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Political regimes and immigration policymaking

The contrasting cases of Morocco and Tunisia

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Introduction

ABSTRACT

This chapter outlines the contributions of this thesis to rethinking the role of political regimes in immigration policymaking and introduces its theoretical and empirical starting points. Existing theories of immigration policymaking emphasize the role of liberal democracy to explain why European and North American countries have tended to liberalize immigration policy despite popular demands for restriction. They suggest a ‘regime effect’ by associating liberal immigration policy outcomes to the liberal-democratic nature of ‘Western’ states. In the absence of systematic research on immigration policymaking in autocracies or ‘non-Western’ democracies that could serve as counterfactuals, however, there are reasonable grounds – such as the fundamental similarities in the nature of modern statehood – to question whether immigration policymaking intrinsically differs across ‘Western/non-Western’ or ‘democratic/autocratic’ countries.

To explore the ‘regime effect’ more systematically, the thesis asks: *How does the polity shape the politics of immigration policy?* It investigates this question by studying the contrasting cases of Morocco and Tunisia: In autocratic Morocco, moderate immigration growth has become intensely politicized and a liberal immigration policy reform was launched by the King in 2013; in Tunisia, the substantial growth in immigration since 2011 has remained largely unpoliticized, and the restrictive immigration policies of the autocratic Ben Ali era have persisted through the democratic transition. These developments suggest a disconnect between immigration patterns, their politicization, and the political regimes within which these dynamics unfold. They also challenge theories that associate liberal immigration regimes to democracy.

Through the paired comparison of Morocco and Tunisia, the thesis provides three key insights: First, immigration politicization is not necessarily a response to the actual magnitude of immigration. Rather, it reflects a state’s national identity conceptions, as well as its strategies for regime legitimation and stability. Second, while the binary regime *categories* of ‘democracy’ and ‘autocracy’ cannot adequately explain policy outcomes; political regime *dynamics* crucially shape immigration politics: In fact, Morocco’s liberal immigration reform was part and parcel of the monarchy’s legitimation strategy; while Tunisia’s restrictive policies inherited from its autocratic past remained untouched to safeguard democratization. Third, I introduce a three-fold typology of immigration policymaking processes to specify policy dynamics where political regimes matter and those that cut across regime types.

1 WHAT'S AT STAKE?¹

Social scientists have long ignored states and policies as drivers of international migration, treating them as 'background noise' compared to demographic or economic factors. In 1985, Myron Weiner wrote: "There is little systematic comparative and theoretical work on such issues as how and why states make their access rules, the interplay between domestic and international considerations, the relationship between regime type and access rules, and how the rules are affected by internal political transformations" (Weiner 1985: 446). This has changed. In line with the early work of Aristide Zolberg (1978) on immigration policymaking and nation-state formation, over the past decades scholars have advanced theories of immigration policy-making.

In the 1990s, scholars sought to explain why European and North American states consistently enacted liberal immigration policies despite popular demands for restriction. Most prominently, Hollifield (1992a) suggested that these states face a 'liberal paradox'. On the one hand, the political logic of democratic nation-states would drive politicians to adopt restrictive stances on immigration in the face of popular demands. On the other hand, the liberal logic of global market economies would push politicians to liberalize immigration to meet economic actors' needs. To explain why the liberal logic seemed to prevail, Freeman (1995) argued that immigration policymaking is dominated by 'client politics'. According to him, this type of policymaking would favor actors such as employers or human rights advocates who benefit from immigration and can effectively lobby for their interests, while it would hinder anti-immigration mobilization because the costs of immigration are diffused among the entire electorate. Complementing this political economy argument with an institutionalist perspective, Joppke (1998b; 2001) highlighted the role of legal actors to account for the expansive tendency of immigration policies in liberal democracies. In particular, he stressed the role of national courts and judges in enshrining migrants' rights and hereby restraining attempts by executive and legislative powers to restrict immigration policies through law-making.

What these theoretical explanations have in common is that they emphasize the role of liberal democracy in creating internal and external constraints that limit states' possibilities to restrict immigration (for a more detailed discussion, see Chapter 2, Section 3.1). They suggest a 'regime effect' by tying expansive immigration policy outcomes and particular immigration policy dynamics, such as the role of courts, employers or the electorate, to the liberal-democratic nature of political systems. Some scholars have explicitly pointed at this 'regime effect' by stating that "accept-

¹ This section heavily draws on the introduction of an article in *Comparative Migration Studies* (Natter 2018b).

ing unwanted immigration is inherent in the liberalness of liberal states” (Joppke 1998b: 292) or that it is the “features of liberal democracy itself that affect the way such regimes process migration issues” (Freeman 1995: 882). Most of the literature, however, has suggested such a ‘regime effect’ more implicitly, by limiting empirical research and theorizing of immigration policymaking to consolidated liberal democracies in Europe and North America (Boswell 2007b; Castles 2004a; Freeman 2006; Hampshire 2013; Meyers 2000).

These considerable theoretical advances since the 1990s have kick-started the debate on “what is specific to policymaking in liberal democracies and what is not” (Brubaker 1995: 904).² However, the research focus on ‘Western liberal democracies’ has limited scientific insights into the ‘regime effect’, as counterfactuals that would systematically investigate immigration policymaking in autocracies or ‘non-Western’ democracies are largely missing. This is not only problematic because one out of two international migrants live in the so-called ‘Global South’ (UNPD 2013: 1) and 42% of countries worldwide are classified as autocracies or hybrid regimes (Marshall, Gurr and Jagers 2018). More fundamentally, the striking similarities in the nature of modern statehood (Tilly 1992) and the fact that countries along the entire democracy-autocracy spectrum have to take into account economic lobbies, public opinion, and geopolitical interests in their decision-making, provide compelling reasons to question the assumption that immigration policymaking intrinsically differs across democratic and autocratic regimes.

Since the late 2000s, migration and comparative politics scholars with regional expertise on Africa, Latin America, and Asia started to defy this Western-centrism by bringing new empirical evidence to the table (see Chapter 2, Section 3.2). For instance, the historical research by FitzGerald and Cook-Martín (2014) challenged assumptions about the link between liberal immigration policy and democracy by showing that North American democracies were the first to establish ethnic immigration selection criteria and the last to abolish them, long after most Latin America autocracies did so. Also, in-depth research on Saudi Arabia (Thiollet 2010; 2015), South Africa (Klotz 2012; 2015) or Kenya (Milner 2006) has examined domestic and foreign policy dynamics around immigration, focusing either on specific actors within the policy process (such as civil society, the state, or international actors) or on specific aspects of the immigration regime (such as policies towards irregular migrants, labour migrants, or asylum seekers). Given the scattered and relatively recent emergence of these empirical studies, the comparative and theoretical insights on the role of political regimes in immigration policymaking are still in an early stage of development

² Brubaker (1995) has been one of the few who challenged this ‘regime effect’ very early on. He questioned Freeman’s claim that the pro-immigration/anti-discrimination discourse prevailing across Western Europe is intrinsically linked to the liberal-democratic structure of European polities, arguing instead that this trend has emerged out of overall economic, ideological, and immigration cycles.

and a systematic comparison of policy processes across political systems or political geographies is still missing.

To start filling this gap, this thesis investigates the drivers and dynamics of immigration policymaking in Morocco and Tunisia.³ These two contrasting cases provide fertile ground to scrutinize the role of political regimes in immigration policymaking: In particular, the fact that the Moroccan monarchy has enacted a liberal immigration reform in 2013, while Tunisia's immigration policies have remained restrictive throughout the democratic transition questions whether expansive immigration policies are a feature of liberal democracy, as suggested by established theories. As this thesis shows, democratization is in fact likely to strengthen popular calls for restriction, while autocratic consolidation might paradoxically create more leverage for state-driven liberal policy reform, a dynamic I call the 'illiberal paradox'. At the same time, Moroccan and Tunisian immigration policymaking also reveals striking parallels with political processes described in the literature on 'Western liberal democracies'. In particular, the fragmentation of state interest, with ministries pursuing diametrically opposed goals on immigration, or the role of economic and foreign policy interests in immigration policy seem largely unrelated to political regime dynamics.

To contribute to more general theory-building on immigration policymaking, the thesis develops theoretical propositions that specify immigration policymaking dynamics for which political regimes matter and those that cut across regime types. Hereby, this thesis adds to a wider academic effort that seeks to bridge theorizations of socio-political processes in the 'Global South' and the 'Global North' (Austin 2007; Bakewell and Jónsson 2013; Comaroff and Comaroff 2012; Pomeranz 2000).

2 WHY RESEARCH MOROCCAN AND TUNISIAN IMMIGRATION POLICIES?

Morocco and Tunisia are critical cases to explore the assumed 'regime effect' of existing immigration policy theories and to advance theory-building across political regimes and political geographies. As I detail later (see Chapter 3, Section 1.2), two main features motivated my case selection: (1) the variety of configurations between immigration politics and political regime dynamics that can be studied over time, namely liberal and restrictive immigration reforms, as well as *laissez-faire*, informal and conscious non-policies within a range of political systems (monarchy, presidential one-party system, young democracy); and (2) the contextual comparability of Morocco and Tunisia in terms of their socio-cultural, economic, demographic, and geopolitical features that allowed me to isolate as much as possible the role of political regimes in immigration policymaking.

³ This breadth of coverage in terms of actors involved and drivers considered comes with an inevitable compromising on the depth with which I can discuss each of the actors and drivers.

2.1 A NOVEL PERSPECTIVE ON IMMIGRATION POLITICS

With its focus on Moroccan and Tunisian *immigration* politics and *domestic* policy drivers and dynamics, the thesis introduces new empirical and theoretical perspectives into a literature that mostly portrays Morocco and Tunisia as emigration or ‘transit’ countries, or casts them mainly as passive receivers of European policy dictates (see for instance: Belguendouz 2003; Boubakri 2009; Brand 2002; Limam and Del Sarto 2015; Perrin 2005; Wunderlich 2010). Indeed, Morocco and Tunisia are central to European migration debates because of the large-scale, sustained emigration of Moroccans and Tunisians to Europe since the 1950s and the growth of irregular migration and so-called ‘transit’ migration from sub-Saharan African countries starting in the 1990s.⁴ The images accompanying those debates are well known: fishing boats packed with migrants crossing the Mediterranean Sea from Tunisia to Lampedusa or Morocco to Gibraltar; metre-high barbed-wire fences around the Spanish enclaves Ceuta and Melilla in Northern Morocco; pick-up trucks and lorries crossing the desert to reach North Africa’s shores.

This dominant portrayal is, however, incomplete. First, it overlooks the historical depth and complexity of migration within, from, and to North Africa that has been ongoing for centuries in the context of trans-Saharan trade, slavery, and pilgrimage, as well as European colonization. Second, it ignores the diverse composition of immigration to Morocco and Tunisia, with refugees, labour migrants, entrepreneurs, and students coming from Europe, sub-Saharan Africa, and the Middle East alike. Third, and perhaps most importantly, policy discussions that cast North African countries as passive executors of European policy proposals disregard that Moroccan and Tunisian immigration policies are importantly shaped by their own domestic and foreign policy interests, as well as by dynamics within the state apparatus and between state and civil society actors. This leads to a truncated understanding of Maghreb immigration policies.

Over the past decades, Morocco and Tunisia have actively developed migration policies, first on emigration and more recently on immigration. With over 10% of their populations living abroad, Moroccan and Tunisian authorities have concentrated their policy efforts throughout the 20th century on encouraging and channelling emigration, as well as controlling and courting their diasporas (Brand 2002; de Haas 2007a; Fargues 2004; Natter 2014a). Since the 2000s, this exclusive focus on emigration has waned, and immigration has gained increasing political salience. This is partly due to the European framing of North African countries as ‘transit countries’, a narrative embraced by Moroccan and Tunisian authorities because it redirected attention from the continued emigration of their nationals and provided them with more leverage in negotiations with the European Union (EU) (de Haas 2007c). Currently, a second

4 See Düvell (2012) for a critical discussion of the ‘transit migration’ concept.

reframing process is taking place, in which Morocco and Tunisia are increasingly portrayed by Europe (and also start to portray themselves) as immigration countries.

Policy developments reflect these framings: In 2003 and 2004, respectively, Morocco and Tunisia abandoned their previous ad hoc or 'laissez-faire' immigration policies, and enacted laws that criminalized irregular immigration and emigration (Belguendouz 2003; Boubakri 2009; Lahlou 2011). A decade later, in the autumn of 2013, Morocco announced a liberal immigration reform that entailed migrant integration measures and a regularization campaign – a first in the region (CNDH 2015). In Tunisia, immigration has remained a socio-political taboo until 2011. Although the 2011 revolution and ensuing democratization have spurred discussions on immigration and diversity, they have not led to substantial immigration reform until the time of writing, as economic and security priorities have stifled civil society and state involvement on immigration over the years. In parallel, transnational civil society networks on immigration have emerged in Morocco since the late 1990s and in Tunisia since 2011. Today, the increasingly long-term settlement of foreigners in Morocco and Tunisia confronts societies with issues of religious and cultural diversity that remind of those debated in Europe for decades.

Looking into the future, there are signs that demand for foreign workers in Morocco and Tunisia may increase: the demographic transition that both countries went through in the 1990s indicates that because of falling birth rates, the number of young, native workers arriving on the labour market will decrease in the coming years (Fargues 2004). Despite high unemployment levels, there are labour shortages in specific economic sectors such as agriculture, construction, and telecommunications, and these will grow with further economic development. Alongside political volatility and protracted crises in the region, these factors will likely consolidate Morocco's and Tunisia's position as destinations for African, Middle Eastern, and European migrants.⁵

2.2 AN EMPIRICAL PUZZLE⁶

Morocco and Tunisia provide a unique opportunity to advance theories of immigration policymaking across political regimes because of their contrasting developments in terms of immigration patterns, immigration policies and domestic politics. First of all, these two countries have reacted very differently to migratory realities over the past decade: Morocco has put immigration on the political agenda and enacted a liberal reform despite only gradual immigration growth. Although immigration to Morocco has increased and diversified since the 1990s, absolute numbers remain small-scale: Census data shows that immigration grew from 50,200 to 86,200 between 2004 and

5 The 2019 Afrobarometer for instance shows that more than one out of three potential African migrants aspire to migrate within their region of origin or within the African continent. Against widespread assumptions, the surveys covering 34 African countries also show that only around one in three respondents considers migrating at all (Appiah-Nyamekye Sanny, Logan and Gyimah-Boadi 2019).

6 This section draws heavily on the introduction to my case studies published in Natter (2018b).

2014, representing respectively 0.17% and 0.25% of the Moroccan population (HCP 2009; HCP 2015). While the census certainly underestimates Morocco's total migrant population because it does not account for irregular migrants, even higher estimates of around 250,000 migrants do not challenge the overall conclusion that the magnitude of immigration remains limited in Morocco.

In contrast, Tunisia's restrictive immigration policies inherited from the authoritarian regime have remained unchanged regardless of a significant increase in immigration. Although official census data suggests that immigration only increased from 35,200 to 53,500 between 2004 and 2014, i.e., from 0.35% to 0.49% of the population (INS 2015), this does not capture the unprecedented immigration from Libya since 2011. With estimates of the number of Libyan immigrants hovering around half a million (roughly 5% of the Tunisian population), this exemplifies Tunisia's (at least temporary) transformation into a destination country.

Second, the fact that immigration has gained political salience in Morocco despite its relatively low magnitude, while in Tunisia, immigration has remained off the political agenda despite its substantial growth since 2011, is even more striking given Morocco's and Tunisia's diverging political developments (Hinnebusch 2015; Mohsen-Finan 2013; Willis 2012; see also Figure A 12): In Morocco, the monarchy has consolidated its power since the early 1990s through tacit liberalizations of the public sphere. This 'controlled liberalization' has allowed civil society organizations (CSOs) to gain political clout, but it has also facilitated the partial co-optation of political opponents to assure regime stability. This explains why popular protests in 2011 did not endanger the regime, but were absorbed by a constitutional reform.

In contrast, the decade-long systematic repression of political opponents and surveillance of the population in Tunisia fueled the revolution and political transition in 2011. The radical break in Tunisia's political system and the passing from an authoritarian one-party regime to the establishment of democracy have reshuffled domestic political processes over the past years. Thus, while revolution and democratization have turned civil society and political parties into meaningful domestic actors in Tunisia, Moroccan authoritarianism has been strengthened since 2011.

These political and immigration policy developments present an empirical puzzle: In Morocco, gradual immigration growth has become intensely politicized and a liberal immigration policy reform was launched in 2013 within a context of autocratic regime consolidation; in Tunisia, the substantial growth in immigration after 2011 has remained unpoliticized, and the restrictive immigration policies of the Ben Ali era have persisted through the democratic transition. These developments go against baseline expectations that democratization would create a window of opportunity to liberalize immigration policy and that autocracies would necessarily curtail migrants' rights. More generally, these observations suggest a disconnect between (1) the magnitude of immigration on the ground, (2) the politicization and policymak-

ing around immigration, and (3) the transformations of the polity within which these migration and policy dynamics take place. Table 1 summarizes this empirical puzzle that provides the starting point for my empirical investigation.

TABLE 1: An empirical puzzle in Moroccan and Tunisian immigration regimes

	Morocco	Tunisia
Magnitude of immigration	Low [gradual growth]	High [substantial growth]
Politicization of immigration	High [policy change]	Low [policy continuity]
Transformation of the polity	Low [regime stability]	High [regime change]

SOURCE: Adapted from Natter (2018b)

Given that the two most obvious immigration policy drivers – a change of political actors or a shift in immigration patterns – seem unable to account for the liberal reform in Morocco and the restrictive policy continuity in Tunisia, what explains observed immigration policymaking dynamics? Scholars have examined this question through policy analyses (Belguendouz 2003; Boubakri 2013; Natter 2015b; Perrin 2009), through the lens of EU migration and development cooperation (Cassarino 2014; Gazzotti 2018; Roman and Pastore 2018; Wunderlich 2010), or with a focus on civil society activism (Alioua 2009; Bartels 2015; Boubakri and Mazzella 2005; Bustos et al. 2011; Üstübici 2015b). While some have started looking at domestic policymaking dynamics, particularly in the Moroccan context (Alioua, Ferrié and Reifeld 2018; Bensaâd 2015; Natter 2014b; Norman 2016a), a comprehensive analysis of Moroccan and Tunisian immigration policymaking and their imbrication with political regimes dynamics is missing. This is the focus of this thesis.

3 WHAT IS THE ARGUMENT?

This thesis investigates the following question: *How does the polity shape the politics of immigration policy?*⁷ The paired comparison of Morocco and Tunisia showed how Morocco’s liberal immigration reform was part and parcel of the monarchy’s authoritarian consolidation strategy, while in Tunisia, the imperative to safeguard democratization has fostered restrictive policy continuity. Based on this empirical analysis, the thesis scrutinizes the applicability of existing immigration policy theories beyond ‘Western liberal democracies’ and suggests avenues for theoretical innovation. In

7 For definitions of the terms polity, politics and (immigration) policy, see Chapter 2, Section 2.

particular, it specifies the boundaries of a 'regime effect' and teases out similarities in immigration policymaking across the 'Western/non-Western' and 'democratic/autocratic' divides.

3.1 EMPIRICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The investigation of immigration policymaking in the context of Morocco's autocratic consolidation and Tunisia's democratic regime change draws on 144 semi-structured interviews with state representatives, civil society activists and international observers conducted in 2016-2017. First, in order to analyse the drivers and dynamics of immigration policymaking in Morocco and Tunisia over the 20th and early 21st centuries, the interviews aimed at getting a clear picture of (1) the actors involved in immigration policymaking within the state and civil society, as well as within the international sphere, (2) daily interactions, power dynamics, and potentially contradictory interests within and between those actors, as well as (3) the ideas that these actors mobilize to frame immigration, and how these frames have changed over time. Second, to explore how broader transformations of the polity have affected immigration policymaking required an in-depth understanding (1) of how Tunisia's democratization and popular calls for more human rights, as well as Morocco's strategies for regime legitimation and stability changed power dynamics and policy processes, (2) of how Morocco's and Tunisia's experiences of large-scale emigration fed into the immigration issue, and (3) of the ways in which Morocco's and Tunisia's shifting diplomatic priorities and deeply rooted national identity conceptions shaped approaches to immigration.

The contrasting cases of Morocco and Tunisia suggest that there is no clear-cut link between citizens' political freedoms and migrants' rights. I find that democratization does not necessarily lead to more tolerance or openness towards foreigners and that democratic politics may even, as in Tunisia, lead to more restrictionist policy demands. Indeed, immigration reform has been sidelined in Tunisia by policymakers' emphasis on a common national identity and the imperative to preserve the democratic transition. Instead of triggering change, democratization has fostered institutional stalemate and a political strategy of depoliticizing immigration that has resulted in restrictive immigration policy continuity. In contrast, the liberal immigration reform in Morocco has both emerged out of and fostered the authoritarian system in place, as it was initiated by the King and ultimately strengthened his legitimation at home and abroad. This suggests what I call an 'illiberal paradox': the fact that authoritarianism might create more leeway for liberal policy reform if it suits the broader economic and political priorities of the regime, given the relative independence of decision-makers from societal or other demands. As I show, this is particularly relevant for countries where immigration remains numerically low, or where liberal policies can be limited to specific aspects of immigration policy (such as entry) and do not spill over into a general liberalization of migrants' rights.

The Moroccan and Tunisian cases therefore demonstrate that while binary regime *categories* cannot adequately explain policy outcomes, immigration politics is crucially shaped by political regime *dynamics*, as immigration policymaking first and foremost reflects (internal and external) regime legitimation and stability goals, as well as deep-rooted conceptions of national identity. The two cases also showcase that the decision-making leverage of the executive, as well as the weight of legal and civil society actors are closely intertwined with the political regime dynamics. At the same time, the analysis of Moroccan and Tunisian immigration policymaking revealed striking similarities across both cases: In particular, the internal workings of the state apparatus, with ministries pursuing diametrically opposed goals on immigration, the heritage of specific administrative cultures, as well as the influence of foreign policy interests or international norms in national policymaking remain largely unaffected by regime dynamics. Such findings are of immediate relevance to studies that explore immigration policymaking in countries experiencing a transition from emigration to immigration country, such as Mexico, Turkey, or South Korea, as well as to research on the drivers of immigration politicization in the absence of substantial changes in migration patterns, such as in Hungary or the United States. Ultimately, they illustrate the value of investigating immigration policymaking to grasp broader dynamics of socio-political change.

The insights of this thesis have also direct implications for policy discussions on migration cooperation in the Mediterranean. Effective cooperation between European and Maghreb countries is only possible if both sides are aware of each others' interests on migration. The in-depth analysis of immigration policymaking in Morocco and Tunisia suggests that development and economic cooperation with the EU or the creation of legal emigration opportunities for their citizens remain crucial for Morocco and Tunisia. However, European policy discussions on 'migration cooperation' should pay more attention to other drivers of Maghreb immigration policies, such as the geopolitical and economic interests of Morocco in West Africa and Tunisia in Libya, or the role of civil society activism and the need to legitimize policies domestically – even in autocracies.

3.2 THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The thesis mobilizes the empirical insights gained through studying the contrasting cases of Morocco and Tunisia to rethink immigration policymaking across political regimes. The analysis shows that there are compelling reasons to question the baseline assumption that immigration policymaking dynamics are intrinsically different across political regimes. In fact, countries along the entire democracy-autocracy spectrum have to take into account economic lobbies, public opinion, and geopolitical interests in their decision-making. And the centrality of territory and population control for national sovereignty or the fact that state bureaucracies around the world

are structured around a common set of ministries suggests fundamental similarities in the nature of modern statehood (Tilly 1992). There is thus no a priori reason why immigration policymaking should intrinsically differ across binary (di)visions of the world into 'Western/non-Western' or 'democracy/autocracy'.

To advance theoretical propositions on the boundaries of a 'regime effect' and on the similarities in immigration policymaking across political regimes and political geographies, I develop a three-fold typology of immigration policy processes:

- (1) 'Generic' policy processes are at play regardless of the political regime or policy area, because they emerge out of the very essence of policymaking in modern states. This is for instance the case for the common discrepancies between policy discourses, policies-on-paper and implemented policies, or for the fragmentation of interests within the state.
- (2) 'Issue-specific' policy processes are inherently linked to what immigration does to state sovereignty and interest alignment, but are present across different regime types, such as dynamics of competition within the state bureaucracy or the international diffusion of policy ideas.
- (3) 'Regime-specific' policy processes are prone to a 'regime effect', as they are shaped by political dynamics characteristic of a country's position on the democracy-autocracy spectrum. This is particularly relevant in the case of policymaking processes emphasizing the role of legal actors or the electorate.

By specifying policy processes where political regimes matter and policy processes that cut across regime types, this thesis shows that the theoretical toolbox for analysing immigration policymaking is not as fundamentally different across political regimes as is often expected. In particular, the thesis argues for expanding the applicability of certain immigration policymaking theories such as national identity approaches, bureaucratic politics and globalization theories, while restricting the 'regime effect' to domestic politics and the role of legal actors such as national courts.

Ultimately, this thesis hopes to advance more systematic comparative theorizing on immigration policymaking in two ways: First, by establishing a two-way road between empirics and theory-building across political regimes and political geographies, the thesis contributes to "a science of similarity rather than of difference" (Moisseron 2009: 23). Given that most countries around the world are neither full-fledged autocracies nor consolidated liberal democracies, an improved theorization of the commonalities in immigration policymaking across political regimes in modern states is crucial. In particular, looking at immigration policymaking in the context of autocratic consolidation and democratic transition may provide a better understanding of dynamics underlying autocratic political tendencies and illiberal practices that are gaining ground in consolidated democracies.

Second, given that the control of individual mobility through instruments like passports, visas, and identity cards is part and parcel of the state formation process, immigration is not just one field of public policy, but of “theoretical centrality” (Portes and Walton 1981) to the study of statehood. Thus, by integrating migration studies into wider political sociology, public policy, and comparative politics research, this thesis also contributes to an ongoing effort in the social sciences that seeks to mobilize immigration as a lens through which to examine broader dynamics of political change and social transformation (Castles 2010; IMI 2006; Portes 2010; Van Hear 2010).

4 WHAT TO EXPECT: THE THESIS OUTLINE

The thesis is structured in four parts. Part I outlines the theoretical and methodological foundations of the research. *Chapter 1* introduces the thesis’ core question and empirical starting point, its main contributions and their broader societal relevance. *Chapter 2* develops the theoretical ambitions and framework for investigating the role of the polity in immigration politics. I position the thesis within the political sociology, comparative politics, and public policy literatures and map existing theories and case studies of immigration policymaking. The chapter argues that theoretical innovation on immigration policymaking is best achieved through comparative research across pre-fixed political regime categories. *Chapter 3* explains the case selection rationale, as well as the methods and methodology adopted for the paired comparison of Morocco and Tunisia. To allow a maximum of dialogue between theory and empirics, I adopt an abductive research strategy, drawing on six months of fieldwork in Morocco and Tunisia in 2016/2017, archival research and 144 semi-structured interviews with key informants. The chapter also reflects on the challenges and specificities of my fieldwork.

Parts II and III present the heart of the empirical analysis. They investigate the drivers and dynamics of immigration politicization and policymaking in the context of Morocco’s autocratic regime consolidation and Tunisia’s democratization. *Chapters 4 (Morocco) and 7 (Tunisia)* offer concise accounts of Moroccan and Tunisian state formation and national identity trajectories, as well as focused overviews of immigration and emigration patterns and policies from the early 20th century until today. The chapters hereby contextualize the subsequent analysis of immigration politics and introduce the empirical puzzle underlying the case studies, namely the disconnect between immigration patterns, their politicization, and the transformations of the polity within which these migration and policy dynamics take place.

Chapters 5 (Morocco) and 8 (Tunisia) focus on policy drivers. Taking a chronological approach, they explore how institutions, interests, and ideas at the societal, state and international level have shaped Moroccan and Tunisian immigration policy,

and how their respective weight has shifted over time. Chapter 5 on Morocco focuses on the drivers of restrictive immigration policy during the 2000s, as well as the liberal shift in 2013, showing that immigration policy is largely driven by the monarchy's legitimation and stability strategies at home and abroad. In particular, the chapter demonstrates that the 2013 reform has been crucial to sustain the monarchy at a moment of continued regional political turmoil in the context of the 'Arab Spring'. This prevalence of top-down policymaking did however not prevent civil society criticism or substantial variations at the level of policy implementation. Chapter 8 on Tunisia focuses on the drivers of immigration policy continuity throughout and after the 2011 revolution. It shows that the absence of reform has paradoxically resulted from the democratization of Tunisian politics, as conflicting domestic demands on immigration cancelled each other out and the proliferation of actors involved in Tunisian immigration policymaking has propelled institution-specific interests to the foreground. Instead of triggering change, democratization has fostered institutional stalemate and a political strategy of depoliticizing immigration, resulting in immigration policy continuity.

Based on this analysis of immigration policy drivers, *Chapters 6 (Morocco) and 9 (Tunisia)* adopt a synchronic perspective and offer a political sociology analysis of policymaking dynamics. They zoom into how the 2013 policy change in Morocco and the 2011 revolution in Tunisia reshaped dynamics among and within the actors involved in immigration politics, particularly the government and administration; international, national, and migrant civil society organizations; as well as international organizations, legal actors, and the private sector. Chapter 6 on Morocco shows that immigration policy liberalization not only emerged out of Morocco's autocratic political structures – a dynamic I call the 'illiberal paradox' – but also consolidated them. Chapter 9 on Tunisia shows that despite its limited impact on policy outcomes, democratization has affected immigration policymaking: While the role of Tunisia's parliament and the independent voice of civil society were reinforced, democratization has also rendered politics more complex and prone to internal contradictions. However, these 'regime effects' did not cancel out inter-actor dynamics known from the mainstream immigration policy literature, such as turf wars within the administration or competition within an expanding civil society. Table 2 summarizes the setup and focus of the empirical chapters.

TABLE 2: Setup of empirical chapters

	Chapters 4 and 7	Chapters 5 and 8	Chapters 6 and 9
Perspective	Diachronic (historical)	Diachronic (historical)	Synchronic (snapshot)
Set-up	Thematic	Chronological	Actor-centred
Focus	Developments of the polity, including migration trends and policies	Drivers and structural factors shaping immigration policy	Inter-actor dynamics and processes of immigration politics
Questions	What state formation histories and national identity conceptions provide the foundation for migration policies and politics? How have emigration and immigration patterns and policies evolved since the late 19 th century?	What are the institutions, interests, and ideas at the societal, state, and international level that shape immigration policy? How has their respective weight changed over time?	What dynamics among and between state, civil society and international actors dominate immigration policymaking? How did transformations of the political regime (autocratic consolidation and democratization) impact these?

Part IV teases out the theoretical implications of the thesis. *Chapter 10* compares the drivers and dynamics of Moroccan and Tunisian immigration policymaking and systematizes insights on the (dis)connect between immigration, its politicization, and state (trans)formation. It shows that the realities of immigration on the ground alone cannot adequately explain the extent of immigration politicization. Instead, ‘state thinking’ (Sayad 1999) and regime strategies to ensure political legitimation as well as territorial and institutional stability provide the foundation for immigration governance. The chapter also teases out how Morocco’s and Tunisia’s political regime dynamics shaped immigration policymaking, focusing on the role, weight, and interactions of the state apparatus, civil society, and external actors. On the one hand, it demonstrates that the decision-making leverage of the executive, as well as the weight of domestic politics and civil society actors are closely intertwined with the political regime dynamics. On the other hand, it shows that the internal workings of the state apparatus, as well as the influence of foreign policy interests or international norms in national policymaking remain largely unaffected by regime dynamics.

Chapter 11 returns to the thesis’ theoretical ambitions to tease out similarities in immigration policymaking across the ‘Western/non-Western’ and ‘democratic/autocratic’ divides, as well as to specify the boundaries of the ‘regime effect’. It confronts my empirical insights with theories of immigration policymaking and with recent empirical research on immigration policies around the globe. On this basis, it develops a three-fold typology of immigration policy processes distinguishing ‘generic’, ‘issue-specific’ and ‘regime-specific’ processes. A short, concluding *Chapter 12* sums up the main arguments of the thesis and outlines avenues for future research in migra-

tion studies, comparative politics, and political sociology. In particular, it suggests that a more general theorization of immigration politics could be advanced by more systematically investigating the drivers of positive immigration politicization, the spectrum of political practices across regime types, and the links between state formation, social transformation, and immigration. Figure 1 summarizes the set-up of the thesis.

FIGURE 1: Thesis outline

