



The Geopolitical Rivalry between Morocco & Algeria in the region, as an entry point for prospecting the future of western Sahara case

Kezzoute Mhammed *

Doctor of Public Law, Founder & Director of the Moroccan Centre for Cyber studies and Technology Security, Mohammed Premiere University, Faculty of Legal, Economic & Social Sciences, Oujda, Morocco.

Open Access Research Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies, 2024, 08(02), 008–020

Publication history: Received on 09 September 2024; revised on 23 October 2024; accepted on 25 October 2024

Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.53022/oarjms.2024.8.2.0059>

Abstract

Since the emergence of the Sahara issue, many changes and developments have characterized Morocco's political behavior and defined its diplomatic conduct. Western Sahara has become a major and priority concern of the country's supreme authority and a national project in which all categories of key and secondary actors have been involved. But despite the importance and symbolism that characterize this dossier in Moroccan conscience, the interest and passion of the national academic elites for the question of the Sahara in particular is limited and has few interests. Therefore, our desire to participate in this academic work in an attempt to approach the question of the Sahara according to a new interactive analytical paradigm, is based mainly on the combination of multiple describing aspects and deducting processes. We see that this process has the ability to provide a new reading that can help to examine the positioning of the issue and to predict the future of possible developments and future scenarios and even the possibility of directly influencing the course of current events.

Keywords: Geopolitics; Strategy; Diplomacy; Armament Race; Moroccan Sahara; American Recognition; Morocco; Algeria; Spain

1. Introduction

The geopolitical competitions between Morocco and Algeria have long influenced the dynamics of peaceful relations between these two countries, as well as periods of conflict, serving as a key point for analyzing the power game between these rival nations in the region and also about the Sahara question. As a region rich in economic potential and also a strategic importance, Western Sahara has seen many actors competing for its control not only our principal competitor countries, each motivated by their own objectives, interests, and ambitions. The withdrawal of Spain as a historical colonizer of Western Sahara has evolved the conflict instead of ending it, attracting both former colonial powers and modern states all seeking to extend their influence, take from the Sahara, and gain a place on the African continent.

In this article, we want to conduct a thorough analysis and explain the process of how Western Sahara has become a platform for geopolitical competition, primarily driven by the historical, ideological, and strategic characteristics of Morocco and Algeria on one hand, and the heightened pressures from various actors, supporters, and opponents on the other hand. We aim to shed light on the broader implications for regional and global diplomacy and how they influence the process of this cause at the local level. We know that Morocco views the issue of Western Sahara as an existential question, while the claims of those opposing the incorporation of Sahara into Moroccan territory are part of a broader strategy of interests and objectives. We also want to monitor and analyze the behaviors of external powers such as the United States, China, and Russia, including exploring the dimensions of American recognition of Morocco's sovereignty over Western Sahara.

* Corresponding author: Kezzoute Mhammed. m.kezzute@ump.ac.ma

Thanks to a multidisciplinary approach combining geopolitical analysis, economic considerations, and security studies, the article explores the future trajectories of the conflict. By examining both, traditional and contemporary factors at this game, we aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of the Western Sahara case, by introducing new analysis factors, and to anticipate potential developments and outcomes that could shape the future of our region or comply more with this case.

We acknowledge that to achieve our goal, a multidisciplinary approach combining geopolitical analysis, economic issues, security requirements, etc., is recommended and necessary. Our article will explore the future dimensions of the conflict and examine how multiple external factors influence the overall understanding of the Western Sahara issue, guiding us to clearly anticipate potential outcomes that may either lead to solutions or, conversely, complicate the situation.

2. Overview of the fundamental principles of competition

From a geopolitical point of view, each specific geospatial space is an area of competition between actors of a different nature, taking into account new strategic resources, privileges or areas considered conducive to changing the map of power, politics and diplomacy. (Patrick, 1976). In addition, the nature of competing objectives, the interests of the actors, regional and global transformations that also combine to characterize, the geopolitical course of such a discussed region (Baylis et al, 2017). We advocate that these interacting factors define, the dimensions, forms and nature of the space competition under study, and help us to delineate the challenges facing the progress of the Sahara cause.

Consequently, the results of previous studies on the Sahara have been partly the subject of such critical anatomy and have been nurtured academic diversity and wealth and political and legal plea in the arenas of decision-making debate such as the United Nations, the Arab League and the Organization of the African Union for years. However, we believe that by adopting such a forward-looking approach in conjunction with these follow-up mechanisms accumulated around the first issue of Morocco that it will help us, to understand the issue, to identify more precisely its elements in competition, and been informed of the impacts that surround it and finally prevent its overall effects. However, before that, we will begin the debate on the geopolitics of Western Sahara by describing its geographical and spatial location, which we are eager to discuss in this analysis and also identify its characteristics in relation to its interactive environment that we believe determine the situation of tomorrow and the future of the cause.

Western Sahara was located between Morocco and Mauritania to the south and Algeria to the east and the Atlantic to the west. The region of Western Sahara was the centre of the old European colonial ambitions even before it became a colony of the Spanish authorities at the end of the 20th century, from which it withdrew in 1975 (Clarke & Brooks, 2017). It should be noted, however, that the region of Western Sahara during and after the colonial period experienced a phase of local resistance, and another of the decades of armed conflict that followed, in early 1991, a ceasefire agreement (Ibid).

In terms of clarification of why ambitions and interests have converged around Western Sahara, we believe that this is due to the economic potential of the region in general and its strategic importance in terms of communication and the important security and strategic role that the region plays between the north and south of the African continent. In these terms, the Sahara has become an area of historic rivalry between Morocco and the historical colonial and hegemonic powers, on the one hand, and, after independence, with the States of the region on the other (Hodges, 1983). This has created many political volatilities and consequences that have had a significant impact on the region as a whole and on all sides in relation to the course of the region's history (Correale & Gimeno, 2015). The fact that the actors in this competitive process sought to control the resources of Western Sahara and of the entire region as a whole. This confirms the presence of an hegemonic tendency to acquire individually the strategic advantages of this whole geographical part, which has opened the door to several other elements underpinning the logic of the permanent antagonism of the parties (Allan & Ojeda, 2022).

First with enormous resources and then as a gateway to the Sahara and the African Atlantic coast, these factors hastened the development of competition in many directions and also contributed to the emergence of new interests that had and will have significant repercussions on the future of the region as a whole (Zunes, 2016). Conversely, in our view, more than geo-economic factors, a security element plays a very important role in the overthrow of this hegemonic process of actors in the Sahara region. This means that the disputed area cannot be isolated from its geographical and political environment as an integral part of Western Africa and the Grand Sahel region. Taking advantage of this interconnectivity between the Sahara and its environment, this has encouraged the rise of an active movement of illegal and prohibited acts at the international level. The region has also provided a platform for launching numerous terrorist attacks and a fertile space for the emergence of other radical groups and has contributed to the growth and

concentration of cross-border criminal groups (Alcaro & Pirozzi, 2014). These new parties have become over time, taking advantage of the professionalism of their activities, one of the key influences in the theatre of events as well as its main parties alongside the main actors.

3. Definition of components and participants in competition

It is not possible to talk about the competitive race in the Sahara, without conjuring its constituent elements and its participating members, and without understanding the changes that have permeated this context along its line of interactions and made it a lasting long-term and endless dispute. The conflict around the Sahara is characterized by several factors, the essential between the U.S. and the transformation in its treatment (Finan, 2008). In the beginning, the cause was a duel between Morocco and Spain directly, before it will turn into a controversy whose development and interactions of the conflict have pushed new actors of a different nature to bubble the entire region each for its own interests (Munene, 2010).

What is interesting is how much the affair has changed since its inception and how it was initially limited to traditional parties whose allies and enemies are now multiplying. In the interim phase, where new parties joined, their interventions oscillated between mediation and diplomatic support, arms and direct support on the terrain. The evidence is multiple and all determine how the actors involved in the cause of the Sahara contributed to the regulation or escalation of tensions with Morocco.

Both the first and secondary phases were marked by the fact that the parties and the main actors in the case did not leave the territorial ocean of the Sahara and did not suffer from major imbalances (Correale & Gimeno, 2015). Then we inaugurated a new phase, which it could be said that the new transformation of the issue after the ceasefire process was the emergence of new allies from both sides, whose support goes beyond the limits of diplomatic support and traditional media support (Gillespie, 2011).

Thus, the preliminary stages of the conflict we reined within the usual framework of management and did not go beyond the limits of its geographical regional framework with some specific and limited international interventions and more necessary by the balances of the Cold War. Nevertheless, at the current stage, the growing presence of Iran and Israel in the region was one of the main indicators of the region entering a new phase of interaction and the question of the Sahara entering an additional stage of equilibrium or imbalance (Cuevas, 2022).

While the former actors in the conflict find many political, diplomatic, geographical or even historical justifications to give legitimacy to its interventionism. The new alliances legitimize in their turns their causes of presence on the ground, their backgrounds and their objectives, and try to justify their presence in a conflict far enough from their territories (Correale & Gimeno, 2015). However, before starting to list the basic data to illustrate the context of new developments in the region by new forces in the face of this conflict, it is necessary first to identify the main elements and causes that led to this change in the course of events and how they contributed to the changes envisaged for the region.

4. Factors contributing to the phenomenon of changing neighbor relations

It can be said that the fundamental difference between the political systems of the two states is one of the key factors that has fuelled the geopolitical rivalry between Morocco and Algeria since independence, although the foundations of competition around the Sahara conflict go far beyond that (Heggoy, 1971). However, the political differences between the two regimes can be regarded as one of the most recent reasons for the creation of many inequalities that cannot in any case be neglected. It is one of the things that defined the perception of the other that characterized the form of foreign and domestic policy that they should pursue by defending objectives and interests at the regional and international levels and imposing their presence in the region. (Zunes, 2016). The two main actors in the conflict, during the post-independence period, acted according to the ideological and moral logic each defended. But, the current tensions around the cause of the Sahara in recent years, cannot be limited to the political and ideological trends of the past or the practices of the current Algerian Government, but they extend far further than we believe, and vice versa (Ibid).

Since Morocco considers the question of the Sahara, as an existential issue for it, firstly through historical and geographical evidence, one of the objectives of our research is to clarify the other real geopolitical dimensions of Morocco and especially Algeria, its strategic interest and its geopolitical vision in the search for the implantation of a State in Western Sahara (see more; Report to the President by the National Security Council, 1949), and also to anticipate the impacts of its practices on the diplomatic and peace process in the region.

5. Initial perspective on historical trajectory and political potential

Following the line of political developments between the two countries since independence, it is clear that conflict and competition are the constant of relations between these two countries, not harmony and openness. The stations that include the chronicle are very little compared to the uninterrupted climbing line (Bakrim, 2017). Historically, while diplomatic and military alliances during the Cold War period were indirectly a mirror of the reality of divergent relations between the countries of the world, Morocco and Algeria clearly reflected this image (Rachidi, 2022).

Indeed, Algeria's proximity to the socialist camp and its dependence on Russian defense industries to this day somehow illustrate the particular perception of the Algerian desire for the region and its desire to go beyond an international diplomatic balance in the region with Morocco. The latter, which, from the outset, was also the opposite approach based on the approach of the West, probably illustrated its vision and perspective to this cause (Europe and the United States) (Adams, 2019).

In the same image and after the active participation of the Moroccan army in the Second World War with the Allies, in addition to its alignment during the Cold War (Garcia, Molina, & Veguilla, 2017). Morocco has presented itself as a key security player and partner of US policies in the fight against the communist tidal and parias regimes in North Africa and the rest of the continent. Later, a real pillar of the US global strategy that was recovering from the loss of Vietnam, the oil shock and the losses of Iran (Ibid).

It is therefore easy to conclude the reasons for the American choice of Morocco and, in turn, to interpret the Western and Atlantic historical direction of a certain part of the Moroccan foreign policy. And, it is possible to say that among the reasons that contributed to the right choice of Morocco according to this analysis, is the principle of equalizing the sleeve with Algeria thanks to Moroccan strategic position on the Strait of Gibraltar and the Atlantic Coast during the Cold War (Ibid). But what distinguishes the period and makes it difficult for the external observation plan to follow the trajectories and anticipate the dimensions of the relationship between the two countries is the complexity of the foundations and issues on which the new relations and alliances between both countries were built in the post-Cold War period, in terms of security and strategy (Schwartz, 2015). Through this research, we aim to clarify the new foundations, interrelationships and balances underlying the current foreign policy trends of the countries and parties to the issue under consideration, in order to anticipate the new trajectories of the question of the Sahara.

6. Conventional and irregular competitive strategies

Algeria has not limited its efforts to traditional diplomatic alliances and forms of peaceful competition known to demonstrate the endless support of the Saharan cause. However, the Algerian authorities have also consistently increased the arms and army budget by developing the military arsenal in the run-up to the development of the conflict (See World Bank Group, Algerian military expenditure, 2020).

In this regard, we assume that Algeria has also increased its armaments not only to strengthen its defence capabilities, but also to withstand its growing influence in the Arab world, on the African continent and in the region in particular as a regional power. To further counteract its processes, Algeria has been involved in strengthening its influence and soft power capabilities to conceal their growing military dynamism. Through this political approach, Algeria has been able to attract and stimulate colonial resistance movements in Africa and around the world and has exploited part of its diplomatic effort to promote the idea of carrying the flame of liberation from colonialism and its resistance leadership in the Third World (Putard, 1965).

Through the exploitation of this position and its diplomatic influence and the legacy of its liberalization revolution among the nations and groups of the Third World, Algeria has advocated the independence of many colonized countries, offering its territory for the mobilization of these liberation groups, establishing training camps and providing the necessary funding (Zunes, 2016). Thanks to the success of its policy of strengthening continental and global colonial movements, Algeria has been able to conceal its true regional strategic intentions towards its neighbors and Morocco in particular, as well as a subsequent pretext to support any armed tendency in the region, whatever its intentions (Zunes & Mundy, 2010).

Since 1976, Rocherieux (2011), conclude that Algeria has hosted and trained armed organizations and provided training, weapons, logistical support and intelligence to many national and African liberation movements in particular. Although Algeria has already achieved certain objectives and benefited from the strength of its diplomatic influence and soft power within the continent by trying to export its model of revolution and commercialize its image of sponsorship

of anti-colonialism movements, especially since its gains in its territorial environment have been inferior with the investments deployed. The failure of Algeria to cope with the rise of political crises and internal blockades is no longer merely linked to the decline of influence policies and resistance diplomacy. Furthermore, other factors contributed to this decline, such as the existence of multiple other systems competing with the Algerian perception in the region. Morocco's attempt to balance the geographical equation and demonstrate power capabilities through these hegemonic planes crowned by the annexation of the Sahara (Bakrim, 2017).

Morocco has also participated in the diversification of the axes of its alliances and the consolidation of the political and economic characteristics of the State and the strengthening of the internal social front. These local interactions hastened Algeria's policy of supporting independence and liberation in the case of Polisario, through the total control of this liberation front by the Algerian army, and made it a legitimate and functional means of keeping Morocco under control (Jakob, 2017).

As a result, the competition intensified between the neighbors, also increased the desire to make the Moroccan-Algeria competition a special feature by emerging through this competition, the introduction of military actions directly into the conflict during this competitive process. We assume, that the purpose of these military activities, which took various forms and activities, was clearly defined in the foreign policy agendas of the Algerian State, in order to exhaust the capabilities of the Moroccan forces and to maintain them in a permanent state (See United Nations Security Council, Final Report of the Panel of Experts on Yemen, 2018). And by providing direct support on the ground to Polizario and providing its troops with tanks and sometimes-sophisticated equipment, Algeria has succeeded to impose a long-term guerrilla war, whose main objective was to drain Morocco's economic resources, which were weak compared to Algeria's oil and gas revenues (Pena, 2022).

On the other hand, Morocco has endeavored to curb the expansion of Algeria, thanks to its prior knowledge of Algerian visions in the region and its main objectives. According to Moroccan allegations, Algeria want not only obtaining an oceanic exit to the Americas to export energy and mineral resources of the Eastern Sahara, but also she want to put Morocco in the corner, and cutting off its entire African links, and decreasing its importance as a real influencer in the region (Jakob, 2012). For this, Morocco has begun to move forward in supporting its western direction and strengthening its links with the Western Camp States, headed by the United States of America, Morocco want by this process to reinforce his diplomatic relations beyond normal trade or political relations to qualitative strategic cooperation (Mundy, 2006).

He then invested his thought of the urgent desire of the United States of America to obtain an appropriate location like France and Spain in the region. Due to its global concern to combat ideas related to the proliferation of anti-American politics in the area and which, according to Morocco, frame the separatist movement in the Sahara (See also Mundy; Garcia et al., 2017).

This has made it easier for Morocco to some of its few objectives, being the closest strategic partner of the United States of America, and the basis for reviving its long-term foreign policy in the region. From this analysis, we conclude that the acute competitive race has not always taken the form of diplomacy or indirect means of managing outstanding problems between the parties, nor has it tended to be balanced through policies of proximity between external actors and influencers of international politics. However, on some occasions it has not only intensified direct and border escalations, but in some stations it has even triggered direct military clashes (El Ouardighi, 2017).

7. Exploring the forms and dimensions of competition

Based on the analysis we have introduced in advance, Dworkin (2022) confirm that it is clear that Morocco has not taken the place of a spectator in the competitive context around the Saharan territory. So this is why, the orderly model of Algerian-Moroccan relations has taken on many other curves and dimensions, and the subsequent political developments resulting from successive diplomatic and political crises. These accumulations have many negative effects on the history of relations between the two countries, where convergence has not gone beyond a few stations and diplomatic approaches that have had no significant impact either on the conduct of things in a positive way or on the resolution of outstanding problems.

On the other hand, the negative impact of these problems has continued and expanded further by guiding the performance of the two countries in global organizations that have become platforms of propaganda for the two states' external policies. It has also had a negative impact on the work of the common local institutions, which aimed to ensure regional integration between all States in the region and not just between Morocco and Algeria (Zoubir, 2018).

The de facto termination of the Maghreb Organization Union, which, despite its ongoing management, is an aspect of the crisis and is one of the many negative repercussions of regional geopolitical rivalries between Morocco and Algeria. The accumulation of problems is accelerated by the context of the political dissolution of this Organization and its dispersal between the Algerian and Moroccan accounts of which he has added nothing in this context of Morocco-Algeria competition around the Sahara (Bendahou, 2022).

7.1. Growing diplomatic problems

It is very clear that the lack of a solution to the outstanding issues between the two countries has not only poisoned the diplomatic relations between these two countries. Nevertheless, it has gone further, because the impact has remained evident in the long term, having become a conflict within the relevant international organizations and courts and also as most estimates of the paralysis of the Maghreb say, despite the urgent need of this organization (Zunes & Munday, 2010).

In the early 1980s and after some domestic problems began to escalate in the countries of the region such as external debt, uncontrolled population rates and accumulated unemployment, etc. The countries of the region have sought to overcome stagnation and political impasse in the interest of economic growth. Therefore, Algeria appealed to the five member states of the Union of the Maghreb in an attempt to restore relations between them and Morocco, and in an effort to return to the situation, which was broken in 1976 following the recognition by Algiers of the Sahrawi Republic (Biad, 2013). However, with Algeria's commitment not to involve the Sahara issue in the negotiations to create the Union of the Arab Maghreb, the creation of this organization was announced directly in February 1989. This organization is committed to removing all barriers to trade, tourism and the movement of people, families and workers, while developing industrial, rail, trade and infrastructure partnerships (Ibid). However, despite the extent of the partnerships and the benefits that were expected to be obtained, problems resumed and led to the closure of land borders from 1994 to the present day (Rachidi, 2022).

Morocco and Algeria failed to manage the conflict over the Sahara within the Organization of the Arab Maghreb. Although the debate on the Sahara was postponed at the beginning of the establishment of the Union, the debate has once again developed in negative directions. After the failure of Arab and international mediators outside the Maghreb Union to put an end to the conflict and bring about real convergence between its parties (Ibid), especially despite the sporadic scandal between Polisario and the Royal Moroccan Army on certain points. And with the exchange of accusations and responsibilities as to who is behind these disputes and indirect clashes, despite the efforts to stabilize, the situation is ruined again and the parties have not lived to concrete answers (Zunes & Mundy, 2013).

It also invokes other influences, such as the escalation of political problems within Algeria, which changed the administration of the Sahrawi cause within the Algerian government. Moreover, we can add, the interventions of Libya in this case and how the Libyan political regime to continuously express its support to the front Polisario (The Annual Review of World Affairs, Libya, Chad and the Western Sahara, The Strategic Survey, 2009). We can also support the attempt by some other forces geographically distant from the region to intervene indirectly in the processes of managing and administering the Sahrawi cause, as required by the Cold War (Ibid). While referring to all these factors, we find that they all contributed, in terms of the study, to the confirmation that the interactive framework of the regional and international geopolitics of the question of the Sahara is the cornerstone for understanding this question and not just its legal or historical aspects.

The natural result of moving away from the traditional framework of analysis and study, and fostering the interactive framework (systemic approach), contributing to the possibility not only to descriptive frameworks, but also to strengthen the methodical capacities to make insights on the changes that will affect the diplomatic format of Morocco in the future. Because the methodology that we have adopted to understand the new interactions generated by the accession or inclusion of new parties to the conflict and their continued pursuit of their interests in the region and also their objectives, helps to predict any new direction in the field of competition between the parties to a conflict. As the question of the Sahara becomes a new center of global diplomatic polarization, much of Morocco's relations with its neighbors, its environment and even its international relations will be based on this polarization (Finan, 2008). Furthermore, the Saharan cause has become a negative financial burden for its actors and a major cause of developmental delays in the region, as well as a catalyst for sustained increases in arms and defense budgets for all parties to the conflict. (Martin, 2022).

7.2. Escalating security rivalry

It can be considered, that the study of geopolitical considerations of critical and existential importance for the main parties to the conflict, has become not only a security burden for the region as a whole in terms of the possibility of

exploitation of its functionality in the context of the evolution of political and military events in the region. However, it is also, in our analysis, a means and a tool of exploitation and manipulation by the great powers of the Sahel-Saharan region and the new forces interested in the region (Trotignon & Pellerin, 2010). The perception by Morocco of the Sahara issue as existential, contrary to Algeria's insistence on undermining the situation and advancing at all costs in its efforts to its goals in the Western Sahara and Sahel, has contributed to attracting the region to political, military and private security applications. As well as to forming diplomatic alliances based on pragmatic balances and not on the geographical interests of the region.

For Morocco, however, the question of the Sahara has become a subject of diplomatic polarization and a new perspective on Moroccan international relations, which means that it is essentially a very sensitive strategic issue and not a cause for political and diplomatic blackmail (Dworkin, 2022). The cause has always occupies a special place in the political spheres of the Moroccan Government, and it is not only important in the pillars of the geopolitical vision in terms of resources or the strategic expansion of Morocco in its deep African only. Also as, integral part of the Greater Sahara and the Sahel region, and as an extension and ground for all the problems of security and crime and all other aspects of destabilization that they may endure (Çonkar, 2020).

We note in this regard that the Sahel-Saharan region, for which Western Sahara is a geographical extension and an integral part, has become, with all its wealth and resources, a vast area serving criminal groups and a home for international and national terrorist organizations. (See also Martinez & Alenou; Garcia et al., 2017). This has threatened the peace and security of the region as a whole and has not directly influenced the development of the main cause of Morocco. There are a few examples which clearly demonstrate the great influence that these radical groups have exerted on the whole of the Sahelo-Saharan region, and how they have influenced the internal and external policy of the countries of the region through their activities for a variety of reasons (Ibid).

The most famous are the “Technturin” Alger 2009 event, and numerous parallel attacks targeting gas production facilities in southern Algeria. The separatism crisis in Mali in 2012, as well as the bloody events in Niger and Nigeria (Trotignon & Pellerin, 2010). In general, all of its activities have benefited from the geographical potential offered by the Sahara in particular, which helps them to conceal their movements and operations, which are in the totality criminal and terrorist acts. In the absence of the necessary control over this vast territory, a number of States in the region would also make it a starting point for attacking the Moroccan and international interests of Western Sahara and the area as a whole by using these groups as means and tools to certain objectives.

This provision is attributable to the growing popularity of these organizations in the region and the potential convergence among local residents and their increased capacity to absorb and adopt radical organizations. Which could turn the region as a whole into an incubator and encouraging environment for the birth of new organizations whose loyalty and membership may vary depending on field data and policy changes (Zoubir, 2022). This conclusion is based not only on the events that we have listed, but also on the analysis of the attitudes and policies of certain countries towards the Sahara region as a whole, especially the world powers. On the one hand, the United States of America adopted a special presidential policy -George W. Bush- towards the Sahara through its global counter-terrorism policy and with a specific trend for the Moroccan region and the Sahel as a whole (Ibid).

The European Union, especially France and then Russia, have pursued special policies to combat groups that are developing in the region whose interests are threatened (Surkhi, 2022). At the local level, Algeria, Mali and Libya announced a regional coordination program to address the escalation of threats in the region and to coordinate their efforts to reduce their adverse effects (For more See Report 267; Narcotraffic, violence et politique au Nord du Mali, International Crisis Group. 2018). In addition, the establishment in Libya in 2009, of the United Nations Office to Combat Drug Trafficking, Organized Crime and International Narcotic Drugs (Ibid) constitute an essential recognition of the region's transformation, into an arboretum for the prosperity and mobility of radical groups and a space for the growth of new threats to international and regional security.

Finally, to these circumstances and this rise in irregular threats, the precarious situation that has become a feature of the region. And as a result of the collapse of Libya and the inability of the Sahelian States to control the situation, these organizations and groups can become functional parties to a larger geopolitical game, and exploit their capabilities and possibilities to strike international or local interests in the region in general (Baghzouz, 2013).

7.3. The future of the case

It is clear that competition will have many developments and repercussions on the future of the cause and the region. Because, for example, the continuation of the armament race and the disturbance between the parties to the conflict,

and the inability of those to end this cause, more than the fading of all means and methods of mediation, all contribute to impose on competitors a logic of confrontations to lie reconciliations. Instead of invoking convergence to find solutions, the positioning of traditional actors, then bringing new allies into the region, new influencers and many conflict actors who, over time, have become more than indirect but essential supporters in the direction of events (Ahrens & Kalkschmied, 2021). That is why we see that Iran and Israel have become influential actors despite their geographical distance from the region and the conflict as a whole, either through arms agreements or through intelligence and diplomatic cooperation.

Iran's presence in the region is not the result of recent years, but extends until the early 1980s, when Iran was part of the western project of the region before the Shah was displaced. In this context, Iran is currently seeking to benefit from natural wealth and resources and to conclude agreements with African countries that embrace this wealth. However, Iran's changing internal situation has led it to adopt a new course of action in its African policies, where it has not only a cultural and religious presence, but has also expanded its interest in the presence of field intelligence in the Sahel-Saharan region (Mari, N. 2017).

The region was not limited to the presence of Iran as the only facet brought into the region in order to align and contribute to strengthening the influence on the ground against Morocco in the ways available in the Sahara issue. Nevertheless, there are also many other forces in the region, such as the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, Egypt, etc. However, their contributions is less solid and compared to that of Iran and Israel (For more See Saudi Arabia and Iran Compete in the Sahel, 2018). The latter, which also clearly has a clear vision and strategy for entering the continent, not only in terms of exploitation and investment in the resources and wealth of African nations. Yet this intrusion includes political, diplomatic, military and intelligence cooperation (Nouho, 2018). We can therefore see how important our region has become for many powers that want to have a place in investment quotas, and to take advantage of the major international development programs dedicated to Africa in general.

Not to mention the American presence, which also takes a lot of demonstrations and forms of economic and commercial cooperation to military maneuvers. The latter, which has formed one of the great foundations - military and strategic cooperation - of what Americans today see as the great geopolitical importance of Morocco in the US strategy of repositioning on the African continent (Nidiay, 2022). On the other hand, signs of Russian and Chinese interest in the region continue to increase, as evidenced by the adaptation of China's economic and trade cooperation with the continent in general and with North Africa in particular as an important partner of the Chinese state (Ahrens & Kalkschmied, 2021). While the interests of the Russian side appear to be somewhat modest in economic and commercial terms, and different in terms of how to act on the continent, its (indirect) interventions in the fields of conflict are visible in Mali, Libya and Niger (Birgersson et al., 1996).

The escalation of special concerns of the great powers of the African continent in general and of North Africa in particular would make them an open space for competition at all levels between the traditional powers in the region and the emerging Powers in order to secure their status and consolidate their vital interests. Economy, trade, diplomacy, military, etc., which in its evolution will inevitably turn traditional forms of competition into real rivalries and geopolitical and strategic conflicts (Ahrens & Kalkschmied, 2021).

This can be seen as another stimulus for political influence in the process of the case and a determinant of its future transformations. The extent of the impact will not be limited to the interactions of traditional parties and their normal contributions, but the arrival of new influencers will add additional weight to the overall context of the conduct of the dossier and will postpone or accelerate its final resolution. A complete end to the question of Western Sahara cannot be achieved by the recognition of the United States of America, because its positions are expressed by the study and follow-up of its practices and by its abuse of many international issues and problems. This reflects the extent of pragmatism and functionality of support or abandonment by the United States of America according to the presence of an interest rather than an American principle or diplomatic courtesy. We conclude, after studying the positions of the Americans towards several auras causes and conflicts, during the Cold War period are different from those of the post-Cold War, which will not be equally in the case of the Sahara, the period of post-recognition (Ogunnoiki, 2021).

Nor is it possible, according to the same logic, to bet on any side as different from Russia, China and Iran to Israel. Each party has its own interests and priorities on the African continent, which serve its various interests above all. However, awareness of the objectives of these powers in the region by Moroccan policymakers would offer more opportunities to manipulate the urgent needs of those powers for the good of the African continent in general, the Sahel or North Africa in particular, in order to balance and manage the equation according to the interests of Morocco and the pressing issues in the area.

In the absence of bilateral coordination between Algeria and Morocco, the region enters a new phase of diplomacy in search of solutions beyond known neighborhood and traditional frameworks. This is a phase of individual action and individual awareness of the new balances that the new powers can endure or condemn in Morocco's policy in the region. Nevertheless, the rapidity of their interactions in the continent and in our region specifically, may present new risks that may affect the choices and strategic objectives of the States of the region if intelligence vigilance is absent.

8. American recognition of Moroccan Sahara as a novel donne

The recognition by the United States of the Moroccan Sahara cannot be regarded as an overestimated attitude based on courtesy or gratitude, yet we consider it to be an inevitable consequence of a long-standing context of American decline on the African continent in general and on the Maghreb region in particular (Temin, 2018). Moreover, another element exists, is that the rapid and stable advance of China and its almost absolute trade control over the continent, which has been able in a quick period by relocating the Americans and Europeans to partnerships and maintain the trade throne with the African continent as a whole until it becomes the main trading partner of the African Continent (Corkin, 2014).

We cannot forget or overcome the Russian tide and the expansion of the Kremlin's power in Africa, in the Sahel-Saharan region, and how Russia has become so interested in security and defense partnerships, and in the fight against terrorism, especially in this region, which is worrying to the United States (Ogunnoiki, 2021). In addition to the factors already discussed and how another wide range of States are trying to draw profile, extending their powers of the continent and exploiting these wealth. All these realities have prompted the United States of America to review its policy and assess its status towards the region as a whole, so that it is surrounded by security constraints, economic and trade challenges, and detrimental geopolitical and strategic competition. It was therefore forced to make a controlled and deliberate attempt to continue its presence in Africa in general and to reposition it in fear of a future total loss of American presence and influence, in the Sahel and the North African region, which is highly appreciated in the United States counter-terrorism strategy (Saidy, 2011).

This precipitates the need for unprecedented and realistic decisions in the administration of US relations with the African continent, even if they lead to imbalances with its European allies at the outset. The fact that the US recognition of Western Sahara has constituted one of these differences with a few European allies (a strategic turning point) is because it is a new approach to dealing with African issues and a more realistic trend in African relations in general and with Morocco in particular. It also represents a fresh start to attach greater importance to African problems, such as those in the Middle East and other parts of the world, and to act in these situations as a global power and not as a mere actor.

American reconnaissance officials are fully aware that American influence and capabilities in the region are constantly deteriorating. Despite efforts on the ground, security partnerships related to counter-terrorism in the region in particular and trade and economic agreements continue to decline (Warner, 2014). However, field data in the region indicate this and confirm the fragility of actions in the light of deteriorating security conditions, disintegration of political initiatives and weakness of local economic projects, compared to efforts and the volume of support provided in the Middle East and Southwest Asia (Dee, 1993). Therefore, American awareness of the need to create a stable base in the region and to intensify their coordination with a strong player and a historically of the region was an urgent necessity and imposed by reality and need, not by diplomatic courtesy.

In addition to the above considerations, we have already mentioned other points that have paved the way for such or even other convergences. The main of these is the inability of the Organization of the Arab Maghreb to regional integration and to develop unified policies at the regional level to address pressing issues in the region (For more See; Union for the Mediterranean structure, 2008). This lack of collective action has also encouraged the advancement of individual alliances, the investment of special opportunities and even the pure exploitation of profiles, competition and confrontation between traditional parts and actors of the continent, the Sahel and North Africa, and even new entrants (Baghzouz, 2014).

This is a new behavioral trend in the policies of States locally, in Morocco, following the failure of local organizations to resolve outstanding issues between their parties in order to an economic start-up and development integration between them. The characteristics of this trend may not only be seen as linked to the recognition by the United States of Moroccan Sahara, but are now a general trend in Morocco's public policy in many areas and not just in the area of cooperation and foreign policy around the Sahara problem.

The US recognition of the Sahara was not only a turning point in the diplomatic relations between the two countries, but it was built on many common points that formed the face of the agreement. It has also achieved strategic integration

between the two countries in the region. The complementarity strategies, which confer on Morocco its historic right to its territory, at the same time provide a solid basis for consolidating the American presence in the northern half of the African continent and preventing other powers from catching up with US policy with Morocco and the progressive and strategic progress between the two countries. This also reflects the American geopolitics of cutting the way ahead of competitors and especially Russia's access to the ocean and depriving other powers of control of the Great Sahara (The American strategy of new deployment in Africa) (Campbell , 2020).

9. Conclusion

Through our extended process of analysis of events and the systematic deduction of facts that we have made through this study, we seek to demonstrate and illustrate the place of local geopolitical interactions and their implications for the course of the issue under study and how they can help to understand and explore its trajectories. Along with the weakness and inadequacy of other known approaches and methods. It should be noted that, in the course of the development of the Sahara issue, they have contributed greatly to the preservation of Morocco's advanced position in its struggle for the integrity and unity of its territories.

Also with the rapid evolution of events, global realities and numerous local and regional data, it has become necessary to rely on more precise mechanisms and means of study and analysis, in order to ensure the excellence and proactivity by the Moroccan elites interested in the question of the Sahara, despite the low productivity of their intellectual content in this area under study, in particular related to the issue of Sahara. As many elements have been discussed during the analysis, we first noted the pace of change that has become the character of events and contexts associated with the region as a whole and that traditional law and diplomacy are no longer able to keep pace and absorb their constant flow. This can be attributed mainly, according to our analyses, to the slow operation of their procedural measures and to the paralysis of their institutions in the face of multiple actors and intentions, which have become difficult to follow and to define them precisely from a legal point of view.

On the other hand, the enormous amount of especially fraudulent information available around the Sahara has had a significant impact on the capabilities and possibilities of the historical method to address such a problem. At a time when thousands of inconsistent and inexactitude documents are circulating online, as well as the monopoly of the colonizers of many original documents and arguments, research methods based on the examination of historical facts alone are becoming easy to answer and argue in the same way. Because the issue has accelerated the imposition of the limits of past methodologies and its ability to explore open horizons, because it has become practically difficult to predict the behaviors, perspectives and ambitions of an unlimited number of direct and indirect actors in a particular case from previous prospects.

Therefore, we would like to add new methodological reinforcements to the analysis of the issue, based on the combination of the previous components, as well as the study of political, strategic, geographical and economic changes in the field, etc. and using them all for a deeper and more accurate understanding of this cause while trying to predict future scenarios, it really helped us to answer a few questions.

Then the recognition by the United States of the Moroccan Saharan cannot be regarded as the final point in the development of the case, because, as we have clearly indicated, it is linked to a set of bases, rules and specific elements that interact according to a specific mobility on the ground. For this reason, recognition of the United States must not only be seen as a definitive asset in this situation. Rather, efforts must be made to consolidate it by bringing about changes in the behavior of the actors and by strengthening the role of diplomacy, as required by the news and methods of modern diplomacy. In this regard, we must encourage the great powers, as well as the actors who have weight in international relations and in the international community, to adopt the Moroccan vision of the question of the Sahara.

In particular, it should also not be a question of attracting favorable international positions without focusing on the internal development conditions of the Sahara and linking them to the national infrastructure. These are the only means of creating genuine urban centers that offer economic opportunities and help combat poverty and vulnerability in the Sahara as a whole. This is to make the Sahara, the cornerstone of the passage to the depths of Africa, and vice versa, a passage from the Great Sahel, to the Atlantic by making Morocco a European transit zone to Africa.

The diversification of economic partnerships must also be encouraged by moving away from political logic in relation to local development in the southern regions, and by encouraging and assisting residents to transform their mere pastoral activities or the fight against trafficking and crime into real commercial and economic activities, thereby ensuring their responsible participation in the region's comprehensive economic and political development projects as an example.

Finally, it should be recalled that the subject is under consideration and continues to raise questions and challenges. Nevertheless, our article has in some way helped to clarify certain points by which it aims to fuel the debate and to contribute effectively and positively to solutions and to broaden the circle of the contribution of citizenship to a question that has, to some extent, been limited to a few elitist attempts, compared to the huge amount of studies and writings regularly provided by opponents. We want by this article, indirectly opens up other qualitative issues that are not only relevant to the question of the Sahara, but also to the new directions of Moroccan defense policy that have shifted from the south to the east and southeast axes and possibly other future divisions.

We are also questioned by other issues, such as the change in the growing dependence on hostile symmetrical weapons and the progressive abandonment of conventional arms of a balanced nature, etc., as well as the new generation of new military diplomacy recently pursued by Morocco, which can be seen as a new form and a new message that must be understood and which should become a necessary space for research and study. This can be seen as a catalyst for further research and immersion in the field in order to illustrate more from different angles and in a sober and scientific way as one of the means to ensure the circumvention and unity on the first cause of Morocco.

References

- [1] Adams, B. K. (2017). *Resistance and Complacency: Cold War Legacies and the Geopolitics of the Western Sahara*. [Doctoral Dissertation, Seattle University]. International Studies Undergraduate Honors Theses.
- [2] Alcaro, R. & Pirozzi, N. (2014). *Transatlantic Security from the Sahel to the Horn of Africa*. Edizioni Nuova Cultura.
- [3] Allan, J. & Ojeda, G. R. (2022). Natural resource exploitation in Western Sahara: new research directions. *The Journal of North African Studies*, 6(27), 1107–1136 <https://doi.org/10.1080/13629387.2021.191712>
- [4] Ahrens, J. & Kalkschmied, K. (2021). *China in Africa: Competitor of the EU?*. Édition, Herausgeber.
- [5] Baghzouz, A. (2013). *Le Maghreb et l'Europe face à la crise du Sahel: Coopération ou rivalités?*. *L'année du Maghreb*, 1(9), 173-192. <https://doi.org/10.4000/anneemaghreb.1898>
- [6] Baghzouz, A. (2014). *La nouvelle géopolitique du sahel, une opportunité pour refonder le partenariat euromaghrébin?*. *Cahiers de la Méditerranée*, (89), 195-207. <https://doi.org/10.4000/cdlm.7783>
- [7] Bakrim, S. T., (2017). *Rivalité Maroc-Algérie : la guerre des récits*. Fondation pour la recherche Stratégique. <https://shorturl.at/PLAoR>
- [8] Baysil, J. Smith, S. & Owens, P. (2017). *The globalization of world politics an introduction to international relations*. Oxford University Press.
- [9] Bendhaou, F. (2022, Février 17). *Union du Maghreb arabe : Un espoir devenu mirage*. Agence Anadolu. <https://shorturl.at/Lnv2L>
- [10] Biad, B. (2013). *La construction du Maghreb au défi du partenariat euro-méditerranéen de l'Union européenne*. *L'Année du Maghreb*, 9(1), 103-124. <https://doi.org/10.4000/anneemaghreb.1866>
- [11] Birgeron, M. Kozeiakhen, A. & Kanet, N. (1996). *La politique russe en Afrique : désengagement ou coopération?*. *Revue d'études Comparatives Est-Ouest*, 27(3), 145-168. <https://doi.org/10.3406/RECEO.1996.2802>
- [12] Campbell, J. (2020, October 12). *U.S. Africa Policy Needs a Reset Trump Didn't Tear Up the Playbook, but It Still Needs to Be Rewritten*. *Foreign Affairs*. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/africa/2020-10-12/us-africa-policy-needs-reset>
- [13] Clarke, J. & Brooks, N. (2018). *The archaeology of Western Sahara*. Oxford & Philadelphia Books.
- [14] Mediterranean & Middle East Special Group. (2020). *Development and Security Challenges in the Sahel Region*. <https://ahmetberatconkar.com/storage/2021/01/SAHEL-RAPOR-Final-rev.-CHALLENGES-IN-THE-SAHEL-2.pdf>
- [15] Corkin, J. N. (2014). *China's rising Soft Power: the role of rhetoric in constructing China-Africa relations*. *Review Revista Brasileira*, 57(spe), 49-72. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/0034-7329201400204>
- [16] Correale, F., & Gimeno, J. C. (2015). *Sahara occidental : mémoires coloniales, regards postcoloniaux*. *Les Cahiers d'EMAM*, 24-24. <https://doi.org/10.4000/emam.757>

- [17] Cuevas, A. S. (2022, March 23). A new era in Israel-Morocco relations, both countries are exploring the possibilities opened by the Abraham Accords signed at the end of 2020. Center for Global Affairs & Strategic Studies. <https://t.ly/W77xu>
- [18] Dee, J. (2019, June 02). The Cold War in Independent Africa. Central College Press, <https://t.ly/XCdL4>
- [19] Dworkin, A. (2022, April 28). North African standoff: How the Western Sahara conflict is fuelling new tensions between Morocco and Algeria. European Council on Foreign Relations. <https://ecfr.eu/publication/north-african-standoff-how-the-western-sahara-conflict-is-fuelling-new-tensions-between-morocco-and-algeria/>
- [20] El Ouardighi, S. (2017, Novembre 11). Témoignage. Ali Najab, Amgala prouve l'engagement militaire précoce de l'Algérie aux côtés du Polisario. Media 24. <https://medias24.com/2017/11/06/temoignage-ali-najab-amgala-prouve-lengagement-militaire-precoce-de-lalgerie-aux-cotes-du-polisario/>
- [21] Finan, A. H. (2008). Trente ans de conflit au Sahara occidental. Institut Français des Relations Internationales. <https://shorturl.at/sytB1>
- [22] Garcia, R., Molina, I. & Veguilla, V. (2017). Global, Regional and Local Dimensions of Western Sahara's Protracted, When a Conflict Gets Old, Palgrave Macmillan.
- [23] Gillespie, R. (2011). Maghreb The Entry of New Factors into the Western Sahara Conflict. European Institute of Mediterranean. <https://shorturl.at/LZWJ6>
- [24] Heggoy, A. (1971). Colonial Origins of the Algerian-Moroccan Border Conflict of October 1963. African Studies Review, 13(1), 17-22. <https://doi.org/10.2307/523680>
- [25] Hodges, T., (1983). Western Sahara, the Roots of the Desert. Lawrence Hill Books.
- [26] International Crisis Group. (2018). Narcotrafic, violence et politique au Nord du Mali., <https://shorturl.at/R72rP>
- [27] Jacob, D. M. (2012). Hegemonic rivalry in the Maghreb: Algeria and Morocco in the Western Sahara conflict. University of South Florida Press.
- [28] Jamet, F. J. (2008, July 7). Intégration régionale : Processus de Barcelone et Union pour la Méditerranée, quels scénarios d'avenir?, Robert Schuman Foundation. <https://old.robert-schuman.eu//fr/doc/questions-d-europe/qe-105-fr.pdf>
- [29] Lewis, W. H. (1981). Western Sahara: Compromise or Conflict?. Current History, 80(470), 410-431. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45315051>
- [30] Martin, A. G. (2022, July 25). The arms race between Morocco and Algeria. Journal Revista ejercitos. <https://www.revistaejercitos.com/en/2022/07/25/the-arms-race-betweenmorocco-and-algeria/>
- [31] Munene, M. (2010). Multiple Colonialism in Western Sahara. Journal of Language, Technology & Entrepreneurship in Africa, 2(2), 178-195. <https://doi.org/10.4314/jolte.v2i2.61528>
- [32] Mundy, J. (2006, January). L'autodétermination du Sahara Occidental 1975 - 2005 analyses - réflexions - témoignages, Comment les USA et le Maroc se sont emparés du Sahara espagnol ? Le Monde Diplomatique. <https://www.arso.org/mundy2006.htm>
- [33] Nidiaye, p. (2022, February 21). L'Amérique est de retour en Afrique. Journal Jeune Afrique. <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/1123877/politique/le-reengagement-americain-en-afrique/>
- [34] Mari, N. (2017). Iran in the Face of the International Scramble for Africa, Journal for Iranian Studies, 1(2), 56-69. <https://rasanah-iiis.org/english/?p=3070>
- [35] Nouhou, B. A. (2018, December 21). Offensive diplomatique d'Israël en Afrique. Fondation pour la Recherche Stratégique. <https://www.frstrategie.org/programmes/observatoire-du-monde-arabo-musulman-et-du-sahel/offensive-diplomatique-disrael-afrique-2018>
- [36] Ogunnoiki, O. A. (2021). Russia-Africa Relations in the 21st Century: Symbiotic or Predatory? », Covenant University Journal of Politics & International Affairs, 9(2), 3650-3663. <https://journals.covenantuniversity.edu.ng/index.php/cujpia/article/view/2833>
- [37] Patrick, R. A., (1979). Problèmes de définition et de méthodologie de la géographie politique anglo-saxonne. L'espace géographique.
- [38] Pena, J. (2022, August 6). Frente Polisario: qué armamento y capacidad militar tiene el ELPS?. Journal ATALAYAR. <https://t.ly/LwxOJ>

- [39] Rachidi, I. (2022, May 3). Morocco and Algeria: A Long Rivalry. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. <https://t.ly/FAtVm>
- [40] Saidy, B. (2021). American Interests in the Western Sahara Conflict. *Journal of the National Committee on American Foreign Policy*, 33(2), 86-92. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10803920.2011.570735>
- [41] Samaaan , J. P. (2021, November 22). Gulf Countries and the Stabilization Efforts in the Sahel. Anwar Gargash Diplomatic Academy. <https://t.ly/8df-e>
- [42] Surkhin, M. (2022, Avril 13). La Russie au Sahel : vers une aggravation des situations sécuritaires et politiques. *Le Rubicon*. <https://lerubicon.org/publication/la-russie-au-sahel-vers-une-aggravation-des-situations-securitaires-et-politiques/>
- [43] Temin, J. (2021, June 10). Africa Is Changing—and U.S. Strategy Is Not Keeping Up Washington Needs to Rethink Its Approach to the Continent. *Foreign Affairs*, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/africa/2021-10-08/africa-changing-and-us-strategy-not-keeping>
- [44] The Panel of Experts on Yemen. (2018) Off-the-record interviews with European and US officials. The United Nations. <http://undocs.org/S/2018/594>
- [45] The President by the National Security Council. *Foreign Relations of the United States*, (1949). Eastern Europe: the Soviet Union. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1949v05/d307>
- [46] Trotignon, Y. & Pellerin, M. (2010). Les enjeux sécuritaires du rivage sahélien. *Club des Directeurs de Sécurité des Entreprises*. <https://www.cairn.info/revue-securite-et-strategie-2010-2-page-43.htm>
- [47] Warner, L. L. (2014). *The Trans Sahara Counter Terrorism Partnership Building Partner Capacity to Counter Terrorism and Violent Extremism*. CAN Corporation.
- [48] Zoubir, Y. H. (2018). The Western Sahara Conflict: Regional and International Dimensions. *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 2(28). 243-225. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022278X00054434>
- [49] Zoubir, Y. H. (2022, June 2). Crisis in the Sahel: Causes, Consequences, & the Path Forward. *Middle East on Global Affairs*. <https://mecouncil.org/publication/crisis-sahel-causes-and-consequences-of-the-conflict-me-council/>
- [50] Zunes, S., (2016). Algeria, the Maghreb Union, and the Western Sahara stalemate. *Arab Studies Quarterly*, 17(3), 23-36. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41858127>