerpts from the call to protest that caught my attention:

"I am Moroccan, and I will protest on February 20th because I want freedom and dignity in my country."

"I am Moroccan, and I will protest on February 20th because I was freedom and dignity in my country."

"I am Moroccan, and I will protest on February 20th for worker's rights and an end to human exploitation."

"I am Moroccan, and I will protest on February 20th so policeman can stop using force and abusing me."

"It is a call to protest."

[4] Watch the film here: https://vimeo.com/36997532

“Dignity! Freedom! Social Equality!

“Listen to the voice of the sons of the people!”

These excerpts from my fieldwork show the diversity of the activists I met with, their dreams, their aspirations and the tapestry of the protest movement that made Morocco an exception. Admittedly, young Moroccans have found inspiration in the protest modes, slogans, and ideas of other protest movements in Egypt, Tunisia, Yemen, and Libya, but the exception that marked the movement in Morocco is summed up by the fact that the king himself was not targeted but rather his entourage. In a regional context marked by revolt and the historic collapse of three political regimes – Ben Ali in Tunisia, Mubarak in Egypt and Gaddafi in Libya – one after the other, the Moroccan monarchy responded by putting in place a strategy of piecemeal implementation of fundamental reforms to counter the democratic aspirations of part of the population.

What constituted the exception of the Moroccan case according to data from my fieldwork is the nature of the shared demands that revolved around social justice and the right to access healthcare, education and employment, the fight against clientelism, corruption and the privatisation of public services, as well as the recognition of the Amazigh and Hassani languages and cultures. Other slogans of a political nature were chanted and translated different aspirations: “The *Makhzen* [the police] must leave”, “Down with government”, “Change the constitution”, “Free the media”, “Reform justice”, but also “Fight corruption.”

I also observed other demands in the public space during the demonstrations that once again were marked by and embodied this aspect of Moroccan exception: other no less important slogans emerged to politicise the claims and make them more visible: “No place for sacredness in politics”, “No to being subjects. No sacredness.*”* It was, therefore, a firm call for the respect of citizenship against the exploitation of religion to serve politics. That said, my interviews with the protestors made me realise that these claims could not have been successful in themselves. For a significant part of the youth, the M20F has achieved an entirely different goal, that of vanquishing fear, causing political power to retreat, and defending dignity and freedom of expression, including the right to protest.

Before starting my fieldwork, I had to make contact and engage in conversation with the people that would be best suited to introduce me to the world of protests in Morocco. In order to do so, I contacted a number of friends from my childhood who I knew to have vested interests in social justice and other similar enterprises in the country. All the people that I contacted agreed to help me in my fieldwork but requested to remain anonymous and, therefore, none of them will be named in this report. Instead, each of them will be given a pseudonym to protect their identity. One of the most helpful people and my main guide in Rabat, which was the first city I visited to conduct my fieldwork was Jalil, a 26-year-old man that lived in the capital's Hassan District, near the city centre. Jalil was introduced to me by a friend and was one of the original protesters of the 20 February movement. He showed great interest in the work I was doing and offered to help me uncover the reality of what became of the movement during the past few years. Our first meeting took place with a mutual friend in a café in the district of Agdal, in which we introduced ourselves and took time to discuss the issue of social justice in Morocco. Jalil explained to me that the original movement of 20 February had lost almost all momentum since its inception in the year 2011.

The movement, which at its peak had gathered a few hundred thousand Moroccan sympathisers, had since become a mere shadow of what it once had been. For him, the shrinking of the movement had much to do with the initial governmental response to the demands of the citizens. He took time to detail the initial protests of the movement, particularly the first 20 February protest. He took part in the demonstration and described the fact that the initial protests had gathered the most participants, and at the time the police did not put up too much resistance against the protesters. As such, militants were allowed to reiterate their demands more or less in peace and the movement flourished while the populace awaited new constitutional reforms for the country. However, he argued that this 'golden age' of the 20 February movement was very short-lived. A few months after the initial protests, as explained by Jalil, the *Makhzen* became more and more aggressive towards protesters, and the country saw the gradual rise of the pro-establishment groups that clashed against pro-M20F militants during the protests. Jalil argued that many of these pro-establishment groups were in fact made up of policemen and other *Makhzen*-affiliated personnel in disguise, who would infiltrate the protests in an effort to snatch away or sometimes even beat the protesters. I asked Jalil whether he was harmed during his participation in those protests. With a grin on his face, he said that he was too fleet-footed for the

Makhzen or any policemen to catch. On the other hand, he did say he witnessed many of his friends and acquaintances being beaten up during these protests, some of whom sustained injuries with marks that last to this day. Jalil and I agreed to meet later without our mutual friend, and he promised that we would both go to a protest that would take place a few days from that time.

The protest that my new friend Jalil and I went to took place on 11 June 2018, and had almost nothing to do with the 20 February movement, as it was instead centred around the *Hirak*, which literally translates to 'movement'. This movement was initially started in the Rif region in the north of Morocco following the tragic death of Mohcine Fikri, a man who was selling fish in the city of Al Hoceima. On an October night in the Rif region, Fikri had his merchandise confiscated by the local authorities because of its alleged illegality. Following this, he threw himself in the rear of a garbage truck to try to rescue his merchandise and was crushed to death by the machine's compactor. This led to the rise of the regional leader of the *Hirak*, Nasser Zefzafi, who was arrested and allegedly tortured by Moroccan authorities before being flown to Casablanca to be tried and imprisoned along with more than one hundred other leaders of the *Hirak*. Initially, the death of Fikri led to protests that only increased in size and violence following the arrest of the movement's leader. The protest we were going to attend took place immediately after Zefzafi and a number of other leaders were given sentences judged exorbitant by Jalil and two other militants who accompanied us, nicknamed Lina and Hamza, who I met on the eve of the protest. During that night, they gathered in Jalil's apartment to put together their whiteboards and decide on slogans. Lina had printed a few pictures of Nasser Zefzafi and bought a long white sheet of hard paper on which we painted the slogan *"*We are all Zefzafi*"* in large Arabic characters. At first, the group was planning to attend the protest in Casablanca, which was about an hour's drive by car away from Rabat. They judged it to be better because they knew most, if not all, the leaders of the *Hirak* were detained in Casablanca. However, because our group only woke up at about noon that day, we not only had to get out of Rabat and take the freeway, which would have taken anywhere from an hour and a half to two hours, but we would also have had to go through Casablanca's very dense traffic.

I was somewhat shocked by the group's lack of punctuality and discipline, and was tempted to ask why they did not wake up earlier to be sure to arrive in time for the start of the protest. I

chose to avoid asking that question for fear of risking offending them so early in our collaboration. Thus, we went to the Moroccan Parliament instead, which was not very far from Jalil's place. I was the designated driver, as no other person in our group had a car (Hamza's had apparently been impounded a few nights earlier). After a 15 minute trip to the capital's Centre District, and a bit more time to find a parking spot, we disembarked and continued on foot along the Mohammed V Boulevard towards the parliament building. It was about 2:45pm and we saw there were already a good number of people gathered around the parliament, brandishing whiteboards and posters with a number of slogans, such as:

"We are all Nasser Zefzafi"

"Social demands are a democratic right"

"Dignity, freedom and social justice"

"Long live the Rif"

"The Moroccan justice: perpetuity for the Rif and guillotine for the nation"

The militants were also singing anthems and chanting slogans along the lines of the ones above; some were brandishing the M20F flag and other flags that I did not recognise – one with a red symbol over a blue, green and yellow font, and another with a green star and crescent over a white and red background. Lina informed me that the first flag was that of the Amazigh people, and the second was that of the Rif Republic, which existed as a political body in its own right in the 1920s and has a historical and cultural significance as a landmark of anti-colonialism. Once our group had taken its bearings, I spent some time with them, mainly observing and (to fit in) occasionally shouting slogans in unison with the crowd. There were a great many protesters gathered in front of the parliament, several hundred protesters in fact. There were also a number of police trucks stationed everywhere, along with police bikes that we had previously spotted patrolling the area on our way to the protest.

I also saw a number of police officers in anti-riot armour with transparent shields in front of the parliament gates, as well as near the police trucks. There were a handful of protesters that shouted and chanted through megaphones, encouraging the rest of the militants. I signalled to my

group that I would be going around asking questions to the protesters and started making my way among them towards the heart of the crowd. Once there, I saw there were far fewer people chanting and shouting. There was a team of three or four people that appeared to be journalists with a camera and boom microphone. I started talking to a few people, trying to get some information on their perspectives, motivations and overall opinions on not only the *Hirak* affair, but also that of the 20 February movement, which was, after all, the main focus of my fieldwork.

I was surprised at the number of people that came all the way from the Rif to protest against the imprisonment of the *Hirak* leaders. In fact, almost one-third of the people I interviewed that day came from the city of Al Hoceima. I tried isolating individuals to ask them a few questions after introducing myself, but their friends would soon join in the conversation to share their own thoughts. I asked some of them what they thought of the M20F, to which some responded that the movement was mostly forgotten after the country adopted its new constitution of 2011, which was unanimously seen by the Rif protesters as a sham, a false indicator that things were about to change in the country. For them, the 20 February movement was supposed to bring true freedom of expression and end the fear of repression in Morocco. However, the *Makhzen's* response to the *Hirak* in 2018 showed that the M20F's ideals were far from having been achieved.

Here were leaders of a movement that simply demanded better healthcare, cultural and educational infrastructure for a region of Morocco that has long been vilified by the ruling powers. Militants from the Rif were disgusted by the verdict of the court for those who led the movement, which in the case of Zefzafi was a condemnation to 20 years in a prison far from his home city of Al Hoceima. These people felt cheated and wronged by what one of them described to me as a government that has no respect for human rights, even though it had engaged itself on behalf of the Moroccan people to render freedom of speech and the right to protest a guarantee in the country. The rest of the militants I interviewed were mostly from Rabat, but some were from neighbouring cities such as Kenitra and Salé, and all shared similar opinions and grievances with their counterparts from the Rif. When I asked the militants about the protests and what they were hoping to achieve in front of the parliament, they said they wanted to make their voices heard, even though all of them knew they had no hope of changing the mind of the authorities about the demands of the *Hirak* and the liberation of political prisoners such as Nasser Zefzafi. Later, I received a call from Jalil who asked me to meet him down the boulevard, far from the area of the

protest. When I met with him and the others, he told me we had to leave as there had been some commotion between the police and some protesters, and there was a risk that the situation could degenerate at any moment. I was hoping to be able to interview the families of the *Hirak* detainees but was forced to abandon the prospect as I did not wish to be left alone in case the situation escalated into violence. Later that day, we learned that the protest ended more or less peacefully and that my hosts' fears had been exaggerated.

Part III: Interviews

Interview Analysis

What seemed to be the start of a new political phase in the Arab world took place in Tunisia in 2010 and was then followed by Egypt in 2011 to go further to Libya and Syria, as well as Yemen. Little did these countries know that the revolution would change the course of the whole country including its political, social and economic system. What had occurred in Tunisia and Egypt, the largest Arab country and with a great deal of influence, reflected years and years of injustice, patience and silence. It seems as if the immediate triggers for these countries' uprisings were an accumulation of political, economic as well as other underlying factors that had been building up over the years to result in an act of tremendous proportion and significance that affected almost the whole Arab world. This almost global revolution shifted powers from the few to the many, from individual work in offices to collective revolution in squares, encouraging open source networks. After analysing a large amount of data and resources along the way, we will discover that poverty and unemployment alone did not lead to the Arab revolt of 2011.

The uprising of the Arab Spring was the result of so many factors, which is not only the responsibility had but the power to make change in so many Arab countries. One of the main reasons that poured fuel on those countries was corruption by the ruling elite, which resulted in widening income inequalities, and a marked contrast between the poor and ordinary people and those who enjoy luxuries.

Fast forward to one of the Arab countries that was slightly touched by the Arab Spring, if at all – Morocco. Thanks to its stable monarchical system, Morocco has almost always succeeded in

overcoming political instabilities instigated by the population or special incidents. For a long time, Morocco has delighted in a reputation for being a standout among the steadiest regimes in the region, yet dealing with challenges in the northern territory of Rif has sullied this supposedly shining example. The demonstrations that occurred a year ago after the grisly demise of a fishmonger have turned into a mass development for advancement, better administration and respect.

Providing a brief illustration of Morocco's Arab Spring, and prepare the floor for further interpretation of how this country went out of the crisis safer than so many other countries. As elsewhere in North Africa and the Middle East, the youth-driven revolts in Tunisia and Egypt sparked a torrent in Morocco's political scene. On 20 February, a development came to fruition where a chosen and responsible government with command over the nation's social, financial and security strategies was requested. From the Islamist Justice and Development party to the Socialist Union of Popular Forces, Morocco's (to a great extent co-picked and maturing) ideological groups stayed calm and separated themselves from the youthful development. At the core of this current movement's requests has been the role of the king, who since independence has been responsible for all senior legislative and military arrangements. Particularly under King Hassan II (1961–1999), the government's tacit centre of influence, called *Makhzen*, has frequently had a plan of action to compel amid the supposed Years of Lead.

In contrast to its partners in the east, be that as it may, the 20 February movement did not explicitly request the expulsion of Mohammed VI from the throne or for the dissolution of government. Also, while Morocco's security apparatus has been associated with savagery against dissenters around the nation, its notoriety has never been as terrible as that of its partner in Tunisia, or even Egypt. Thus, the movement requested basic protected changes instead of a fundamental shake-up. Indeed, even the movement central requests – for example, the decision of the executive by the parliament, not by the king – had just been transparently discussed in the press and ideological group workplaces throughout the most recent two decades. Thus, the Arab uprisings met a specific political field that decided the result and future prospects of change in Morocco.

In order to discern the factors that contributed to Morocco being spared from the movement of the Arab Spring, two interviews were conducted with highly involved personalities: namely, Abbas El Fassi, ex-prime minister and ex-ambassador of the Kingdom of Morocco to Tunisia then to Paris; and Mohamed El Ouafa, ex-minister of education and also ex-ambassador to many countries (Brazil, India and Iran). The choice of having those two political figures as interviewees was driven by their background and knowledge of Moroccan politics, to attempt to explain why the Arabs rose up, and why at that time. Their knowledge of the country allows them to be more aware and informed about what happened, not only from an outsider's perspective but from a close one, but also and mainly because of their presence within the Moroccan government during the period when the Arab Spring started, which will reveal surprises along the way.

In fact, during the year 2011, both interviewees were in office – Mr. El Fassi was at the time prime minister, while Mr. El Ouafa was the minister for education. Consequently, they were both at the time close witnesses of the situation of the Moroccan government and they both played roles of paramount importance during that particular period. This is why I chose to interview those two particular political figures, given their background and implication in the events that occurred in Morocco during the Arab Spring.

Abbas El Fassi, who was the Moroccan prime minister from 15 October 2007 to 29 August 2011, as mentioned above, is probably the best-suited person to interview with regard to the subject at hand. It is at this exact same period of time (starting from 2010) that the Arab Spring began. It all started in Tunisia, with Mohamed Bouazizi, the unfortunate merchant who decided to set himself on fire, who chose to sacrifice his life to express his discontent about his country's situation, struggling to enjoy his basic rights as a human being and citizen of Tunisia. Who could imagine that the desperate act of a Tunisian fruit vender could spark the beginning of a revolution that would group the Arab world under one umbrella? This poor person found no choice for his voice to be heard other than through this tragic event, which not only started a whole revolution in Tunisia but affected other neighbouring Arab countries too. And here lies another reason to choose Mr. Abbas El Fassi as interviewee, who was himself appointed, as previously mentioned, ambassador of the Kingdom of Morocco to Tunis. His knowledge of both Moroccan and Tunisian culture and social situations provides us with clear insight on the differences between

Morocco and Tunisia, and allows us to compare and shed light on the major factors that made the two countries react differently to a phenomenon that seems to directly concern both countries to a seemingly similar extent.

In addition to his knowledge of Tunisian society, given the experience he acquired while representing Morocco in Tunis, Abbas El Fassi was also at the centre of what appeared to be the beginning of the Arab Spring in Morocco, with the movement of 20 February 2011. He was the head of the government during the change of constitution in March 2011, and brings clear insight to the situation within the Moroccan government, by clarifying how the government reacted and perceived the demands of those movements that were asking for reforms that might have led to revolts and rebellions. Abbas El Fassi is thus one of the best people to answer the questions surrounding Morocco's sparing from the domino effect that pushed many Arab countries to collapse internally and fall into civil war, to satisfy the curiosity of those who seek answers and explanations.

During an interview that lasted around two full hours, Abbas El Fassi took the time to explain the reasons that, according to him, were the real factors contributing to the start of the Arab Spring. His answers seemed to be based on accurate facts and strong arguments. He started by pointing out that people's living situations in most Arab countries affected by the Arab Spring were declining, contrary to Morocco, he added, as they have seen their rights taken away from them, and dictatorships that have been in place for many decades depriving the press of freedom of speech and the people of their human rights. The ex-head of the Moroccan government also specified that common denominators were shared by those countries (mainly Tunisia, Libya and Egypt), which led them to surviving through almost the same crisis. He continued by indicating that Morocco was a different case, primarily because of the different way it had regained its independence from French colonialism but also because of the monarchical aspect, as it is the only kingdom in the region, while the other countries are republics. However, he insists on the fact that independence itself is not a legitimate reason for power, but that the fight for independence itself represented a fight for democracy, which puts Morocco in a different position and situation to the formerly cited countries.

Fast forward to the subject of the movement of 20 February. The interviewee claimed that it could in no way be compared to the events that happened in other Arab countries such as Tunisia, where violence, acts of vandalism and chants were directed at the government in place and meant to bring it down. While for the case of Morocco, the situation was very different to those seen in other Arab countries, there were nothing but demands related to the level of education and unemployment, in his eyes. Which, he added, is common practice in democratic countries such as Morocco and unlike the countries concerned by the Arab Spring.

When he was interrogated about his feelings towards political parties joining the youth movement protesting about the previously cited issues, the ex-prime minister insisted on calling it "sympathy" from the likes of the PJD and Istiqlal parties, which felt the same way with regard to unemployment, as most of the protestors were mainly young, unemployed people whose worries were similar to the worries of the parties representing them. Implying that the reforms taken subsequently were not a "move" that was meant to calm the people, they were, in his eyes, nothing but a normal process to fulfil the democratic aspect of the Kingdom and respond positively to the requests made by its citizens. In other words, what occurred was nothing similar to the events that took place in other neighbouring countries and that was clearly understood by the different way the countries dealt with them and the consequences of those events.

For the record, approximately 20 days after the protests of 20 February, a new constitution was proposed by the king in his speech, the first change in Morocco since 1963. Abbas El Fassi explained that the reforms taken in order to put the new constitution into practice were mainly giving less freedom to the king in the appointment of ministers and head of government, thus allowing the elections to have more impact on the representatives elected to represent the interest of the Moroccan people at parliament. The concern that lies here is not whether or not the decision was efficient and had a meaningful impact on the Moroccan population, but how these succeeding events will be faced. Those reforms, according to him, were a long-term project led by Hassan II but were never put into place due to the negotiations with the former Prime Minister El Yousfi that were taking a long time to reach agreement, mainly because of the "stubbornness" of the two sides, neither of whom were ready to concede. For Abbas El Fassi, the new constitution is thus not a reaction to the protests and the growing hostile geopolitical environment.

Although this partly contradicted his words earlier about the reforms being meant to shape the democratic aspect of the Kingdom, he then admitted that these reforms played a role of paramount importance in preserving the unity of the Moroccan Kingdom, something that was not an easy feat during the critical time of the revolutions. In fact, he added that the actions taken by Morocco were partly, among other reasons cited previously and later on, what differentiated the Kingdom from the likes of Tunisia and Libya. Clearly, and proven by the results, the Kingdom of Morocco was luckier than the other countries.

El Fassi's answer to the next question concerning the high esteem Moroccans hold for their king allowed some light to be shed on his previous answers, as it gave further clarification and allowed more sense to be added to the knowledge he provided us with, as the answers were not quite clear on the role played by the historical background of the country. Abbas El Fassi explained while linking his answer to his previous response concerning the role of independence, by pointing out that during the exile of Mohammed V, who gave all he had to regain his throne, the whole nation backed him up and fought for their territory, asking for the return of their legitimate ruler. This historical event had its impact on strengthening the relationship between the royal family and the people. Moreover, he explains that the nature of the Moroccan people itself needs a monarchical system to unify it, due to both multilingualism and ethnic diversity. Post-independence, Mohammed V gave power to the Istiqlal party for being the most representative – also the most helpful during the independence process – but put in place on the other hand a multi-party system that remained for the next five decades. That has been how Morocco has functioned, under a monarchy and its institution, almost without question.

Before ending the interview, Abbas El Fassi expressed his desire to see social issues such as education and unemployment, which form the basis to many complications and issues, improved in Morocco and clarified that he had all the hope in King Mohammed VI's plans to make the country a better place.

Throughout the interview, we can clearly see how Abbas El Fassi was obviously reiterating the core principles and ideas of the political party that shaped his thought process and political views. For him, and his party, it is the specificities of the country as it demonstrates advanced levels of democracy, which exhibits itself through the presence of a multitude of political parties.

Starting from this point, Morocco distinguishes itself from other Arab countries such as Tunisia, Libya or even Egypt, where the power was either in the hands of the military or a unique party system. In the other countries, mainly Egypt and Tunisia, they often attracted accolades from multinationals due to their economic growth (Egypt), but under the surface was a very different reality.

Moreover, El Fassi's point concerning the relationship between Moroccans and their king playing a major role in convincing the people not to push the demonstrations to revolts like it did in other countries, is also mainly due to the way in which the whole Istiqlal party perceives this relationship; in fact, the active participation of the party in Morocco gaining back its independence from the French brought out that idea according to which the 'Throne' and the 'Country' were inseparable and linked to eternity. However, the questioning of the monarchy's legitimacy during 2011 shows that this argument is no longer relevant in Moroccans' minds and that the contribution of this factor cannot be considered as a major contributor to Morocco avoiding the domino effect of the Arab Spring. While in reality it is different, this ideal relationship has lost value due to the fact that current Moroccan citizens do not know about these events (mainly due to their age or education) nor how meaningful they were. Nowadays, adult Moroccan citizens and youth do not perceive this relationship as an important factor, as shown by the questioning of the monarchy's legitimacy, as mentioned before. They clearly give it less importance.

Following up with the second interview, Mohamed El Ouafa was of great interest and accepted a long interview of almost three hours. The Moroccan ex-ambassador to countries such as India, Brazil and Iran, Mr. El Ouafa served his country for many years. Furthermore, he was also a minister in Benkirane's government and during the Arab Spring. Being part of the Istiqlal party at the time, Mr. El Ouafa actively participated in decisions made to achieve Morocco's best interests through different means. Furthermore, he is considered to be one of the most well-known Moroccan ministers, as well as the most well-known member of Benkirane's cabinet. During the Arab Spring he made decisions that helped shape the positive outcome of the 20 February movement, the results of which were highly appreciated and valuable considering how the other countries dealt and suffered from the consequences of their own movements.

In order to answer the thesis, we first have to deeply understand how the origin of the Arab Spring affected Morocco. As we already know and formerly mentioned, the Arab Spring's trigger was caused by Mohamed Bouazizi, who set himself on fire in Tunisia, creating a domino effect in many Arab countries that were vastly affected in many ways. In his own words to an open-ended question, Mr. El Ouafa emphasises that historically Tunisia has always had an impact on the Moroccan political sphere for different reasons, including their neighbouring relationship as well as being in the same Maghreb union. When asked if he thought that the leaders had failed to see it coming, he answered by pointing out that Morocco had experienced in 2010 a lot of protests in the public and private sectors, prior to the outbreak of the revolution in Tunisia. Therefore, Morocco had reasons to believe that the outbreak had the potential to affect Morocco in a disastrous manner because there was nothing at the time to make Morocco believe the opposite. As with the first interviewee, Mr. El Ouafa was member of the Istiqlal party at the time, which was the leading party. He explained that Benkirane was actively holding meetings all over the country in order to speak against the movement. He also commented that he took position in order to stand by the demands put forward by the 20 February movement concerning social justice and reforms. Indeed, the 20 February movement was launched through Facebook receiving support of the far left as well as PJD members, which gathered everyone in a common network space, playing the role of Tahrir Square in Egypt and helping information to spread faster. This allowed people to raise questions that were previously taboo in Morocco; it gave them more freedom and fewer reasons to fear spreading their words from fear of reprisals. Therefore, in a sense, social networks fuelled the revolts. This was also the case in other countries affected by the Arab Spring. When an idea does not have the proper environment to develop, it simply stays dormant and waits until the correct conditions are united, which takes longer, and people tend to forget or at least give it less importance with time, because it is not just about anger at the economic and political situation but also about people's deep longing for freedom. Once this is the case, the idea spins back to life and gains increasing momentum, leading to great innovations as well as disasters. In this case, the ideas encompassed by the revolution were dormant as well and the correct conditions were united when social networks allowed citizens to share discontent towards the monarchy anonymously, especially that the networks helped information and data spread very rapidly without cost and without fear of reprisals.

Many people in Morocco believe that the 20 February movement and the Arab revolution enabled the PJD to ascend to power. On the other hand, Mr. El Ouafa believed that it was about another issue, rooting from the Arab Spring, and used this to bounce back to describe the actions taken by government officials. He personally believed that one of the main reasons Morocco kept its stability during the Arab Spring was due to the famous speech, on 9 March, by King Mohammed VI. During this speech, the king informed the citizens about reforms that were going to be undertaken on the constitution. The speech served to calm the revolts by conceding some of the monarchy's power to the government. Indeed, this played a major role in keeping the country stable. First of all, the king took these measures as a preventative act. At the time, the protests of the 20 February movement did not ask to remove the king from power or for the complete removal of the monarchy. In other words, the king was not directly threatened. Second, the monarchy, under the king, made a series of reforms politically, economically and socially. The speech was then portrayed as an act of goodwill that had already been undertaken, instead of coming out of the blue. Finally, this succession of events made the people feel as if the king understood them and blended with these ideas, creating a sense of unity between the Moroccan citizen and the monarchy.

Mr. El Ouafa also stated that the United States indirectly played a role in order to influence the Arab countries to change through the Arab Spring. He explained that the United States wanted new leaders, perhaps because they had been in power for decades, in order to have a hold on Islamic radicals. They wanted to limit the terrorist groups in these key countries by creating political openings and social inclusions. The United States has been seen in the past to support the creation of political imbalances that lead to a change in control in certain territories. King Mohammed VI understood that, hence the necessity for constitutional reforms. Concerning the question of legitimacy, Morocco remained a monarchy and will continue to be for a long time; however, the need to evolve, giving power to the people, is crucial. For Mr. El Ouafa, the PJD ascended to power due to the Arab Spring, even though the atmosphere instilled by the 20 February movement was a driving force. He stated that, after the change in constitution, Morocco could no longer rig elections. It indeed forced democratic reforms; however, this did not achieve the same, positive, results in other countries such as Egypt compared to Morocco.

Benkirane's government had a difficult time keeping stability in the country, and he was worried that he would not live up to the expectations of the population. Not long before that, it was the people who were worried about being watched by their government. However, people's views on the future rapidly and significantly improved, and this hope endured through turbulent transitions. Today, we know that they were successful; however, at the time it was vague and unclear. Mr. El Ouafa recalled a particular incident that was the impetus for them to use force in order to maintain peace. Two young people gave an interview to foreign media; one of them doused himself with gasoline in order to "scare the police". However, the incident did not end there; the second person threw his cigarette towards his friend and lit him on fire, giving rise at the same time to a resurgence of protest. The question to ask here is what was the significance of that act, or what was the real reason behind it? In other words, what were their demands? It turned out that they wanted to be part of the new government without going through the normal procedures; they did not want to follow the regular steps that led towards what they desired, which left many more worse off. This highlights that even though the protest could be justified, the lack of education coming from the population could be detrimental to the country, since their demands made no sense. The lack of education can be traced from political decisions taken during the latter half of the twentieth century, when the Arabisation movement created a gap in intellect. At the time, the idea was to reform the pre-existing French education, established during the French colonialist period, into an adaptive Arabic education. However, this was not the case and it only served to fuel illiteracy all over the country, creating, therefore, a gap of intellect in Morocco, as stated before. The problem, to which very few pay attention, is if the core issues that propelled the revolutions and movements are not addressed, the consequences could be catastrophic on stability, not just for Morocco but for the entire region. Moroccans' priorities for the government are logical and they are: jobs, stability, economic development and education. But most of all, for the first time in decades, they expect to be active participants, not just an audience, in the affairs of their country that directly concern and affect them. They are nervous for the lack of a better Morocco.

Fortunately, after this event Benkirane managed to appease the population and keep a certain stability. He managed to do so by acting as a true representative of the Moroccan population – for the first time, a head of the government was seen on TV discussing the future of the country with unemployed undergraduates. Mr. El Ouafa also said that the power in Morocco (*Makhzen*)

gave a “free pass” to the government in 2012. Explaining that the king takes the decisions, giving a free pass meant delegating decisions to the council of ministers and occasionally attending the meetings. Furthermore, he stated that he did not always accept the decisions undertaken but thought that the government had to fulfil its duties with the least intervention possible. However, this led to problems within the government, originating from one person, Chabat, followed by numerous members of the Istiqlal party, who collectively decided to submit their resignations from the government. Mr. El Ouafa, on the contrary, did not follow them, thinking that it would bring even more turmoil and political instability to the country. Nevertheless, the odds turned out in favour of Morocco’s stability. The government could have been unfortunate and fallen as other countries did, such as Tunisia, Egypt or Libya, which experienced coups by their armies, but this was not the case; Benkirane stayed and successfully kept everything under control. One of the reasons is due to the Islamic religious presence in the country. The PJD, held by Benkirane, is considered to be an Islamic party. Since the population is extremely faithful towards Islamic principles, as it is their regulator and source of stability, they naturally followed this party and had faith in it, as long as the representatives did not go against those ideals. Furthermore, Islam can be perceived as being of use as a political ideology in Morocco, because it is a strong source of unity and control for the nation. In other words, Islam is a political weapon used to indoctrinate the masses and keep them sedated. This has been the case throughout history; for example, the infamous anecdote of Galileo and the Catholic Church. Asking any Moroccan what they fear the most will almost always result in the same answer: God. Another reason the army did not try to take over power is due to the way the king treated his generals. In Morocco, generals are indirectly given almost total control, in the sense that they have powerful relationships with the country’s leaders, as well as their own army. Second, the king offers them many financial advantages, such as land. Finally, Morocco’s history has already experienced two *coups d’état*, which always led to the execution of the accountable.

When asked what Moroccan diplomacy did to prevent or hold back the Arab Spring, Mr. El Ouafa said that they simply did not see it coming at first, even though they could sense that something was about to happen; even the ministry had stopped providing direction, waking up only after the 9 March speech. In Mr. El Ouafa’s opinion, the king was more preoccupied by what was happening in other countries and, all of a sudden, realised that the Arab Spring had touched Morocco, fortunately, rapidly reaching that conclusion before the 20 February protests.

If Mr. El Ouafa's speculations are indeed correct, this means that the king prepared the country, behind the scenes, in order to protect it from going out of control. Indeed, we did not notice that agreements were made between foreign powers in order to create an opening for the United States and the Western world in Arab countries. For the public eye, this issue was not even raised, the hidden mechanisms stayed in the shadows and have never been publicly discussed.

Extracting the following directly from the interview, the following work, *Master and Disciple: The Cultural Foundations of Moroccan Authoritarianism*, puts forward the underlying interactions between master and disciple. Abdellah Hammoudi focuses on the postcolonial era and how authoritarianism has shaped the newly founded Arab states. In fact, the Moroccan scholar considers the submission of the subordinate occurs in a manner that directly targets his virility. Apparently, "this inversion operates at the heart of Moroccan society and is most highly stylised in the master/disciple relationship in which the master requires his male disciple to perform 'feminine' tasks such as cooking, collecting wood, making the master's bed, gathering water for ablutions, washing clothes, and in rarer instances, performing sexual acts for the master". The scholar raises an intriguing theorem, where one desires to be subordinate in order to survive. Mr. El Ouafa disagrees with this idea, saying that the Moroccan regime is deeply rooted to its past history. Monarchy has been part of the country for more than 12 centuries. One of the main concerns of the Arab revolts was the grip on power by one entity; since Morocco had a deep connection with the idea of a monarchy, it is hard to believe that the revolts could fuel a change to a complete democracy. Mr. El Ouafa further elaborates that Moroccans stayed attached to the idea of a monarchy for two main reasons. First, the diversity of Moroccan culture, and second, the fact that we still operate through a tribal system. He further explains that in order to campaign, it is essential to meet representatives and leaders of each region, even in urban areas. Hammoudi produces a deep analysis of the need to be governed in order to feel safe, and Mr. El Ouafa also engages us in an important retrospective of the country's history. Whether they were right or not, it is clear that in the end the citizens held monarchy too highly for it to crumble.

When asked if Morocco could have bought its stability after the Arab Spring, Mr. El Ouafa responds by saying that it does not have the adequate resources to do so, in comparison to Saudi Arabia, which raised the national salary by 30% overnight. He continues by saying that another reason Morocco remained stable was due to the strong establishment of political parties, when

other countries were lacking them. For example, in Tunisia, when Ennahda saw that the situation was getting out of hand, he retired instantly. This prevented another political party from rising at the same time.

Mr. El Ouafa believes that the struggle was about power regaining its authority, and the only way to achieve that result was to break the political parties. At the time, Benkirane had difficulty constituting his government; the king had to appoint him officially due to an unsuccessful operation where all political parties sent him an official letter saying that they did not want to work with the PJD. This caused unnecessary obstacles that could have led to a resurgence of the original protests. However, this never came to pass and things went on smoothly, maybe due to the fear of the *Makhzen*. Furthermore, for the first time, the question of religious legitimacy rose. Indeed, the king is said to have religious legitimacy, tracing back from his patrimony, supported by the fact that he is a descendant of the Prophet. As stated before, religion is highly valued in Morocco; standing against the king is akin to standing directly against Islam. Therefore, citizens not only fear the *Makhzen*, which could use its power to silence anyone in the country, but Islam and God as well, and this played in favour of the government.

In conclusion, there is a myriad of different parameters to consider in order to understand how Morocco succeeded where other countries failed. The interviews enlightened us and helped us understand the context, as well as the struggles affecting the political sphere in Morocco. As we have seen, religion was one of the pillars that helped the country maintain a stable environment and keep things under control. It played a central role in keeping the king's legitimacy among the citizens, as well as helping the PJD's party rise to power and maintain it. Indeed, without Benkirane's government, the country's stability could have taken another turn towards a disastrous result. Furthermore, the stronghold of the *Makhzen* kept people quiet through fear, but with the rise of social networks people were able to share their disagreements. In other words, citizens could have fuelled further turmoil in complete anonymity, but this, fortunately, did not occur. Finally, the patrimony of Morocco, and more precisely the long-held monarchy (over 12 centuries) played a role, even though not necessarily visible, over citizens' thoughts on it.

Overall, both interviews converged in essence and led to common conclusions with regard to how Morocco has managed to get away from the domino effect created by the rise of the Arab Spring, which first took place in Tunisia.

The two interviews contributed strong testimony and evidence in conducting this investigation and support my thesis, according to which the elections held following the riots played a major role in helping Morocco keep its political stability, contrary to many other similar countries that witnessed tectonic shifts other than those mirrored in the cameras and squares. The interviews were first recorded then written down in order not to lose the originality of the choice of words made by the interviewees and focus solely on the content, rather than wasting time being transcribed in the moment and having to interrupt the interviews by taking notes.

Nonetheless, the first interviewee, the prime minister during the events, insisted on how even though the elections and reforms helped to maintain the country's stability, they were in fact long-term projects held in order to improve Morocco's democratic system and not emergency reforms as they might be perceived by some. Abbas El Fassi was very careful in his choice of words during the interview and kept a position of defence regarding the image of the government and the monarchical institution. He also clarified how the historical background of Morocco and the relationship between the monarchy and the people was bolstered by strong historical events that led to independence, which lasted for decades and were the result of the work of consecutive kings. El Fassi concluded by justifying his worries about Moroccan social issues and raising questions on the improvements needed in the areas of education and unemployment, which will clearly make an enormous difference to the whole country and will especially directly affect the population. Although the questions put to Mr. Abbas El Fassi were not really guiding the interview, as he was answering by pushing the discussion towards how he expected the interview to be conducted, it finally all made sense throughout the interview as he clarified his points. The way he directed the interview took me to a path that was not very different from the one we wanted to walk on, almost satisfying the same queries I had about the same issues he discussed and clearly explained.

As for Mr. El Ouafa, his ease of expression helped to conduct a more detailed interview. He confirmed the first interviewee's declarations concerning the historical background effect and

added other parameters that have affected the destiny of Morocco. Mainly, he pointed out the effects of the unity of religion that, although raised for the first time, was also a factor that allowed the country to stay stable; the legitimacy of the king being religious, as he is a direct descendant of the Prophet. He also joined Abbas El Fassi in agreeing that the difference between Morocco and other countries that were touched by the Arab Spring was the existence of the multi-party system that in itself demonstrates a huge democratic gap.

As for the main dissimilarities between the content of the two interviewees, we can distinguish a clear difference in the role Abbas El Fassi gave to the government as he insisted the new reforms were a long-term project intentionally put into practice at the right time by a competent institution and not just a crisis management move to avoid the effects of the Arab Spring. El Ouafa gave more credit to the government that followed the elections and Benkirane's impact on appeasing the situation by adopting a new form of political discourse in an attempt to get closer to the citizens and abandoning so-called "political double-talk". Also, for Mohamed El Ouafa, there was a bit of luck on Morocco's side and the monarchical system that allowed the country to stay stable in a period where the whole Arab world was at boiling point, where some countries were bleeding and others falling apart. All in all, these interviews provided a whole set of reasons why Morocco was able to get through the Arab Spring with the least possible damage, as both interviewees were part of the government in place during these events and played an important role in the transition to the new constitution, showing support and facilitating that transitional phase. All the factors stated previously allowed Morocco to maintain political stability during difficult times, when Arab countries' governments were falling one after the other. Even after the rise of the population's multiple concerns, the role of religion and the nature of the Moroccan political system shaped more safely the way the country responded to the acts and movements of its population.

Rationale for Conducting the Interviews

In order to determine the reasons for Morocco's escape from the Arab Spring and successful transition through this demanding period that destroyed the stability of many countries, I conducted meaningful interviews with two highly involved political figures: Abbas El Fassi and

Mohamed El Ouafa. They were a great help with my research, given their political positions, which coincided with the time of the revolutions.

The first interviewee, Abbas El Fassi, was prime minister during the Arab Spring and formerly an ambassador of Morocco to Tunisia. His professional experiences put him in an ideal position to answer the questions raised in my thesis, not only for a personal, subjective perspective as a Moroccan, but also from an objective point of view of a political figure who had personally taken part in these events. Moreover, his party, Istiqlal, was and is still very close to the monarchical institution, which played a major role in Morocco's independence and thus reinforcing the relationship between the Moroccans and their king. It goes without saying that Abbas El Fassi, as a former general secretary of the Istiqlal party, had a clear insight into how things were managed internally in the Moroccan government during the Arab Spring.

Mr. El Ouafa, Moroccan ex-ambassador, and one of the most notable ministers throughout the history of Morocco, worked hard in order to develop his country. Being a figure in the Moroccan political sphere at the time of the Arab Spring, he played a direct role in influencing the outcome of the movement. Indeed, as ambassador to India, Brazil and Iran, Mr. El Ouafa had experienced different perspectives and ways of life, and had witnessed non-Arab cultures and politics. These influenced and opened his viewpoint on democratic states, learning about different cultures as well as discovering the political spheres of the latter. Furthermore, both India and Brazil share prosperity, even though they have completely different ways of functioning. Mr. El Ouafa was able to see these and come back to his country in order to apply his knowledge. On the other hand, his time in Iran allowed him to see how a democratic, Islamic state could strive and make political decisions that respects both.

In addition to their professional experiences, an important factor that influenced my choice in interviewing those two specific political figures over others was mainly and firstly their membership and high position in the Istiqlal party (prime minister and minister of education), which was back then in power during the Arab Spring; in other words, part of the government in place. This valuable knowledge rendered these two interviewees ideal to answer my questions and concerns, as well as enlighten my investigation with insider information about what the

thought process was in government during that period, not only externally but internally as well. In other words, their involvement in the decision-making could only be of help.

However, as they elevated my expectations and curiosity to know more, their responsibilities and their celebrity might have pushed them to be slightly biased in their personal opinions and ideas on the subject, as they were directly concerned. Nonetheless, the declarations of highly involved political figures are a must in the process of constructing a strong thesis and provide the investigation with accurate information coming from insider sources. It is of great assistance and, without a shadow of a doubt, pushed us to respect more and more those who not only promise to serve their country correctly but also its population. Those who not only work hard to attain the most important goals of the country, but also spare time and dedicate it to the country's researchers and educated population to answer their most probing questions about the country's situation.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The Arab Spring consisted of a wave of revolts that may have only caused instability in some Arab countries, but overwhelmed many others in regards to both the political and social atmosphere. During this fight for democracy in most of the Arab countries, the authorities and citizens of every country affected created an array of choices to either calm the revolts or to be heard by those in power, respectively. These choices caused some economies to crash, some to merely crack and some to be barely touched at all. There is much available research that addresses the question of why some choices led economies to crash, but not much on why other choices left some economies untouched. While Egypt was at one end of the spectrum, with its economy extremely and negatively affected by the Arab Spring, Morocco was at the other end, having hardly been shaken by events. This sparked my interest in researching how Morocco emerged from the Arab Spring stronger than when it went in.

At first glance, it appeared that the main difference between Morocco and Egypt, for example, would be the amount of force used by the authorities to deal with citizen revolts against the king and president. Some parts of Morocco would not even have been aware of the revolts, if it had

not been for the newspapers and social media. I also thought that another underlying reason for the difference might be because Moroccan citizens were more apprehensive, as they were less numerous than the Egyptians, and therefore did not push their revolts as far as the Egyptians did. It was clear that more in-depth research was needed, since not much explanation of these reasons could simply be found on the Internet. Therefore, I decided to dig even deeper to make sure I knew what I was setting out to prove.

Upon closer inspection, the brutalities against Moroccan citizens were broadly similar to those against Egyptian citizens. The only difference, apart from the number of citizens revolting, was that most brutalities were only written about in some magazines for Moroccan citizens, while brutalities committed by the Egyptian authorities against their citizens seemed to all have been photographed or recorded on video. Therefore, the media appeared to have had a very significant impact on how Moroccans reacted to the Arab Spring compared to how Egyptians responded to it. Apart from the media, King Mohammed VI of Morocco handled the revolts in a very quick and efficient manner – this 'efficient manner' was something I was interested in investigating as well. Last but not least, there were many dissimilarities between Egyptian and Moroccan culture that may also have led to different reactions for a change in government. These were only some of the differences I was able to find before setting off on my research journey.

Although not much was yet known about the question I wanted to answer, I knew this project had to be organised in such a way so that I would never get lost in it. Therefore, I decided to write down questions as a basis for analysis and for the points that I did not want to forget throughout this intensive research. The questions included: Why did the Arab Spring manifest itself differently in Morocco? What defines Moroccan culture? What is the specific regime of the country? What was resolved during the revolution? How did the citizens make their voices heard? How did the citizens conquer their fear of speaking against the monarchy for their causes? These were all questions that needed to be answered and that were essential to the project. Although there were many and the ones mentioned above are only a fraction of the number of questions that I jotted down, they always helped me identify where I was in the project and what I needed to do before I finished it. The bigger dilemma was how to choose which question would form the basis to my thesis, and how to word it correctly.

It was still confusing to me why most research focused on the failure of some countries to save their economies during the Arab Spring and why almost none looked at how other countries succeeded in doing so. Most researchers did not appear to realise that if the strategies to save the countries are determined, the fall of economies could be prevented if there ever were to be future revolts of the sort. If these strategies are researched and identified properly, future countries could use them to prevent disastrous outcomes to citizen revolts. The realisations and theories I had constructed helped me to understand what my research question had to be: what explains the resilience of the Moroccan monarchy in the Arab world and with what means did it withstand the Arab Spring?

With this question, I was able to try to research my way to finding out what strategies Morocco used to fight its way out of an unfortunate outcome caused by the Arab Spring. This was done through numerous methods, some of which I never thought I would be able to accomplish. Secondary research was intensive and very difficult at first, especially because little information could be found on the subject I was researching and even less information could be found about the country I was researching, Morocco. Although this step seemed challenging to me at the time, the next one completely changed my view of the world. The primary research that I was going to conduct myself, first and foremost, demanded preparation of its own. I had to learn how to adapt my character and how to integrate into groups without changing the environment for unbiased observance, which was completely new to me. However, these were only the steps that truly enlightened me as a person. There were many other steps to this research that greatly contributed to it, as there were some that did not contribute to it as much as I had hoped. The following paragraphs will summarise my findings from the different steps of the project and demonstrate to what extent each of them contributed to this research.

Most of the secondary research conducted was summarised in my literature review. Although much detail was mentioned in the text about the particularities I found important at the time, only some major points were truly crucial to the conclusion I had formed by the end of my research. The sections on Islam and Authoritarianism, Women and Decision-Making, and the beginning of the Specificities of the Moroccan Monarchy section involved subjects that I kept referring back to frequently during the course of my research. The other parts of my literature review greatly assisted in preparing me for what was coming, but the aforementioned sections were particularly

helpful during the project. This was because, when looking over the whole project, those were the subjects that everyone involved kept going back to; the people involved in the fieldwork and who I interviewed spoke about many of the subjects mentioned in those sections of the literature review. The next paragraphs will highlight the important details of the previously mentioned chapters, as well as their importance to the whole project.

Understanding authoritarianism in Islamic states was crucial to structuring of the project, since this is mainly what the Arab Spring consisted of, especially in the case of Morocco. It was found through much reading that most Islamic states have authoritarian regimes, which have prevailed through many decades. The Islamic religion is actually a very peaceful religion and does not promote authoritarianism as the correct way to rule a state, but most leaders of Islamic states make it seem as such. In the past, this method of ruling Islamic states worked, and therefore spread among Islamic Arab states. Although all of these countries have parliamentary governments, the leaders ensure they have control over those government in various manners; some leaders would rig elections in their favour or bribe decision-makers in the government such as the prime minister. Although having an authoritarian regime as an Islamic state became part of Arab culture, citizens began to demonstrate their discontent when leaders resorted to unethical methods of staying in power and ignored citizens' demands, which mostly related to human rights and dissatisfaction with their working and living situations. Women had a very big part to play in these revolts.

Women in Islamic states have been forced to be submissive to men for decades, but this reached a turning point during the Arab Spring. Before this season of revolts, women were not only paid less than men, but in some cases were not allowed to drive, vote, or even rent an apartment as a single woman. Harassment of women was so common on the streets that they were blamed for the way they dressed or the hijab they were not wearing. In some states, women are not allowed to have their heads uncovered at all and if they do, it is a crime punishable by law. Worst of all of these discriminations were the family laws, since they were all in favour of the husband and did not protect the wife at all. Feminist scholars have found out that these discriminations were actually not due to religion but to the authoritarian regimes. In the past, when these countries were colonised, women had much more equality with men in the Islamic society; it is only with the spread of authoritarian regimes that this view of women began. During the Arab Spring,

women gathered in the streets in various Islamic states to fight for their rights as human beings and equals to men. In my opinion, these women helped give courage to many other causes taken on during the Arab Spring. Although women in Morocco did chant for their rights, they did so in a much more peaceful manner than in other states, because Morocco is run in a far more equitable way.

While researching Islamic states and their regimes, Morocco clearly stood out in many ways; for example, the manner in which the royal family came to the throne, which was a key addition to this research because it may have affected the reaction of citizens during their revolts. The Alawite royal family was appointed to rule one year after Morocco's independence was attained in 1956, with the first king being Mohammed V. This family was chosen because it is believed that they are the descendants of the Prophet Mohammed of the Islamic religion. Therefore, citizens believe there is no one better than this family to rule over Morocco and there is great respect for them. The king also takes an oath of allegiance every year, which brings citizens closer to him and demonstrates a leader promoting peace and unity; many scholars believe that this is a major factor in keeping the citizens peaceful. The relationship between the Moroccan king and his citizens is quite positive, but the relationship between the citizens themselves and the government does not have the same results.

Although the king and citizens of Morocco have a peaceful relationship, the various social classes are treated differently in terms of the country's gain. The Moroccan upper class usually lives above the law through bribery and networking, and this frustrates the middle and lower classes. The upper classes usually make sure the country's system stays in place and therefore try their best to make the rich richer. The middle and lower classes usually only express their frustration through minor strikes at work or education centres; they are not displeased with the monarchy itself, but rather with the lack of public services available in the country, which is why they are discontent with the government instead. The civil government and Royal Military Household are actually always in competition with each other and the king often steps in as mediator; therefore, he has most of the say in what happens either way. He is able to influence a change in prime minister if he deems it important to protect his citizens and supremacy. This information about Morocco's monarchy was a significant contribution to my research, because it helped differentiate the country from other Arab Islamic states.

Everything mentioned in the Literature Review chapter greatly helped the start of this thesis, but the previously mentioned sections were recurrent in the project. From the history behind Islamic authoritarian regimes and its link to patriarchy and the discrimination of women, to how Morocco actually functions as a monarchy, many realisations were made. Although Morocco was mimicking its neighbouring Muslim countries, there was no precedent for its citizens to accept such harsh authority. Although women are in effect submissive to men, the culture in Morocco displays a certain respect towards females that other Islamic states do not. For example, during the Arab Spring, many men supported women in their demonstrations to gain more rights in family law, which was unusual in character for the majority of Arab men. Also, their sense of unity, thanks to the king and their culture, helped to bring the lower and middle classes together *en masse* to revolt against the discrimination of social classes and their need for better public services. This allowed their voices to be heard more clearly, because there were thousands of people shouting the same thing in the streets, instead of everyone shouting about different concerns. This research was an invaluable first step to what was to come in the project.

Although the secondary research on which this project is based contributed to a large extent to what was concluded, the primary research I conducted helped to pin-point facts that were not available in other published research. For this thesis, three types of primary research were used to ensure that I received the most information possible: a survey, interviews and physical group integration. The first two primary research methods were quite familiar to me, since I have conducted and taken a number of surveys and interviews in the past. However, having to integrate into a group and analysing the experience was a completely new method of research to me, and therefore much preparation had to be done before I approached its members. There were many ways of behaving from which I had to detach myself, because my role in this exercise was not to actually be part of a group close to the protests, but rather to observe the group while interacting with its members but never influencing them. Both during and before/after meetings with the group, I tried to avoid inadvertently exerting any influence on its members, and them on me, which would bias the outcome of the research. The most important results of the primary research are summarised in the paragraphs that follow; their impact on this thesis will also be discussed.

The survey produced many useful statistics that added interesting and noteworthy elements to my research. Some of the key percentages revealed that only about one-third of the participants in the survey were afraid of what the Arab Spring revolts may have led to for Morocco and about two-thirds thought it would reach Morocco. This means that although the majority did believe the revolts would reach Morocco, they were not afraid of the consequences it would have on the economy. Because of how peaceful the country usually is, its citizens knew that there was discontent and that revolts would emerge in Morocco, but did not believe the revolts would lead to such disasters as those in neighbouring Islamic Arab states. This is a clear indicator that the Moroccan case in the Arab Spring was unique.

The survey also found that although almost 80% of the participants believed that authorities throughout the Arab world handled the Arab Spring very badly, about 70% thought that the authorities in Morocco handled the revolts of the Arab Spring very well. This is a strong sign that the way the Moroccan authorities dealt with the uprisings of the Arab Spring played a major role in the positive outcome it had from them. This was an invaluable contribution to my project because it was one of the first pieces of evidence supporting my theory that the Moroccan authorities played a major role in the positive aftermath of the protests. This meant that the next step was to find out how the authorities managed the revolts so well and the strategies that they used. Determining the answers to these questions would possibly enable other Arab countries to use this research in the future, to better handle revolts and to not have such negative effects on their economies. Therefore, my next step was to interview important Moroccan leaders that were involved in the decisions made by the authorities during the Arab Spring uprisings.

The two interviews conducted for the contribution to the research were with Abbas El Fassi and Mohamed El Ouafa. Abbas El Fassi was the sitting prime minister just before the Arab Spring and was replaced during that period by Abdelilah Benkirane. During his interview with me, he stated that the revolts were in fact much more peaceful than the ones in other Arab countries at the time because of Morocco's culture. This was an essential contribution to my research, because it supported the theory that Moroccan culture itself was a cause for the positive outcome of the revolts during the Arab Spring. He also stated that the reason some political parties joined certain protests and took the side of the citizens was truly because they sympathised with them and wanted to see their demands gain traction. This goes against the popular idea that the

authorities of Morocco manipulated its citizens to maintain calm; but then again, the information came from a Moroccan authority figure.

Mohamed El Ouafa was an ambassador for Morocco in key countries such as Brazil and Iran, and had some interesting things to say about the events of the Arab Spring in Morocco. He was actually a minister of education in the political party replacing that of Abbas El Fassi during the Arab Spring (the PJD). He clearly stated that one of the main reasons the PJD won the elections after the revolts during the Moroccan Arab Spring was because Benkirane, the future prime minister at the time, held conferences all over the country to hear citizens' demands and provide them with a possible solution for the long run. This calmed down many citizens because they saw that they could elect a prime minister who would actually listen to their demands and support change – at least, some of the things the citizens were asking for. He believes that the change in political parties greatly influenced the positive outcome of the revolts. He actually believes that the only reason the revolts during the Arab Spring in Morocco were chaotic for a short period was because the population lacked intelligence, since not enough investment was being put into the education of Moroccan citizens. This was another turning point to the theories I was gathering, because, until then, I had not thought of education as being a factor. I knew that the next step was to go and observe the citizens themselves by conducting research on a group of protestors.

The group analysis part of the primary research was very central to the project. I came to many new realisations during this part of the project. Although I thought that this primary research would be like any other, I had to mentally and physically prepare myself for the group meetings by carrying out intensive reading on the subject. I found that I had to change the way I have normal conversations, otherwise I was not going to yield the unbiased results I wanted. Therefore, I learned that instead of debating with the person with whom I am having a conversation or introducing a new point of view, my role was to encourage their discussion with me while answering in neutral vocabulary. I also learned that the best way to conduct such group research is to take time out of the day to distance myself from the group and observe them from afar, allowing me to pay attention to their body language and behaviour with people they have known for a longer period of time. The fact that I was going to join them as a new member made me worry that they would not act the same with me as they did with their friends, and although I

learned ways to be included in the group quickly, I found that observing from afar was a great addition to the research.

Once I had integrated into the group, I made many observations that actually helped with the findings of this research. First and foremost were their attitudes, before and after the protests, among themselves. They lacked a lot of organisation and loyalty to each other, which meant that they would act in ways such as waking up late, not following their action plan, or not doing what they had planned on doing the day before. Comparing this attitude to the ones seen in other Arab countries, it was clear that these citizens had a culture that differed significantly from the others. That is not to say they were not as discontent as the citizens in other countries; it was simply that they already believed that nothing was going to change in Morocco because of the inherently laidback Moroccan attitude. It is not that they did not believe that the authorities would change Morocco, rather that they did not believe in each other enough to stand fearless for this cause in front of the authorities. Therefore, their culture definitely played a key role in the peacefulness of the protests and the fact that they did not harm the country at all.

Then again, these groups were very discontent about some of the injustices supported by the laws of Morocco. These young people believed that Morocco should spend more on education than the military; that it should allow women to have custody of their children and financial support from the fathers in case of divorce; that women should not be forced to marry their rapists; that the population needs a higher minimum wage; and that senior citizens need a proper retirement plan after having worked in public service all their lives. The demands did not stop here, because they also called for a change to Morocco's constitution, giving more power to the prime minister of the country. Although they voiced to me their main grievances and how they had major things planned in order to be heard, this all died down when Abdelilah Benkirane spoke to groups of citizens in different regions of Morocco, and the king gave a speech saying that the citizens had been heard and that change would come. Although they were filled with rage by all of the previously mentioned laws and way of ruling, they were loyal to their king and truly believed in peace when they heard the speeches. Their loyalty and trust in the king did come from their culture, which was more evidence in support of my theories.

After conducting my primary and secondary research, there were subjects I needed to return to and explore to make more sense of the strategies used by the Moroccan authorities to handle the revolts so well. One recurring subject through both types of research was the role of the media in the Arab Spring. Media has always been a tool in the hands of governments that allows communication with citizens. Through newspapers, television and radio, governments are able to share information with the people and reach a maximum number of citizens at the same time. However, when censored and closely monitored by the state, media becomes a tool that controls what people know and what they do not know. It affects the way a population behaves and determines their level of awareness. In the next paragraphs, I will explain and demonstrate how the media allowed Morocco to successfully avoid falling victim to the Arab Spring through close control of content shared, and through transparent communication and smooth propaganda, but also how social media played a role of paramount importance in overcoming the state's control over information.

Social media in particular and the national press both heavily affected the Arab Spring. In fact, it is through the use of social media that citizens in countries like Tunisia, Egypt and others (Morocco included) were able to realise how numerous they were. Consequently, people who shared the same discontent with their countries' social conditions became aware of their fellow citizens' support and each individual became conscious of the power that trickles down from mass mobilisation. This also helped citizens of various countries to reach international news to ensure that they would be heard by other leaders, if not their own. As a result, movements advocating for more individual rights and democracy, such as the 20 February movement, were born and led to protests all over the streets of the Kingdom. If social media was the reason why this movement began, then social media was one of the reasons why the Moroccan authorities were worried that they were no longer in control and that action had to be taken.

The Moroccan government's response was quite different from the reactions of other countries that had faced the Arab Spring. The way it handled the situation could be described as 'smart', but could also be criticised for being unethical, even if it was more diplomatic than any form of violence. Morocco's approach was focused on the use of media and exerted its power over media outlets. The monarchy owns most of the national press, both printed and televised. Therefore, not much can be said by journalists against the monarchy or its officials, because they are technically

responsible for those journalists' salaries. Most reporters of such press outlets, as shown in the literature review section, are afraid of stating their real opinion because of what happened to the reporters before them that did so. Most of the reporters that went against the monarchy are almost all in exile and are unable to return to Morocco.

While other countries opted for violence to calm the masses, Morocco made use of the power it has over the media, realising the power of communication and the benefits that arise from it. As most Moroccan media companies are owned completely or partially, directly and indirectly, by companies that belong to the king, the monarchy and the government, they were able to follow a strategy of quick reaction and made the most of public relations. Shortly after the riots on 20 February 2011, the king gave a speech announcing a referendum in order to change the constitution and meet, to a certain extent, the demands of the protestors. Thus began the propaganda to incite people to vote 'yes' to the adoption of the new constitution. Through video clips that were broadcast on TV and newspaper articles, a massive campaign took place to push Moroccan citizens to accept the change. As a result, 99% of the votes were favourable to the new constitution proposed. This was a clear way in which the authorities manipulated their citizens during a time when they needed to be heard. The Moroccan citizens were weak and needed solutions to their answers and they needed hope. Hope was exactly what the government and king gave them, but in the form of speeches and biased newspaper articles.

Nonetheless, what has been successfully hidden is the high level of censorship by the Moroccan government at the time. Moroccans were only told to vote favourably, but were not given any specifications about the actual changes that would occur after the revolts during the Arab Spring. Through monitoring media outlets, very few to no media companies were standing up to this campaign. Moroccan citizens were thus only and solely encountering positive messages that cemented the monarchy's position, creating an image of a responsive government in place that was ready to do everything to please the demands of its people. In reality, the wider issues and demands brought forward by the demonstrators such as freedom of speech and freedom of religion and individual rights were barely met. This realisation was a major addition to the research concerning the strategies used by the Moroccan authorities to handle the revolts in a very quick and efficient manner. Whether this method was ethical or not, it was one that clearly made a difference between the outcomes from the revolts during the Arab Spring in Morocco

compared to those in Egypt, for example. Although quite unethical for democratic regimes, this method does not seem too unethical for authoritarian regimes and actually has been shown to be a successful method of crisis management.

Mohamed Bouazizi's act of desperation led to a string of events that he could not have expected. He would have turned 35 years old this year. Almost 10 years have passed since Bouazizi started the flame that burnt the despots. The unknown street vendor toppled the most powerful man in his country and so much more. The injustice he suffered served a greater purpose and I wish to honour his life, so that he remains remembered as a symbol of change.

All in all, the legitimacy of the Moroccan crown provided the pillars to resist what others in the region could not. The people of Morocco have given their trust to the king as a guardian of national unity and stability. He is not exempt from criticism, but in this particular case, Mohammed VI rose to the occasion. He, and the monarchical institution the he embodies, successfully resisted the Arab Spring.

The value of this thesis lies in the fact that it took an event (the Arab Spring), a political system (monarchy) and a case study (Morocco), and explained through an ethnographic prism the nuances by which the Kingdom resisted. Furthermore, this work contributes to the existing pool of knowledge with extensive field-work. It was important for me to consider the voice of the people as well as that of the political elite. That is why the surveys and the interviews render this work pertinent and valuable. In addition, the ethnographic immersion allows the reader to truly understand the Moroccan psyche.

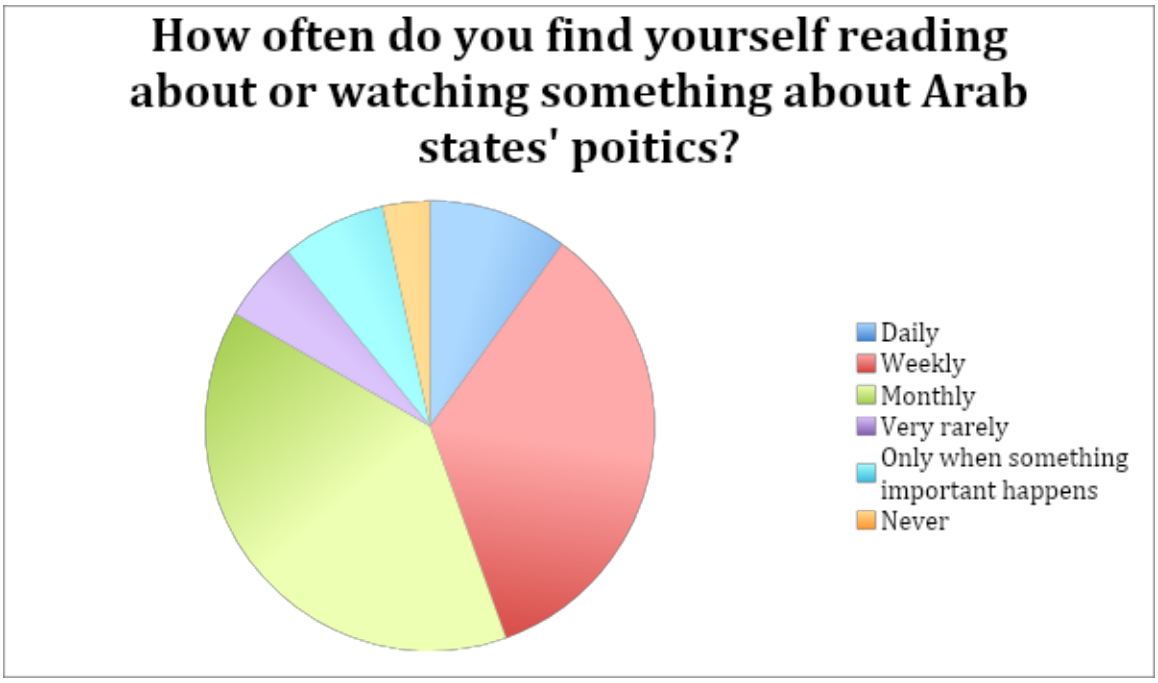
Appendix

Survey Results

1. How often to you find yourself reading about or watching something about Arab states?

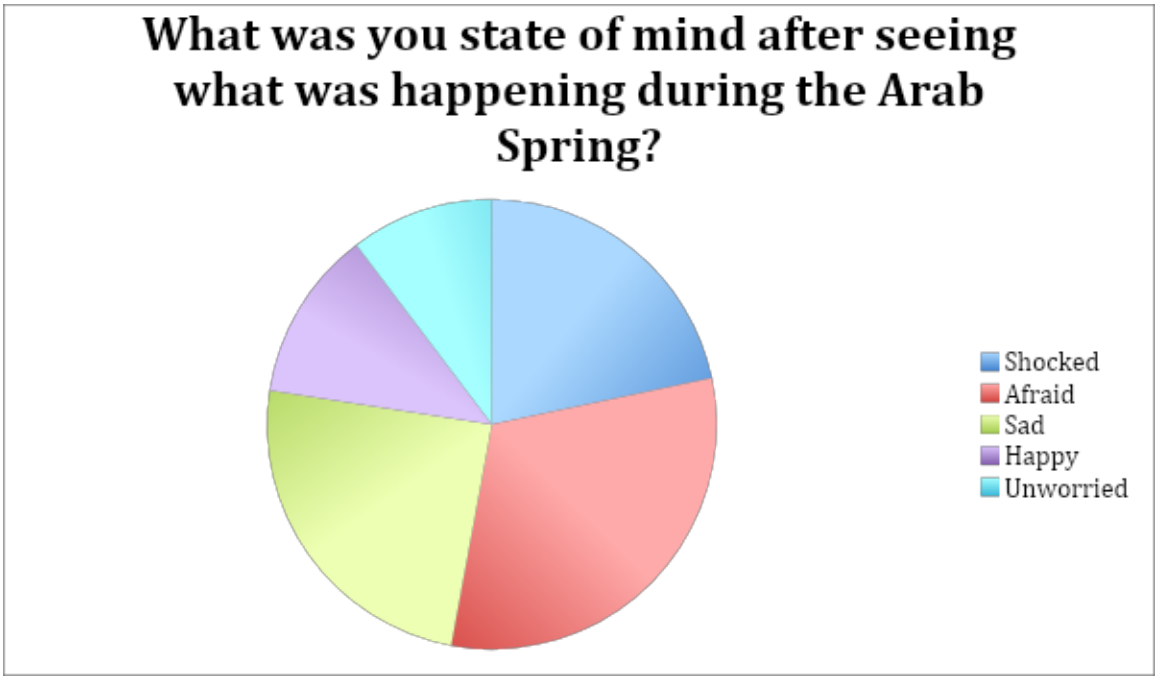
- Daily: 10%
- Weekly: 34.5%
- Monthly: 38.8

- Very rarely: 5.8%
- Only when something important happens: 7.5%
- Never: 3.4%



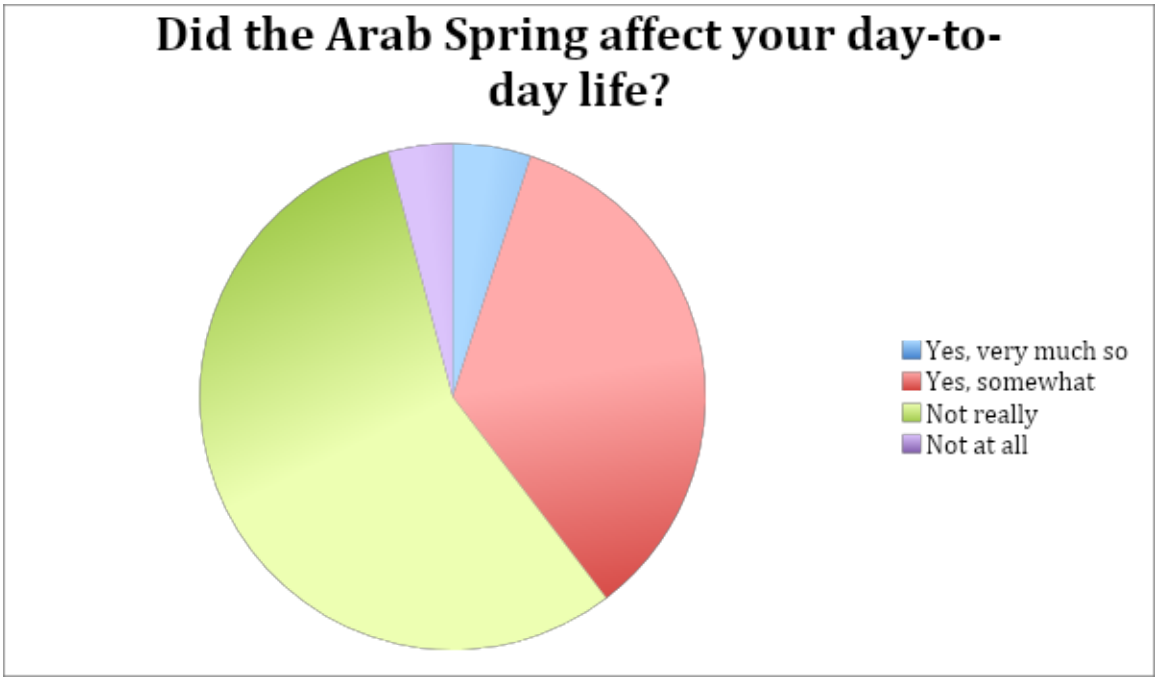
2. What was your state of mind after seeing what was happening during the Arab Spring?

- Shocked: 21.7%
- Afraid: 31.2%
- Sad: 24.5%
- Happy: 12.3%
- Unworried: 10.3%



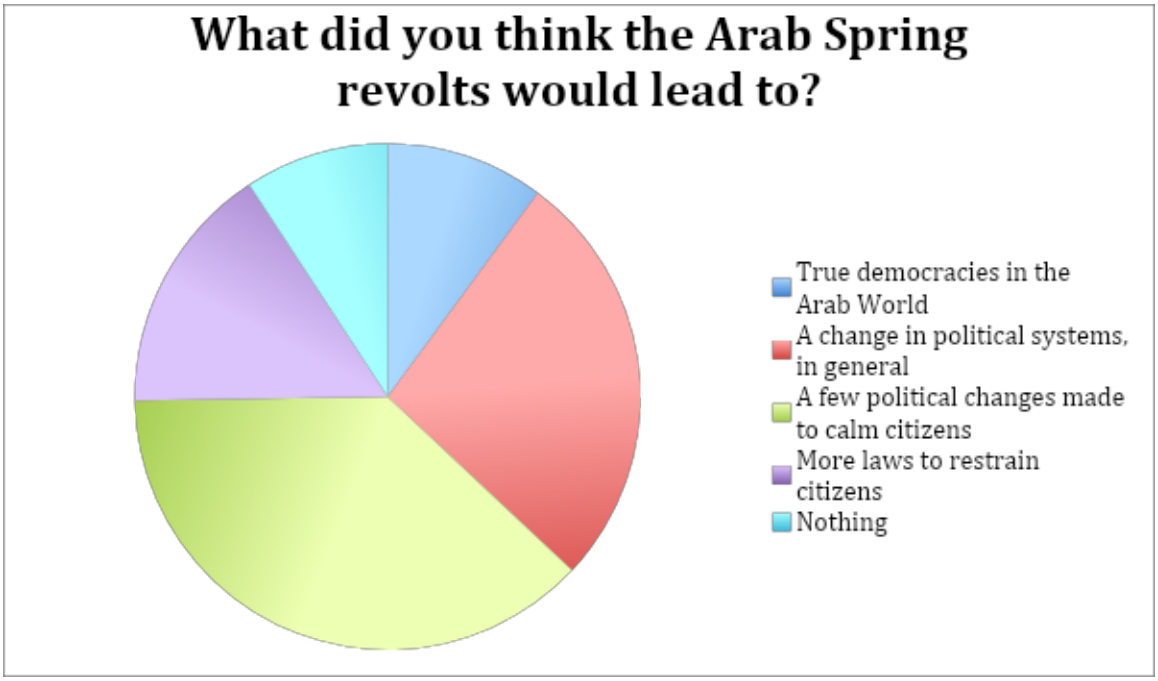
3. Did the Arab Spring affect your day-to-day life?

- Yes, very much so: 5%
- Yes, somewhat: 34.6%
- Not really: 56.3%
- Not at all: 4.1%



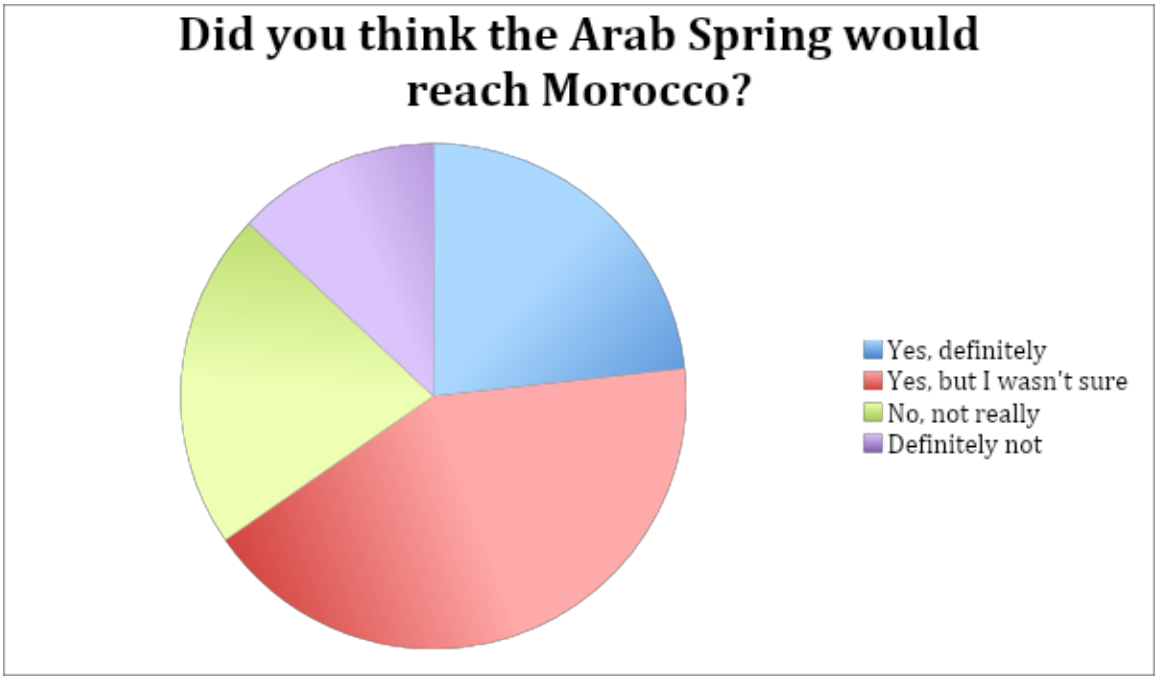
4. What did you think the Arab Spring revolts would lead to?

- True democracies in the Arab World: 9.1%
- A change in political systems, in general: 24.2%
- A few political changes made to calm citizens: 34%
- More laws to restrain citizens from revolting: 14.4%
- Nothing: 8.3%



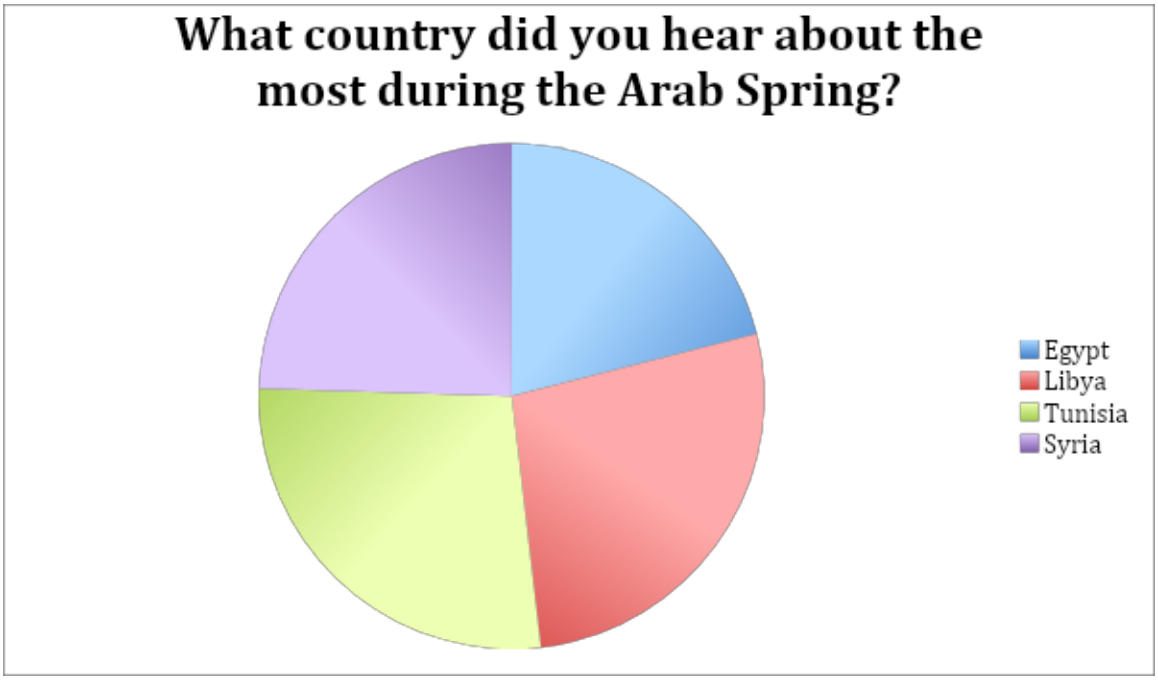
5. Did you think the Arab Spring would reach Morocco?

- Yes, definitely: 23.2%
- Yes, but I wasn't sure: 42.1%
- No, not really: 21.6%
- Definitely not: 13%



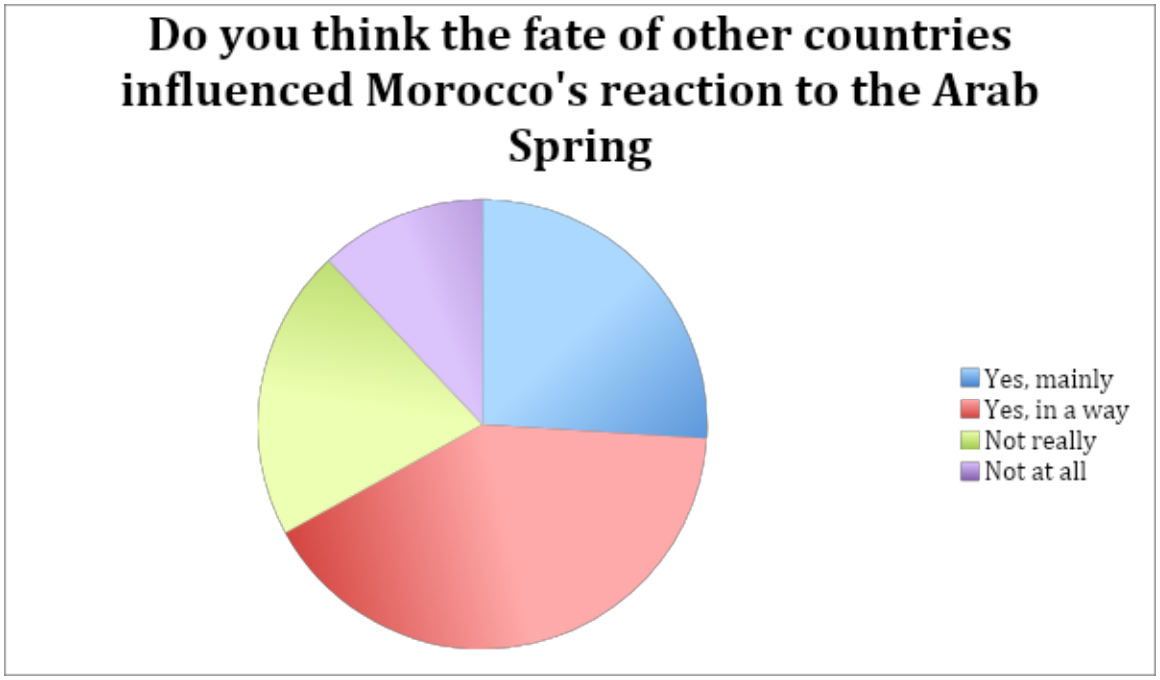
6. What country did you hear about the most during the Arab Spring?

- Egypt: 21.0%
- Libya: 27.1%
- Tunisia: 27.3%
- Yemen
- Bahrain
- Syria: 24.5%
- Algeria
- Kuwait
- Mauritania
- Saudi Arabia
- Palestine



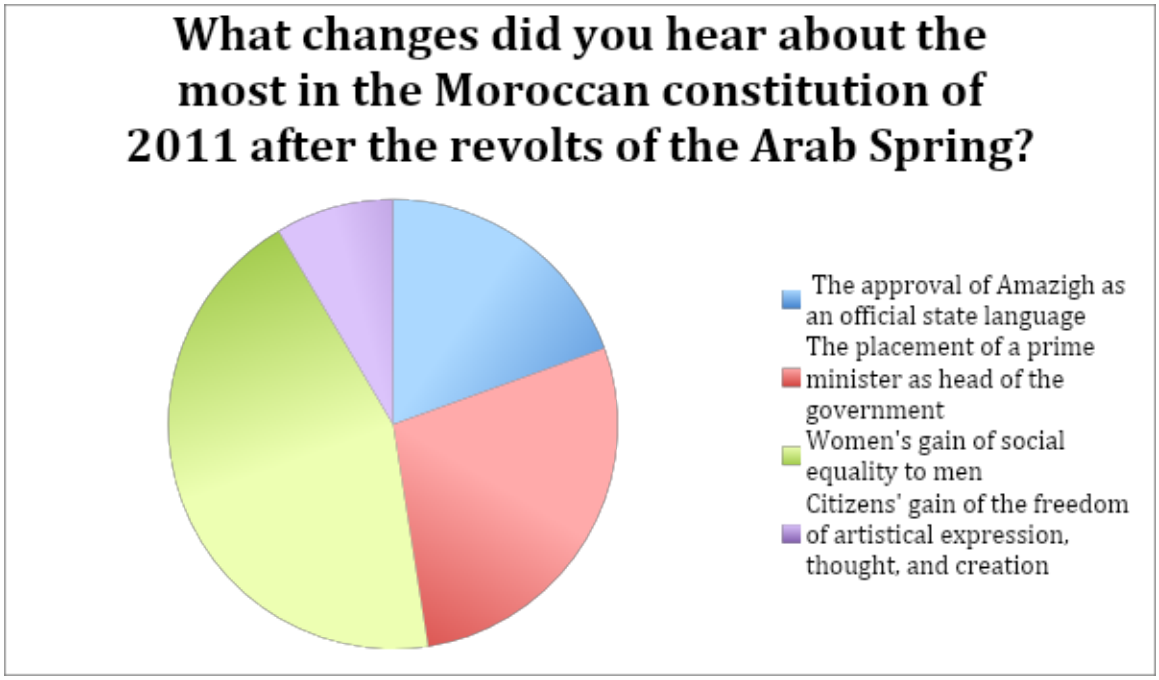
7. Do you think the fate of other countries influenced Morocco's reaction to the Arab Spring?

- Yes, mainly: 26%
- Yes, in a way: 41%
- Not really: 21%
- Not at all: 12%



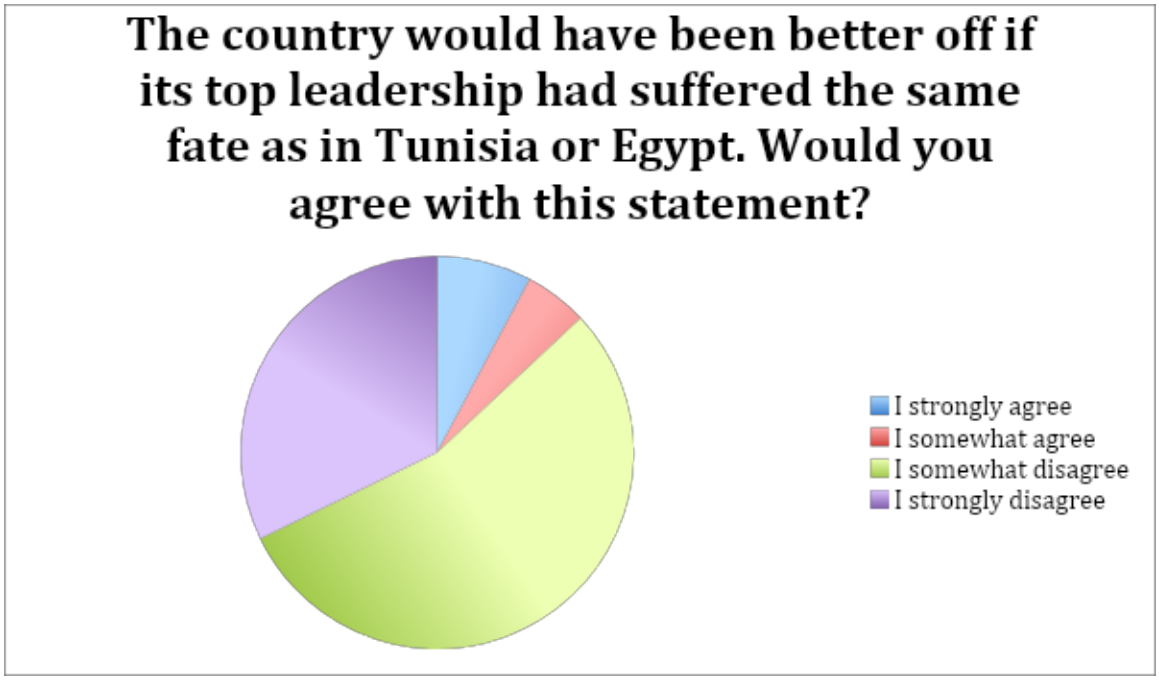
8. What changes did you hear about the most in the Moroccan constitution of 2011 after the revolts of the Arab Spring?

- The approval of Amazigh as an official state language: 19.5%
- The placement of a prime minister as head of the government: 28%
- Women's gain of social equality to men: 44%
- Citizens' gain of the freedom of artistic expression, thought, and creation: 8.5%



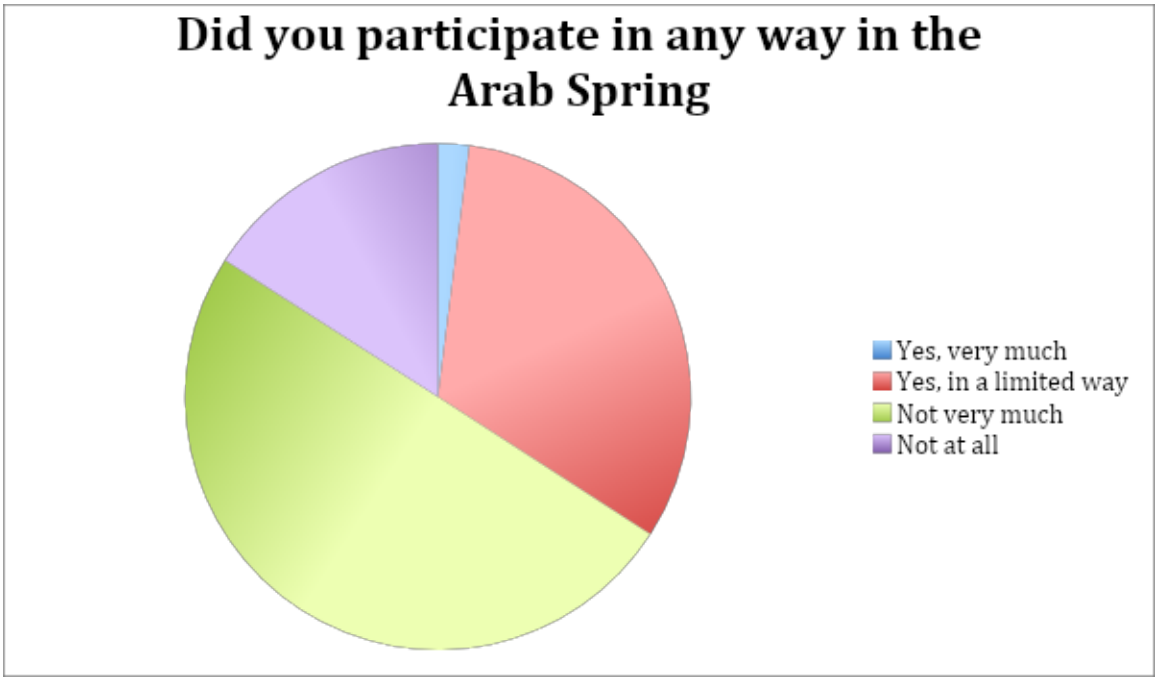
9. The country would have been better off if its top leadership had suffered the same fate as in Tunisia or Egypt. Would you agree with this statement?

- I strongly agree: 7.8%
- I somewhat agree: 5.2%
- I somewhat disagree: 54.8%
- I strongly disagree: 32.2%



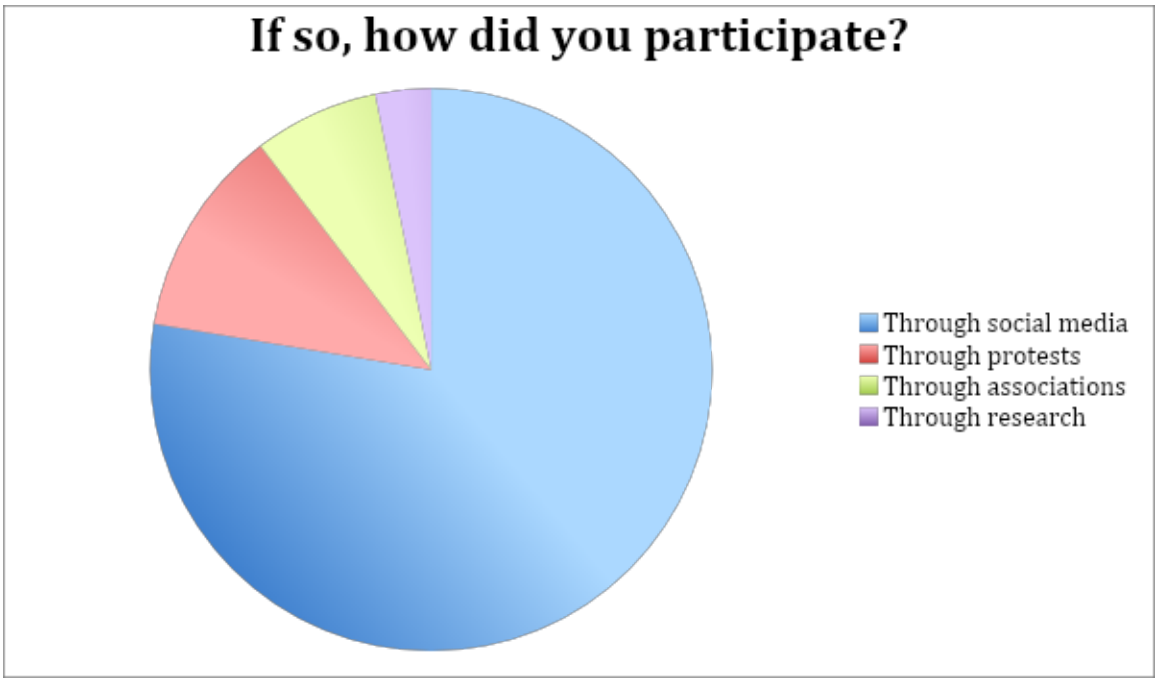
10. Did you participate in any way in the Arab Spring?

- Yes, very much: 2%
- Yes, in a limited capacity: 32.3%
- Not very much: 50.2%
- Not at all: 16%



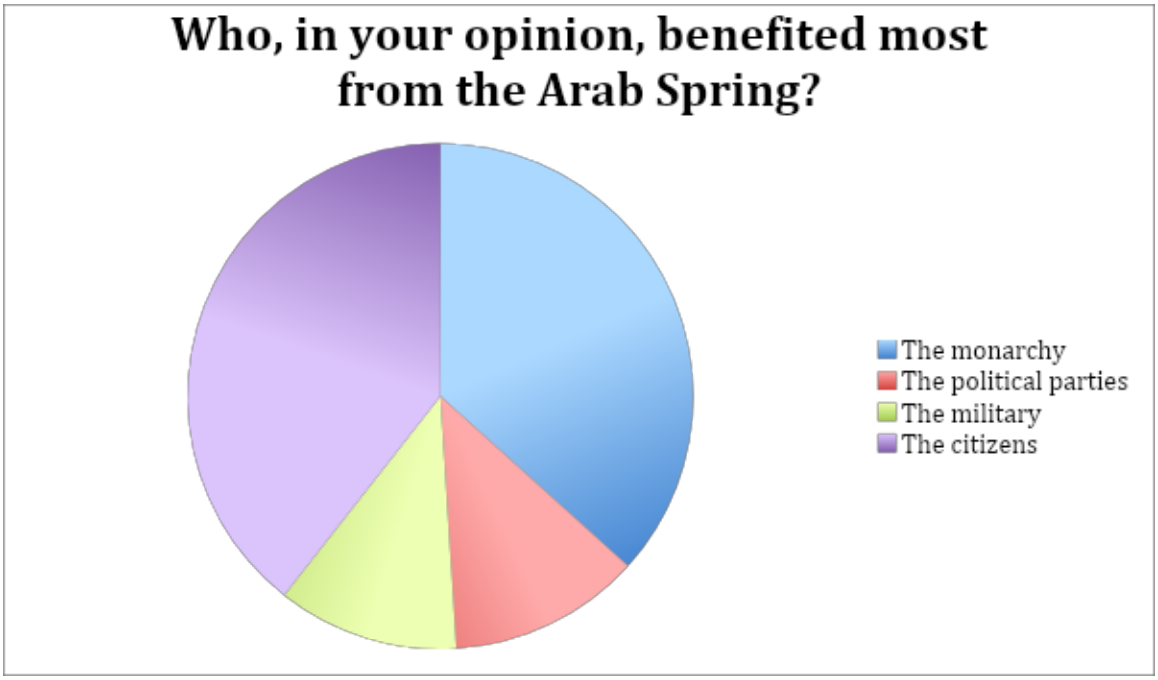
11. If so, how did you do so mostly?

- Through social media: 77.6%
- Through protests: 12%
- Through associations: 7.2%
- Through research: 3.2%



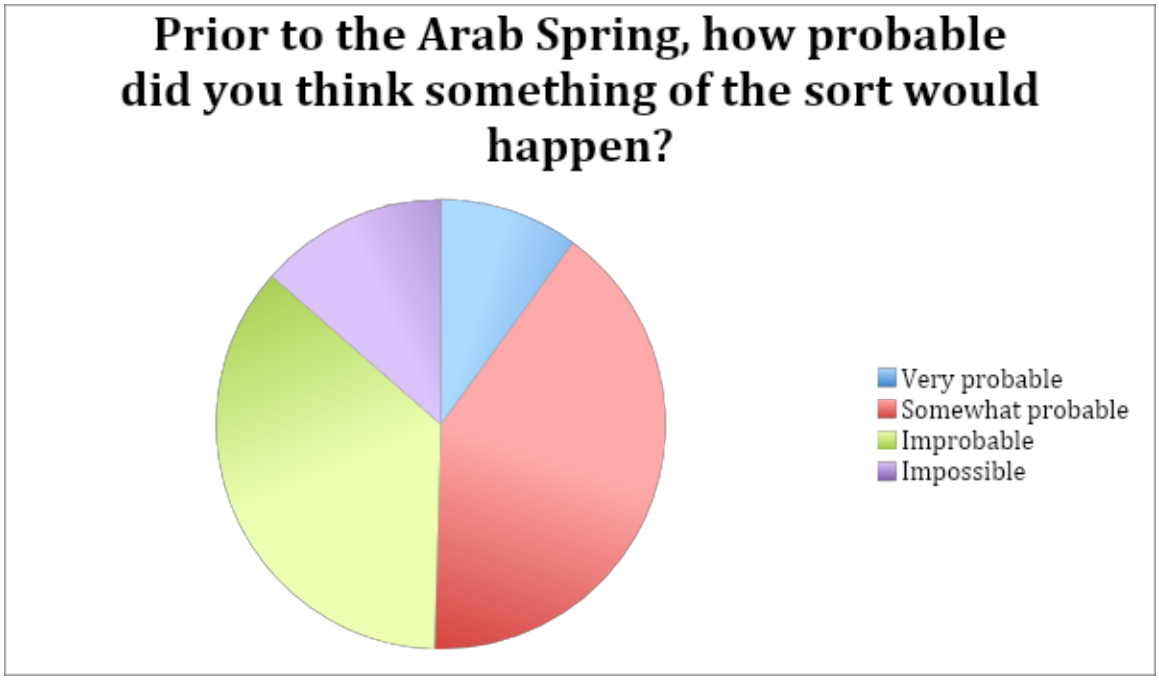
12. Who, in your opinion, benefited most from the Arab Spring?

- The monarchy: 36.7%
- The political parties: 12.3%
- The military: 11.6%
- The people: 39.4%



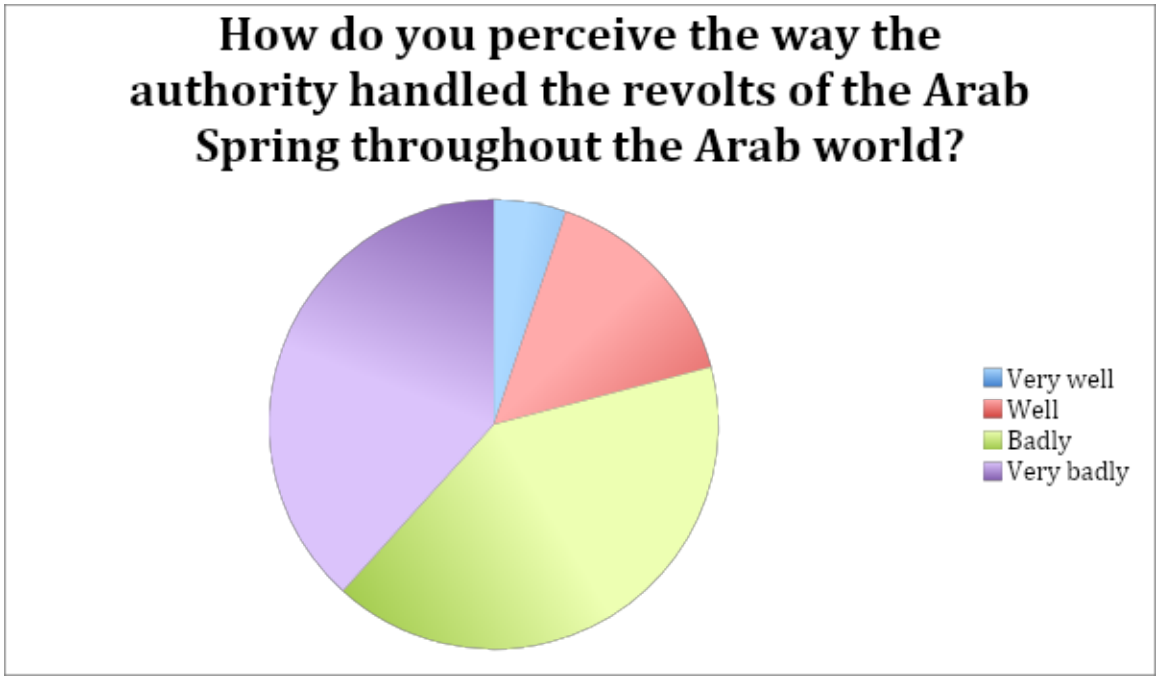
13. Prior to the Arab Spring, how probable did you think something of the sort would happen?

- Very probable: 9%
- Somewhat probable: 36.4%
- Improbable: 32.4%
- Impossible: 12.2%



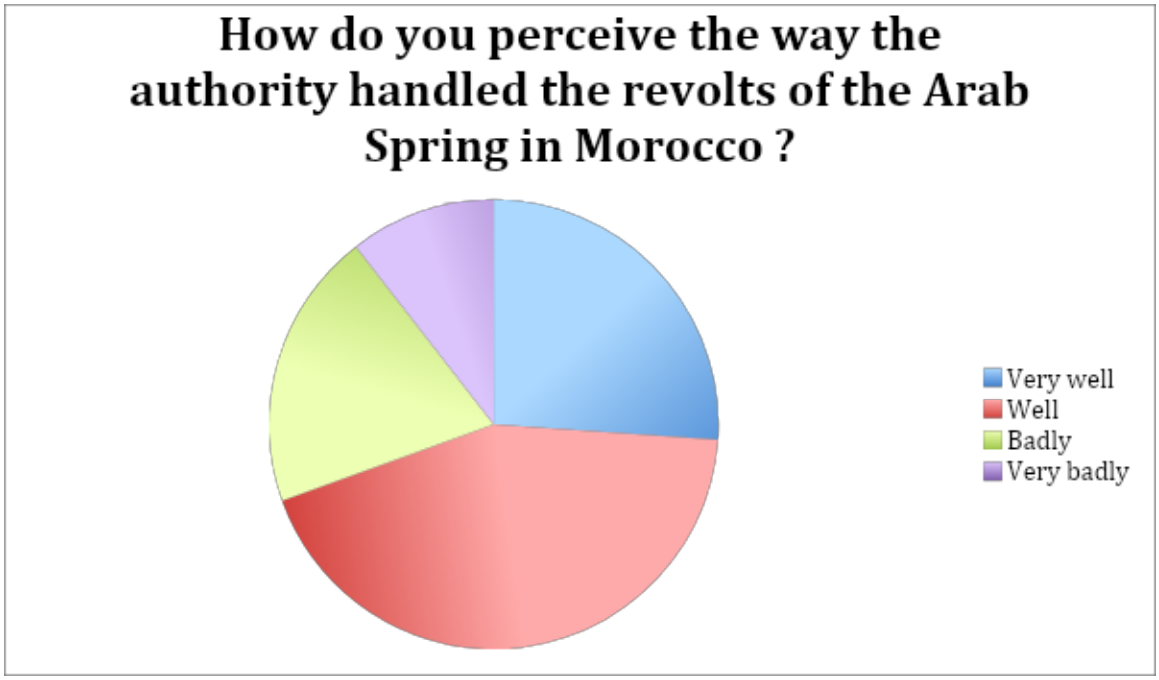
14. How do you perceive the way the authority handled the revolts of the Arab Spring throughout the Arab world?

- Very well: 5.2%
- Well: 15.7%
- Badly: 40.8%
- Very badly: 38.3%



15. How do you perceive the way the authority handled the revolts of the Arab Spring in Morocco?

- Very well: 26.1%
- Well: 43.4%
- Badly: 20%
- Very badly: 10.5%



Interviews with protesters

I had the opportunity to meet protesters and the following are some excerpts of our exchanges:

- Fatiha, 28-year-old protester met in Rabat on 5 January 2015: “For me I demonstrate for dignity, freedom and the right to decide freely about my body.”
- Omar, 35, met at a sit-in in Casablanca on 8 January: “I took to the streets to put an end to unemployment. I'm 35 years old, I still don’t have a job and continue to live at my parents’ house. I’m thinking of migrating abroad to continue my studies.”
- Khalid, 29, met on 6 January in Salé during a sit-in: “I picket aganst repression, for the freedom of expression and the freedom of worship.”
- Aziz, a Master’s degree student and a native of Casablanca, met on 8 January: “I protest against corruption, this vice that is eating away at our society and destroying the dreams of our youth. Everyone steals, from parliament to government.”
- Touriya, young executive aged 41, met in Rabat on 5 January: “When I saw what happened in Egypt, I became obsessed. Hope was rising from the ashes in my

heart. I told myself: “It is impossible that nothing would happen in my country, Morocco. I started to follow the dynamics on Facebook and we started discussions on Facebook. I was among the first to call on the young to become organised. Then the 20 February movement saw light. My parents were against but I joined the protests on 20 February and I am proud of it today.”

- Halima, 37, a civil servant, met on 9 January in Casablanca: “It was the social demands on health, education and housing that encouraged me to join the protests and heed the call for protests made by the 20 February movement. I demonstrate for my children and for future generations.”
- Amine, 63, met on 6 January in Salé: “My first battle is the right to a dignified and just retirement. I am 63 years old and I still work for a pittance. The reform of retirement is unfair. The young protesters of the 20 February movement of give us hope and defend our cause.”
- Youssra, a 32-year-old PhD student in public law, met in Rabat on 5 January: “In the beginning, the Internet played a decisive role in the creation of our 20 February movement. We were inspired by the Facebook pages of activists from Egypt and Tunisia, so we issued the call to protest on Facebook for all Moroccans, with no exceptions.”
- Said, 53, a post-office employee met on 6 January in Salé: “You know, we first thought of launching a movement with the name ‘Freedom and Democracy Now’, but it did not work. There was no response. Then we thought of creating the 20 February movement and it resonated well with young Moroccans.”
- Samia, 24, a sociology student in Rabat, met on 6 January: “What made me join the protest movement was this diversity of the currents and political demands. Even if most of the political parties are not with us, politicised young people joined the movement from the very beginning. In my opinion, the most relevant demand is the establishment of a democratic constitution through a popular vote, to fight against despotism and corruption.”
- Saida, 43 years old, a private sector communications employee, met on 8 January in Casablanca: “My dream is to abolish Article 19 of the current constitution, which grants the King a sacred and political power. We must

separate the sacred and the political in our country so democracy can prevail in the end."

- Yassine, 41, a private company executive and young activist of the religious formation *Al Adl Wa Al Ihssan* (Justice and Beneficence): "I am a member of the 20 February movement, but I am concerned that the claim for a parliamentary monarchy has become the ceiling of our movement's demands. The concept of the Commander of Believers, reserved for the monarch by virtue of Article 19, poses a problem. For us in *Jamaat Al Adl Wa Al Ihssan*, we have one claim to achieve, even if it happens much later: a caliphate system, following the model of the Prophet."

Interviews with officials

Interview with former Prime Minister Abass El Fassi

Abass El Fassi has had a long and distinguished career, where he occupied some of the most important political offices in the country. The pinnacle came on 19 September 2007, when he became the fourteenth head of government (prime minister) to the Kingdom of Morocco. His tenure ended 29 November 2011, coinciding with the Arab Spring…

In your opinion, what triggered the Arab Spring and why did those in power not see it coming?

I think that the Arab Spring affected many Arab countries, all of which share common denominators: the absence of democracy; the systematic violation of human rights; and the restriction of civil liberties, especially freedom of the press.

This was not the case in Morocco?

Finish your question!

Why did the Arab Spring happen? Did the leaders at that time fail to see it coming?

It is also necessary to point out the mismanagement of public policies in the various countries that witnessed a popular uprising, e.g. Gulf countries, dictatorships, single-party countries.

There have been presidents who remained in power for a long time, but Moroccan leaders had some legitimacy, unlike other presidents who ruled for decades. Morocco is the exception in the region, owing to its monarchy, which has been legitimised and validated through the centuries. What I would like to understand is: even if the main party leaders knew they were abusing power and were aware of the people's distress, why did they never think about making changes?

In Libya, for example, they adopted a never-seen-before system, which combined dictatorship and personal power. In Tunisia, the people initially approved of President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali because there was a power void, given the age of President Bourguiba – age and everything that ensues and senility. I was present at those events; I was ambassador to Tunisia. In principle, no one expected the regime to be overthrown but everyone expected the growing discontent of the population and the elevation of the protests' tone, such as the use of slogans directly insulting the regime in place, in an unprecedented way. We are talking here about Ben Ali, Gaddafi, Mubarak, etc.

But Morocco is the exception among these countries, since Morocco is not rich in oil as there are several…

Yes, Morocco is the exception. We struggled and fought for our independence, while most of the current third-world countries did not lead battles against colonialism.

So, in your opinion, the fact that Morocco reclaimed its independence from French and Spanish colonialism gave it the legitimacy to stay in power for 50 years?

No, I mean that the fight against colonialism was also a fight to get what we cannot obtain from it: a democracy, local elections, municipal elections, etc. We had to regain them all from the French because they could not hand it to us. It is the nature of colonialism. So, we snatched it. Moroccan citizens managed to overpower France, regain their freedom and achieve their independence. When the Moroccan nationalist movement felt that it was impossible to achieve democracy under colonialism, the main priorities became to gain independence and claim the sovereignty of the nation, then to rebuild the country after independence on the basis of democracy as seen in Western countries.

When you were the prime minister of Morocco, how did you personally perceive this wave of protests that rose in the region? Did you feel for a moment that it could reach Morocco with movements such as that of 20 February and others?

In fact, the movement in Morocco cannot be compared to the movement in Tunisia or in the Orient by any means. I, for example, as a citizen, know there were young people who were chanting and picketing, but that is about it. It was not a threat for the Moroccan regime, but of course it was an opportunity for young people to demonstrate and present their demands related to the level of education and unemployment, and this has certainly been a common practice in democratic countries.

But this movement was not limited to young people. It became politicised afterwards, when parties from the left or the far left joined it.

But those parties are not representative of the whole population, they are not a force to be reckoned with, like the PJD. The PJD did not directly support the movement; they perhaps just expressed their sympathy. The movement had also sympathisers from the classical political parties, but with no real membership, especially since the demands of the youth were limited to social issues – unemployment being at the top of their concerns, which means they were mainly unemployed young people. As a matter of fact, from what I remember, the young leaders of the Istiqlal party were also present in the protests, since unemployment affected many young people from all regions and parties.

Were there subsequent reforms to tackle unemployment issues?

A long and consistent dialogue between the different authorities, with regard to democracy at a political, economic and social level, was the main reason why there had been no revolution in Morocco. His majesty, the late Hassan II, never cut ties with the nationalist movement, which was in opposition. Professional reforms had been issued since independence up to the last constitution in November 2011. The constitution of 2011 stipulates that the king appoints the prime minister of the winning party of the legislative elections, but in practical terms the system was adopted by King Hassan II and King Mohammed VI even before the preparation and adoption of the 2011 constitution.

In what way?

The legislative elections took place in 1963 after the constitution of December 1962. The FDIG was announced as the first party by the king and the assembly, following which the president of the FDIG became prime minister. What was new in 2011 was the adoption of this practice in the constitution. Now the constitution provides that the king appoints the ministers based on the prime minister's proposal. It also stipulates that the prime minister is chosen from the ranks of the party that came first in the legislative elections. The king, however, does not name the secretary general of the party; and the only condition for the prime minister is that they should be from the winning party.

This was the case for Prime Minister El Othmani.

And for me personally.

This brings me back to my question, since my focus is mainly on the Arab Spring and why it did not reach Morocco, and the elections were held afterwards…!

It was due to the fact that a dialogue had been ongoing for 10 years.

Yes, I agree with you that this was one of the reasons, but some might argue that one of the main factors was the elections that took place afterwards. The people felt a real democratic vote.

Yes, the truth must be told but before, when Yousfi became prime minister, he was appointed to this position after the elections and after the USFP party finished first. It should be said, the Moroccan people during the course of negotiations, dialogues that continued and then stopped there were always improvements. Improvements have always taken place; an agreement could not be achieved and the negotiations kept dragging on. We sat down, we agreed and then we postponed it. One of the reasons was the stubbornness of all the key players, including Hassan II, with his strong character; he did not want to come out of these negotiations at a disadvantage and neither did the USFP.

But in the context of the Arab Spring, did you feel that the rise to power of the PJD, led by the charismatic Benkirane, helped stabilise the country at that time?

No, the stabilisation took place before…

Compared to what happened, since there was a domino effect happening?

After the Arab Spring and the enactment of the constitution, legislative elections took place and Benkirane was elected. I have a simple explanation for this: Moroccan citizens have given a lot of chances to a lot of parties and have been disappointed. The PJD had an advantage: it was new, relatively known and with an untarnished reputation. It is worth noting that for the first time, elections were truly honest and transparent. No political party participating in the elections questioned the results.

Why was that?

I was prime minister and the Istiqlal party organised the elections with transparency. It was no surprise that the PJD won the election; we all expected it a little since it was an emerging party.

Such as the 'En Marche!' party in France.

Yes, for example. In general, the ruling party is at a disadvantage in the following elections, but my government was an exception: the PJD came first and the Istiqlal second. However, we won when it came to forming a majority with allies from other parties. There were no popular sanctions, another choice was made but without sanctioning the Istiqlal party.

During my research, I noticed a recurrent theme. I often find an admiration and love for the king in many people I interview – how can we explain that this symbol can unify a whole country?

First, we must remember that throughout history Morocco has always been a monarchy and also the Alawite dynasty has fought alongside the people for their independence. King Mohammed V sacrificed his time to protect the dignity of the Moroccan people and, in return, the people sacrificed themselves when he was in exile. Second, given the history of Morocco, its diversity and multilingualism, only a monarchy can unify it. Third, during the fight for independence there was a strong understanding between the king and the nationalist movement represented mainly by the Istiqlal party. Mohammed V, with his renowned wisdom, maintained a dialogue with everyone and gave priority to the Istiqlal party because it was more representative; in fact, he

believed that it was normal for Morocco to have a multi-party system. After the death of Mohammed V, things remained the same; no one disputed the concept of monarchy and its institution. Sometimes there is criticism, but the situation remains peaceful overall. Critics mainly target the government and the constitution since the head of the government, in charge of public policies, is the prime minister, as stipulated by the constitution.

One last question: hypothetically speaking, what would be the cause of a revolution?

We have somewhat neglected social issues. Today, the standards by which we measure the maturity of a nation are no longer the constitution, freedom of the press, etc. – these are established norms in all developed nations. Today, we must discuss ways to provide education and employment opportunities to the youth and how to develop the public health and housing sectors to achieve better living conditions. Mohammed VI is well aware of it and has been working on it since his enthronement; he even wants to extend it to the rest of Africa.

Thank you for your time.

Interview with Mohamed El Ouafa

Mohamed El Ouafa is a Moroccan diplomat, ex-ambassador to notable countries such as India, Brazil and Iran. More importantly, he was a minster in the Benkirane government during the Arab Spring.

On 17 December 2010, Mohamed Bouazizi set himself on fire in Tunis, triggering a domino effect that led to revolutions in Libya, Egypt, Yemen, Syria and Bahrain, and protests in Morocco, Iraq, Algeria, Iran and several other countries. What do you think caused the Arab Spring? Did the leaders at that time fail to see it coming?

Yes, more or less, personally I always use the dialectic approach. There is a basis for all this. In 2010, Morocco experienced a lot of protests in the public and private sectors prior to the outbreak of the revolution in Tunisia, but historically Tunisia has always had an impact on Moroccan political life.

Could you give me an example?

Two protests emerged in Morocco after the assassination of Farhat Hached, a great unionist in Tunisia, in 1961. Similarly, the Tunisian bread riots had an immediate impact on Morocco in 1981. We witnessed demonstrations in cities around the country, but they were especially intense in Casablanca. These two countries had a significant impact on each other for a long time. Accordingly, Tunisia's events marked the start of the far-left protests; they were soon joined by new generations that had no political affiliations, but the big underground key player was the Islamist party PJD. The 20 February movement, which was launched through Facebook, also had the support of the far left since they protested alongside them. You just have to take a look at the 20 February's demonstration leaders and analyse them, to realise that PJD members were present as well as the party's representative sporadically.

But all these individuals only came out to protest only after the people came out to the streets; the parties did not start the protests.

Yes, but after...

After that they just followed a movement, but the real cause of the protests is the domino effect that came from the other countries.

Yes, mainly Tunisia. I was lucky to watch these events from the outside, since I was ambassador to Brazil. I saw it all coming. In January 2011, a great Moroccan personality who was well informed told me: "It will come to us too". So, the movement had political support whether we like it or not, primarily from the far-right and secondarily from the PJD. We saw in the 20 February movement's evolution that when the PJD members retreated in 2013, the protests became insignificant.

But how can the far-left profit from participating in these demonstrations?

The far-left is always present. You could ask any politician; they would all tell you that they participate in every protest. When we take a step back and look at the big picture, 20 February included both non-politicised youth of the far left and PJD members, but as soon as solid political parties came out against it, the movement faded gradually. It was mainly after the king's speech on 9 March that two parties officially denounced the 20 February movement: the PJD and the Istiqlal party.

Which brings me back to my question, since you were a member of the Istiqlal party – which was leading the government at that time.

Yes, it was the ruling party, but its syndicate and some prominent figures such as Hamid Chabat condemned the 20 February movement. Chabat was the syndicate's secretary, and the secretary general was naturally the prime minister; he even held meetings throughout the country to speak against the movement, Benkirane did likewise.

Why did they take this position?

Benkirane has explained it on several occasions; he stood by the demands put forward by the 20 February movement when it concerned social justice and reforms, but he considered, Chabat too, that the key issue was not resolved by it, i.e. the future power in Morocco. Was the monarchy included in the future regime? Or did people have other hidden intentions? They could not tell.

Everyone who was against the 20 February movement recognised that the major claim was not put forth.

Yes, but many people say that the PJD would have never ascended to power if the 20 February movement and the Arab revolution had not happened.

No, this is another issue, it will come one year after. Initially, the king made his famous speech on 9 March – I think it was the main originality of the Arab Spring in Morocco. The king informed us during his speech about the beginning of the great reform of the constitution.

I personally believe it was one of the main reasons why Morocco kept its stability during the Arab Spring.

Ben Ali and Hosni Mubarak's examples are terrible. While the protests were ongoing, Ben Ali went to visit Bouazizi in the hospital and he even received his family. It was not enough; the riots were spreading everywhere; it was too late when he gave his speech and he made a terrible mistake by saying: "I understood you". The next day he was taking his plane to leave the country because he wrongly believed, and the people who supported him also, that by saying these three words the streets would calm down. Although he recognised his mistakes, the protesters had already condemned him. I was at home with the Tunisian ambassador, we were listening to the speech, he was happy; I told him he should not be, that this was the beginning of the end. Hosni Mubarak should also have left five or six months earlier; it was over since the Tahrir Square occupation, when the army could not enforce decisions, they made minor attempts by shutting down the Internet, electricity or water, but it was useless when there was crowd movement.

The crowd movement, and also the introduction of technology and social networks. They did not appreciate the extent of social networks.

Yes, and the Americans worked a lot on that aspect. Only now are we beginning to understand some things.

What do you mean?

The United States indirectly pushed these countries to change through the Arab Spring.

What makes you say this?

The United States wanted new leaders; some people remained in power for 30 to 40 years. Worse still, societies became radicalised with Islamic extremism. The United States wanted to limit radical Islam and terrorist groups by creating openings in these countries through political and social inclusion. This is what Mohammed VI understood; he knew it was necessary to make constitutional reforms, i.e. to give his powers to the parliament and the government.

There is also the question of legitimacy. I am 28 years old and I have Egyptian and Tunisian friends who have witnessed the same president since their birth. When I was born, I had a king and I knew that his son would inherit the crown.

The Americans thought that a number of presidents have stayed for way too long. Look at Abdullah Saleh who was murdered overnight. You are right when you say that Morocco is a monarchy and that the king's son will be the next king. We are aware of this, but Morocco must open up and have rights and freedom.

And according to you, it is what changed with this social constitution.

So, we had to bring back… No, you have to listen, we should not adhere to the theory of the 20 February movement launching the PJD.

It is one of the factors. But for me, it is not even the 20 February movement, it is the Arab Spring.

The 20 February movement is an ambience, but a fundamental element. After the constitution, Morocco could not rig elections anymore.

It is the effect of the Arab Spring; it forced democratic elections.

In other countries, it did not achieve positive results.

Such as?

Egypt, for two or three years. For us, it was five years, because we are now in a boomerang period: a rollback period.

What are your thoughts on Benkirane's track record? Did he bring any added value to Morocco? Did he play a role in the country's stability?

Benkirane stayed for five years and during this period there was no mass movement or protest against him. It is kind of a big deal. According to my personal experience, I was in Brazil until the day before the elections, when I was told to return. When I arrived, I found myself in the government as minister of national education on 3 January 2012. The teachers were on strike on the handover day; I would never have managed to enter the building without the police's assistance. I had not yet taken up my duties as minister and Morocco was in turmoil. People were on the roofs of the administration buildings; they occupied administrations and places, and we had slowdowns; people worked from 8am until 10am and stopped teaching or working on school administrations. It was a destabilised country and the government did nothing because they were afraid of the street protests. When we joined the government later, we decided to put an end to all of it. It was not easy. I had to deal with the roof occupation of a building not far from the ministry of education. I went to see the protesters, although the police warned me against going there; they said they would throw me from the rooftop, but I thought that I could talk reason to them. The head of government Benkirane joined me and we engaged in discussions with them on the roof of the building. Then we decided to leave them alone and let time do the work, but they never left. Unfortunately, there was an incident that pushed us to use force. Two young people decided to give an interview to foreign media in the port; one of them doused himself with gasoline to scare away the police – the tragedy is that his friend threw a cigarette and set him on fire.

But what were their demands?

They wanted to become government employees without passing the competitions. We told them that this was a new government with a new approach, because the previous government had done this – they employed people participating in the protests. But we decided that we were not taking the same path. Benkirane appeased the population; whether we like it or not, he maintained a certain stability. Why? Because Moroccans experienced real politics for the first time. For the first time, a head of government was seen on TV getting out of his car to speak with unemployed graduates during a protest. Since that date, the king hired bodyguards to escort him; he told him

that he was not allowed to do that. Benkirane's speech found credibility among the population. I am not spreading propaganda about him; he does not need me. We passed two major reforms that nobody could achieve in this country, the compensation fund and pension reforms. Unfortunately, the initial reform project that the government and Benkirane planned was to raise the retirement age to 65, but he was forced to step back and accept 63. A month ago, the president of the court of auditors declared that if we do not raise the retirement age to 65 or 67, we will be in the same situation in 10 years' time. The current government is unable to do it; I am not saying this to flatter Benkirane or the previous government, they just cannot. If Benkirane had served for a second term, the compensation fund would have disappeared within the first 15 days. This is the novelty of Benkirane and that is what caused him problems with 'the power'.

What do you mean by 'power'?

'The power', this is a Moroccan expression...

What I refer to in my thesis as the *Makhzen*.

That is right, but I do not like using that term. I prefer 'power'.

Yes, but it is the term used in literature. This *Makhzen*, this power...

I really like this word, 'power'. When we say power or *Makhzen*, it is to avoid saying 'the king'. We hide behind these words, that is it. The king gave a free pass to the government in 2012.

A free pass?

He let us do our work and occasionally hold the council of ministers. He was not always happy about some things, but he felt that he had to let the government fulfil its duties. And then, problems started in the government: the first crisis. It started with one person and it was Chabat, then he was followed by the whole Istiqlal party when they collectively submitted their resignations to the government. I refused to follow, I thought we would make a political crisis for nothing and other people would take over our positions and this has proven to be the case. The government carried on, since the balance of power was still in Benkirane's favour. If it was not the case, such as what happened to Ennahda in Tunisia when they left the government or when

the army took control of Egypt, the power would have got rid of Benkirane, but they knew they could not.

According to you, you who have led this very rich life in diplomacy, what did the Moroccan diplomacy do to prevent or hold back the Arab Spring? And preserve stability afterwards?

No, at first, no one predicted what would happen. When I was with the Egyptian and Tunisian ambassadors, we had this sense that something was about to happen in Morocco, but we did not expect it; honestly, no one saw it coming. Even the ministry stopped providing direction. We awakened only after the speech of 9 March and we started explaining...

So, in your opinion, the king knew before the government.

That is correct. I do not think the king realised it before the 20 February protests. I believe he was more preoccupied by what was happening in the other countries and, all of a sudden, he realised that it could happen to Morocco.

It is normal to wonder after seeing all these heads falling successively…

When will be my turn? But at the time, we did not notice that there was an agreement between foreign powers, mainly the United States and the Western world to create an opening in the Arab countries.

OK, one more question. Master and Disciple: The Cultural Foundations of Moroccan Authoritarianism – ingrained in Islamic mysticism, this work puts forward the underlying interactions between master and disciple. Abdellah Hammoudi focuses on the postcolonial era and how authoritarianism has shaped the newly founded Arab states. In fact, the Moroccan scholar considers the submission of the subordinate occurs in a manner that directly targets his virility. Apparently, "this inversion operates at the heart of Moroccan society and is most highly stylised in the master/disciple relationship in which the master requires his male disciple to perform 'feminine' tasks such as cooking, collecting wood, making the master's bed, gathering water for ablutions, washing clothes, and in rarer instances, performing sexual acts for the master" (Hammoudi, 1997: 97). The scholar raises

an intriguing theorem, where one desires to be subordinate in order to survive. Do you agree?

No, this is sociology. The problem of the Moroccan regime is that monarchy is rooted in the history of Morocco. It has been here for 12 centuries.

Since 1600.

No, it has been 12 centuries. The Alawites had only four centuries.

So, you are speaking generally.

The concept of monarchy throughout our history. Here we have to take a look at what Al Aroui says or what Allal Al Fassi wrote in The Independence Movements in Arab North Africa. Sociologists have a way of perceiving history that is a bit weird, unlike historians.

There is a secular monarchy, there was a population's behaviour throughout history; Moroccans remained attached to the monarchy even when it was weak. Why? For two main reasons, and I agree with historians on this. First, we are a diverse country, of diverse origins, even the Amazigh story is wrong. It is a modern slogan! The Amazigh identity is firstly three great movements, and within each of them other tendencies. There is everyone who has come, either from Andalusia, Arab countries or even Yemen. Then there is this phenomenon of the south; Moroccans traded with Africa across the trade routes since early history, which makes us a diverse population with different backgrounds. Then we have a system, the Moroccans want to forget about it, but it reappears once in a while; we have a tribal system.

In what way?

Some neighbourhoods in the cities only have people from Ouarzazate or Errachidia, for example. When you are campaigning for the election, you have to meet their leaders. Even if we are in urban areas, such as now, we are in Salé, which is next to the capital of Morocco. It is necessary to speak with the people coming from southern zones like Ouarzazate or Zagora, the tribal system is still strong.

But it is not like in Libya with Gaddafi.

No, Libya is another problem. The tribal system was first bruised by Gaddafi, and then he corrupted the tribes with money because it suited him. Divide to conquer.

Regarding annuities, there are several authors who explain how governments have exerted control using this system, especially those who have a lot of oil, as if buying their people. Which explains why Morocco was able to keep its stability.

No, even Morocco has it, but not at this scale.

Morocco did not buy its stability after the Arab Spring?

The country does not have the resources to do so!

The others can do it. "Do you want to leave? Take this money and keep quiet!"

Like Saudi Arabia, which declared a 30% salary increase overnight.

And in Gaddafi's revolution, he told them to go to the bank and withdraw money. On the other hand, Morocco has kept its stability, why?

Because it has a political establishment and political parties, the other countries were lacking this. Just as in Tunisia, when Ennahda came up and turned everything upside down, but they were smart, they did not keep all the power to themselves; when people started to march against them, Ennahda told them very clearly: "We retired!". But they could not counsel because they created one party where they gathered everyone. What is the state of this party right now? Ennahda is still strong; if there are elections tomorrow, they would win.

The whole fight for the past five years has been to take back control of Morocco. The entire struggle that we have endured for five years, publicly or privately and through the press, was about the power trying to regain its authority, and the only way to achieve this was to break the political parties.

And you think this is what is happening right now?

Of course, they did not let Benkirane constitute his government. It is not that he did not want to constitute the second government; the king was forced to appoint him because a silly operation did not succeed on 7 October and they tried another one on 8 October...

Which means?

It was to send a letter to the king to inform him that all political parties did not want to work with the PJD. It failed, and the king was forced to name Benkirane on Monday. They were putting unnecessary obstacles in the way…

If it was a democratic country, there would have been a vote and he should have taken office, that is it.

That is another matter; of course, this would have been the case for PJD in England, in France or in Spain. In Morocco, if you perform well, you endure hell. During these elections, the power believed that the PJD would be overthrown in September 2015, and then the party won all the communes and all the cities, they lost only in one city, El Houceima. Then we used all means to break them. I saw that with my own eyes.

Who used all means? But who wants to break this power? It takes a bit to not protect the power…

But of course, and in addition to that, for the first time in Morocco, the question of the religious legitimacy was considered. The king had religious power from his ancestors and the head of government came with religious reverence. It is a permanent struggle; we must not forget that the head of the government wanted to counter corruption, fraud and exploitation of the public sector. All of that has calmed down, but people have lost their power, so they tried to regain it.

Would this keep stability in Morocco, or could it cause a revolution?

I was for democracy since I was young; we should have embraced democracy. The king was outside political parties' games, he had a power without the constitution where he could regulate political life when things go wrong. We are moving towards a period of uncertainty in my opinion, we will see...

Hypothetically speaking, what would be the cause of a revolution?

Oh no, I am not for the revolution, I am a reformist, but that is not the question. All these tricks that have been played. We must let democracy do its work. Benkirane won, let him create his government without involving Akhannouch! What are all these stories? This is very under the belt… that's why I did not follow my comrades from Istiqlal, when they submitted their resignations. We did not live here, we lived in the other apartment. The general secretary came to my house, I told him that I would not hand my resignation, that he was wrong on the whole line, that even if they left the government, the balance of power would still be in favour of Benkirane and that the king would find a solution to keep him.

It is what happened, the Istiqlal left in July, the king asked the RNI to join the government, and the RNI stayed three years in the government. And then we saw what happened to Istiqlal. Unfortunately, first they elected an unfit general secretary, but that is their fault. They made an analysis and they were wrong; they appointed a catastrophic general secretary, who believed that attacking Benkirane was going to make Istiqlal the leading party.

Mr. El Ouafa, thank you very much.