

Norwegian University  
of Life Sciences

**Master's Thesis 2022 30 ECTS**

Department of International Environment and Development Studies (Noragric)

# **The United States' Foreign Policy and Enabling Interstate Aggression: A Case Study of the Moroccan Annexation of the Western Sahara**

Hamilton J. Turner

International Relations

The Department of International Environment and Development Studies, Noragric, is the international gateway for the Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU). Eight departments, associated research institutions and the Norwegian College of Veterinary Medicine in Oslo. Established in 1986, Noragric's contribution to international development lies in the interface between research, education (Bachelor, Master and PhD programmes) and assignments.

The Noragric Master theses are the final theses submitted by students in order to fulfil the requirements under the Noragric Master programme "International Environmental Studies", "International Development Studies" and "International Relations".

The findings in this thesis do not necessarily reflect the views of Noragric. Extracts from this publication may only be reproduced after prior consultation with the author and on condition that the source is indicated. For rights of reproduction or translation contact Noragric.

© Hamilton James Turner, May 2022

Hamilton.j.turner@gmail.com

Noragric

Department of International Environment and Development Studies

P.O. Box 5003

N-1432 Ås Norway

Tel.: +47 67 23 00 00

Internet: <https://www.nmbu.no/om/fakulteter/samvit/institutter/noragric>

**Declaration**

I, Hamilton James Turner, declare that this thesis is a result of my research investigations and findings. Sources of information other than my own have been acknowledged and a reference list has been appended. This work has not been previously submitted to any other university for award of any type of academic degree.

Signature.....

Date.....

## **Acknowledgments:**

I have labored over the best way to set about this research project – both to create something I could be proud of as an accomplishment and to do so in a way that would not be a critique of a country that is not my own. I have had numerous conversations with people to come to this topic, all of whom influenced my topic and how I have handled and analyzed it here.

This study would not have been possible without the consistent motivation of my partner. Their love and support for me while writing this thesis is what allowed me to organize myself and actually put words on the page. I also have to give special thanks to our cat Tiziri for being the emotional support animal I needed, for always sitting by my side, and on at least one occasion adding an entire section of Zs to my thesis.

Likewise, this thesis would not have been completed without the guidance of my advisor Esben Leifsen. His patience and feedback were invaluable as I set about completing this study, despite disappearing for months at a time, working across three continents, and accidentally sleeping past at least one scheduled meeting.

All the friends I made in Norway over the course of this Master's program helped me pull through in the end. Without them, writing and working during the worst of the Covid-19 pandemic and through periods of isolation would have been impossible.

## **Abstract**

The thesis is a study of the Moroccan state's actions and rhetoric surrounding the Western Sahara and the role of US foreign policy as a motivating factor in the Moroccan annexation and ongoing administration of this territory. This study focuses on the consequences of the Trump administration's recognition of Morocco's annexation of the Western Sahara and acknowledgment of the Moroccan Autonomy Plan for the region. It combines a historical study with an inter-state comparison. In analyzing actions taken on the part of the Moroccan state and the United States, this study incorporates aspects of critical constructivist and postcolonial schools of thought as well as a theoretical understanding of settler colonialism to understand their contemporary manifestations in the Western Sahara. This also incorporates analysis of the history of colonial extractivism inherent to this region's administration. This is done to understand whether or not United States foreign policy constitute an instigator of interstate conflicts. To conduct this analysis, this study analyzes behaviors taken on the part of the Moroccan state after the United States' acknowledgment of Moroccan control of the Western Saharan territory during the Trump administration. This study also contextualizes the United States interventionism during the period of the Cold War and its adherence to Realist theory in positioning itself internationally for its own interests.



## Table of Contents

1. Introduction .....	2
1.1 Rationale for Research Area .....	3
1.2 Research Questions .....	5
1.3 Methodology .....	6
1.4 Positionality and ethical considerations .....	9
1.5 Theoretical Framework .....	10
2. The United States and the Cold War .....	14
3. Morocco’s Annexation and Settling of the Western Sahara .....	17
3.1 State Occupation and Green Washing .....	19
3.2 The Moroccan Autonomy Plan .....	21
4. Moroccan State’s Increase in Hostile Rhetoric and Actions .....	25
4.1 Morocco in the Western Sahara .....	26
4.2 Morocco and Algeria .....	28
4.3 Morocco and Spain .....	30
4.4 Morocco and Germany .....	32
5. Morocco’s Territorial and Economic Value to the United States and Allies .....	33
5.1 Morocco’s Economic Value in Light of the War in Ukraine .....	37
5.1.1 Fertilizers and Phosphates .....	39
5.1.2 Gas and Energy .....	41
6. Callous Hegemonic Power .....	42
6.1 The United States as an Instigator of Aggression .....	43
7. Conclusion .....	45
8. References .....	46
Appendix A: List of Ongoing Energy Projects in the Western Sahara with International Investment .....	57





## 1. Introduction

This study aims to conduct an analysis of the impacts of United States foreign policy as an instigator of interstate conflicts. To conduct this analysis, this study analyzes behaviors taken on the part of the Moroccan state after the United States' acknowledgment of Moroccan control of the Western Saharan territory during the Trump administration. Given the complexities inherent to this conflict and how they change over time, this study incorporates the history of the territory and the United States' involvement in the region to provide the foundation for this analysis. This historical analysis serves as a case study of the effects of United States foreign policy and the enabling of aggression and acts of violence on the part of a state or other actor. This study also provides a historical analysis of United States foreign policy leading to aggressive tendencies of states or actors within states that receive United States validation or support.

The structure of this study is laid out as follows. To provide the historical context and nature of United States intervention and actions in the region of the Maghreb, this analysis starts with the Cold War period<sup>1</sup>. This period coincides with the anti-colonial movements in the Maghreb, as well as these states gaining independence from France. The United States' involvement in North Africa and the Maghreb came into their modern form during the Cold War and the Post-Colonial period. During this period, the narrative coming out of Moscow as a representative for oppressed peoples led to a perceived threat to the United States' sphere of influence in colonial states. While France maintained strict control of its territories, namely Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia for this study - the Maghreb was one of many regions of the world shaped by the bipolarity of the Cold War period. Therefore, this period shaped how relations between Morocco and Algeria manifest contemporarily, as well as the constructed identities within those states and the nature of their relations with foreign states. Beginning with a historical study of the United States' foreign policy during the Cold War with the USSR, this offers context to understand the development of relations between Morocco, Algeria, the United States, the USSR (later Russia), and Europe. By providing this historical context of the United States' support for state and non-state actors, this study looks at instances wherein conflict and acts of aggression increased to promote the United States' interests.

Following the historical contextualization of the Maghreb is a detailed accounting of the Moroccan annexation of the Western Sahara. This starts with the initial 1975 annexation, known as the Green March, up to the contemporary period. The section on the Moroccan annexation also includes discussion on the means by which the Moroccan state has sought legitimization of its administration of the territory. These include garnering international acceptance of the Moroccan 'Autonomy Plan' for the Western Sahara, as well as an international campaign to 'green wash' its extractivist enterprises within the territory. Discussion surrounding the Moroccan annexation and the state's activities there utilizes post-colonial, settler colonial, and constructivist theory to understand the complexities inherent to the operation of the Moroccan state in the Western Sahara.

---

<sup>1</sup> The Maghreb consists of the region of Northwest Africa specifically encompassing Morocco, Algeria, Libya, Tunisia, and Mauritania.

Chief among these being the narrative shaping – both culturally and through practices such as ‘green washing’ - to construct a regional social reality that benefits the Moroccan state.

Following the contextualization of the Moroccan case, an analysis and discussion is conducted of hostilities perpetrated by the Moroccan state over the issue of the Western Sahara since the Trump administration’s 2020 recognition of Moroccan sovereignty over the territory. Morocco’s relationship with Spain, Germany, Algeria, and in the Western Sahara itself are the principal focus as these four actors constitute a range of Moroccan relations. That is, these states characterize Moroccan relations with a former colonizer, a major economic and trade partner, a perceived adversarial state, and the region in question itself, respectively. This builds the main structure of the Moroccan case study on interstate aggressions enabled through United States foreign policy. What is of primary interest to this study is the nature of these relationships, their reliance on United States influence to be able to put pressure on even partnered states, and how these interstate relations have been shaped through United States influence since the period of the Cold War. Following this is an analysis of the rationale for states’ contemporary involvement in the territory, focusing primarily on its economic and strategic value to the United States and Europe. This consists of material and energy resources as well as valuable fishing licensing off the coast of the territory<sup>2</sup> which add to the economic importance of Morocco to other states.

### 1.1 Rationale for Research Area

This paper uses the Western Saharan conflict as a case study due to its reemergence as a significant issue in the Maghreb as of the Trump administration’s 2020 acknowledgement of the Moroccan Autonomy Plan for the Sahara. The significance of the Western Sahara and the regional conflict therein cannot be overlooked. In the context of the Arab Spring there is compelling evidence that the originating spark of mass protest movements was not in Tunisia but in the October 2010 protests in Gdeim Izik<sup>3</sup> (Chomsky, 2011; Errazzouki, 2012). Noam Chomsky’s assertion<sup>4</sup> of such may have merit if one looks at the events in North Africa on a timeline. Specifically, that Saharawi protests and the Moroccan state response in quickly and violently dispelling them in October 2010 could have been a popular inspiration for the response to the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi in December 2010<sup>5</sup> (Errazzouki, 2012). The history of the Western Sahara, as briefly outlined in this

---

<sup>2</sup> This study does not provide in depth analysis of the fishing industry of the Western Sahara, however the 700-kilometer coastline that Morocco controls contains one of the richest and least exploited fishing waters in the world, currently being illegally fished by Moroccan and European ships under license from the Moroccan state (Zoubir, 2010).

<sup>3</sup> Gdeim Izik was a protest camp set up outside of the city of Laayoune, considered by the POLISARIO to be the capital of the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) though currently under control of the Moroccan state. The camp itself consisted of up to 5000 Saharawi protestors and existed for approximately one month until it was dismantled by Moroccan security forces – reports are conflicting but as many as 36 Saharawi protestors and 11 Moroccan police were killed and upwards of 1200 others were injured in the process (Chomsky, 2011; Errazzouki, 2012; Mandraud, 2010).

<sup>4</sup> While having been criticized for making generalizing statements regarding the origination of the Arab Spring, this study looks at Noam Chomsky’s comments as illuminating the importance of the Western Saharan conflict. There is, however, an argument to be made that his comments suggesting the state repression of Saharawis in the Western Sahara as the origin of the Arab Spring are reductionist.

<sup>5</sup> Mohamed Bouazizi’s self-immolation is widely considered to be the tipping point that began the Arab Spring; his protest was against corruption and mistreatment by Tunisian police forces as a street vendor. The response in Tunisia

study, is distinct from that of other states or territories within North Africa or even the Maghreb. However, there exist similarities in the struggles and conditions faced by the peoples engaged in popular revolt. The Saharawi protests were in fact hinged on their lack of representation in their occupation by the Moroccan state and by Spain previously. They also comprise peoples faced with socio-economic hardship, opposition to authoritarian rule, and lack of autonomy and representation in their governance. Such factors can also be applied in all cases where the Arab Spring took root in early 2011.

This has been a region of conflict for Morocco and its neighbors since the Moroccan state began its systematic settlement in 1975 - as well as prolonged conflict between Spanish colonial forces and the Saharawi populations. Of primary interest to this study is the conflict that exists between the POLISARIO<sup>6</sup> front and colonizing states in the Western Sahara – Spain and Morocco. The formation of the POLISARIO front can be traced back as early as 1968, when Mohamed Sidi Brahim Bassir founded the movement for the liberation of Saguia el Hamra and Rio de Oro (Lippert, 1992). In essence, it was founded to protest and rebel against Spanish colonial rule and as a direct response to violent massacres and repression faced by the Saharawi people. Officially, the POLISARIO came into existence on May 10, 1973, by a group of Saharawi university students, survivors of the Zouerate massacres<sup>7</sup>, and Saharawi men who had served in the Spanish army - all in spite of the violent and consistent repression of Mohamed Sidi Brahim Bassir's independence movement (Lippert, 1992). The POLISARIO itself identified as a Saharawi anti-colonial nationalist liberation front. Once Spanish colonial rule came to an end and Moroccan nationalists immediately entered the territory, they came into direct physical and rhetorical conflict with Saharawi nationalists. There became two ideologically opposed nationalistic identities – both claiming to be anti-colonial and seeking to reclaim territory thought to be their own. To establish themselves as a Saharawi nationalist organization, there became the necessity of forming a Saharawi government organization – the SADR or Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic government – in 1976 immediately following the Moroccan annexation (Zunes & Mundy, 2020). The SADR government is headed by a president and prime minister – currently Brahim Ghali<sup>8</sup> and Mohamed Wali Akeik (Zunes & Mundy, 2010). This government functions as a government-in-exile due to its operation based out of Tifariti – located north of the Mauritanian border within what Morocco considers to be the ‘buffer zone’ or the ‘liberated territories’ according to the POLISARIO (Zunes & Mundy, 2010). This is considered the de facto capital while the officially

---

to this act then later spread throughout the Middle East and North Africa in 2011, including its manifestation in Morocco as the 20 February Movement.

<sup>6</sup> From the Spanish name: Frente Popular para la liberación de Saguia el-Hamra y Rio de Oro; English: The Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia el-Hamra and Rio de Oro

<sup>7</sup> The town of Zouerate is a mining town located in Mauritania near the Western Saharan border. Saharawis had been involved in the Mauritanian independence movement until it officially got its independence in 1960 – when France installed Moktar Ould Daddah as president (Meredith, 2005). Zouerate was the site of a number of massacres in 1968, in particular in May of 1968 during a miners' strike where police forces fired upon the workers (Bronte & Cheikh, 2001).

<sup>8</sup> Morocco, Algeria, and Spain have had numerous conflicts regarding their treatment of and the movement of Brahim Ghali during his time as president and representative of the SADR government and the POLISARIO. These are covered in the sections on Moroccan relations with Spain, Algeria, and the Western Sahara.

declared capital of the SADR remains the coastal city of Laayoune which is under Moroccan administration (Zunes & Mundy, 2010; Zunes & Mundy, 2020).

The act of ‘settling’ the territory on the part of Morocco was conducted through a movement called the Green March in 1975. This consisted of approximately 350,000 Moroccans, escorted by approximately 20,000 soldiers from the Moroccan military, moving in caravans and other means to the southern border of Morocco (Zunes & Mundy, 2020; Mundy, 2006). This also consisted of seizing former Spanish settlements, mines, and other resources that remained after Spain left the region. The timing of this movement, as is covered further in this study, is significant for a number of reasons. Chief among these are Spain’s exit from this territory during the decolonial period, the International Court of Justice’s decision that neither Morocco, Algeria, nor Mauritania had unique historical claims over the territory (Janis, 1976), as well as continued assistance and aid for Morocco from the United States in the greater context of the Cold War.

The recent policies regarding the Western Sahara taken on the part of the United States represent a significant shift in policy regarding the territory on the part of the United States and its allies, at least in official rhetoric from a United States’ presidential administration. For the United States and its allies to maintain relations with the Moroccan state, these states have either elected not to make official proclamations regarding the governance of the Western Sahara, outside of individual statements from specific parties or leadership. Meanwhile, the foreign policy motives of the Moroccan government have become increasingly focused on legitimizing its control of the territory internationally. To assess whether acts of aggression on the part of an international actor or state can increase following United States’ foreign policy, the Moroccan annexation of the Sahara serves as a contemporary subject for this study’s historical analysis.

This study then investigates the apparent repetitions of colonial behaviors by the Moroccan state, as well as the Moroccan state increasing aggressive actions and language upon receiving the acknowledgment of state sovereignty over the Western Sahara from the United States in 2020. This requires analysis of the actions and statements made by representatives of the Moroccan state against other states following the United States’ acknowledgment of Morocco’s territorial rights to the Western Sahara. In conducting this analysis, the interstate relationships between Morocco and Algeria, Spain, and Germany are of particular interest. Likewise, the history of the United States’ foreign policy in the region is of importance as a primary factor motivating relations between Morocco and other states. Germany, Spain, and Algeria are states of focus for this study as they represent notable examples of states that the Moroccan government has been actively employing aggressive rhetoric and actions towards following the change in United States’ foreign policy. Finally, Moroccan state relations with representatives of the POLISARIO and SADR government and their characterization as an example of ‘othering’ on the part of the Moroccan state provides the basis as the case study of this research.

## 1.2 Research Questions

Primary RQs:

RQ1: What interstate aggressive tendencies has Morocco engaged in upon receiving the United States' legitimization of the annexation of the Western Sahara?

RQ2: Have aggressions increased or decreased in interstate disputes following the United States' validation of the Moroccan annexation of the Western Saharan territory?

Sub-RQs:

SRQ 1: How has Morocco received validation from the United States for its annexation of and actions within the Western Sahara?

### 1.3 Methodology

This study investigates the case of the Moroccan annexation of the Western Sahara to analyze the negative effects of United States' foreign policy. To conduct this historical analysis, this study utilizes the history of the Moroccan annexation of the Western Sahara, the value of this territory in terms of social and political identity for the Moroccan state and its peoples, and value of the territory for the global political economy. These elements are then weighed against the contemporary conflict and how recent United States' intervention in legitimizing Moroccan control over the territory has instigated more conflict in the region.

A historical analysis is conducted in this qualitative research project. This is to understand the development of United States foreign policy in the region of the Maghreb over time and to understand the full context of United States involvement as a source of influence over other state behaviors. Therefore, this study covers the period of time from Morocco's independence in 1955 within the context of the Cold War up to 2022 and the characterization of the Moroccan annexation in light of the United States' recognition of the 1975 annexation of the Western Sahara. The historical data utilized to understand the broader context for this study come from sources such as Frantz Fanon and his writings on the Algerian revolution, Edward Said's writings on Orientalism in the context of the Israel-Palestine conflict, and decisions from the International Court of Justice regarding the post-colonial governance of the Western Sahara. Other contemporary data come from organizations such as the Western Sahara Resource Watch as they provide context for the breadth and scope of involvement of international and Moroccan state industries in the region. These are utilized alongside a wide range of news and academic publications covering the period of time since Morocco's independence to as recent as 2022 to understand the ongoing and changing nature of the Moroccan occupation. This study's understanding of the diachronic development of the Moroccan nationalistic narrative has changed from anti-colonial to support for its activities in the Sahara as the very nature of the population of the Sahara changed during the time of the Moroccan occupation. This is analyzed through the lenses of political philosophers such as Hannah Arendt, Achille Mbembe, Noam Chomsky, Patrick Wolfe, Lorenzo Veracini, Franz Fanon, Edward Said, Michel Foucault, and Homi Bhabha. These political theorists and philosophers provide this study the perspectives from which to understand the physical and metaphysical dimensions at play in the Moroccan annexation, administration, narrative building, rhetorical construction, extractivism, and settler colonial behaviors.

This method of study follows guidance from Bryman’s methodology for a comparative design utilized here to observe changes over time. This borrows from Bryman’s understanding “that we can understand social phenomena better when they are compared in relation to two or more meaningfully contrasting cases or situations” (Bryman, 2016, p.65). For the purposes of this study, the social phenomena of interest are the social and political characterizations of the Western Sahara on the part of the Moroccan state before and during the course of its occupation of the territory. Likewise, this study looks at the behaviors of the Moroccan state in the territory before and after receiving the United States’ acknowledgment of its control over the Sahara. As per Bryman’s outlining of a comparative analysis, this study includes aspects of Hantrais (1996) cross-national research, that is to conduct a study covering “two or more countries with the express intention of comparing their manifestations in different socio-cultural settings.” In particular, this study looks at the nature of Moroccan institutions such as its state-owned industries and media “to carry out secondary analysis of national data.” National data for the purposes of this study come from Moroccan media, state industry press releases, statements from international representatives of Morocco – for instance, the UN Ambassador – in order to understand the social and political realities in the Western Sahara and how they relate to United States foreign policy and interests in its relations with Morocco. In this study, the historical context of the Cold War is first presented to demonstrate the extent of United States intervention globally and in the Maghreb region. This contextualization is necessary as it leads to the annexation following United States support for Moroccan nationalists over perceived socialist or communist threats; thus, the examples therein are provided to build an analysis of aggressive behaviors as a result of United States’ policy. This leads into the contemporary period following United States’ recognition of Moroccan sovereignty over the Western Sahara and subsequent acts of aggression in the main case study herein on the part of Morocco in four specific instances. These are broken down into sub-sections outlining hostilities within the Western Sahara, then between Morocco and Algeria, Spain, and Germany. This analysis comes from the understanding that increased hostilities in these four instances have dramatically risen as a direct response to receiving legitimacy from the United States for Morocco’s annexation and activities in the Western Sahara – including settlements, resource extraction, military action, and state repression. Following this, the rationale for states’ interests in legitimizing Morocco’s settler colonial and extractivist activities due to Morocco’s territorial and economic importance is provided; the section on Morocco’s economic importance following legitimization of their sovereignty in this region is then expanded into the broader context of the war in Ukraine. Following this, further instances of United States’ intervention and acknowledgment of state and non-state actors leading to increased hostilities are outlined to inform the main study question – whether or not United States’ foreign policy has a tendency towards increasing regional conflicts and hostilities.

This study utilizes a number of sources in building its theoretical foundation. This is to attain a robust picture from a pluralistic understanding of the factors present in Morocco’s annexation of the Western Sahara. This study’s use of Neorealist theory serves to understand the rationale of states’ actions as serving their self-interests and builds the understanding that a state may operate opportunistically – applied here to understand the timing and initial operation of the Moroccan annexation through the Green March. Likewise, the United States has historically utilized Realist thought as the basis for its actions and interventions. This study investigates this behavior in its

section outlining United States actions during the Cold War. However, this theoretical outlook can only serve to understand these states' internal rationalization for their actions – that is to seize more power and tip the scales in their own favor. Morgenthau's Realism, for instance, lacks elements of empiricism and leads to general assumptions that all policy must be rational – and that all actors act rationally. However, this study understands that this cannot always be the case, as humans are not at all times rational actors. However even for its lack of empiricism, the fundamentals of Realism under Morgenthau apply to Neorealists such as Mearsheimer who then assert that states seek security and control over international anarchy – that states act selfishly due to a lack of central authority. Neorealism is essential for the purposes of this study due to the United States' adherence to this theoretical outlook in defining foreign policy throughout the Cold War – as Neorealists hold the understanding that a bipolarity such as at the time of the Cold War is the most stable system as each actor balances against the other. Such was the motivation for action against the USSR and the rationalization for United States interventionism – as well as closing any perceived 'gaps' between the United States and the USSR. However, as these theories apply primarily to states actions, securitization, and power they do not cover the breadth of this study and serve as an understanding of state actors' rationales. For the purposes of this study, this is primarily limited to the rationale within the Moroccan state for annexation of the Western Sahara, and United States' interventionism historically and contemporarily.

For this reason, Constructivist and Post-Colonial theory, and the theoretical understanding of Settler Colonialism serve as the principal foundation for this study when analyzing actions taken by the Moroccan state. The constructivist lens, as outlined in this study's theoretical framework, gives an understanding of how rhetoric and understanding of operations within the Moroccan annexation have changed and thus reshaped the nature of their operation. That is, that through redefining and operating within a globally accepted realm of terminology, the Moroccan state has been able to conduct similar operations through the rhetoric – at different times – of decolonialization, international securitization, and of greenwashing extractivism. Through these constructions, the Moroccan state is able to craft and conduct its image in a manner more acceptable to potential trade partners and allies in the Security Council that may legitimize their annexation. Following this understanding of the nature of identity and actions on the part of the Moroccan state and their construction, aspects of post-colonial theory as well as settler colonial theory inform the nature of this study and its analysis.

For the purposes of this study, the data collected comes in the form of reports from the states involved, institutions in the field, and NGOs focused on the Western Sahara. These also include press releases and news media from the states involved to analyze contemporary actions taken in the Western Sahara and how they characterize relations between Morocco and other states. Information taken from Human Rights Watch studies in the region as well as data from the Sahara Press Service inform the nature of the Moroccan annexation from the perspective of the Saharawi peoples in the region, as well as inform on the nature of human rights on the ground in the Sahara. News media for this study comes from a number of outlets, notably Aljazeera, France24, Medias24, Africanews, as well as American news outlets such as CBS, CNN, and the New York Times. This study also takes information from Morocco World News – an English language publication from Morocco published for those outside of Morocco but with a tendency towards following the

Moroccan state narrative. For specific data on extractivist, corporate, and economic interests in this study, data from specific industries' press releases, the Western Sahara Resource Watch, and the Observatory of Economic Complexity provide the scale of economic value and involvement of various private and state-owned industries in the Western Sahara. This information is analyzed in their contexts and compiled to build an understanding of each case. This is then compared to the history and modern case of Morocco as it develops over the time of this study. In order to remain objective in this analysis, this study looks to a wide variety of sources to obtain an objective picture of actions and state involvement within the Western Sahara. This is primarily due to significant limitations in accessing information on state and corporate activity in the region, but through their characterization through state and private industry press releases as well as a firm stance informed through the theoretical framework of this study in constructivist and post-coloniality this study seeks to provide as clear a picture as possible despite a lack of primary sources – specifically primary sources on human rights abuses, state and military involvement, and corporate investments.

Through the understanding of the impact of language, orientalism, settler colonialism, and post-colonial processes on behavior and their manifestations in the physical puts this study in the ontological position of constructionism, as defined by Alan Bryman (2016) as a position “that asserts that social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors. It implies that social phenomena are not only produced through social interaction but are in a constant state of revision” (Bryman, 2016, p.29). Thus, this study looks incorporates how social understandings and practices committed within the Western Sahara by the Moroccan state are in constant revision to be constructed in a modern world view. This ontological understanding of social and rhetorical construction of identity are thus applied to the case of Moroccan ‘green washing’ of extractivist activity conducted in the Sahara to receive greater international legitimization of its annexation.

#### 1.4 Positionality and ethical considerations

There are significant ethical concerns in this study. Primarily, there are risks posed to those that question Moroccan state authority, especially in the Western Sahara. Journalists and researchers focused on this issue have faced persecution, expulsion from Morocco, and detainment by Moroccan authorities. These include journalist Omar Radi, who was arrested and is still detained by Moroccan authorities due to being critical of state actions (Human Rights Watch, 2020); his case is emblematic of the force used and risks that exist in writing on Moroccan state authority. This study thus does not focus on interviews with Moroccan citizens, nor residents within Morocco as their wellbeing would be in jeopardy.

It is also of importance to understand my positioning as the principal researcher in this study, being not of Moroccan descent nor having Moroccan heritage. Having been a resident of Morocco for approximately six years, my understanding of the Moroccan state and of Moroccan society are based on my lived experience as a foreign resident, thus an outsider's perspective. Considerations towards being critical of a society and culture not my own are to be taken and attempts to be objective in my analysis. My personal values regarding freedom of information, human and



specifically indigenous rights, and views on land grabbing on the part of a state for state benefit also potentially influence this analysis. These considerations can be taken as a form of bias. However, the purpose of this study is to conduct an analysis of the effects of the United States' foreign policy.

As the concept of social reality and how it is constructed through discourse is central to this study, the assumptions of this construction on the part of the primary researcher are important to understand. It is assumed, then, that knowledge and power are built and constructed through discourse and the means by which language is used. This can be influenced by the linguistic choices in speech as well as the timing and context from which a particular piece of discourse is made. The timing to be considered primarily throughout this study is premised on foreign policy decisions taken by the United States and their repercussions.

### 1.5 Theoretical Framework

This study is founded on the theoretical basis of constructivist and postcolonial schools of thought, utilizing aspects of structural and neorealist thought to understand the aggregate United States foreign policy actions and stances taken in the Maghreb. The historical basis of this study utilizes the period of Cold War to contemporary policy in the area of United States trade and securitization. Conceptually, this looks into rationalizations for the Moroccan state's actions in the Western Sahara and how there may be parallels to other states and actors in the past. Looking to Morocco, the tenants of Morgenthau's realism here can be seen in clear play; though to expand upon the Moroccan state's attempts to control the anarchy of the region by seizing material, and thus land with its resources, we can look to Mearsheimer's assertion that great powers seek to gain as much power over others as possible, similar to Morgenthau's classical realist perspective (Snyder, 2002). However, different from Morgenthau, Mearsheimer's assertion that states engage in "a search for security that is forced by the anarchic structure of the international system" (Snyder, 2002) and thus Morocco can be seen to be gathering as much power as possible to secure itself physically.

The constructivist and social-political lenses taken in this study are based on Foucault and Noam Chomsky's understandings of the formation of language and of the social development of political realities through the means of propaganda and 'corporatocracy' (Foucault, 1977; Chomsky, 1999a). Foucault informs how discourse and language manifest the objects which enter political discourse – that is, in the social constructivist stance that as discourse around an object changes so does the nature of the object, as any such concept is formed through a social understanding of its meaning (Foucault, 1977). This will become important in the case of the rhetoric used by the Moroccan state regarding its actions in the Western Sahara, as well as the reactions and attempts to subvert the Moroccan narrative by rival states and actors.

In the realm of postcolonial theory and writing, this study leans on a number of historical and contemporary thinkers and researchers. Much of the literature on postcolonial theory focused on understanding where perceptions and narratives of the 'other' and colonial behaviors becoming naturalized in the public mind come from representations in literature and media consumed by the public at large (Said, 1978; Said 1985; Kristeva, 1999; Bhabha, 1994). Frantz Fanon's *The*

*Wretched of the Earth* is of particular interest to understand the violence and aggressions inherent in the colonial process in his detailing of the revolutionary struggle of Algeria against their French colonizers. His descriptions and understanding of the nature of violence as it manifests in colonial behavior underline this study's outlook on colonial activity as inherently violent. That is, any action that is taken under the guise of colonial or colonizing behavior is an act of violence perpetrated by a state upon colonized peoples. Likewise, Fanon's descriptions of the interplay between capitalism and colonial activity - the seizing of land and territory for the purpose of exploitation and exportation of resources and thus capital - apply as well to the modern nature of Morocco's occupation. That is the co-opting of capitalistic behaviors on the part of a bourgeois state not only on the grounds of arms and hard powers, but through the leveraging of capital and soft powers to quell upper-class conflict. This can then be applied internationally - as intervention or rhetoric against the Moroccan occupation goes only as far as to offer criticism without disrupting trade and diplomatic relations with the Moroccan state<sup>9</sup>.

Furthering the theoretical foundation of this study are the works of Hannah Arendt and her writings on power, legitimization, and justification of violence. Hannah Arendt's understandings of political power apply to this study in its manifestation within the Sahara itself as the Moroccan state seeks to assert authority. Applied with understandings of settler colonialism in the case of a territory with no apparent state - as was the case during Morocco's annexation in 1975 - her understanding of power and violence as needing legitimacy applies precisely to this case.

Postcolonial theory in this study is furthered through from Edward Said's foundational text *Orientalism*. Said's understanding of the nature of orientalist thinking - that is, eurocentrism - allows for the exportation of violence upon those outside of the world of the colonizer. His work on the means by which the West constructed a monolithic notion of the 'East' or 'Orient' is rooted in constructivist thought and thus in relation to Foucault's study on language formation and social understandings of the world. In essence, the forming of the concept of the 'other' - those outside of 'West' - is central to Said's construction of orientalism. By forming a binary opposition - that of 'us' and 'them' - representations of those outside of our personal experience are built up, leading to viewing the 'other' as inferior. Narratives taken in from cultural presentations surrounding the 'other' thus shape behaviors and as well as perceptions, constructing an individual's perceived understanding of the world and how to interact within it. Therefore, constructing an identity of those outside of the purview of the 'West' allowed for the exploitation of these peoples by 'imperial administrators' on the basis of being primitive 'others.' In Said's definition of orientalism, he states:

*"...it is an elaboration not only of a basic geographical distinction... but also of a whole series of 'interests' which, by such means as scholarly discovery, philological reconstruction, psychological analysis, landscape and sociological description, it not only creates but also maintains... shaped to a degree by the exchange with power political (as with a colonial or imperial establishment), power intellectual (as with reigning sciences like comparative linguistics or anatomy, or any of the modern policy sciences), power cultural (as with*

---

<sup>9</sup> This point is elaborated in the sections detailing Morocco's territorial and economic value to the United States and Europe.

*orthodoxies and canons of taste, texts, values), power moral (as with ideas about what 'we' do and what 'they' cannot do or understand as 'we' do)" (Said, 1978, p.12).*

Achille Mbembe's postcolonial study supplements Edward Said in her characterization of the postcolony – that is, the state such as it exists after a colonial power has ceded apparent authority. As she states, “the postcolony is also made up of a series of corporate institutions and a political machinery which, once they are in place, constitute a distinctive regime of violence” (Mbembe, 1992, p.3). This relates as well to Chomsky's definition of corporatocracy, as also applies here, to the study of financial, economic, and corporate interests serving to legitimize the Moroccan state's authority over the Western Sahara. The nature of the postcolony according to Mbembe, however, is also characterized by those within the state serving to perpetuate their oppression through “cheap imitations of power so as to reproduce its epistemology” leading to a standard of practice within postcolonial states in repetition of the authority and domination leveraged against these peoples by colonial administrations. Specifically, this manifests in “how the practices of those who command and of those who are assumed to obey are so entangled as to render them powerless. For it is precisely the situations of powerlessness that are the situations of violence par excellence” (Mbembe, 1992, p.29). This understanding of the postcolony applies then to Morocco's colonial enterprise in the Western Sahara through repetition of colonial behaviors in the name of land reclamation and through the reinterpretation of the relationship between colonizer and colonized.

Through a constructivist lens, in the post-colonial period of Morocco's independence a perceived anti-imperialist sentimentality in Moroccan society can thus be seen to be morphed and changed into a narrative of reclamation and assertion of a pluralistic nationalistic Moroccan identity. This thus leads us to the rationale for the subsequent annexation of the Western Sahara approximately twenty years after Morocco's independence – while itself an act of settler colonialism and a reiteration of European actions in the region – as a necessary action through anti-imperialist thought to reclaim territory lost to European imperialist states. The formation of a new nationalistic identity under the auspices of the newly empowered Moroccan monarchy, led by the Kings themselves ordained with a divine right under the title of Prince of Believers, gives way to an understanding of the reinterpretation and re-construction of the actions taken by a colonial power. Through this understanding, Morocco's annexation and subsequent administration and exploitation of the Western Sahara is focused on here as a form of settler colonialism operated through a constructed nationalistic identity reinforced by narratives of nationalistic claims to land through postcolonial reclamation.

The region of the Western Sahara and Morocco provides the case study for this research. Particularly the acts of settler colonialism enacted by Morocco are analyzed as acts of aggression in a historical analysis as a case study of a state with legitimization from the United States. Specifically, settler-colonialist behavior is the subject for analysis regarding the Western Sahara as the Moroccan settlement of the territory meets criteria for settler colonial activity per definitions laid out by Patrick Wolfe and Lorenzo Veracini. This is due to the direct emplacement of Northern Moroccans, those with loyalties and identities tied to the Kingdom of Morocco, into the territory and the attempts by the Moroccan state to develop a narrative of incorporating the Saharawi people into a greater Moroccan identity – while apparently denying their right to self-determination. The

actions taken by Morocco in this territory do not amount to purely colonial behaviors as the narratives around Moroccan colonization do not attempt to create a subordinate or exploited class amongst the colonized. Instead, there exists an intent to “effectively repress, co-opt, and extinguish indigenous alterities, and productively manage ethnic diversity” (Veracini, 2011, p.3). That settler colonialism is different from colonialism is apparent in the distinction of their operation – that settler colonialism seeks to erase its existence as a colony and instead build a new state or entity (Veracini, 2011). Reflecting back on the neorealist sense of a state operating within the realm of international anarchy to better position itself and better securitize itself, the seizure of territory and its resources can be assessed a purely self-interested act to develop a state’s security, such as is done through the operations of settler colonialism. Specifically, as stated by Patrick Wolfe, “the primary motive for elimination [within settler colonialism] is not race (or religion, ethnicity, grade of civilization, etc.) but access to territory” (Wolfe, 2006, p.388). This can be seen as the case in Morocco, as race, religion, and other dividing lines in Moroccan society are not apparently at play in its settlement of the Western Sahara. Rather there is an attempt to incorporate a territory and its peoples into a greater identity – ‘the Great Morocco’ (*al-Maghrib al-Kabir*) - potentially against the wills of those within the territory itself.

The concept of colonization when studied or discussed typically focuses on those states most notorious for their colonial pasts, those being states typically in Western Europe such as England, France, the Netherlands, Spain, or Portugal, among others. What is more interesting to this study are the repetitions of these behaviors by formally colonized states, in this case Morocco. The historical narratives and nationalistic ideals that motivated some 350,000 Moroccan citizens to move en masse to this territory under King Hassan II are of particular interest to this research (Zunes & Mundy 2020, p.5; Mundy, 2006). As such, in the elaboration on the case of Morocco, this study analyzes colonization and its effects on Morocco’s borders. This applies then towards internal aggressions and an analysis of who are considered ‘others’ in Moroccan society. Fanon’s concepts of subjugation and its effects on the mental health of those subjugated in colonized states are of importance to this study (Fanon, 1961). His writings on the intersections of language, culture, identity, and one’s perceived reality play into the concept of how Morocco’s colonial past shaped its current reality and the ways that it acts in repeating these behaviors in the territory of Western Sahara (ibid). The dominance over Moroccan identity by the French in particular during the period of French control (1907-1956) has dramatically shaped this identity and the concepts of status within Moroccan society; the prevalence of French as a national language and as the most common language of study in higher education has had significant effect on the peoples in Morocco and the shaping of their current reality (Mundy, 2006). It could be said that French ideals during the period of colonialism could thus be maintained in the systems of governing, institutionalism, and education that were established by the ruling French authority. Edward Said’s writings on orientalism are also crucial to the understanding of colonial attitudes and motivations on the part of European states in settling and establishing dominion over other territories; the divisions between the ‘West’ and the ‘East’ - this ‘othering’ of those outside of Europe - is how we understand the origin of European colonialism and its manifestations (Said, 1978). This is clearly represented in the ways in which French identity, structures, language, and influence have been held to a higher standard in modern Morocco, implying an inherent superiority of French culture over the identities and cultures that pertain to Moroccan identity at large.

This study will incorporate these theoretical lenses in its analysis of behaviors and the nature of the ongoing conflict in the Western Sahara. For historical background into the Western Saharan conflict and its contemporary manifestations, this study makes use of writings from Frantz Fanon, Yahia Zoubir, and the works of Stephen Zunes and Jacob Mundy. As discussed, Fanon's writings from the period of the Algerian Revolution offer insight into the nature of the French colonial apparatus in the Maghreb and the nature of violence and subjugation faced by those within the French colonies of North Africa. This in particular will add insight into the chapter on United States' interventionism during the time of Cold War. Yahia Zoubir is a Professor of International Relations and International Management and Director of Research in Geopolitics at KEDGE Business School in France; his writings detail the history and political ideologies in the Maghreb and the influence the United States had in shaping the contemporary nature of Maghreb states, particularly through its support for nationalists during the Cold War. The support for these nationalists in Morocco in particular is necessary in this study's analysis of the annexation of the Western Sahara and the narratives surrounding Morocco's claims and administration of the territory. Stephen Zunes and Jacob Mundy are a Professor of Politics and International Studies at the University of San Francisco and an Assistant Professor of Peace and Conflict Studies at Colgate University respectively; together they have authored *Western Sahara: War, Nationalism, and Conflict Irresolution*, originally printed in 2010. This book covers the history of the region and in particular its ongoing developments, timeline of events, and research from the region and its peoples themselves – information that proves valuable as such first hand research is often hard to find or access. This study utilizes two versions of this text printed in 2010 and then updated in 2020. Their work and analysis of the conflict are of particular interest as they attempt to keep each iteration of their study up to date with current events. As an ongoing research effort, this gives a robust picture of the contemporary conflict and the many intersections of identity politics, regional conflicts, diplomacy, and the POLISARIO movement's resistance to Moroccan nationalism.

To begin this study's analysis, an elaboration of the history of United States-Moroccan relations needs to be accounted for. For the purposes of this study, this begins with the Cold War and the characterization of the United States' foreign policy during this period. As this encompasses the period in which Morocco and Algeria get their independence, both fueled by anti-colonial sentiments of the time, the way these nations exist contemporarily is heavily influenced by United States and USSR intervention at this time.

## 2. The United States and the Cold War

While much has been written on the actions taken by the United States during the prolonged conflict with the USSR, this section focuses on the historical relationships these two superpowers had with the two states most at odds with one another in the Western Saharan conflict – these being Algeria and Morocco. As the nationalist and anti-imperialist movements grew in the Maghreb after World War II the United States found itself in a position having to make the decision whether or not to honor the Atlantic Charter with Great Britain – that both states “pledged to respect the right of all peoples to choose their own form of government and the restoration of sovereign rights and self-rule for those who lost them through force” (Zoubir, 1995, p.60). Initially, rather than honoring

this pact, the United States decided to maintain its alliance with France and maintain the status quo within their North African colonies. Within the Maghreb, United States foreign policy amounted to “accepting the reality of nationalism; guiding the movement rather than opposing it; supporting non-communist nationalist movements in collaboration with the colonial powers” (Zoubir, 1995, P.62) leading to the United States to position itself more strongly in Morocco and Tunisia specifically. This was due to increased relations within these two countries as the leadership of Moroccan and Tunisian nationalist movements were notably more pro-Western and in particular anti-communist (Zoubir, 1995). As a reflection of most United States’ foreign policy and interventions during this period, this can be seen as allowing for state and non-state leadership to act in ways that otherwise would have received the United States’ condemnation except in the context of furthering the interests of the United States in its projection of hegemonic power – including both soft and hard powers.

Both the USSR and the United States had a great deal of difficulty in finding a foothold in the Maghreb – and both were predicating their advances in the region based on the movement of the other, as was the nature of most conflicts during the Cold War. However, both states’ involvement in the Maghreb are not merely relics of the past for study but have a direct impact on the actions and nature of Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia contemporarily. In an example of Realist power dynamics, the USSR and later Russia has acted in the region in an apparent attempt to offset United States and Western influence in the Maghreb – stemming from relations between Algeria and the USSR after the Sand War – the war between Morocco and Algeria over these states’ border in the Sahara. Specifically, “following the Sand War (1963) between Algeria and pro-Western Morocco, Algeria intensified military and political cooperation with the Soviet Union” (Zoubir & Hamitouche, 2020, p.212)

USSR and Russian influence in Algeria from the time of the Cold War until the present is apparent in that the vast majority of Algerian arms and material military support has come from Russia over the course of the last two decades (Zoubir & Hamitouche, 2020, p.214). Even as recent as September 2015, when the Algerian President Bouteflika “finally succeeded in removing his powerful intelligence chief” General Mediene<sup>10</sup>.

Further attempts to bolster United States’ influence in the region against an apparently growing Russian leaning state led to the acquisition of military bases on the part of the United States in Morocco (Zoubir, 1995, p.60). This can be seen as an attempt both to create a buffer state to hedge against perceived Russian incursion into the region as well as to protect American and European economic interests and investments. This came despite growing anti-colonialist movements in the region after Moroccan independence from France. While the United States and Great Britain both pledged in the Atlantic Charter to “to respect the right of all peoples to choose their own form of government and the restoration of sovereign rights and self-rule for those who lost them through force” (Zoubir, 1995, p.60), such policy was leveraged in order to gain support of nationalists and

---

<sup>10</sup> General Mediene studied at a Russian Komitet gosudarstvennoy bezopasnosti (KGB) school in the USSR with a group known as the Tapis Rouge and apparently modeled the intelligence services of Algeria after that of the KGB (Tlemçani, R., 2020, p.70).

to ward off growing socialist movements. Despite this pledge, the United States only seemed to respect the right of self-determination of peoples who were perceived to act in the interests of the United States and its allies. This is the case specifically here regarding the foreign policy of the United States regarding Morocco, Algeria, and the Western Saharan peoples. While this pledge was upheld in the case of protecting Moroccan nationalists in their nation building, it was ignored in instances where support from France could be lost in the Maghreb. The Atlantic Alliance was seen to be of greater importance to American interests in the Maghreb, and thus “France's full and exclusive domination in North Africa had to be recognized. American policymakers were genuinely fearful that any US attempt to alienate France in the region would backfire and only create divisions within the Alliance, a fact which could then be exploited by the Soviet Union and by the local communists” (Zoubir, 1995, Pp. 60-61). Therefore, the United States’ stated goals of support for previously colonized states and their subjugated peoples came second to primary goals in establishing its own power and authority over perceived threats, in this case the USSR. This is a direct instance of Realist theory in the balancing of powers as applied by United States policymakers. While administrations within the United States maintain the rhetoric of support and aid for peoples globally – specifically peoples’ rights to autonomy and self-governance – these stated missions intending to promote concepts such as Democratization and Human Rights come second. In this case, an alliance with France is of greater importance than potentially questioning French rule in North Africa. Put succinctly by Yahia Zoubir:

“Although American policy-makers were conscious of the anti-colonial character of the American public, support for the European colonial powers was preferred as the best safeguard for American national interests... In most dependent areas of the world the security interests of the United States will best be served by a policy of support for the Western Colonial Powers” (Zoubir, 1995, P. 61).

Realism in its various forms dominated the character of the Cold War and led to the formation and development of the conflict in the Western Sahara as it exists today. Rather than stated decolonial narratives espoused by the United States government and policy, the balancing of powers between the USSR and the US was seen as of greater importance. In fact, the need to project United States power to assert itself in the region while not losing ground to the USSR extended as far as to damage the image of the United States as a supporter of colonized peoples – such as the case of “the French bombing of the Tunisian town of Sakiet Sidi-Youssef - where Algerians found refuge - using American-made airplanes that killed scores of civilians, mostly school children” (Zoubir, 1995, p. 75). Given that the Soviet Union was utilizing its rhetoric as a champion for oppressed and colonized, the United States seized the opportunity to trade decolonial values for that of nationalism in the case of Morocco as well as Tunisia (Zoubir, 1995, P. 62). This resulted in the nationalistic character of the governments of both these states following United States’ intervention from 1956 throughout the Cold War (Zoubir, 1995, P.62). In particular, this is notable in the annexation of the Western Sahara itself – specifically, the nationalistic character of de-colonial rhetoric leading to the 1975 annexation of the Western Sahara, known as the Green March, which is covered in more detail in the following section on Morocco’s annexation and settlement of the territory. During the Nixon administration, the Eisenhower doctrine – the policy allowing for states to request economic and military assistance from the United States if threatened by another state – was extended to include Morocco (Zoubir, 1995, P. 73). This covers the period of time wherein the

Moroccan state initiated its annexation of the Western Sahara and therefore extended the reach of United States interventionism and support as “the USA believe[d] that the maintenance of close ties between Morocco and NATO-member states is vital” (Zoubir, 1995, P. 73).

The following section provides detail and an accounting of Morocco’s annexation of the Western Sahara through the Green March. This also encompasses contemporary activity within this territory on the part of the Moroccan State, its occupation and settler colonial behaviors. Of particular importance is the nature of the Moroccan Autonomy Plan for the Sahara, and its political maneuvering to gain international recognition as the best possible administrator of the region.

### 3. Morocco’s Annexation and Settling of the Western Sahara

The territory known as the Western Sahara, previously the Spanish Sahara, was under the control of Spain until 1975. Spain’s authority during this time was disputed and erupted in numerous conflicts internally, leading to the decision of the Spanish government in 1975 to transfer power over to the Saharawi peoples; by October of 1975, Spain had begun negotiations to handover authority in this region to those leading the rebel Sahrawi groups there (Mundy, 2006). However, this same year, Morocco embarked on its annexation of the territory. As soon as Spain was seen to be moving out of the Sahara, a nationalistic movement called the Green March began under the order of King Hassan II. For the Moroccan state to be able to mobilize its peoples to claim ownership over this land, a nationalistic narrative and identity needed to be called upon. The claim that Morocco had rights to ownership over this region comes from a historical assertion that there was uninterrupted Moroccan rule in the Western Sahara. Specifically, “a claim to ties of sovereignty on the ground of an alleged immemorial possession of the territory and an uninterrupted exercise of authority” (Janis, 1976) as reviewed by the International Court of Justice. The Moroccan state staked this claim on the basis that the ruling Sultan and subservient local authorities had longstanding “allegiance of various tribes” maintained by their caids or sheikhs (Janis, 1976). This claim then is based entirely upon the alleged subservience of Saharawi tribes to the Sherifian Empire and therefore incorporates these peoples into the greater pluralistic Moroccan identity. It has been important that Morocco make this claim so that they avoid staking their authority over the region on the basis of land and resources, but instead on notions of identity and historical rights. Establishing a solid line of linking identity and subservience of those in the region to Moroccan rulers helped lead to what was the division of lands in the basis on to whom they were subject to, “what was called the Bled Makhzen, areas actually subject to the Sultan, and partly of what was called the Bled Siba, areas in which the tribes were not submissive to him” (Janis, 1976). At the time of the Green March, it is important to note that the Northern region of the territory was designated as Bled Siba (Janis, 1976).

As Moroccan claims over this region grew within the state, calls were being made to retake the land that was, in their estimation, taken from them during colonization. These ideas of ownership were fanned by Moroccan leadership, and the notion of al-Maghrib al-Kabir, the Great Morocco, “gained currency among the nationalist elite and was quickly introduced into the postcolonial pedagogy. It was asserted, first of all, that Morocco should seek to ‘reincorporate’ the remaining Spanish colonial enclaves” (Zunes & Mundy 2020, p.xxiii) including territories in the North of



Morocco still currently owned by Spain, as well as the Western Sahara. This claim can also be further expanded, as it would encompass not only these regions administered by Spain, but also “parts of western Algeria and Northern Mali” (Zunes & Mundy, 2020, p.xxiii). The Green March, conducted under the rule of King Hassan II, involved the movement of 350,000 Moroccans and military escorts directly into the disputed territory following Spain’s exit (Zunes & Mundy, 2020; Mundy, 2006). This movement of Moroccans into the region sent a clear message that would be hard to contest militarily as it involved a massive civilian population loyal to Morocco and to the King. This mass movement was not only a nationalistic endeavor, founded on this principal of rebuilding the Great Morocco lost to colonial powers, but also a direct act of settler colonialism in itself. By incorporating Saharawis into the greater Moroccan identity, there exists an element of erasure of these peoples’ independent cultural identities. This constitutes a utilization of a nationalistic narrative on the part of the Moroccan state, legitimized through an anti-colonial narrative, to then allow for the Moroccan settler-colonial project. Taking from Patrick Wolfe’s conceptualization of settler colonialism, this erasure and redesigning of Saharawi identity into the nationalistic Moroccan identity is essential in a settler colonial enterprise through the alteration of society and eliminating those elements that do not conform.

The actions inherent to settler colonial activity also occupy the physical space and land itself. Settler colonial behavior is predicated on the acquisition of land – and thus restricting movement or access to that land by native or ‘other’ populations. The restrictions on movement and being confined to specific space on the part of the Saharawis – and specifically the POLISARIO – while the colonizer is able to move and spread freely throughout the space constitute a significant element of settler colonialism according to Lorenzo Veracini (Veracini, 2010). Reinforcing this, the Berm – or the Western Sahara Wall – was constructed in order to separate the territory that is administered by the Moroccan state and the territory wherein the POLISARIO still exist; this structure was constructed by the Moroccan military between 1981 and 1987 (Zunes & Mundy, 2020). The use of the Moroccan military to isolate those that do not conform to the Moroccan nationalistic narrative not only restricts these peoples’ movement but also reinforces the very nature of its settler colonial project. Taking these settler colonial activities in their totality, whether this amounts to form of violence depends on the operations of settler colonialism in the case of Morocco, and whether Moroccan settlement of the Western Sahara amounts to an erasure of Saharawi peoples, their rights; erasure of native populations has been the outcome of several settler colonial states and territories as the “settler-colonial logic of elimination has manifested as genocidal” though is “not invariably genocidal” (Wolfe, 2006, p.387). Given the perpetuation of this activity, the systematization and institutionalization of its process and the breadth of land and peoples sought to be encompassed into the nationalistic Moroccan conceptualization, these elements amount to several instances of violence perpetrated against the Saharawi peoples through the erasure of a Saharawi identity with the nationalist pluralistic Moroccan identity being touted by the Moroccan state.

Referring back to post-colonial theory, as Fanon states, the “violence which governed the ordering of the colonial world, which tirelessly punctuated the destruction of the indigenous social fabric, and demolished unchecked the systems of reference of the country's economy, lifestyles, and modes of dress, this same violence will be vindicated and appropriated when, taking history into

their own hands, the colonized swarm into the forbidden cities” (Fanon, 2004 [1961], p.5). Such an understanding of violence can be applied to the contemporary Moroccan settling of the Sahara and the actions taken against the Saharawi population. As Fanon justifies the revolutionary violence of the Algerian Liberation Front with the intent of dismantling the colonizers, the same line of reasoning would then justify the POLISARIO’s ongoing conflict with the Moroccan state. Fanon continues in his understanding of colonial violence as including notions of the “supremacy of white values,” stating that “the colonist only quits undermining the colonized once the latter have proclaimed loud and clear that white values reign supreme” (Fanon, 2004 [1961], p.8). As the Moroccan settlement of the Sahara becomes increasingly hinged on the notion that Moroccan administration of the territory is for the greater good of those who can benefit from their infrastructural and economic development, Fanon’s understanding of the supplantation of the colonized with the ideals of the colonizer thus also applies.

Likewise, the treatment of Saharawi peoples within Morocco can be attributed to an extension of European notions of orientalism being applied internally within Morocco. Such an understanding is thus applied by the Moroccan state regarding the constructed identity of the POLISARIO as being outside the pluralistic Moroccan identity. While the Moroccan state has a stated aim of incorporating Saharawi peoples into the newer nationalistic Moroccan identity, this is predicated on the allowance of Morocco as the arbiter of land use for their own benefit. Similar to the narrative used by the Spanish colonial government during its period of control over the Sahara, the justification for colonial exploits in the territory and the violence waged against those Sahrawis who exist there stems from an idea that these people are incapable of acting in their own self-interest; that these people are unable to utilize these resources for their own benefit, and that the Moroccan state and those foreign interests invested in the territory better understand, are better equipped, and are more capable of using this land and its resources.

Until the Trump administration in the United States, the position of the US government was that the Western Sahara was a disputed territory with no singular state having administrative control of the entire territory. In a series of negotiations with leaders of various states with the intention of normalizing relations with Israel, Jared Kushner (Former Senior Advisor to President Trump) negotiated terms with the Moroccan state leadership to forge a relationship with the state of Israel in return for acknowledgement of the Western Sahara territory as Moroccan (Holland, 2020). The rationale given for this normalization of relations between Morocco and Israel were stated to be diplomatic and economic. The extent of this agreement is significant, and among other items such as increased trade, “include[s] the reopening of liaison offices, trade relations, and the launch of direct flights between the two countries” (Hekking, 2020a). Likewise, this agreement includes economic investments on the part of the United States in Morocco – from a statement directly from the United States Ambassador to Morocco at the time, “the US will announce measures to improve trade and economic ties with Morocco and promote American investment in the country.” (Hekking, 2020a).

### 3.1 State Occupation and Green Washing

In order to sustain its administration and effective occupation of the Western Sahara, the Moroccan

state has been using the recent global push for renewable energy resources. In this effort, there seems an apparent ‘greenwashing’ of its interests in the Sahara. ‘Green washing’ as a term, to put simply, is the generation of a narrative of working within international frameworks of being more environmentally friendly, developing renewable resources, or otherwise spinning certain actions or conventions to be focused on environmentalism – all as a sort of smoke screen to cover up or justify other actions. In sum, for the Moroccan state, greenwashing is being used in its actions in the Western Sahara as a justification for its continued occupation in the territory. This despite the International Court of Justice and the European Court of Justice rulings as recent as September 2021 that Morocco’s continued exploitation of the resources of the Western Sahara is illegal – including the European Union’s complacency in trade of these resources. The Moroccan state’s development of energy infrastructure in the territory gives credence and legitimization to their continued occupation – especially in the case of renewable energy. Similarly, diplomatic and trade ties to other states can become hinged on their acceptance of the Moroccan administration of the territory as Moroccan state industries continue to develop energy infrastructure with the intent to export to neighboring European and African states. If Morocco is able to create a reliance on resources extracted from the territory under their administration, then this furthers state acceptance and legitimization of their control. This would also increase the Moroccan state’s own reliance on this territory as the energy required for their own self-reliance comes increasingly from the Sahara – while also incentivizing more settlers to move from Morocco’s North to work in and develop these industries and infrastructure as the available jobs and work increase to maintain and develop these projects. “Saharawis are today a minority in their own homeland, outnumbered by Moroccan settlers that have either permanently moved into the territory or stay for extended periods as seasonal workers. Settlers are attracted by job opportunities created by the industries that have emerged on the back of Morocco’s exploitation of the territory’s resources – a development that has become more profitable precisely because of the renewable projects” (Western Sahara Resource Watch, 2021, p.9). All of the energy development in the country is carried out by the state-owned energy company ONEE (Office National De L’electricite Et De L’eau Potable).

The goal of developing renewable energy resources in the region has served as a valuable narrative for the Moroccan state to legitimize their control over the territory. However, at present, energy from renewables such as wind farms in the region are providing power to other mineral extraction efforts – the “[w]ind parks that already operate in occupied Western Sahara provide energy for Morocco’s exploitation of non-renewable resources. In fact, practically the entire phosphate sector in the territory – operated by a Moroccan state-owned company and increasingly maligned by investors worldwide – runs on wind energy” (Western Sahara Resource Watch, 2021, p.9)

The following details come from a Western Sahara Resource Watch (WSRW) October 2021 report titled *Greenwashing Occupation: How Morocco’s renewable energy projects in occupied Western Sahara prolong the conflict over the last colony in Africa*. To quote, “Morocco is switching to solar and wind power to fulfill its energy needs and to reduce its dependency on energy imports. In occupied Western Sahara, the potential is enormous” (Western Sahara Resource Watch, 2021, p.4).

“It estimates that the energy produced from wind in occupied Western Sahara could constitute 47.20% of Morocco’s total wind capacity by the year 2030. By that same year, the share of solar power generated in the territory could be between 9.70% and 32.64% of Morocco’s total solar

capacity - likely towards the higher end of that range” (Western Sahara Resource Watch, 2021, p.3). The push towards the development of wind and solar farms in the Sahara has been rigorously studied by Moroccan institutions and state companies. “According to the Moroccan think-tank Policy Center for the New South (formerly OCP Policy Center), each km<sup>2</sup> of desert receives an annual amount of solar energy equivalent to 1.5 million barrels of oil, which demonstrates a theoretical capacity of the world’s deserts to supply several hundred times the planet’s electricity needs” (Western Sahara Resource Watch, 2021, p.5). Echoing this, the World Bank has made its own estimates of offshore wind power in the Western Sahara as “169 percent greater than that of Morocco.” (Western Sahara Resource Watch, 2021, p.5). Put together, the energy potential of the territory alone makes it essential for the Moroccan state’s energy independence as well as their potential as an energy exporter to both Europe and other regions on the African continent.

This strategy of greenwashing its actions in the Western Sahara is not new. Over the last decade, the Moroccan state and the king have increased their investments within the territory in order to both increase their energy reserves and improve their image internationally. Projects in the Sahara have been developed in order to give Morocco carbon credits through the use of companies owned by King Mohammed VI himself. For instance, in 2010, “the Moroccan company Nareva, wholly owned by the Moroccan king himself, had requested carbon credits from the UN Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) for the Foug El Oued wind farm” (Western Sahara Resource Watch, 2021, p.27).

Through a social constructivist lens, one can see how the need for the Moroccan state to create a narrative shift through a new social understanding of the state’s extractive efforts. Foucault and Chomsky inform this understanding of the construction of social norms through rhetoric – and specifically into what can be seen as settler colonial extractive efforts taken in the Western Sahara. This is applied to the concept of colonialism and how discourse around extractivism through colonial activity in the case of the Western Sahara saw a narrative shift in the nature of land exploitation from the colonizer to the colonized - that the Moroccan narrative of land reclamation justify the actions taken by the Moroccan state in the territory in question, and later the extraction of resources fit into international norms of ‘green’ policy. Meanwhile, Noam Chomsky’s idea of a ‘corporatocracy’ applies to the actions taken by the various companies and actors in the Western Sahara for the interests of the Moroccan state – that is, the many international corporations and the Moroccan national industries that maintain extractive interests in the region ranging from materials to energy resources in the form of wind and solar farms. The apparently intentional acts of ‘greenwashing’ activities in the Western Sahara fall firmly into Chomsky’s writings on the nature of think tanks and corporate interests taking control of the narratives of what is taking place in the region.

### 3.2 The Moroccan Autonomy Plan

In order to receive international validation for the Moroccan sovereignty of the Western Sahara, the Moroccan state has been developing what it deems the ‘Moroccan Autonomy Plan,’ developed by CORCAS (Fr: Conseil royal consultatif pour les affaires sahariennes; En: The Royal Advisory

Council for Saharan Affairs). In a 2007 letter to the United Nations written by El Mostafa Sahel<sup>11</sup> - the Permanent Representative of Morocco to the United Nations at the time – the outline for this plan is laid out. Titled “Morocco’s commitment to a final political solution,” the letter states that the Moroccan state intends to exercise full sovereignty over the territory while allowing for “the Sahara populations” to “run their affairs democratically, through legislative, executive and judicial bodies enjoying exclusive powers” and also guarantees that “[t]hey will have the financial resources needed for the region’s development in all fields, and will take an active part in the nation’s economic, social and cultural life” (Sahel, 2007). Meanwhile, “[t]he State will keep its powers in the royal domains, especially with respect to defence [sic], external relations and the constitutional and religious prerogatives of His Majesty the King” (Ibid). The letter goes into more detail, stating that the populations of the proposed Sahara Autonomous Region will retain powers over local administration, police, economic development, trade, industry, taxation, infrastructure, as well as other sectors (Ibid). A condition of this proposal dictates that the financial resources to be allocated to the autonomous authority would come not only from taxes collected by the regional authorities but also “from the exploitation of natural resources allocated to the Region... The share of proceeds collected by the State from the exploitation of natural resources located in the Region” and “[p]roceeds from the Region’s assets” (Ibid). It also dictates that the Moroccan state would represent the Sahara internationally “in consultation with the Sahara autonomous Region” (Ibid). Notably, this proposal is intended to supplant the MINURSO referendum vote in the region with instead a referendum vote headed by the Moroccan state.

The Moroccan state’s proposals have all been directly rejected by the POLISARIO and Algeria given that they would offer no support to any proposal that does not guarantee independence – as well as disputes over which peoples would be given representation in the Moroccan autonomy plan, and whether Moroccan migrants into the region would be given the ability to vote in a proposed Morocco-led referendum (Ruiz Miguel, 2005). In a continuation in this study’s analysis of settler colonial activity taken on the part of the Moroccan state, the conditions of the autonomy proposal restrict the indigenous population’s access or ‘entitlements’ to the resources of this land as well as their use and economic value – by ensuring that the Moroccan state has authority over the exploitation of these resources and deciding what portion their economic value would go to the ‘autonomous region.’ This is explained through Veracini’s theory of Administrative Transfer, that as administrative borders are moved or ‘redrawn’ by a colonizing power, the indigenous population thus loses their entitlements to what exists within the land they occupy (Veracini, 2006). At present, the POLISARIO and Algeria both reject the Moroccan autonomy plan as it does not constitute

---

<sup>11</sup> It is important to note that El Mostafa Sahel, a former Permanent Representative of Morocco to the United Nations, has had a number of positions of import close to the King of Morocco and Parliament. These include various ministerial positions starting from Minister of Maritime Fisheries and the Merchant Navy in 1995. Of note are his positions from November 7, 2002, to June 8, 2004, as Minister of the Interior and from January 21, 2009, until his death on October 7, 2012, as an advisor to the King (OT El Jadida, 2017). Also of note is his position as CEO of SOMED (Fr: Société Maroc-Emirat de Développement) – defined on their website (somed.ma) as such (translated from French): “SOMED is a private holding company with Moroccan-Emirati capital, working for the economic and social development of Morocco through the realization of investments that create jobs and added value. The SOMED Group is organized into strategic business areas: hotels, real estate, industry and trading, automotive, education, agri-food and fishing. In addition, the Group also manages financial holdings” (SOMED Development, 2022). This can be seen as one instance of cronyism inherent to many businesses and governance in this region.

independence for the territory and, while giving some degree of autonomy, gives the Moroccan state full control of the territory's resources through state-controlled industries, representation of the territory internationally, and control over what the Moroccan state deems to be issues of national security, defense, and defense "territorial integrity" (Sahel, 2007).

More important to the Moroccan state is international recognition of their administration of the Western Sahara in order to increase foreign investment, trade, and grow its industries there. This can be seen as the primary motive and rationale for the Moroccan Autonomy plan – as a source of legitimization of its activities in the Western Sahara on its own terms. Looking back to Hannah Arendt's discussion on the legitimization of violence and power, this applies to the political and diplomatic aims of the Moroccan state in developing its own autonomy plan. To quote Arendt, "[l]egitimacy, when challenged, bases itself on an appeal to the past, while justification relates to an end that lies in the future... Its justification loses in plausibility the farther its intended end recedes into the future" (Arendt, 1970, p.52). What began as an appeal to the Great Morocco of the past prompted the Green March, at least in rhetoric, developed in a strive for legitimization. However, as time goes on the continuation of conflict in the territory further erodes Morocco's claim to rebuild their lost state – and eliminates most options other than an opportunistic move on the part of the Moroccan State under King Hassan II. Instead of being anti-imperialist, the Green March instead seems more an opportunity to seize and dominate territory that did not have a formal state or government. Looking again to Hannah Arendt, "[i]f a foreign conqueror is confronted by an impotent government and by a nation unused to the exercise of political power, it is easy for him to achieve such domination. In all other cases the difficulties are great indeed, and the occupying invader will try immediately to establish Quisling governments, that is, to find a native power base to support his dominion" (Arendt, 1970, p.52).

In the autonomy plan itself, there seems an acknowledgement that European states and the United States would not acquiesce fully to direct Moroccan annexation and settlement of the territory as this violence cannot exist without justification – publicly so as the mission of the referendum has been ongoing since the Green March. However, Western states are accepting enough if the Moroccan state can be seen to be operating in a way that is fitting for trade without direct acts of violence. Therefore, to conform to the global norms that would disallow direct subjugation or supplantation of peoples, we see this autonomy plan that promises to give some degree of autonomy except in the realms of resources and finances which the state seeks to fully control. This focus on capital and investments at the expense of peoples harkens back to Fanon's conceptions of the interplay between capitalism and colonial behaviors. Fanon states:

"The monopolistic fraction of the metropolitan bourgeoisie will not support a government whose policy is based solely on the power of arms. What the metropolitan financiers and industrialists expect is not the devastation of the colonial population but the protection of their 'legitimate interests' using economic agreements. Capitalism therefore objectively colludes with the forces of violence that erupt in colonial territories" (Fanon, 2004 [1961], p.26-27)

Therefore, using this perspective, the Moroccan state seeks legitimization of its behaviors and actions in the Western Sahara not on the basis of the human rights it can offer to the peoples of that territory but instead from those state which can be appeased through the protection of their

investments and financial projects – and protection of the mechanisms of extraction of resources of the territory itself.

International support for the Moroccan autonomy plan for the Sahara has been an issue of contention since it was publicly put forward to the United Nations. For the United States, the George W. Bush Administration initially supported the plan for autonomy laid out by the Moroccan state – a position that was reversed by the Obama administration in 2009 (World Tribune, 2009). During the Carter and Reagan administrations, the position of the United States was of support for Morocco as an extension of the Cold War – and thus a strategic ally in the region – through the declaration of the POLISARIO as a Soviet ally (Slimi, 2009). However, during this period the United States did not offer full support for a Moroccan plan of administration nor autonomy of the region, preferring instead to offer only military support for the Moroccan state to ward off potential Soviet incursion (Ibid). During the administrations of George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton, the United States stayed neutral in an apparent attempt to maintain its economic interests in the Maghreb at large – that is, a close allyship with Morocco and economic involvement in Algeria related to global petroleum trade (Ibid). The Obama administration’s apparent support for the POLISARIO thus represented a significant change in rhetoric from the White House, given the specific declaration that “[t]he United States no longer supports or endorses the Moroccan autonomy plan” (World Tribune, 2009). The Trump administration’s declaration of support for the Moroccan state and its actions and interests in the territory then is the first firm public stance in support for the Moroccan autonomy plan by the United States.

As of March 21<sup>st</sup>, 2022, an apparent international movement in support of the Moroccan autonomy plan has begun to take place. There seems to be a specific rationale in this timing that is explored in the following section on Morocco’s territorial and economic value to the United States and its allies. While there remain many conflicting opinions from members of various state governments, the list of European states that have offered support for the Moroccan-led initiative include the following: Spain, Germany, and France (Minder, 2022; Arredondas, 2021; Hekking, 2020c; France 24, 2022). Notably, this reversal of opinion comes after the initially negative response from members of the governments of these states after the Trump administration’s declaration of support in 2020. In the cases of Spain and Germany in particular, it seems that taking a stance in favor of the Moroccan autonomy plan has been a condition of reinstating diplomatic ties with Morocco.

This bid to institutionalize Morocco’s control over the Western Sahara thus refers back to this study’s ontological positioning in constructivism. The Moroccan state organizes its control through the manipulation of social and public discourse surrounding the nature of the POLISARIO, Saharawi peoples, Moroccan state intentions for the territory, and the potential ‘good’ or ‘value’ Moroccan administration over this region can bring. These social understandings serve to legitimize various forms of aggression as they manifest from within Morocco – that is, internally and between internationally recognized Morocco and the Western Saharan territory. These amount to aggressions in the form of denying land and resource rights to the indigenous population. Likewise, there are physical aggressive acts against those that are outspoken in the territory, specifically in the form of Saharawi protests in the city of Laayoune – specifically violent repression of Saharawi protests and speech in November 2010 wherein “Moroccan security forces forcibly dismantled the Gdim Izik tent camp...” which consisted of “Sahrawis protesting against

their perceived marginalization and a lack of jobs and adequate housing” (Amnesty International, 2010). In this specific instance, “Thirteen people, 11 members of the security forces and two Sahrawis, died as a result of the violence that erupted in the camp and in Laayoune” (Amnesty International, 2010). Through contextualizing these acts of aggression, they can be compared to similar acts performed by other states contained within this study. It can be seen through the development of the Moroccan Autonomy Plan that European states influenced the practices and means by which Moroccan authorities have initiated and acted, up to the present day, in the annexation of this territory.

Similarly, the social divisions within Moroccan society that characterized the colonial state under France, as well as the divisions in the Western Sahara under Spain, manifest today in the nature of social structures and potentially colonial practices reiterated by the Moroccan state in its annexation of territory. These amount to repetitions of projections of authority, as proposed by Achille Mbembe’s characterization of the postcolony. While the explicit motivations behind European colonialism and apparent colonial actions taken by Morocco are different, the institutionalization of their operation have similarities. In general, these can be said to consist of European narratives of ‘civilizing’ a territory not their own whereas the Moroccan narrative regarding the Western Sahara is characterized by a notion of reclaiming lost territory and being the best possible authority over the management of its land and resources. It is the opinion of this study that there are potential overlaps regarding ‘othering’ the inhabitants within the territory, referring back to Said’s concept of the ‘other’, as well as narratives of ‘developing’ the territory through the displacement of indigenous peoples as well as supplanting cultural practices with one that is ‘superior.’ By denying the right of self-determination to the indigenous Saharawi populations of the territory – and relegating them to one singular ‘other’ identity rather than a collection of populations – the Moroccan state is able to execute domination over them.

As states have acknowledged or refuted the Moroccan Autonomy Plan as a realistic or ‘best case scenario’ for the administration of the Sahara, the Moroccan state and state media have responded harshly to critique and held aloft those that recognized its plan. The following section outlines responses by the Moroccan state towards those states that have been critical and, in the cases of Spain and Germany, later rescinded their objections to the Moroccan Autonomy Plan. Specifically covered here are the fluctuations of/and increase in hostile actions and rhetoric from Morocco towards the Western Sahara itself, Algeria, Spain, and Germany. While Morocco has significant historical relationships with Spain and Algeria in particular, these subsections are focused primarily on actions and rhetoric from the period following the Trump administration proclaiming the Western Sahara as Moroccan territory. Historical examples are provided to contextualize contemporary behaviors when necessary.

#### 4. Moroccan State’s Increase in Hostile Rhetoric and Actions

Hostile rhetoric and actions taken by the Moroccan State are not limited to only internal behaviors. Though the country relies heavily on trade with and financial investment from the European Union - as well as the United States and Algeria - this has not prevented the state from aggressive politicking. By utilizing the legitimization of its control over the Sahara, the Moroccan state has



acted and reacted in short order against states that may be perceived to delegitimize its control. This is presumably due to both the influence of the United States enabling the Moroccan state to push more aggressively for its own internal interests, as well as the unique economic positioning of Morocco as a manufacturing and agricultural hub for Europe, as well as its geographical positioning at the Strait of Gibraltar, and the vast wealth extracted from the waters off the shore of the Sahara in the form of fishing conducted under license by Spanish ships (Smith, 2015). Morocco has been able to leverage the significant international investment in the Sahara for energy and natural resources, as well as international reliance on its trade and labor, to force states to recognize its Autonomy Plan for the territory. In order to defend its interests in the territory and quash any potential sources of contention to the Moroccan State's authority over the Sahara, the state security apparatus has systematically enforced restrictions on what is allowed in public discourse. Amnesty International maintains reports on the Moroccan state's efforts to harshly move against anyone that would dissent against Morocco's authority in the region, as well as journalists, activists, and others. Amnesty International's report on this in 2019 stated their assessment as such:

*“...authorities harassed journalists, bloggers, artists and activists for expressing their views peacefully, sentencing at least five to prison terms for ‘insulting’ public officials and apparently targeting others with spyware. They restricted the rights to freedom of association and assembly by preventing some groups critical of the authorities from operating and using unnecessary or excessive force to disperse demonstrations in Morocco and Western Sahara” (Amnesty International, 2019).*

The Moroccan state has been able to act aggressively internally in order to control the rhetoric and messaging of its administration of the territory - outside of its borders the state has taken to aggressive and decisive diplomatic and media tactics in order to persuade acceptance of its administration of the territory. As this section explores, following the 2020 declaration by the Trump Administration, the Moroccan state has leveraged a number of means including border security and trade relations to motivate otherwise reticent foreign state leadership to accept the legitimization of Morocco's control.

#### 4.1 Morocco in the Western Sahara

The conflict between Morocco and the POLISARIO front has flared up once again with the POLISARIO Front having declared war on the Moroccan state on November 17, 2020 (Manzanaro, 2020). This reignition of the conflict arose from a series of events over the course of a few weeks. After the Security Council vote at the end of October 2020 to extend the referendum, the POLISARIO Front called upon the OHCHR to disallow the Moroccan National Council for Human Rights from actions in the territory and to respect the Sahrawi government's right to self-governing (Sahara Press Service, 2020). Their claims of human rights abuses on the part of the Moroccan state are where they stake their desire to not be subjected to the Moroccan National Council for Human Rights. After perceived inaction on the part of the UN, the POLISARIO Front blockaded material transport routes near Guerguerat, on the border between Mauritania and the Moroccan-controlled Western Sahara, preventing the movement of some two hundred trucks (Toutate, 2020). The region is considered a 'buffer zone' in the conflict, and by now declaring war on Morocco the Moroccan Special forces have entered the region to “*restore free circulation of civilian and*

*commercial traffic*” (Al Jazeera, 2020). While this conflict is brewing, the Moroccan state has simultaneously embarked on further establishing itself in this region, specifically in the town of Guerguerat, by beginning construction on a large mosque (Hekking, 2020b). Again, this sort of action is bent on signaling to their opposition that the Moroccan state is intent on establishing itself in the territory of the Western Sahara both culturally and physically. On March 25, 2022, “Units of the Sahrawi People's Liberation Army (SPLA) carried out attacks Friday on the entrenchments of the occupation forces in the areas of Laagad and Aguirat Ould Ablal in the Mahbas sector” (Sahara Press Service, 2022b).

The strategy of the Moroccan state is clear: to build up established towns and city centers, to create routines and stability on the part of those who hold tightly to their Moroccan citizenship and loyalties, and to destabilize and create insecurity for those who do not fit their narrative and identities. Looking back towards this study’s constructivist lens and specifically to Alexander Wendt, from Wendt’s definitions of these concepts and how they arise, “*social structures are defined, in part, by shared understandings, expectations, or knowledge. These constitute the actors in a situation and the nature of their relationships, whether cooperative or conflictual*” (Wendt, 1995). Utilizing this understanding, this study looks at both Moroccan and Saharawi nationalism as socially constructed narratives stemming from their respective colonial struggles. The Moroccan state, through its nationalistic narratives, seeks to build the idea of a historical Great Morocco. That is, it is trying to establish – and essentially enforce – their understanding and expectation for the nature of the Sahara and its resources. In their constructed identity, the Sahara and the Saharawis are Moroccan – part of the larger construct of the lost great Moroccan state – *Al-Mghrib Al-Kabir*. This comes counter to the Saharawi nationalist narratives held by the POLISARIO front. As covered previously in this study, the basis of this ‘Great Morocco’ was built by Moroccan nationalists in the post-colonial period of Morocco’s history and was reinforced by United States support and intervention during the period of the Cold War. One of the narratives surrounding the construction of *Al-Maghrib Al-Kabir* is the reclamation of territory that was lost due to colonization by Spain, France, and other states. From the outset of the annexation, Saharawis took issue with the imposition of a constructed Moroccan identity. As this narrative came into conflict with the self-identity of Saharawi people, “*Western Saharan nationalists have constructed themselves as the natives, whereas Moroccans are the settlers*” (Zunes & Mundy 2020, p.xxiv). This countered Moroccan nationalists’ anti-colonial claims, and thus has been a motivating factor for both the generation of constructed Saharawi and Moroccan nationalist identities as well as the construction of the annexation and rhetoric surrounding activities taken there. As this has gone on over time, the identities of the parties involved in the case of Sahara have become more and more established and hence more harshly divided, and the definitions of material power between them have shifted in meaning as needed by the Moroccan state in its attempts to acquire them. While material resources were never a basis of Morocco’s claim to the territory, their actions in immediately seizing and exploiting them betray this fact. By taking control of Spain’s mines and other extractivist activities immediately following the annexation, their immediate motives are clear.

The formation of identities that can be ‘othered’ outside of Moroccan society and thus be relegated to those that the state can sacrifice pertain specifically to the POLISARIO. The Moroccan state’s classification of the POLISARIO as a terrorist organization for instance, as well as demonizing

them and their ties to Algeria as a regional rival, has led to a harsh stance held by Moroccan nationalists,

*“...the Western Sahara conflict presents a double affront: it seeks not only to undo Morocco (again), but also to do so through the validation of boundaries imposed through the original sin of colonialism. Moroccan nationalism strongly asserts that colonialism, adding insult to injury, invented Spanish Sahara and to a lesser extent Algeria—both largely at the expense of the precolonial Moroccan state’s alleged territory”* (Zunes & Mundy 2020, p.xxiii).

Part of this declaration of the POLISARIO as a terrorist organization is to garner further support from the United States in the greater War on Terror – and to dissuade further support. As Moroccan nationalism manifested itself in the annexation of the Sahara and the attempts to create a greater Moroccan identity, as the Saharawi peoples and specifically the POLISARIO found themselves in opposition to this. While the POLISARIO was initially founded as a socialist national liberation movement as the conflict against Moroccan nationalism continued, the organization constructed its identity as a Saharawi nationalist front. As the Moroccan identity is at odds with the existence of groups opposed to the imposition of a Great Morocco as a regional hegemon, the generation of ‘indigenous nationalism’ *“presented a direct challenge to these ideas and thus to the Moroccan nationalist worldview. For Sahrawi nationalisms, the conflict is just as much a matter of identity, a democratic claim to their exclusive right to the territory”* (Zunes & Mundy 2020, p.xxiii). These Sahrawi groups that form the POLISARIO Front, SADR, and even Sahrawis in the Moroccan controlled parts of Western Sahara are seen as the ‘other’ by those that hold strong to a Moroccan identity due to Sahrawi groups holding an *“implicit counter assertion that they are not and never will be Moroccans”* (Zunes & Mundy 2020, p.xxiv). This comes counter to another claim of religious uniformity through these parties as in the 1976 International Court of Justice advisory opinion it was stated that the disparate nomadic tribes in the region were of Islamic faith (Janis, 1976), which remains true to this day; Islam is the fundamental religious ideology held by groups on both sides of this conflict.

## 4.2 Morocco and Algeria

Morocco and Algeria have been in a state of conflict since Algeria got its independence from France after the Algerian Revolution. Part of this stems from the directly anti-West stance of Algeria following its independence while Morocco was seen as more friendly or at least more willing to have positive relations with Europe and the United States. This led to the intervention of the United States in Morocco and Tunisia to counter the more USSR and China aligned Algeria. Through the use of Moroccan and Tunisian nationalism, growth of economic co-operation, and a closer military partnership, the United States directly intervened in this conflict. As established in this study, the adherence to realist theory in the case of the United States’ attempts to balance powers against the USSR during the Cold War greatly shaped the nature of relations between these two countries. This enabled the prolongment and increase in aggressions historically, for instance the case of the FLN (Fr: Front de libération nationale; En: Algerian National Liberation Front) turning instead towards “the East bloc for weaponry to fight the French, a threat which the Algerians eventually carried out” (Zoubir, 1995, P. 73). In the case of the Western Sahara, the United States’ realist philosophy towards the USSR led to the United States condoning the

annexation and occupation of the Western Sahara as Algeria had had such strong relations with the USSR (Lagdaf & flici, 2020, pp.256-257). However, since the September 11 attacks in the United States and the beginning of the War on Terror, this issue has become more contentious for the United States. Algeria has become an important security partner of the United States (Lagdaf & flici, 2020, pp.256-257) – therefore until the 2020 declaration of support for Morocco, it had been the strategy of various administrations to balance between these two states in the conflict.

Diplomatic relations between Morocco and Algeria have rapidly deteriorated as covered in this study since 2019. While there has been a long-standing conflict between the two, this has been limited to rhetoric and the occasional war of words over the Western Sahara and the POLISARIO. Since 2019 however, Algeria has officially condemned the United States' and other states' acknowledgement of Morocco's territorial rights to the Western Sahara (Kasraoui, 2020). Algerian media has also been pushing more aggressive rhetoric regarding Morocco. Algeria – through state media and President Abdelmadjid Tebboune – continues to make statements in favor of the self-determination of the Sahrawi peoples of the Western Sahara. Morocco responded in 2021 by making a public statement supporting the self-determination of the Kabyle people within Algeria in an apparent redirection against Algeria's support for the self-determination of Saharawi people (Africanews, 2021c). This came in the form of statements from the Moroccan Ambassador to the UN recognizing the Kabyle separatists in Algeria, stating that "the valiant Kabyle people deserve, more than any other, to fully enjoy their right to self-determination" (Dworkin, 2022). This has led Algerian state media to accuse the United States and Israel of working with Morocco to destabilize Algeria through support for Kabyle separatists (France 24, 2020a). These claims extended to blaming Morocco and Israel specifically for wildfires allegedly started by the Kabyle separatists (Africanews, 2021a; France 24, 2021a; Aljazeera, 2021), despite wildfires in the North of Morocco at the same time due to the ongoing drought. Allegedly, according to Algerian media, there exists collaboration between the United States, Morocco, and Israel to delegitimize Algeria in the region – despite the United States' ongoing security collaborations with Algeria.

Algeria has continued to condemn apparent acts of aggression from the Moroccan military as well as targeted strikes that have been conducted by the Royal Moroccan Armed Forces. This is an apparent attempt to continue to counter the Moroccan construction and shaping of its actions in the territory. The Moroccan state and its media apparatuses continue to push for the idealized nature of the Moroccan annexation – that of increased development, investment, growth, and international cooperation. Algerian media highlights any act of hostilities in the region, for instance it offered a condemnation of a military strike taken on a civilian truck convoy traveling between Morocco and Mauritania in April 2022 (Chikhi & Eljehtimi, 2022). Likewise, Algeria offered condemnation of a similar strike – allegedly conducted via Israeli drone – in November 2021 along a similar route; a statement from the office of the Algerian president concluded that "[s]everal factors indicate that the Moroccan occupation forces in the Western Sahara carried out this cowardly assassination with a sophisticated weapon" (Agence France-Presse, 2021).

Further deterioration of relations comes due to the Algerian state allowing the leader of the POLISARIO – Brahim Ghali – to reside within the country while Morocco considers him to be a war criminal and terrorist (France 24, 2021b). This has been a point of contention between the two states but has recently seen greater significance due to Alegria's alleged assistance in the movement

of Brahim Ghali into and out of Spain for medical care. Following this point in particular, both states have engaged in an increase in their military presence along the Morocco-Algeria border, which is covered more in detail in the following section.

### 4.3 Morocco and Spain

Tensions between Morocco and Spain reached new heights after the United States' recognition of Moroccan sovereignty over the Western Saharan territory. As Spain has pushed for a UN referendum over this region's administration since its exit in 1976, the position of the Spanish government has never supported the Moroccan annexation without outside arbitration. The recent rise in tensions came after the Spanish Parliament reiterated its stance against outright Moroccan control of the territory<sup>12</sup> – calling the Moroccan annexation an act of settler colonialism and administration of a territory without the support of those people within the territory. For the Moroccan state, press releases and statements from the government have added fuel to the fire given that Spain still retains two enclaves in the North of Morocco along the Mediterranean – Mellia and Ceuta – which are Spanish territories that were never returned to Morocco, in the same vein as Gibraltar being retained by the United Kingdom. For the Moroccan state and peoples, these Spanish territories make the substance of their arguments against acts of Moroccan colonization null and void as Spain retains colonial territories – deemed enclaves - within Morocco, and as such maintain some of the most militarized borders in the world between Morocco and these two territories to prevent migrants from entering European soil.

One of the most contentious points in the tensions between Spain and Morocco now lies in the fact that POLISARIO Front leader Brahim Ghali was secreted out of the territory on an alleged Algerian diplomatic passport to receive medical care in Spain. While in Spain, charges were attempted to be levied for war crimes in the Western Sahara against Brahim Ghali but have been dropped in court before his return to Algeria (France 24, 2021c). As Morocco classifies the POLISARIO as a terrorist organization, this treatment of Brahim Ghali and subsequent refusal to detain, prosecute, or otherwise charge him as the leader of a group in opposition to the Moroccan state over the Western Sahara conflict is seen as an apparent act against the Moroccan state.

The following newspaper articles detail the recent cessation of relations between the Moroccan and Spanish states, coming after the United States' acknowledgment of Moroccan administration of the Western Sahara, bolstering Morocco's ability to retain closed borders with Spain while reopening the country to the rest of Europe following closures due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The seaports between Morocco and France reopened during the summer of 2021 to facilitate the yearly return of Moroccan foreign residents.<sup>13</sup> However, ports remained closed to ships from Spain following

---

<sup>12</sup> Until March 2022 when the new Minister of Foreign Affairs declared the Moroccan Autonomy plan as the best route to resolve this conflict. This issue is elaborated in this section.

<sup>13</sup> Operation Marhaba is a yearly initiative implemented in 2001 to encourage the return of Moroccans who reside abroad and constitutes a significant factor in Morocco's tourism industry. By encouraging the Moroccan diaspora to return for summer holidays this brings foreign currency into the Moroccan economy and banks. Operation Marhaba annually consists of significant investments to run and operate travel agencies and 'reception sites' in Morocco, Spain,

the disputes between these two countries regarding the POLISARIO and the territorial integrity of the Western Sahara (Africanews, 2021b). Likewise, Moroccan seasonal workers were repatriated from Spain (Dumpis, 2021); negotiations between Morocco, Spain, and Algeria for gas pipelines were ‘halted’ (Kasroui, 2021); and Moroccan authorities apparently did little to guard the borders to the Spanish enclave of Ceuta located in the North of Morocco from migrants attempting to illegally cross the border (BBC, 2021). These events all took place within six months following the diplomatic mission of Jared Kushner in December 2020 to formalize the normalization of relations between Morocco and Israel as well as the United States acknowledgement of Morocco’s administration of the Western Sahara.

In March 2022, the Spanish government through José Manuel Albares Bueno, the Minister of Foreign Affairs after his predecessor was removed due to Brahim Ghali’s entry into Spain, issued a statement declaring that the Moroccan autonomy plan was “the most serious, realistic, and credible basis” to end the conflict (Minder, 2022). This stance has been reiterated by Félix Bolaños, the Minister of the Presidency (Kasraoui, 2022b). Immediately following this declaration, Morocco reinstated its ambassador to Spain, while simultaneously Algeria and the POLISARIO withdrew their representatives in Spain (Rahhou, 2022). Of note at this time is that while the Biden administration has not made a firm statement in favor of continuing the policies laid out by the Trump administration regarding the Sahara, there has been no change to the plans laid out – and in this recent movement by the Spanish government in favor of the Moroccan autonomy plan, the United States ambassador to Spain stated on Spanish radio station Cadena SER that (translated from Spanish) “[t]he United States considers that the Moroccan autonomy plan for the Sahara is reasonable and viable” (Reynoso, 2022). The interview wherein she gave this statement took place on the day after the Spanish government issued its statements reversing their stance over the past two years.

Spanish support for the Moroccan autonomy plan has come in exchange for Moroccan acceptance of the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, cities ostensibly in northern Morocco which are Spanish territory, and for Spain’s continued control and ownership of the Canary Islands (Hernández, 2022). Morocco initially had been using the existence of Spain’s city territories in its arguments against Spain’s acceptance of the Moroccan administration of the Sahara, and this change in opinion from the Spanish parliament represents a monumental diversion from its historical stance on the territory since its exit. Since the official acknowledgment of the Moroccan autonomy plan, on March 26, 2022, the “Second Deputy Prime Minister of Spain, Yolanda Diaz, affirmed that Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez’s decision regarding Western Sahara is ‘unconstitutional,’” specifying that the decision not only violates the Spanish constitution but also “international law in order to satisfy the Moroccan occupation regime” (Sahara Press Service, 2022a). Likewise, protests against the decision have taken place in Madrid (World is One, 2022).

---

France, and Italy. This also consists of a humanitarian effort under the Mohammed V Foundation for Solidarity to facilitate the movement of MREs (Fr: Marocains résidant à l'étranger; En: Moroccan Foreign Residents). The foundation states this includes “Hospitalization abroad, chartering of substantial means of transport, accommodation for families, administrative assistance... The Marhaba operation was implemented in response to the need to expand assistance services and humanize travel and transit conditions” (Mohammed V Foundation for Solidarity, 2021).

It can be said the acts of aggression taken by the Moroccan state against Spain have been successful. This is apparently due to the pressure put onto the Spanish government to reopen its borders – including the borders of its territories within Northern Morocco – and maintain trade. Of significant note is the closure of the Maghreb gas pipeline, mentioned previously and covered in more detail in the section covering Algeria. As Morocco’s natural gas supply primarily came from this pipeline, the Algerian state under President Abdelmadjid Tebboune intended cut Morocco off from this resource. However, in normalizing relations with Spain, the Moroccan state has been able to gain access to Algerian gas through trade with Spain.

#### 4.4 Morocco and Germany

Tensions between Morocco and Germany came in the form of ending diplomatic and aid relations between Morocco and the German state. Following the diplomatic move by Jared Kushner that resulted in the United States’ acceptance of the Moroccan annexation, members of the German government were outspoken in their rejection of this. By June 7, 2021, Morocco suspended security co-operation with German authorities, cut off contact with the German embassy in Rabat, recalled the Moroccan ambassador, and postponed any projects that were linked to financing from the German government or German institutions (Rößler, 2021). Germany then froze over one billion USD in aid as well as any development projects in Morocco (Middle East Monitor, 2021a; Market Research Telecast, 2021). On June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2021, a member of the German Parliament, Frank Heinrich, made a statement that “[t]he Sahrawi people are solely responsible for deciding the fate of the Western Sahara and neither the United States nor anyone else will be able to make that decision for him [sic]” (Sahara Press Service, 2021). This statement came following his remarks in "rejection of the decision of former US President Donald Trump regarding the alleged sovereignty of Morocco over Western Sahara," and reiterated the opposition of this by the German government at large – due to the prevailing notion that this amounts to an unacceptable Moroccan occupation of the territory (ibid). Meanwhile, Moroccan authorities began refusing assistance or services to German citizens within the country, and consular support to Germans within Morocco became limited due to the severing of ties between the German consulate and embassy with Moroccan authorities (Middle East Monitor, 2021b).

After an extended period of diplomatic maneuvering on the part of Morocco to push European states to acknowledge its autonomy plan for the Sahara, the German government has seemingly acquiesced as of March 2022 stating that “Germany... is satisfied with Morocco’s development reforms, advancing social, economic, and political progress” (Kasroui, 2022a). In a joint statement from the Moroccan minister of Foreign Affairs and the German Minister of Economic Cooperation, the two states have apparently come to agreement on an economic basis that Morocco’s administration of the Sahara is in the best economic interest of both parties – particularly “in the areas of economic development and employment, sustainable development, climate, renewable energies, and water” (Kasroui, 2022a). This builds further on the case of the Moroccan state’s use of greenwashing to attain validation from the international community at large for its continued occupation and extractivist efforts in the region.

While the Moroccan diplomatic strategy with Germany differs greatly with that of Spain, the end result of the German state acquiescing to the Moroccan autonomy plan is the same. The timing of this shift is particularly interesting, however. For both Spain and Germany, support for the Moroccan autonomy plan and thus Moroccan control of the territory came one month after the Russian invasion of Ukraine began. This is covered in the section on Morocco's international economic value in light of the war in Ukraine.

## 5. Morocco's Territorial and Economic Value to the United States and Allies

The United States has a long-standing history of relations with Morocco, extending as far back as 1777, the year in which Sultan Sidi Muhammad Ben Abdullah recognized the United States and gave a proclamation that ships bearing the flag of the United States would be allowed in Moroccan ports. The essence of this decision was inherently economic, as the Moroccan Sultan wanted to increase maritime trade relations with other states to bolster his rule and decrease reliance on his military forces to collect taxes (Peterson Institute for International Economics, 2009). This gives the United States over two hundred years of economic relations with Morocco and a history of economic interests with Morocco or with whomever wields de facto control over the region.

Morocco is at present a significant trade partner to both the United States and the European Union. For Morocco, 90% of its energy resources are imported, coming primarily from Spain, Saudi Arabia, the United States, and Algeria. As of 2020, Spain, Saudi Arabia and the United States were the principal states of origin for petroleum products, while natural gas comes to Morocco from the United States and through Algeria (Western Sahara Resource Watch, 2021). There have been significant changes in regard to energy resources from Algeria in light of Morocco's occupation of the Western Sahara that is covered later in this study, however this highlights Morocco's desire for energy independence.

This is of importance to the global economy, as well as the global political economy. There are also the resources and economic benefits of having a historically US-allied state in control of the resources and their extraction of the Western Sahara, as opposed to the POLISARIO or SADR government within the Western Sahara as these actors would be less willing to establish trade with the United States nor Europe due to their respective histories of non-acknowledgement of Saharawi self-determination and colonization with its associated violence persecuted against the peoples of this territory.

Moroccan control over the Western Sahara was limited to only administration and not sovereignty for the period between the International Court of Justice decision in 1975 and up to at least the 2020 recognition of Moroccan sovereignty by the Trump administration. The Madrid Accords in 1975 served as the ultimate historical decision to transfer control of the Western Sahara. This did not grant Morocco rights to resources but only a 'transfer of administration' from Spain to Morocco (Zoubir, 2010; Le Marec, 2002). While the Spanish had been exploiting this territory for their own economic gain, once the costs (in both image and economics) became too much to bear, this transfer of administration became necessary in light of King Hassan II's push to annex the territory. Since



Spanish ‘administration’ of the territory itself was an exercise of colonial exploitation, Moroccan economic exploitation of the territory was in effect inevitable.

Given the availability of resources in this territory and a governing authority in favor of United States (and European) economic interests – and an open desire to be incorporated into the global economy – Morocco’s annexation of the Sahara was allowed to take root, even as the exploitation of the resources in both land and sea were illegal if one follows the terms of the International Court of Justice decision and the Madrid Accords. Specifically, that the original International Court of Justice decision granted no state governing control over the territory; the Madrid Accords coming after the Green March then acquiesced control over the Western Sahara to both Morocco and Mauritania.<sup>14</sup>

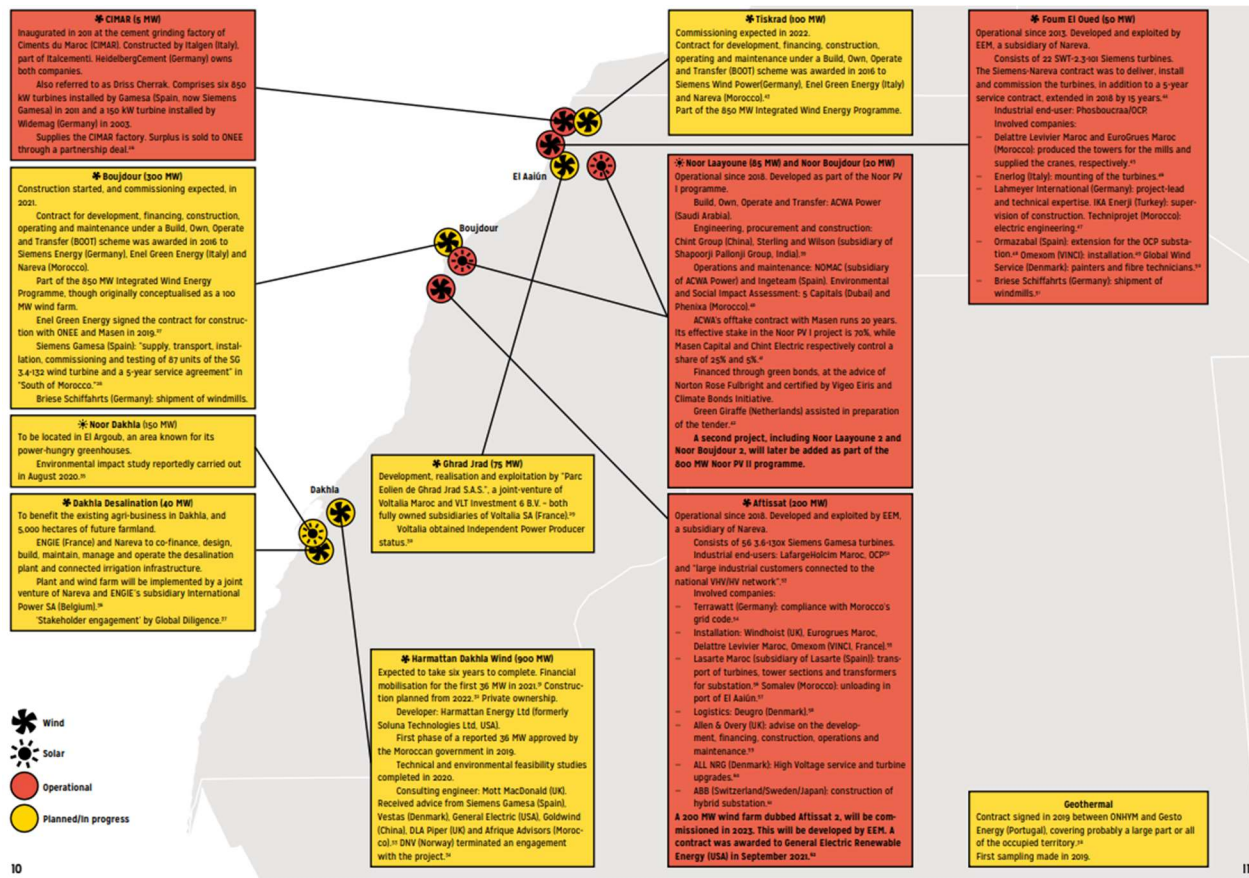
There are varying reports of the amounts of minerals – namely phosphates – extracted from the Western Sahara over the period of Moroccan administration. The company responsible for the extraction, refinement, and exportation of mineral resources from the major mine in Bou Craa is PhosBoucraa – a public (that is, nationalized) enterprise (Boukhari, 2009). According to the POLISARIO Front’s representative to the United Nations, Ahmed Boukhari, in his 2009 letter to the United Nations Security Council, at that time it was estimated that “this mine [Bou Craa] produces about 3 million tons of phosphate per year, the export value of which is in the billions of dollars.”<sup>15</sup>

Foreign investments in the development of renewable energies in Morocco is also essential to the operation of both resource extraction as the continued occupation and increasing Moroccan population. The Western Sahara Resource Watch maintains documentation of ongoing projects in the Western Sahara both by the Moroccan state and with international partners.

---

<sup>14</sup> The Madrid Accords also required that Spain would retain 35% of the shares of the phosphate mining industry of Bou Craa, while the remaining 65% would presumably be divided by Morocco and Mauritania. Likewise, these accords stipulated that the Moroccan and Mauritanian governing authorities were to “who would respect Saharawi public opinion” (Thompson & Adloff, 1980, p.175).

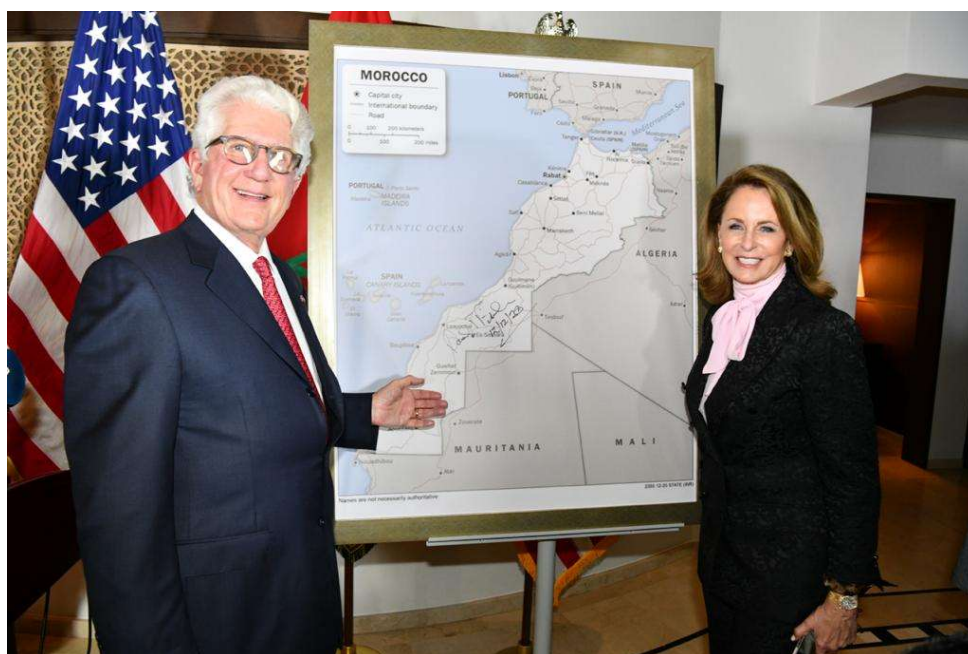
<sup>15</sup> Translated from French, brackets mine



Source: (Western Sahara Resource Watch, 2021, pp.10-11)

This map shows the locations of various energy projects within the Western Saharan territory, as of 2021, currently under construction or operation by the Moroccan state, state industries, and with foreign industrial partners. It demonstrates the scale of investment from international industries and firms, operating despite these projects taking place in disputed territory. From the Western Sahara Resource Watch (WSRW) 2021 report on greenwashing efforts taken by the Moroccan state, the sheer number of wind and solar projects in the Sahara and international investment in their development and construction is made abundantly evident. As Morocco positions itself as an essential regional partner of the United States and Europe, it seeks to also position itself as an energy exporter to Europe and Africa through these projects. A list of the many energy projects can be found in Appendix A, adapted from the WSRW 2021 report outlining their projected energy output in megawatts, as well as their international investors, developers, and partners.

Next to the mineral and energy resources within the Western Sahara, the most significant economic resource currently being extracted from the territory comes from fishing off its coast. Detailed reports of what is allowed to be extracted from off the coast of the Western Sahara are limited; however, some information has come out through groups such as the *Organe du Comité pour le respect des libertés et des droits humains au Sahara occidental*. Of this group, reports are available written by Jean-Paul Le Marec, their Secretary General. In Le Marec’s report (2006) to ARSO (*Association de soutien à un référendum libre et régulier au Sahara Occidental*) he states that the European Union, and thus also the United States, works outside of international conventions to allow exploitation of the Western Sahara under the guise of “sovereignty or jurisdiction of Morocco’ without geographical delimitation of the fishing zone.”<sup>16</sup> He continues, specifically decrying the illegality of this operation in that the “European Union thus deliberately flouts international legality.” The systemic issues that arise from the influx of funds through the Morocco’s exploitation of the natural resources of the region also leads to trade deals that not only bolster Morocco’s military but also allow for the purchase of European and American arms. As Le Marec states, “Morocco uses European financial compensation to buy new military equipment to strengthen the defense wall and suppress the Saharawi people”<sup>17</sup> (Le Marec, 2006).



Pictured: Former US Ambassador to Morocco David T. Fischer (Left), December 12, 2020, pointing towards the region of the Western Sahara. (U.S. Embassy Rabat, 2020).

Two days after the Trump administration’s proclamation recognizing the validity of Morocco’s sovereignty over the Western Sahara, Ambassador Fischer<sup>18</sup> issued a statement supporting the

<sup>16</sup> Translated from French

<sup>17</sup> Translated from French

<sup>18</sup> David Fischer was in office as ambassador to Morocco for only one year, from January 2019 to January 2020. He was instrumental in the Abraham Accords between Morocco and Israel at this time. He then served on the Advisory Board of Abraham Accords Institute for Peace (Dalil, 2021).

Moroccan Autonomy Plan for the Sahara as well as the establishment of a U.S. consulate in the city of Dakhla (U.S. Embassy Rabat, 2020). The above picture from the United States' embassy in Rabat is of note as the map that bears the signature of the ambassador no longer contains the dividing line between Morocco and the Western Sahara. In the same statement, Ambassador Fischer credited King Mohammed VI as having positioned Morocco as the “economic gateway to Africa” (U.S. Embassy Rabat, 2020). This further emphasizes the importance of economic development and interests as having influenced the decisions toward the Moroccan Autonomy Plan.

Therefore, as the following subsections detail, the nature of United States' foreign policy – as well as that of other states economically involved with Morocco – can be said to be heavily influenced through their economic interests in the region. This has been the case as outlined previously, as foreign policy decisions historically regarding the Western Sahara have been more dependent on what states and their industries have to gain from the exploitation of the resources therein rather than on the human rights of those within the territory. In the case of the Western Sahara, the influence of economic interests over foreign policy extends to the vast mineral resources, including iron ore, titanium oxide, vanadium, phosphates, and the potential for oil and natural gas within the Sahara (Zoubir, 2010).

### 5.1 Morocco's Economic Value in Light of the War in Ukraine

The recent war in Ukraine has had a great impact on the potential of the Moroccan state to accelerate its claims over the Western Sahara as its trade partners may be more willing to offer acknowledgment for Moroccan administration of the region to weigh against trade disturbances following Russia's invasion. However, the Moroccan state has been reticent to make any claims or statements regarding the war in Ukraine that may be seen to view Russia unfavorably. This is evident in the UN General Assembly vote to condemn the Russian invasion in Ukraine where Morocco opted not to vote at all. This is a direct decision on the part of Morocco to at least initially not make any public statements regarding the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

Voting Started		02-Mar-22		11:55:14	
<b>Item 5 - Draft resolution A/ES-11/L.1</b>					
<b>Aggression against Ukraine</b>					
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AFGHANISTAN	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CAMEROON	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FINLAND	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> KUWAIT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NEPAL	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SAUDI ARABIA
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALBANIA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CANADA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FRANCE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> KYRGYZSTAN	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NETHERLANDS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SENEGAL
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALGERIA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CENTRAL AFR REP....	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GABON	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> LAO PDR	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NEW ZEALAND	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SERBIA
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ANDORRA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CHAD	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GAMBIA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> LATVIA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NICARAGUA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SEYCHELLES
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ANGOLA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CHILE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GEORGIA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> LEBANON	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NIGER	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SIERRA LEONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ANTIGUA-BARBUDA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CHINA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GERMANY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> LESOTHO	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NIGERIA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SINGAPORE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARGENTINA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COLOMBIA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GHANA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> LIBERIA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NORTH MACEDONIA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SLOVAKIA
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARMENIA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMOROS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GREECE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> LIBYA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NORWAY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SLOVENIA
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AUSTRALIA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CONGO	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GRENADA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> LIECHTENSTEIN	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OMAN	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SOLOMON ISLANDS
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AUSTRIA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COSTA RICA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GUATEMALA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> LITHUANIA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PAKISTAN	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SOMALIA
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AZERBAIJAN	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COTE D'IVOIRE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GUINEA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> LUXEMBOURG	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PALAU	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SOUTH AFRICA
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BAHAMAS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CROATIA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GUINEA-BISSAU	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MADAGASCAR	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PANAMA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SOUTH SUDAN
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BAHRAIN	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CUBA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GUYANA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MALAWI	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PAPUA NEW GUINEA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SPAIN
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BANGLADESH	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CYPRUS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> HAITI	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MALAYSIA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PARAGUAY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SRI LANKA
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BARBADOS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CZECH REPUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> HONDURAS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MALDIVES	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PERU	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SUDAN
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BELARUS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DEM PR OF KOREA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> HUNGARY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MALI	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PHILIPPINES	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SURINAME
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BELGIUM	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DEM REP OF THE C...	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ICELAND	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MALTA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLAND	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SWEDEN
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BELIZE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DENMARK	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDIA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MARSHALL ISLANDS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PORTUGAL	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SWITZERLAND
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BENIN	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DJIBOUTI	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDONESIA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MAURITANIA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> QATAR	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SYRIAN ARAB REP...
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BHUTAN	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DOMINICA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IRAN (ISLAMIC REP...	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MAURITIUS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> REP OF KOREA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TAJIKISTAN
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BOLIVIA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DOMINICAN REP...	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IRAQ	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MEXICO	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> REP OF MOLDOVA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> THAILAND
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BOSNIA-HERZEGOV...	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ECUADOR	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IRELAND	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MICRONESIA (FS)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ROMANIA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TIMOR-LESTE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BOTSWANA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EGYPT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ISRAEL	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MONACO	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RUSSIAN FED...	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TOGO
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BRAZIL	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EL SALVADOR	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ITALY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MONGOLIA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RWANDA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TONGA
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BRUNEI DARUSSAL...	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EQUATORIAL GUINEA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> JAMAICA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MONTENEGRO	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SAINT KITTS-NEVIS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TRINIDAD-TOBAGO
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BULGARIA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ERITREA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> JAPAN	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MOROCCO	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SAINT LUCIA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TUNISIA
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BURKINA FASO	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ESTONIA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> JORDAN	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MOZAMBIQUE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SAINT VINCENT-GR...	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TURKEY
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BURUNDI	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ESWATINI	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> KAZAKHSTAN	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MYANMAR	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SAMOA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TURKMENISTAN
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CABO VERDE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ETHIOPIA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> KENYA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NAMIBIA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SAN MARINO	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TUVALU
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CAMBODIA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FIJI	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> KIRIBATI	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NAURU	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SAO TOME-PRINCE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UGANDA
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UKRAINE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNITED ARAB EMIR...	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNITED KINGDOM	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNITED REP TANZA...	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNITED STATES	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> URUGUAY
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UZBEKISTAN	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> VANUATU	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> VENEZUELA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> VIET NAM	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YEMEN	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ZAMBIA
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ZIMBABWE					
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>IN FAVOUR:141</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>AGAINST:5</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>ABSTENTION:35</b>

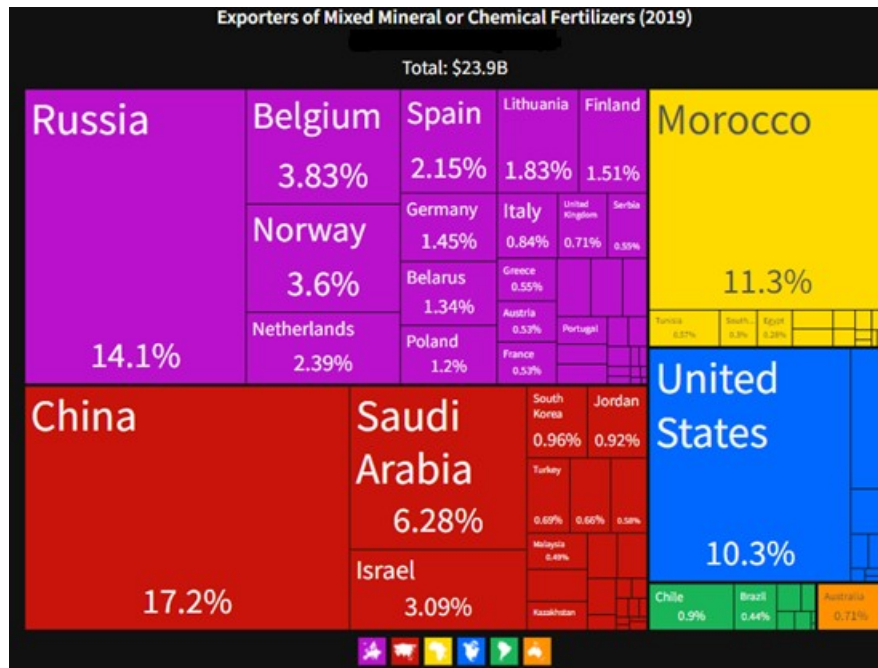
Morocco was one of the twelve states not to issue any vote – neither in favor, against, nor in absentee - on the UN General Assembly resolution on March 2, 2022, to condemn the Russian invasion in Ukraine.  
Source: UN

This apparent non-commitment to making a statement during the initial invasion of Ukraine can be understood to be entirely strategic – and hinged on the issue of the Western Sahara. As Russia retains a seat on the Security Council, Morocco cannot lose Russian support in an eventual Security Council vote on Moroccan sovereignty over the region. Likewise, the Moroccan state cannot disrupt the interests of the EU and US in the Sahara. This is even more interesting when one considers the number of Moroccans in Ukraine – including approximately eight thousand students - as well as Morocco’s reliance on Ukrainian wheat as well as Russian coal and other resources (Agencia EFE, 2022; Kana, 2022; Latrech, 2022b; Trading Economics, 2020). Hence, the Russian invasion of Ukraine as well as the potential for this conflict to include more international actors and states could necessitate an increase in the potential to accelerate Moroccan control over the Western Sahara. This is clear as Morocco’s allies will necessarily seek sources to both supply the war effort and means by which to offset trade disturbances due to sanctions against Russian products.

Giving a statement on this decision, Tareq Atlati, the President of the Moroccan Center for Strategic Studies and Research directly stated that "we [Morocco] have a national cause that determines our positions knowing that we are facing permanent members of the Security Council” (Maghreb Arabe Presse, 2022). This reinforces the fact that, while this could change over the course of the war in Ukraine, Morocco is electing to remain neutral in favor of its own domestic interests. Likewise, this conflict has a tremendous potential to increase Morocco’s economic importance to the EU as sanctions, limitations, and restrictions on trade with Russia take hold. Through the United States’ initial acknowledgment of the Moroccan administration of this territory in 2020, the barriers

that existed preventing significant economic and corporate interests in the region have become less of an issue. Thus, by opening the potential for state investment and direct trade of resources from the Western Sahara with the Moroccan government and the United States, private and state industries may now capitalize on increased involvement in the territory. While the United States’ foreign policy has accelerated this development, the following sections outline two major sectors where Morocco could position itself as a valuable economic partner to the EU, US, and Africa considering the war in Ukraine.

### 5.1.1 Fertilizers and Phosphates



(Source: Observatory of Economic Complexity, 2019)

Due to the sanctions levied on products from Russia, one sector that is going to be hit heavily is the production and export of fertilizers. Reuters reports that “[i]n the United States alone, fertilizer bills are expected to jump 12% this year (2022), after rising 17% in 2021, according to American Farm Bureau Federation and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) data” (Polansek & Mano, 2022). Morocco has been using the mineral resources of the Western Sahara over the entirety of its administration of the territory to position itself as one of the world’s leading exporters of phosphates and mineral fertilizers; this change in the global supply chain thus makes the resources extracted from the Western Sahara increasingly more important and thus more valuable.

Morocco was the third-largest exporter of mineral or chemical fertilizers in 2019 in terms of economic value, after China and Russia (Observatory of Economic Complexity, 2019). Given the importance of this resource to farming and maintaining food prices, states levying sanctions on Russia will necessarily need to lean more on Morocco to maintain food staple prices and domestic production. This will become only an increasingly more valuable and crucial resource as the war in Ukraine goes on – as not only is Russia a major exporter of fertilizers, but Ukraine is a major

exporter of wheat and other staple grains. This also gives Morocco leverage in asserting its sovereignty over the Sahara as the resources necessary for the production of mineral fertilizers come from the phosphate mines administered by the state owned OCP (Fr: Office Chérifien des Phosphates; En: Sharifian Office of Phosphates<sup>19</sup>) Group which operates in the Western Sahara. The economic value of the resources extracted by OCP in Morocco has attracted significant international investment. As of March 2, 2022, Koch Industries<sup>20</sup> subsidiary Koch Ag & Energy Solutions entered into joint ownership of the Jorf Fertilizers Company III (JFC III) with OCP wherein Koch and OCP will each retain 50% stake in the company (OCP Group, 2022; Latrech, 2022a). The Jorf Fertilizers Company III, while not based in the Western Sahara, is a producer of phosphate fertilizers for export – up to 1.1 million metric tons annually - that utilizes the raw mineral phosphates that are extracted from the Sahara through OCP’s mines in Bou Craa and other regions (OCP Group, 2022; Latrech, 2022a). Koch’s involvement with this company, according to their own statement announcing the partnership, will be to provide other raw materials such as ammonia and sulfur to produce mineral fertilizers and assist in marketing these fertilizers internationally (OCP Group, 2022).

The timing of this deal is of particular interest, as it comes not weeks after the sanctions on Russian goods – including nitrogen and mineral fertilizers – came into place. While a deal of this magnitude would have taken significant time to finalize, Koch Industries and OCP clearly see the potential increase in value to be had in the exploitation of this resource at this time. Koch Industries also has a history of using its political influence to motivate United States policy for its economic interests – this may be the case with the Western Sahara, but it is more likely that the recharacterization of the Moroccan annexation as being legitimized by the United States has allowed for the direct investment and partnership between Koch Industries and OCP. For Koch Industries, this could also be seen as an effort to hedge their own investments, as at the time of this deal Koch Industries maintained operations in Russia through three of its subsidiaries - Guardian Industries, Molex, and Koch Engineered Solutions (Rushe, 2022). While none of these industries operate in the sector of agricultural products, Koch Industries elected not to halt these operations until April 22, 2022 – well after other partnerships and alternatives had been negotiated as a means of potentially balancing against the losses they may incur due to the conflict (Gibson, 2022). It is also important to note that Koch Industries has found itself at the center of a number of scandals – particularly its engagement with United States’ politics through its Political Action Committee (PAC) KochPAC. Likewise, Koch Industries has a record of green washing campaigns to maintain its extractive and manufacturing activities as well as funding research to claim that climate change is not a result of

---

<sup>19</sup> The name Sharifian refers to the Sharifian Empire of the Saadian and Alawi dynasties that dominated much of the territory of modern Morocco from the 16<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century. The term Sharifian itself implies direct descentance from the Prophet Mohammed. This gives the monarchy a history of divine right attributed to its actions, up to the present.

<sup>20</sup> Koch Industries is one of the largest privately owned corporations in the United States with a history of lobbying the United States government through its Political Action Committee KochPAC to protect its interests in petroleum fuels and products, plant nutrients and fertilizers, fabrics and textiles, building products, the automotive industry, rubber, and many others (Koch Industries, 2022; Schwartz, 2022). Koch Industries also remains invested in Russia and as of March 23, 2022, is under scrutiny for its campaign donations to United States government officials leading up to the Russian invasion – apparently to retain its business interests there while keeping lawmakers in favor of Koch Industries economic interests (Schwartz, 2022).

human action (Parafiniuk & Smith, 2019). Koch Industries itself has an unfortunate environmental record, as of 2019 the company “has been fined over \$836 million for 466 violations. A total of 313 of those violations were environmental. An additional 680 environmental violations were found on a self-audit of the acquired Invista Company” (Parafiniuk & Smith, 2019). This can also be found through its manipulation of rhetoric and narrative around its extractive efforts, and in particular in the Western Sahara seems to be co-opting the Moroccan state’s narrative around the development of ‘green’ energies and alternative energy sources. Koch Industry’s activities in the region of the Western Sahara, like elsewhere, allows it to expand its investment in the phosphate extraction and fertilizer production industries in Morocco and particularly capitalize on the growth potential for this resource.

### 5.1.2 Gas and Energy

As covered previously, international investments in Morocco’s energy sector are increasingly dependent on renewables based in the Sahara in the form of wind and solar farms. Also of importance is the movement of liquid natural gas (LNG) and liquid petroleum gas (LPG) from Algeria to Europe. As of November 1, 2021, the Maghreb-Europe Gas Pipeline (MGE) which went from Algeria to Spain via Morocco has been closed due to the ongoing conflict between Morocco and Algeria over the Western Sahara<sup>21</sup> – Algeria now relying on the Medgaz and Transmed pipelines directly to Spain and Italy, as well as marine exports via tankers (Ghilès, 2021). The value and importance of Algerian gas, given sanctions and restrictions on the import of Russian gas products, will increase Spanish, Italian, and Portuguese reliance on Algerian exports. This has the potential to make these states more reluctant to weigh their public opinion on the Western Sahara in favor of the Moroccan administration – however, Algeria’s reliance on these states gives it little leverage one way or the other. As seen in the case of the Spanish state, the current Spanish parliament has had no issue in giving its support for the Moroccan Autonomy plan.

Meanwhile, there have been ongoing negotiations for a petroleum pipeline between Nigeria and Morocco that would follow along the coast – as opposed to the more direct route that would go through Niger, Mali, and Mauritania and potentially become the world’s longest offshore oil pipeline (Onuah, 2022). This pipeline would supply petroleum to much of coastal North-Western Africa through a partnership between Morocco and Nigeria – a massive market with the potential then to directly supply Europe with Nigerian petroleum. The funds for this project are being sourced from OPEC, the Moroccan State, the Nigerian state oil industry, as well as potential investment from the Russian state. The details of this potential project and its funding are still limited; however, it can be assumed that the potential for Russian involvement is itself in order to circumvent sanctions and restrictions on the importation of Russian hydrocarbons into Europe. Deals of this magnitude also extend the reasoning for the Moroccan state’s lack of direct statements condemning Russia’s military action in Ukraine. The state and its industries have much to gain both from the war itself and from the Russian state, provided their neutrality.

---

<sup>21</sup> Algeria has chosen not to renew its contracts with Morocco for the MGE pipeline in an apparent move to choke Morocco’s supply of LPG and LNG which the country relies on heavily. This is seen as a direct response to Morocco’s continued international lobbying for its interests in the Sahara and came after the Trump administration’s decision.



## 6. Callous Hegemonic Power

The adherence to Realist political theory has led United States administrations to seize opportunities for control and influence whenever possible. Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century this was in an attempt to balance against any perceived gains by the USSR and to maintain the United States' position in a bipolar world. After the shift in polarity following the Cold War, the United States still retained its control through opportunistic positioning as the singular world superpower. As the economic hegemon, the United States sought to incorporate states it had allied with during the Cold War into the liberalized global economy – a plan which has apparently backfired, as the United States has found itself increasingly less able to maintain its status as the center of international economic activity.

Noam Chomsky's *Profit Over People* (1999) offers a succinct summary of the United States actions counter to the narrative of decolonial support purportedly stemming from the United States:

“Even the most dedicated believers in ‘America’s mission’ must be aware that the US-UN relations have been virtually the opposite of what the opening passages depicts ever since the UN fell out of control with the progress of decolonization, leaving the United States regularly isolated in opposition to global accords on a wide range of issues and committed to undermining central components of the UN, particularly those with a third world orientation.” (Chomsky, 1999)

In sum, the mission of the United States in liberalizing the world economy comes at odds with its own securitization; that is, as a global capitalist economic system develops, the position of the United States as an economic hegemon decreases and its ability to wield economic power wanes. To centralize itself as the dominant state, in realist thinking, other states and actors necessarily lose in the zero-sum game that is international politicking. This has led to administrations within the United States to abandon conventions such as the Atlantic Charter to instead bolster itself alongside its allies against adversarial states – as was the case in the United States' support of French control over their colonial protectorates in North Africa. The Cold War with the USSR was not only a war of ideologies, but also an economic war of competing systems – in order to incorporate states into the United States capitalistic world economy, the United States needed to simultaneously court nations economically and ideologically while siding with its allies militarily as a bulwark against the USSR. In the end - focusing specifically on the Maghreb - this amounted to United States' military support for the French to secure their support against Russian influence, even during the Algerian War wherein Algerian nationalists fought the French for their independence.

In attempting to assert itself in the region, the security-focused US administrations in the post-9/11 era have increased their security ties with both Morocco and Algeria in particular. As the United States' narrative of democracy-building in the ‘Arab world’ took shape, their securitization efforts extended to cover any and all territory that could be seen as a potential harbor of Islamist or radical ideologies – “the US and the EU equated the ‘enduring security’ of the American and European peoples with the promotion of ‘a world of democratic and well governed states’. Furthermore, they both stressed their ‘shared commitment to promoting democracy’ as ‘one of the fields where ... [they] can do, and should do, even more together’” (Zoubir, 2009, p.988). What this amounted to

was the development of “closer military, security and economic partnership” (Zoubir, 2009, p.988) between the United States and Maghrebi states, particularly Algeria and Morocco.

While the United States has been touting its involvement around the world as a force for good – that is, for economic development or democratization in most cases – wherever it has inserted itself in North Africa and the Middle East only more destabilizing actors seem to arise. Likewise, there are a wealth of criticisms that exist arguing that the United States’ stated intent of improving security to combat terrorism is only to maintain or increase its presence and power in regions of the world – which would appear to be a continuation of adherence to Realist or Neorealist theory to maintain control of the international anarchy. “Some critics argue not only that the US presence in the region is a destabilizing factor but that the US has ‘fabricated’ or greatly exaggerated the terrorist threat in order to maintain its presence—now to be institutionalized through AFRICOM—and achieve its goals of controlling the region’s hydrocarbon resources and warding off China’s advance in mineral-rich Africa” (Zoubir, 2009, p.992)

### 6.1 The United States as an Instigator of Aggression

The objective of this thesis has been to demonstrate the effects of United States’ foreign policy as an instigator of aggression and thus violence. Through the historical examples provided here as well as the modern context of the Moroccan occupation of the Western Sahara, it can be said that the United States’ history in the Maghreb has been one of allowing for and assisting in the perpetuation of acts of violence to position itself for its own gain. This can be seen through the lens of the Cold War as acts taken in order to securitize and develop its economic interests in the Maghreb against the incursion of the USSR as well as in the present day as the United States seeks to capitalize on its longstanding relationship with Morocco. As Morocco stands to become an increasingly important actor in the Maghreb and in Africa as a whole, the United States is necessarily seeking to position itself as a staunch ally of the Moroccan state to develop trade, economic ties, and further integrate Moroccan industries and resources into the global economy. As stated by Ambassador David Fischer, Morocco is positioning itself as the “economic gateway to Africa” (U.S. Embassy Rabat, 2020), and as a major security partner of the United States. Therefore, as the Moroccan state gains importance to and validation from the United States and its allies, it has both been able to increasingly levy this power in its own favor as well as have its own aggressions be ignored. This is a repetition of the United States’ behaviors during the Cold War in looking the other way to the French colonial atrocities committed in the Maghreb, whereas now the United States is able to look the other way when it comes to Moroccan settler colonial activity.

The importance of the United States’ position regarding the Western Sahara cannot be understated. As covered previously, the Trump administration’s acknowledgement of the Moroccan administration over the territory and the conditions of the Moroccan autonomy plan has led to a dramatic change in international policy regarding the territory. This study has made mention of different policies and statements from United States’ presidential administrations and their understanding of the importance of relations with Morocco, in particular the Nixon era decision to extend the Eisenhower Doctrine to Morocco to give economic and military support during the Cold War. In more recent years, presidential administrations have erred on the side of caution when

referring to the Western Sahara to maintain positive relations with the Moroccan state for security and economic collaboration. During the administration of George W. Bush, the official position of the United States was to allow for diplomatic negotiations on the terms for the Moroccan autonomy plan – specifically to state that the autonomy plan was “serious and credible” (Zoubir, 2009, p.986). However at no time did the United States government nor institutions such as the State Department openly offer direct declarations in support of the Moroccan autonomy plan, opting instead to allow for the tenuous legality of the Moroccan occupation to persist in order to further United States’ interests in the region – at least until May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2008 when the State Department pronounced the following: “An independent Sahrawi state is not a realistic option. In our view, some form of autonomy under Moroccan sovereignty is the only realistic way forward to resolve this longstanding conflict” (Zoubir, 2009, p.986). This did not, however, amount to full recognition of Moroccan authority over the region, offering instead a continuation of diplomatic negotiations in Morocco’s favor – allowing for the development of Moroccan settlements and industries in the region while further excluding Saharawi involvement. Thus, this support for the Moroccan state allowed for further physical manifestations of aggression and violence against Saharawi peoples during the period of the Bush Administration and the increased security relations between the United States and Morocco after 9/11. Specifically, during the period, the United States’ War on Terror offered aid and support to states that would act against perceived terrorist threats, in particular those seen to be Muslim or Islamic in nature. Following the Bush administration, the Obama administration reversed this support. In 2009 “the fact that Obama did not mention the autonomy plan in his letter to King Mohamed VI has been interpreted as a reversal in US policy on the question” (Zoubir, 2009, p.987). Further, reports through United States diplomats at this time concluded that the United States “no longer support[ed] or endors[ed] the Moroccan autonomy plan ... Instead, the administration has returned to the pre-Bush position that there could be an independent POLISARIO state in Western Sahara” (Zoubir, 2009, p.987).

The security agreements between the United States and Morocco have the potential to shift following the United States’ acknowledgment of the Moroccan control of the Western Sahara. While the Biden administration has yet to take a public stance on the territory, there seems to be a reluctance to withdraw the Trump administration’s position; however, the official opinion of the United States’ government appears to be in favor of the Moroccan autonomy plan. The security agreements made post-9/11 for the development of the military Africa Command - “it appears that Morocco did in fact offer to host AFRICOM, but the United States refused because Morocco proposed that in exchange the United States imposes [sic] the autonomy plan in the Western Sahara” (Zoubir, 2009, p.991). Meanwhile the Biden administration has had a number of other issues to contend with, and thus the Western Sahara has taken a backburner as it so often has in its history. As the status quo for the region does not involve direct conflict that the United States sees a need to insert itself into, the Moroccan state is able to continue its activities unabated in the region. Likewise, the United States securitization efforts in the region would suffer if a need to take sides between Algeria and Morocco were to take place.

## 7. Conclusion

This study has covered the history of the United States' foreign policy regarding its relations with Morocco and policy towards the Moroccan annexation of the Western Sahara. By utilizing international relations theories, this study has provided lenses through which the Moroccan annexation can be understood as an exercise of nationalistic narrative shaping and a settler-colonial enterprise. The aims of the United States' foreign policy in the region have consistently been centered on the advancement of the United States' positioning in the region relative to its perceived threats. Through Realist theory, it can be understood that the United States has sought, at least since the time of the Cold War, to seize control within international systems to advance its own goals. In this case, it is understood that through stronger relations with Moroccan nationalists during the time of Moroccan independence led to the growth of their power within the newly formed state and the advancement of nationalistic narratives within that state. Through a social constructivist understanding of how these narratives are built and manifest themselves into actions, the Moroccan annexation of the Western Sahara can be understood as an inevitability as nationalistic narratives after Morocco's independence from France would necessitate the reclamation of territory from their colonizers – in the case of the Western Sahara, the colonizer being Spain.

While the United States maintains rhetoric of support for marginalized peoples and the betterment of peoples globally through their incorporation into a liberalized global economic system, the Western Sahara stands as an example of a region that has been exploited – both materially in terms of resources and physically in terms of its peoples – in the advancement of United States foreign policy. This is demonstrated through the increasingly hostile and aggressive rhetoric from the Moroccan state and media towards its critics following the Trump administration's acknowledgment of the Moroccan Autonomy Plan for the Western Sahara. The Moroccan state's exploitation of the resources within this region is allowed as it benefits the United States and European economic and securitization priorities, even as it comes through harm perpetrated against the Saharawi peoples. The systematic repression and physical violence levied against Saharawi activists and those vocal against the Moroccan annexation are allowed to continue without condemnation as the Moroccan state continues to both incorporate itself into the international economic system and to shape its image as a stable and safe country for United States and European investment and development.

## 8. References

- Africanews. (2021a, August 18). Algeria accuses Morocco of involvement in its deadly fires, to "review" relations. *Africanews*. Retrieved from <https://www.africanews.com/2021/08/18/algeria-accuses-morocco-of-involvement-in-its-deadly-fires-to-review-relations/>
- Africanews. (2021b, June 16). Morocco excludes Spain's sea links in summer transit plan for diaspora. *Africanews*. Retrieved from <https://www.africanews.com/2021/06/16/morocco-excludes-spanish-sea-links-in-summer-transit-plan/>
- Africanews. (2021c, July 19). New diplomatic tension between Algeria and Morocco. *Africanews*. Retrieved from <https://www.africanews.com/2021/07/19/new-diplomatic-tension-between-algeria-and-morocco/>
- Agence France-Presse. (2021, November 3). Algiers blames Morocco for deadly attack on Algerians in Western Sahara region. *France 24*. Retrieved March 13, 2022, from <https://www.france24.com/en/africa/20211103-algeria-blames-morocco-for-bomb-attack-that-killed-three-algerian-truck-drivers>
- Agencia EFE. (2022, February 24). Morocco prepares for a rise in wheat prices due to the war in Ukraine. *Atalayar*. Retrieved March 23, 2022, from <https://atalayar.com/en/content/morocco-prepares-rise-wheat-prices-due-war-ukraine>
- Al Jazeera. (2020, November 13). Morocco troops launch operation in Western Sahara border zone. *Al Jazeera and News Agencies*. Retrieved November 20, 2020, from <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/11/13/morocco-launches-operation-in-western-sahara-border-zone>
- Al Jazeera. (2021, August 19). Algeria blames groups it links to Morocco, Israel for wildfires. *Aljazeera*. Retrieved from <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/8/19/algeria-review-relations-morocco-israel-wildfires>
- Amnesty International. (2010). *Morocco/Western Sahara: Rights trampled amidst protests, violence and repression*. Amnesty International. Retrieved from <https://www.amnesty.org/es/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/mde290202010en.pdf>
- Amnesty International. (2019). *Morocco and Western Sahara 2019*. Amnesty International. Retrieved from <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/middle-east-and-north-africa/morocco-and-western-sahara/morocco-and-western-sahara/>
- Arendt, H. (1970). *On Violence*. San Diego ; New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich.
- Arredondas, M. (2021, December 14). Germany backs Moroccan autonomy plan for the Sahara. *Atalayar*. Retrieved March 21, 2022, from <https://atalayar.com/en/content/germany-backs-moroccan-autonomy-plan-sahara>

- BBC. (2021, May 18). Migrants reach Spain's Ceuta enclave in record numbers. *BBC*. Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-57150051>
- Bhabha, H. (1994). *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge.
- Bhabha, H. (2004). Foreword: Framing Fanon. In F. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (pp. vii-xli). New York, New York: Grove Press.
- Bonte, P., & Cheikh, A. W. (2001). *La montagne de fer - La SNIM (Mauritanie) : une entreprise minière saharienne à l'heure de la mondialisation*. Paris: Karthala.
- Boukhari, A. (2009). *Lettre datée du 8 avril 2009, adressée au Président du Conseil de sécurité par le représentant du Front Polisario*. United Nations. Retrieved March 11, 2022, from [https://www.arso.org/A63\\_871\\_S\\_2009\\_198\\_fr.pdf](https://www.arso.org/A63_871_S_2009_198_fr.pdf)
- Bryman, A. (2016). *Social Research Methods* (5th ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Chikhi, L., & Eljechimi, A. (2022, April 13). Algeria says Morocco attacked truck convoys in border area. *Reuters*. Retrieved April 27, 2022, from <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/algeria-says-morocco-attacked-truck-convoys-border-area-2022-04-12/>
- Chomsky, N. (1999a). *Profit Over People: Neoliberalism and Global Order*. New York: Seven Stories Press.
- Chomsky, N. (1999b). *The Fateful Triangle: The United States, Israel and the Palestinians*. London: Pluto Press.
- Chomsky, N. (2011, February 17). “The Genie Is Out of the Bottle”: Assessing a Changing Arab World with Noam Chomsky and Al Jazeera’s Marwan Bishara. (J. Gonzalez, Interviewer) *Democracy Now*. Retrieved March 9, 2022, from [https://www.democracynow.org/2011/2/17/the\\_genies\\_are\\_out\\_of\\_the](https://www.democracynow.org/2011/2/17/the_genies_are_out_of_the)
- Cohen, R. (2022, March 26). The Making of Vladimir Putin: Tracing Putin’s 22-year slide from statesman to tyrant. *New York Times*. Retrieved March 28, 2022, from <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/26/world/europe/vladimir-putin-russia.html>
- Constitute Project. (2011). Morocco's Constitution of 2011. Retrieved from [https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Morocco\\_2011.pdf](https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Morocco_2011.pdf)
- Dalil, R. (2021, July 14). David T. Fischer et Robert Greenway, VRP discrets du Maroc, en tournée éclair dans le royaume. *Telquel*. Retrieved from [https://telquel.ma/2021/07/14/david-t-fischer-et-robert-greenway-vrp-discrets-du-maroc-en-tournee-eclair-dans-le-royaume\\_1728977](https://telquel.ma/2021/07/14/david-t-fischer-et-robert-greenway-vrp-discrets-du-maroc-en-tournee-eclair-dans-le-royaume_1728977)
- Dumpis, T. (2021, June 17). Morocco Repatriates 523 Seasonal Workers From Spain. *Morocco World News*. Retrieved from <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2021/06/342951/morocco-repatriates-523-seasonal-workers-from-spain>

- Dworkin, A. (2022). *North African standoff: How the Western Sahara conflict is fuelling new tensions between Morocco and Algeria*. European Council on Foreign Relations. Retrieved April 12, 2022, from <https://ecfr.eu/publication/north-african-standoff-how-the-western-sahara-conflict-is-fuelling-new-tensions-between-morocco-and-algeria/>
- Errazzouki, S. (2012). *Chomsky on the Western Sahara and the "Arab Spring"*. Arab Studies Institute. Jadaliyya. Retrieved March 9, 2022, from <https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/27299>
- Fanon, F. (2004 [1961]). *The Wretched of the Earth*. (R. Philcox, Trans.) New York: Grove Press.
- Foucault, M. (1977). *Discipline and Punish*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- France 24. (2020a, December 12). Algeria slams 'foreign manoeuvres' over US-brokered deal on Western Sahara. *France 24*. Retrieved from <https://www.france24.com/en/africa/20201212-algeria-slams-foreign-manoeuvres-over-us-brokered-deal-on-w-sahara>
- France 24. (2020b, September 22). Maroc : le journaliste Omar Radi, détenu depuis fin juillet, entendu par un juge d'instruction. *France 24*. Retrieved from <https://www.france24.com/fr/20200922-maroc-le-journaliste-omar-radi-d%C3%A9tenu-depuis-fin-juillet-entendu-par-un-juge-d-instruction>
- France 24. (2021a, August 18). Algeria to review Morocco relations after 'hostile acts'. *France 24*. Retrieved from <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20210818-algeria-to-review-morocco-relations-after-hostile-acts>
- France 24. (2021b, June 2). Polisario chief back in Algeria after Spain-Morocco row. *France 24*. Retrieved from <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20210602-polisario-chief-back-in-algeria-after-spain-morocco-row>
- France 24. (2021c, June 1). Polisario leader's lawyer to ask Spanish court to drop war crimes case. *France 24*. Retrieved from <https://www.france24.com/en/europe/20210601-polisario-leader-to-be-questioned-by-spanish-judge-over-torture-allegations>
- France 24. (2022, March 8). US stresses support for Morocco over W. Sahara. *France 24*. Retrieved March 21, 2022, from <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20220308-us-stresses-support-for-morocco-over-w-sahara>
- Ghilès, F. (2021, November). Escalating rivalry between Algeria and Morocco closes the Maghreb-Europe pipeline. *CIDOB Notes Internacionals*, 1-5. doi:doi.org/10.24241/NotesInt.2021.260/en
- Gibson, K. (2022, April 22). Koch Industries reverses course and says it will stop doing business in Russia. *CBS News*. Retrieved May 18, 2022, from <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/koch-industries-russia-ukraine-business/>
- Grant, D. H. (2004). Introduction: Organizational Discourse: Exploring the Field. In *The SAGE Handbook of Organizational Discourse*. London: Sage.

- Hekking, M. (2020a, December 15). Jared Kushner to Take First Israel-Morocco Commercial Flight Next Week. *Morocco World News*. Retrieved from <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2020/12/328968/jared-kushner-to-take-first-israel-morocco-commercial-flight-next-week>
- Hekking, M. (2020b, November 18). Morocco Begins Construction on Large Mosque in Guerguerat. *Morocco World News*. Retrieved November 20, 2020, from <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2020/11/326375/morocco-begins-construction-on-large-mosque-in-guerguerat/>
- Hekking, M. (2020c, December 11). France: Autonomy Plan Credible Basis to End Western Sahara Conflict. *Morocco World News*. Retrieved March 21, 2022, from <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2020/12/328586/france-sahara-conflict-must-end-autonomy-plan-credible-basis-for-dialogue>
- Hernández, M. (2022, March 19). El acuerdo obliga a Marruecos a desistir de Ceuta, Melilla y las Islas Canarias. *El Periódico de España*. Retrieved March 23, 2022, from <https://www.epe.es/es/politica/20220319/acuerdo-marruecos-ceuta-sahara-melilla-13396752?s=08>
- Hilali, A. Z. (2017). *US-Pakistan Relationship: Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan*. New York: Routledge.
- Holland, S. (2020, December 15). Kushner to lead U.S. delegation to Israel, Morocco. *Reuters*. Retrieved from <https://www.reuters.com/article/mideast-usa-kushner-idUSKBN28P22F>
- Human Rights Watch. (2020). *Morocco: Espionage Case Against Outspoken Journalist*. Human Rights Watch. Retrieved May 3, 2021, from <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/09/21/morocco-espionage-case-against-outspoken-journalist>
- Janis, M. W. (1975). Questions Concerning Western Sahara; Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice. *The International Lawter, American Bar Association*, 199-203. Retrieved November 13, 2020, from [www.jstor.org/stable/40705008](http://www.jstor.org/stable/40705008)
- Jones, R. (2012). *Border Walls: Security and the War on Terror in the United States, India, and Israel*. London: Zed Books.
- Kana, L. N. (2022, March 3). Moroccan students fleeing Ukraine arrive in Casablanca. *AfricaNews*. Retrieved March 23, 2022, from <https://www.africanews.com/2022/03/03/moroccan-students-fleeing-ukraine-arrive-in-casablanca/>
- Kasraoui, S. (2020, December 11). Algeria, Russia Condemn US Position on Morocco's Western Sahara Sovereignty. *Morocco World News*. Retrieved from <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2020/12/328605/algeria-russia-condemn-us-position-on-moroccos-western-sahara-sovereignty>



- Kasraoui, S. (2021, June 13). Morocco 'Halts' Negotiations For Renewal of Spain-Algeria Pipeline Gas Concession. *Morocco World News*. Retrieved from <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2021/06/342887/morocco-halts-negotiations-for-renewal-of-spain-algeria-pipeline-gas-concession>
- Kasraoui, S. (2022a, March 25). Morocco, Germany Renew Willingness to Intensify Cooperation. *Morocco World News*. Retrieved March 28, 2022, from <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2022/03/347889/morocco-germany-renew-willingness-to-intensify-cooperation>
- Kasraoui, S. (2022b, March 20). Spanish Minister: Spain Is Committed to ‘Stable’ Diplomatic Ties with Morocco. *Morocco World News*. Retrieved March 21, 2022, from <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2022/03/347785/spanish-minister-spain-is-committed-stable-diplomatic-ties-with-morocco>
- Koch Industries. (2022, March 23). *What We Do*. Retrieved from Koch Industries: <https://www.kochind.com/about/what-we-do>
- Koundouno, T. F. (2020, August 30). UN Secretary-General Reaffirms Algeria's Role in Western Sahara Conflict. *Morocco World News*. Retrieved November 16, 2020, from <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2020/08/316955/un-secretary-general-reaffirms-algerias-role-in-western-sahara-conflict/>
- Kristeva, J. (1999). *Strangers to Ourselves*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Lagdaf, S., & Flici, N. (2020). Chapter 18: Algeria and the Conflict in Western Sahara: Principles and Geopolitics. In Y. H. Zoubir, *The Politics of Algeria* (pp. 251-265). New York: Routledge.
- Latrech, O. (2022a, March 3). OCP Group Partners with Koch Industries in Jorf, Morocco. *Morocco World News*. Retrieved March 23, 2022, from <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2022/03/347408/ocp-group-partners-with-koch-industries-in-jorf-morocco>
- Latrech, O. (2022b, March 19). Over 8,000 Moroccans Were Enrolled in Ukrainian Universities. *Morocco World News*. Retrieved March 23, 2022, from <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2022/03/347765/over-8-000-moroccans-were-enrolled-in-ukrainian-universities>
- Le Marec, J. P. (2006). *Exploitation Illegale des Ressources Naturelles du Sahara Occidental*. ARSO. Retrieved March 11, 2022, from <https://www.arso.org/LemarecResnat0106.pdf>
- Levin, S. S. (1999). Social Dominance and Social Identity in the United States and Israel: Ingroup Favoritism or Outgroup Derogation? *Political Psychology*, 20(1), 99-126.
- Lippert, A. (1992). Sahrawi Women in the Liberation Struggle of the Sahrawi People. *Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 17(3), 636–651. doi:10.1086/494752

- Maghreb Arabe Press. (2022, March 2). Ukraine CrisisMorocco's Non-Participation in UNGA Vote is Sovereign Decision, Cannot be Interpreted as 'Strategic Misalignment'. *Agence Marocaine de Presse*. Retrieved March 23, 2022, from <https://www.mapnews.ma/en/actualites/world/ukraine-crisis-moroccos-non-participation-unga-vote-sovereign-decision-cannot-be>
- Mandraud, I. (2010, November 16). Western Sahara conflict flares again as refugee camp is broken up. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/nov/16/moroccan-raid-sahara-refugee-camp>
- Manzanaro, S. S. (2020, November 17). Polisario Front declares war on Morocco over Western Sahara region. *Euro News*. Retrieved from <https://www.euronews.com/2020/11/17/sahrawi-arab-democratic-republic-declares-war-on-morocco-over-western-sahara-region>
- Market Research Telecast. (2021, June 18). Tension over Western Sahara leaves development aid from Berlin to Rabat up in the air. *MRT*. Retrieved from <https://marketresearchtelecast.com/tension-over-western-sahara-leaves-development-aid-from-berlin-to-rabat-up-in-the-air/77418/>
- Mbembe, A. (1992). Provisional Notes on the Postcolony. *International African Institute*, 62(1), 3-37. doi:10.2307/1160062
- McCoy, A. W. (1991). *The Politics of Heroin: CIA Complicity in the Global Drug Trade*. Lawrence Hill Books.
- Meredith, M. (2005). *The Fate of Africa: A History of Fifty Years of Independence*. New York: Public Affairs Publishing.
- Merom, G. (2003). *How Democracies Lose Small Wars: State, Society, and the Failures of France in Algeria, Israel in Lebanon, and the United States in Vietnam*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Middle East Monitor. (2021a, June 21). Germany freezes over \$1bn aid to Morocco over Western Sahara. *MEM*. Retrieved from <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20210621-germany-freezes-over-1bn-aid-to-morocco-over-western-sahara/>
- Middle East Monitor. (2021b, June 11). Morocco authorities refuse services to German citizens, says embassy. *MEM*. Retrieved from <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20210611-morocco-authorities-refuse-services-to-german-citizens-says-embassy/>
- Minder, R. (2022, March 19). Spain, Seeking Better Ties With Morocco, Shifts Stance on Western Sahara. *New York Times*. Retrieved March 21, 2022, from <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/19/world/europe/spain-morocco-western-sahara.html>
- Mohammed V Foundation for Solidarity. (2021, October 4). *MARHABA OPERATION*. Retrieved April 23, 2022, from Fondation Mohammed V: <https://www.fm5.ma/en/operations/marhaba-operation>

- Mundy, J. (2006). Neutrality or complicity? The United States and the 1975 Moroccan takeover of the Spanish Sahara. *The Journal of North African Studies*, 11(3), 275-306.
- Observatory of Economic Complexity. (2019). *Which countries export Mixed Mineral or Chemical Fertilizers?* (2019). OEC. Retrieved March 21, 2022, from [https://oec.world/en/visualize/tree\\_map/hs92/export/show/all/63105/2019/](https://oec.world/en/visualize/tree_map/hs92/export/show/all/63105/2019/)
- OCP Group. (2022). *Koch Ag & Energy Solutions to acquire 50% stake in JFC III from OCP*. OCP Group. Retrieved March 23, 2022, from <https://www.ocpgroup.ma/press-release-article/koch-ag-energy-solutions-acquire-50-stake-jfc-iii-ocp>
- Onuah, F. (2022, May 3). Nigeria oil minister says Russia interested in gas pipeline to Morocco. *Reuters*. Retrieved May 18, 2022, from <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/nigeria-oil-minister-says-russia-interested-gas-pipeline-morocco-2022-05-03/>
- OT El Jadida. (2017, December 01). Ex Conseillé Du Roi Mohammed Vi El Mostapha Sahel Né À El Jadida. *LES ARTICLES SUR EL JADIDA*. Retrieved March 21, 2022, from <https://ot-eljadida.com/articles-sur-el-jadida/el-mostapha-sahel-ne-a-el-jadida>
- Parafiniuk, A., & Smith, Z. (2019). Green Gilded Oil: How Faux Sustainability by US Oil Companies is Undermining Neo-Sustainability. *Sustainability*, 11(14). doi:<https://doi.org/10.3390/su11143760>
- Peterson Institute for International Economics. (2009). *Capitalizing on the Morocco-US Free Trade Agreement: A Road Map for Success*. (G. C. Brunel, Ed.) Washington, DC: United Book Press, Inc. Retrieved March 21, 2022
- Polansek, T., & Mano, A. (2022, March 23). As sanctions bite Russia, fertilizer shortage imperils world food supply. *Reuters*. Retrieved March 23, 2022, from <https://www.reuters.com/business/sanctions-bite-russia-fertilizer-shortage-imperils-world-food-supply-2022-03-23/>
- Poullada, L. B. (1981). Afghanistan and the United States: The Crucial Years. *Middle East Journal*, 35(2), 178-190.
- Rahhou, J. (2022, March 19). Algeria Recalls Its Ambassador in Madrid for Consultations. *Morocco World News*. Retrieved March 21, 2022, from <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2022/03/347779/algeria-recalls-its-madrid-ambassador-for-consultations>
- Reuveny, R. P. (1999). The Afghanistan war and the breakdown of the Soviet Union. *Review of International Studies*, 25(4), 693-708. doi:10.1017/s0260210599006932
- Reynoso, J. (2022, March 19). Julissa Reynoso, nueva embajadora de Estados Unidos en España, sobre el Sáhara: "Creemos que el plan de Marruecos es razonable". (C. SER, Interviewer)
- Rosemarin, A. (2016). Phosphorus a Limited Resource - Closing the Loop. *Global Status of Phosphorus Conference*. Malmo, Sweden: USGS Phosphate Rock Statistics and Information. Retrieved from

[https://dakofa.com/fileadmin/user\\_upload/1600\\_Arno\\_Rosemarin\\_Stockholm\\_Environment\\_Institute.pdf](https://dakofa.com/fileadmin/user_upload/1600_Arno_Rosemarin_Stockholm_Environment_Institute.pdf)

- Rößler, H. (2021, June 7). Western Sahara, source of strife among would-be partners. *Qantara*. Retrieved from <https://en.qantara.de/content/crisis-between-morocco-and-germany-western-sahara-source-of-strife-among-would-be-partners>
- Rubin, B. R. (2002). The Political Economy of War and Peace in Afghanistan. *World Development*, 28(10), 1789-1803. doi:[https://doi.org/10.1016/S0305-750X\(00\)00054-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0305-750X(00)00054-1)
- Rubin, B. R. (2013). *Afghanistan from the Cold War through the War on Terror*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ruiz Miguel, C. (2005). El Largo Camino Jurídico y Político Hacia el Plan Baker II. *Anuario Mexicano de Derecho Internacional*, 5, 445-498. doi:10.22201/ijj.24487872e.2005.5.127
- Rushe, D. (2022, March 19). Pressure mounts on Koch Industries to halt business in Russia. *The Guardian*. Retrieved May 18, 2022, from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/mar/19/koch-industries-russia-business-pressure>
- Sahara Press Service. (2020, November 1). Polisario Front urges OHCHR not to support Moroccan institutions activities in occupied Sahrawi territories. *Sahara Press Service*. Retrieved November 20, 2020, from <https://www.spsrasd.info/news/en/articles/2020/11/01/28211.html>
- Sahara Press Service. (2021, June 23). "Sahrawi people the only ones who will decide Western Sahara fate " German ruling party Leader. *SPS*. Retrieved from <https://www.spsrasd.info/news/en/articles/2021/06/23/33965.html>
- Sahara Press Service. (2022a, March 26). Sanchez violated Spanish constitution and international law in Western Sahara. *Sahara Press Service*. Retrieved March 28, 2022, from <https://www.spsrasd.info/news/en/articles/2022/03/26/38885.html>
- Sahara Press Service. (2022b, March 26). SPLA carries out new attacks against entrenchments of Moroccan occupying forces in Mahbas sector. *SPS*. Retrieved March 28, 2022, from <https://www.spsrasd.info/news/en/articles/2022/03/26/38886.html>
- Sahel, E. M. (2007, April 11). Letter dated 11 April 2007 from the Permanent Representative of Morocco to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council. *Moroccan initiative for negotiating an autonomy statute for the Sahara region, S/2007/206*. United Nations Security Council. Retrieved March 21, 2022, from [https://moroccoembassy.vn/FileUpload/Documents/S\\_2007\\_206-EN.pdf](https://moroccoembassy.vn/FileUpload/Documents/S_2007_206-EN.pdf)
- Said, E. (1978). *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon.
- Said, E. (1985). Orientalism Reconsidered. *Race & Class*, 27(2), 1-15. doi:10.1177/030639688502700201

- San Martín, P. (2004). Briefing: Western Sahara: Road to Perdition? *African Affairs*, 103(413), 651-660. Retrieved November 18, 2020, from [www.jstor.org/stable/3518495](http://www.jstor.org/stable/3518495)
- Sartre, J.-P. (1961). Preface. In Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (pp. xliii-lxii).
- Schwartz, B. (2022, March 21). Koch Industries' campaign donations questioned after company's decision to remain in Russia. *CNBC*. Retrieved March 23, 2022, from <https://www.cnbc.com/2022/03/21/koch-industries-campaign-donations-questioned-after-decision-to-remain-in-russia.html>
- Slimi, A.-R. A.-M. (2009, June 17). The United States, Morocco and the Western Sahara Dispute. *Voices from the Middle East*. Retrieved March 21, 2022, from <https://carnegieendowment.org/2009/06/17/united-states-morocco-and-western-sahara-dispute-pub-23275>
- Smith, J. (2015). The taking of the Sahara: the role of natural resources in the continuing occupation of Western Sahara. *Global Change, Peace & Security*, 263-284.
- Snyder, G. (2002). Mearsheimer's World-Offensive Realism and the Struggle for Security. *International Security*, 149-173. Retrieved November 16, 2020, from [www.jstor.org/stable/3092155](http://www.jstor.org/stable/3092155)
- SOMED Development. (2022, March 21). *SOMED*. Retrieved from <https://somed.ma/>
- Thompson, V., & Adloff, R. (1980). *The Western Saharans: Background to Conflict*. London: Croom Helm.
- Tlemçani, R. (2020). Chapter 5: Policing Algeria under Bouteflika: From police state to civil state. In Y. H. Zoubir, *The Politics of Algeria* (pp. 61-74). London and New York: Routledge.
- Toutate, I. (2020, November 6). Blocked by Polisario, 200 Moroccan Truckers in Guerguerat Cry for Help. *Morocco World News*. Retrieved from <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2020/11/325060/blocked-by-polisario-200-moroccan-truckers-in-guerguerat-cry-for-help/>
- Trading Economics. (2020). *Morocco Imports from Russia of Mineral fuels, oils, distillation products*. Trading Economics. Retrieved March 23, 2022, from <https://tradingeconomics.com/morocco/imports/russia/mineral-fuels-oils-distillation-products>
- U.S. Embassy Rabat. (2020, December 14). *Ambassador David Fischer spoke to reporters about the historic White House announcement*. Retrieved from U.S. Embassy & Consulates in Morocco: <https://ma.usembassy.gov/ambassador-david-fischer-spoke-to-reporters-about-the-historic-white-house-announcement/>
- United Nations Press Release. (2020). *Security Council Extends Mandate of United Nations Mission for Referendum in Western Sahara by 13 Votes*. United Nations. Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/press/en/2020/sc14342.doc.htm>

- United States Department of State Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor. (2018). *2018 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Western Sahara*. State.gov. Retrieved November 10, 2020, from <https://www.state.gov/reports/2018-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/western-sahara/>
- Veracini, L. (2006). *Israel and settler society*. London: Pluto Press.
- Veracini, L. (2010). *Settler Colonialism*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Veracini, L. (2011). Introducing, Settler Colonial Studies. *Settler Colonial Studies*, 1-12.
- Waltz, K. (1979). *Theory of International Politics*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Wandersman, A. F. (1987). Who participates, who does not, and why? An analysis of voluntary neighborhood organizations in the United States and Israel. *Sociological Forum*, 2(3), 534-555. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01106625>
- Wendt, A. (1995). *Constructing international politics*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Western Sahara Resource Watch. (2020). *Stock-exchange registered companies in occupied Western Sahara*. Brussels: WSRW. Retrieved November 15, 2020, from <https://www.wsrw.org/a106x4348>
- Western Sahara Resource Watch. (2021). *Greenwashing Occupation: How Morocco's renewable energy projects in occupied Western Sahara prolong the conflict over the last colony in Africa*. Brussels: WSRW. doi:978-82-93425-41-0
- Wolfe, P. (2006). Settler colonialism and the elimination of the native. *Journal of Genocide Research*, 8(4), 387-409. doi:10.1080/14623520601056240
- Wolfe, P. (2016). *Traces of History*. London; New York: Verso.
- World is One. (2022, March 26). Large protest in Madrid against Spain's position on Western Sahara. *WION*. Retrieved March 28, 2022, from <https://www.wionews.com/world/large-protest-in-madrid-against-spains-position-on-western-sahara-465799>
- World Tribune. (2009, July 9). Obama reverses Bush-backed Morocco plan in favor of Polisario state. *World Tribune*. Retrieved March 21, 2022, from [http://www.worldtribune.com/worldtribune/WTARC/2009/af\\_morocco0547\\_07\\_09.asp](http://www.worldtribune.com/worldtribune/WTARC/2009/af_morocco0547_07_09.asp)
- Zoubir, Y. H. (1995). The United States, the Soviet Union and the decolonization of the Maghreb: Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, 1945–1962. *Middle Eastern Studies*, 31(1), 58–84. doi:10.1080/00263209508701041
- Zoubir, Y. H. (2009). The United States and Maghreb–Sahel Security. *International Affairs*, 85(5), 977-995. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2346.2009.00842.x
- Zoubir, Y. H. (2010). The Unresolved Western Sahara Conflict and Its Repercussions. *Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies (in Asia)*, 85-99. doi:10.1080/19370679.2010.12023157

Zoubir, Y. H., & Hamitouche, Y. (2020). Chapter 15: China's Relations with Algeria: A Strategic Partnership? In Y. H. Zoubir, *The Politics of Algeria* (pp. 210-225). London and New York: Routledge.

Zunes, S., & Mundy, J. (2010). *Western Sahara: War, Nationalism, and Conflict Irresolution*. Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press.

Zunes, S., & Mundy, J. (2020). *Western Sahara: War, Nationalism, and Conflict Irresolution*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press.

## Appendix A: List of Ongoing Energy Projects in the Western Sahara with International Investment

CIMAR (Ciments du Maroc) (5MW): Involves the following companies: Italgem (Italy), a subsidiary of Italcementi group; two companies owned by HeidelbergCement (Germany). “Comprises six 850 kW turbines installed by Gamesa (Spain, now Siemens Gamesa)... and a 150 kW turbine installed by Widemag (Germany)... Supplies the CIMAR factory. Surplus is sold to ONEE [Office National De L'electricite Et De L'eau Potable] through a partnership deal” (Western Sahara Resource Watch, 2021, pp.10-11).

Boujdour (500 MW): Involves the following companies: Siemens Energy (Germany), Enel Green Energy (Italy), Nareva (Morocco), Siemens Gamesa (Spain) (Western Sahara Resource Watch, 2021, pp.10-11).

Dakhla Desalination (40 MW): Involves the following companies: ENGIE (France), Nareva (Morocco), International Power SA (Belgium) (Western Sahara Resource Watch, 2021, pp.10-11)

Ghrad Jrad (75 MW): Involves two subsidiaries of Voltalia SA (France) (Western Sahara Resource Watch, 2021, pp.10-11)

Harmattan Dakhla Wind (900 MW): Involves the following companies: Harmattan Energy Ltd (United States). Of note, DNV (Norway) dropped out of this project due to its association with the Western Sahara (Western Sahara Resource Watch, 2021, pp.10-11)

Tiskrad (100 MW): Involves the following companies: Siemens Wind Power (Germany), Enel Green Energy (Italy), Nareva (Morocco) (Western Sahara Resource Watch, 2021, pp.10-11)

Noor Laayoune (85 MW) and Noor Boujdour (20 MW): Involves the following companies: ACWA Power (Saudi Arabia), Ingeteam (Spain), Chint Group (China), Sterling and Wilson (India), Green Giraffe (Netherlands) (Western Sahara Resource Watch, 2021, pp.10-11)

Afissat (200 MW): Developed by EEM, “a subsidiary of Nareva.” Involves the following companies: Terrawatt (Germany), Windhoist (UK), Eurogrues Maroc, Delattre Levivier Maroc, Omexom (VINCI, France), Lasarte (Spain), Somalev (Morocco), Deugro (Denmark), Allen & Overy (UK), ALL NRG (Denmark), ABB (Switzerland/Sweden/Japan), General Electric Renewable Energy (USA) (Western Sahara Resource Watch, 2021, pp.10-11)

Foum El Oued (50 MW): Developed by EEM. “Consists of 22 SWT-2.3-101 Siemens turbines.” Power generated to be used by Phosboucraa/OCP for extraction of mineral phosphates. Involves the following companies: Delattre Levivier Maroc, EuroGrues Maroc, Enerlog (Italy), Lahmeyer International (Germany), IKA Enerji (Turkey), Techniprojet (Morocco), Ormazabal (Spain), Global Wind Service (Denmark), Briese Schiffahrts (Germany) (Western Sahara Resource Watch, 2021, pp.10-11)