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„The Normalisation of Diplomatic Relations Between
Morocco and Israel: A Strategic Narrative Analysis of
Official and Media Communications in Morocco “

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On my honour as a student of the Diplomatische Akademie Wien, I submit this work in good faith and pledge that I have neither given nor received unauthorized assistance on it.

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English Abstract

This Master's thesis for the degree "Master of Advanced International Studies" represents a manually coded qualitative content analysis of the 2020 normalisation deal between Morocco and Israel. Relevant contents published in Moroccan media and official outlets (e.g., press agency releases and communiques) are examined according to the theory of Strategic Narrative Analysis. The research attempts to answer the question how a Strategic Narrative might have helped the political elite shape Moroccan public opinion favourably on resuming relations with Israel. The analysis shows how the normalisation achieved strategic political and economic policy goals for Morocco, while the narrative in the media and official outlets accompanied this *fait accompli* with a convincing argumentation that emphasized on economic, political and cultural benefits resulting from the deal. The media also succeeded in cleverly using Jewish history in Morocco as a supportive element of the narrative. This is analysed in more detail in a dedicated background chapter of the thesis. Due to restricted press freedom and strictly controlled flows of information in the kingdom, only a small amount of media releases discussed negative opinions on the deal and were usually described as unreasoned or ill-informed, whereas the official narrative evolved mostly around positive arguments. Although the normalisation was brokered by the U.S., the current American administration has not renewed the expressed support of Moroccan sovereignty over the Western Sahara, which was granted in the context of the Tripartite Agreement of the U.S., Israel and Morocco. This fact has slowed down euphoria about the deal in Morocco, which is why normalisation remains a dynamic and controversial issue in the context of MENA regional developments.

German Abstract

Diese Masterarbeit für den angestrebten Titel „Master of Advanced International Studies“ präsentiert eine manuell codierte qualitative Inhaltsanalyse über die 2020 beschlossene Normalisierung zwischen Marokko und Israel. Inhalte, die in marokkanischen Medien und offiziellen Kommunikationskanälen veröffentlicht wurden, werden im Rahmen der strategischen Narrativ-Analyse untersucht. Die Recherche versucht die Frage zu beantworten, inwieweit ein strategisches Narrativ bei der Einflussnahme der politischen Elite des Landes auf eine positive öffentliche Meinung über Israel in Marokko geholfen haben könnte. Die Recherche zeigt auf, wie durch die Normalisierung strategisch wichtige politische und wirtschaftliche Ziele erreicht wurden, während der Prozess medial von einer überzeugenden Argumentation begleitet wurde, welche v.a. die wirtschaftlichen, politischen und kulturellen Vorteile des Übereinkommens hervorhob. Auch die historische Komponente jüdischer Geschichte in Marokko wird durch das Narrativ geschickt eingesetzt und wird in einem Hintergrundkapitel dieser Arbeit näher beleuchtet. Aufgrund eingeschränkter Pressefreiheit und streng kontrollierter Informationsfreigabe im Königreich konnten nur

wenige Beiträge gefunden werden, die eine negative Meinung zur Normalisierung diskutierten. In diesen Fällen wurden abweichende Darstellungen meist als unangemessen oder schlecht informiert beschrieben, während das offizielle Narrativ fast ausschließlich positive Argumente beförderte. Obwohl das Übereinkommen von den USA initiiert wurde, hat die aktuelle Administration im Weißen Haus bislang nicht die damalige vertragliche Anerkennung einer marokkanisch kontrollierten Westsahara wiederholt zugesichert. Dies hat die Euphorie im Normalisierungsprozess ausgebremst und ist mit ein Grund dafür, dass die Beziehungen zwischen Israel und Marokko ein dynamisches und kontrovers diskutiertes Thema der regionalen Entwicklungen im Mittleren Osten und Nordafrika bleiben.

Introduction

With the official re-opening of diplomatic missions between the Kingdom of Morocco and the State of Israel in the summer of 2021, the bilateral relations appeared to be on an all-time high. The media in both countries convey a largely positive image about the progress in economic and political exchange. Following the normalisation of Israel's relations with several Arabic states following the Abraham Accords, Morocco and Israel signed their cooperation agreement in December 2020 under U.S.-led initiation. In this Master thesis I am going to evaluate the role of the strategic narrative Moroccan media and official statements by the Moroccan administration in shaping or influencing the domestic public opinion on relations with Israel. Considering the cultural and political placement of Morocco at the Western end of what is considered the Arab world, or MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region, with a population of predominantly Arabs and Berbers and a few smaller minorities, the hereditary kingdom remains embedded in its identification as an Arabic and Sunni Muslim nation¹. However, local Berber and Amazigh traditions and their culture have survived and been revived in recent years², and are often-times combined with Muslim traditions and rites. The necessity to shape public opinion favourably regarding the relations with the Jewish state becomes obvious when looking at the collective objection, or non-recognition of Arab nations towards Israel and its politics in the disputed territory, since the founding of Israel in 1948. Apart from Egypt and Jordan, whose governments concluded bilateral peace agreements with Israel in 1979 and 1994 respectively, Arab states had hitherto stood united in the non-recognition, or at least in harshly criticising the existence and actions of Israel in the Middle East. Therefore, a strategic narrative could have helped in convincing the elites and the general public of the daring political project. Since the normalisation between Morocco and Israel is a very recent event entering the dynamics of the MENA region, though rarely mentioned in the analysis of the peace process of the Palestinian question, I decided to research what methods the kingdom had used to communicate and convince the public of re-entering into bilateral relations with Israel.

I will outline the thesis' academic contribution, the research question and my hypothesis in the following paragraph, before continuing with the literature review and the theoretical framework that explains concepts and the method of this research. This is followed by the historical background chapter on Jewish history in Morocco, which helps contextualise the topic. The subsequent analysis looks at the use of strategic narrative elements in the examined content. Finally, I will sum up the results of the analysis in the conclusion, according to the defined four-step method of strategic narrative analysis.

¹ 'Morocco Population 2022 (Demographics, Maps, Graphs)', accessed 2 June 2022, <https://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/morocco-population>.

² Iran's Regional Role, 'The Amazigh Cultural Renaissance', The Washington Institute, accessed 2 June 2022, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/amazigh-cultural-renaissance>.

Contribution

Assessing the presumed intention behind the implementation of this normalisation is essential in order to understand broader policy goals: All actors involved, the United States, the State of Israel and the Kingdom of Morocco, follow foreign policy strategies by subscribing to the Abraham Accords. Whether these strategic goals remain on a purely political and economic level, or whether they imply a more substantive approach for an advance in the peace process in the MENA region is a relevant question in understanding the long-term goals that a major actor in IR, like the US, is pursuing. More interesting for this analysis, however, are the intentions of the Moroccan Kingdom in normalising relations with Israel. It will reveal whether the Kingdom truly supports a project of peace for the region, and to maintain close ties with Israel on the cultural, economic and diplomatic level, despite domestic criticism and that from other Arab states. Or, what seems more self-evident on the surface, simply to secure its authority over the Western Sahara, which the U.S.' Trump administration recognised in the Abraham Accords and which grants the country access to valuable mineral resources.

Research Question

Policy decisions are taken by the Moroccan government, and most likely instructed by the royal palace. The involvement of King Mohammed VI. and his advisors in the country's politics are presumed, though difficult to assess, due to the lack of transparent information and restricted press freedom.³ Thus, I decided to analyse the reporting on Moroccan-Israeli relations in the media of the kingdom, as well as in press statements and other official outlets, with the aim to identify how the Moroccan administration could convey the advantages of extending relations with Israel, both diplomatically and economically, by means of an adapted narrative. The recent diplomatic rapprochement between Morocco and Israel thus raises the question to what extent the narrative of official and media communications yielded at drawing a more positive image of the state of Israel. Who are the actors mentioned, what are they portrayed like and which promises does the narrative hold? How are potential advantages of normalisation argued and how are they used in order to convey a convincing story of success eventually resulting from the normalisation?

Hypothesis

Since the Abraham Accords were concluded by the political elites and with the consent of the diplomatic leaders, in this case of Israel, the U.S. and Morocco, though not by means of a public opinion poll or a referendum, there are two ways to explain the impact of the normalisation's strategic narrative:

- 1) A political programme, steered by the elites of the United States, Israel and Morocco, that reaches its goals on an economic, political and diplomatic level,

³ 'Morocco / Western Sahara | RSF', accessed 2 June 2022, <https://rsf.org/en/country/morocco-western-sahara>.

however not reaching out to the people, nor matching the general public opinion.

- 2) A substantive change and peace initiative aimed at creating a new dynamic for the peace process by breaking with old stigmas in the Arab world regarding Israel, thus reaching the broader public directly and shaping a new narrative for peace and cooperation that includes Israel as a regional partner.

I argue that both explanations are valid in the narratives. As a matter of fact, the Accords were concluded mainly on grounds of political and economic interests (e.g., enhancing the tourism sector and trade exchange).

The second explanation implies a broader buy-in, intended at reaching the public, designing a long-term change in narrative on the relations with Israel, potentially breaking and undermining the formerly existing pan-Arab unity against the state of Israel. This effect might have been favoured thanks to the narrative. The designing of a narrative with the primary goal to reach policy goals and to satisfy economic and security interests is coupled with the impact of the narrative on public opinion. If implemented and communicated convincingly, the narrative may well be a factor that could favour a sustainable peace process for the MENA region by allowing a more dynamic discourse of Arab-Israeli relations. Not just in Morocco, in other Arab states as well. This argument is supported by the fact that the Abraham Accords have not only been concluded with Morocco, but so far also with the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Sudan.⁴ The Accords may not have been implemented, had Moroccan state-actors and media not carefully introduced a strategic narrative that guided public opinion towards a more favourable tide.

Literature Review, Concepts and Method for the Analysis of the Strategic Narrative in the Context of Normalisation between Morocco and Israel

In the following chapter, I will present existing literature on research that has applied in similar contexts and analyses. I will define the theoretical framework and perspective through which I aim to analyse this topic. The concepts and theories include the role of the media in international relations and strategic narratives.

Soft power and communication: State-actors have numerous possibilities to promote political agendas, be it educational exchange programmes, cultural and development projects, or social media representation, to name just a few. All of these policies

⁴ 'The Abraham Accords One Year Later: Assessing the Impact and What Lies Ahead | Wilson Center', accessed 4 June 2022, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/event/abraham-accords-one-year-later-assessing-impact-and-what-lies-ahead>.

can help attract public attention through the use of different media tools. Analysing the impact and development of communication channels in international relations (IR), Castells argues in his work *“Communication Power”* that new networks communication *“allowed new forms of social and political organization, symbolized by waves of protest and uprisings in 2011, and created a sense of anxiety and vulnerability among the big powers of international relations, triggering a range of attempts to find ways to control global communication, some deft and some heavy-handed.”*⁵ These are examples of how state-actors use public diplomacy to implement policies. Joseph Nye, a distinguished scholar in political sciences, describes soft power as follows: *“This soft power-getting others to want the outcomes that you want- co-opts people rather than it coerces them”*.⁶

As he implies, the concept is about persuading the public of one's own goals, rather than banning or imposing certain viewpoints and ideas. Nye takes the concept of Public Diplomacy further and defines that when combining hard and soft power policy tools, a state exercises smart power. However, he points out that the excessive use of public diplomacy will be perceived as propaganda and will in turn have an inverse effect, whereby the intended goal implodes, and the information thus loses credibility.⁷ Within the concept of soft power, it is considered that hard power elements like the distribution of military capacities are not sufficient to maintain the power status of a major actor like the US for example. Instead, Nye assumes that *“power rests on attraction as well as coercion”*, elements which can also be found in the works of IR scholar Morgenthau.⁸ Attraction and coercion to a certain power or its aims would then require communication strategies favourable to that end. Assuming that Moroccan media narrative has been successful in delivering information convincing the public of normalisation, I will assess the balance of credible critique and persuasion of the journalistic and official releases.

Narratives: Generally speaking, narratives are essential in the creation of an emotional link and relation to a story. Stories are accounts reproduced through an individual perspective, including emotional perception, and portraying of the actors involved in it. Both the cognitive and cultural dimension are directly addressed through narratives: human thinking and understanding are closely tied to the creation of a narrative through which we relate to a story. In every culture, there is the use of narratives, in order to associate with communities, values, concepts, traditions, etc.⁹ To create a convincing narrative in the case of Moroccan-Israeli relations, the actors (the media, or the

⁵ Manuel Castells, *Communication Power*, vol. 2nd edition (Oxford: OUP Oxford, 2013), <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=620218&site=ehost-live>.

⁶ Joseph S. Nye, ‘Public Diplomacy and Soft Power’, *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616 (2008): 95.

⁷ Nye, 107.

⁸ Alister Miskimmon, Ben O’Loughlin, and Laura Roselle, *Strategic Narratives: Communication Power and the New World Order* (New York: Routledge, 2013), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315871264>, p.3

⁹ Alexander Spencer, *Romantic Narratives in International Politics : Pirates, Rebels and Mercenaries* (Manchester, UNITED KINGDOM: Manchester University Press, 2016), 178, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/dalib-ebooks/detail.action?docID=5446721>.

government/royal court) must be aware of existing criticism within the society and the potential backlash which the normalisation initiative might trigger. For several decades, the Arab world had been united in its condemnation of the state of Israel and its actions. Morocco is undoubtedly part of the Arab world, so the strategic of the narrative must opt for common denominators of Israeli and Moroccan history, or narratives, that have the potential to persuade critical minds of the cause with a convincing argument focussing on shared history (or stories). As Spencer explains in "Romantic Narratives in International Politics": "*Narratives have to conform to previously existing ones in order to gain acceptability from an audience*".¹⁰

Spencer further argues in his book that there are three different variations of how (romantic) narratives may work convincingly: they shall be approached by focusing either on the narrator, on the story, or on the audience.¹¹

Strategic Narratives: The main academic work used in this thesis to examine this concept is the following book on strategic narrative in IR, "Strategic Narratives: Communication Power and the New World Order". Herein, the authors point out that "*political actors attempt to use narratives strategically*"¹². The actor is the Moroccan state and state-controlled media outlets. "*Strategic narratives are (...) a communicative tool through which political actors—usually elites—attempt to give determined meaning to past, present, and future in order to achieve political objectives.*"¹³

The political actors of Morocco aim, I argue, to shape the public opinion favourably of Moroccan society on its relations with Israel. "*Strategic narratives are a tool for political actors to extend their influence, manage expectations, and change the discursive environment in which they operate. They are narratives about both states and the system itself, both about who we are and what kind of order we want. The point of strategic narratives is to influence the behaviour of others*".¹⁴

This underlines the final goal of the implementation of a narrative: to influence behaviour in a constructive way for the political goal. The political goal may of course be intended to support economic or political interests (geostrategic, military, etc.), embedded in and bound to political frameworks.

To apply a somewhat polemic argumentation regarding the relevance of strategic narratives, Roselle et al. stated that "*Rational theories are for well-ordered worlds and for leaders set within that world. Today, however, we have a chaotic world, with leaders who are ill-prepared for its complexities. Narratives are even more important for ordering the chaos.*"¹⁵

¹⁰ Spencer, 180.

¹¹ Spencer, 181–85.

¹² Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, and Roselle, *Strategic Narratives.*, p. 1-3

¹³ Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, and Roselle, 22.

¹⁴ Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, and Roselle, p. 1-3

¹⁵ Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, and Roselle p. 74.

To explain my choice of analysing the normalisation process of this thesis' case from the perspective of strategic narrative analysis, the following quotation supports my reasoning: *"It is because narratives give sense to international relations that actors seek to use them strategically"*.¹⁶ The strategy of the Moroccan state is aimed more at speaking to its own population, potentially also to please the actors who facilitated the normalisation, namely the U.S. Applying Strategic Narrative Analysis is explained in Roselle et. al.'s work "Strategic narrative: A new means to understand soft power" as follows: *"Our work on strategic narratives involves identifying and understanding communication in international relations. We recognize that communication involves both verbal and other forms of communication. This is important because a focus on strategic narrative then bridges the gap between hard and soft power concepts"*.¹⁷

However, from a scientific point of view it is difficult to define the possibility of accurately measuring empirical evidence of the impact of language, media and narratives influencing events in international relations. As the authors of "Strategic Narratives" have pointed out: *"How influence works in these spaces (the "people" or the "audience") is hard to empirically measure or demonstrate, and skeptics rightly ask whether states' rhetoric of engagement and listening is likely to have any substantive effect on their foreign policy making"*.¹⁸

Therefore, I have decided to apply a qualitative analysis to this case-study by looking at media and official communications and to examine the narratives, as well as considering the historical components, rather than applying empirical measurement methods or algorithms, which are more commonly used in critical discourse analysis.

The research method consists of a manually coded qualitative content analysis of communication outlets of the Moroccan state that relate to the normalisation with Israel. This will reflect the kingdom's public and official stance on the process. I will then look at newspapers and media outlets, as well as comments and articles on the renewed diplomatic relations with Israel, qualitatively analysed with the same frame. Here, I will identify whether the media landscape boosts the official strategic narrative, or whether the media draw a different picture of the public view on the topic. The analysis is thus limited to the domestic level at which the Moroccan state may control flows of information, and publicly expressed and promoted discourse. The choice of the media publications intends to reflect the public opinion, since most of the opinion pieces are written by scholars or journalists. I am aware, however, that the seemingly diverse media landscape is likely to be controlled by the authorities of the kingdom. The current score on the index of press freedom, according to the NGO RSF (Reporters without Borders), is 135 out of 180 evaluated countries¹⁹. RSF further argues that authorities exert pressure and expose journalists to harassment. This must be taken into account in the context of

¹⁶ Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, and Roselle, p.176

¹⁷ Roselle, Miskimmon, and O'Loughlin, 'Strategic Narrative', 75.

¹⁸ Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, and Roselle, *Strategic Narratives.*, p.179

¹⁹ 'Morocco / Western Sahara | RSF'.

the analysis, since the media publications may therefore be considered just as a façade to fabricate an illusion of a diversified media landscape that -in reality- is an extension of the authorities' information control. Some of the media outlets claim to publish individual opinions, indicated in the title of one of the sources "*L'Opinion*". Others, like "*bladi.net*" simply report on news, whereas "*mapnews.ma*" is the official press agency of the Moroccan administration and shall therefore be considered an official outlet rather than a journalistic editorial office.

I aim to identify a potentially evolving narrative and to point out the indicators for that change in discourse in the published content. The thesis also sheds light on the historical developments, illustrating the Jewish heritage and history of Morocco in a dedicated background chapter. Press articles and official statements, as well as historical works for the interdisciplinary chapter shall serve as primary sources. Each official communication analysis is followed by a media communication analysis. I will analyse eight official reports and eight media articles published over the course of about 18 months, dating from the signing of the Tripartite Agreement in December 2020, until June 2022.

In order to systematically frame the content in the analysis, I will apply the scheme from the essay "*Strategic narrative: A new means to understand soft power*"²⁰, as a way to explaining the structure and components of the narrative. This scheme includes four components²¹ which I will assess for each analysed content:

- 1) **Character of Actors:** The main actors of the analysis are the Kingdom of Morocco and its official representatives that are responsible for the design of the narrative. Their character as part of the state-actor Morocco and the historical context are described in the background chapter. Secondly, there is the state of Israel, the partner diplomatic relations have been taken up with in 2021. But the case does not simply represent a bilateral issue: The United States are the major state-actor having brokered the normalisation between the two states. Apart from tensions with neighbouring countries like Algeria or the conflict of the Western Sahara, there are also Gulf states that are involved in the case, since the United Arab Emirates and Bahrein have also normalised relations with Israel, as well as Sudan. Apart from Algeria, all the actors mentioned can be viewed as stabilizing factors for the normalisation, but also as support for the narrative. As a destabilizing factor may be mentioned Iran since this major geopolitical actor poses a threat with nuclear capabilities to the security in the MENA region. A recognition of Israel's statehood by Iran is unthinkable at this date. In the analysis, I will examine the portraying of and comments on the mentioned actors involved in the case by Moroccan officials and media.

²⁰ Roselle, Miskimmon, and O'Loughlin, 'Strategic Narrative'.

²¹ Roselle, Miskimmon, and O'Loughlin, 75–76.

- 2) **Setting/environment/space:** In this part, we look at the regional and international setting of our case: how does the Moroccan narrative describe the international system, its place in it, by normalizing with Israel, and within the regional context of MENA dynamics? This may refer to enhanced cooperation and prestige on the economic and political level, both regionally and internationally.
- 3) **Conflict or action:** How the narrative represents temporality, the structure “*to address past, present, and future*”²² of the relations to Israel and other involved actors. This component sheds light on what the narrative claims to have achieved or changed thanks to the normalisation, and what future prospects for Morocco arise from that action.
- 4) **Resolution or suggested resolution:** After identifying what the narrative claims to have achieved in the historical perspective (under point 3), what does it say about resolving conflicts like the Palestinian territorial issue, the peace process in the Middle East, etc.? This may address the broader impact of Morocco’s normalisation and how it affects conflicts or the status quo with other actors involved.

The four components of Strategic Narrative Analysis will serve as an instruction to examine the published content in media and official outlets. Even though the content may well extend its references beyond these four concepts, it facilitates the understanding and the intentions of the publications in the context of strategic narrative theory.

²² Roselle, Miskimmon, and O’Loughlin, 75.

**Background Chapter: Brief Overview of Jewish History in Morocco.
How the Common History of the Faiths in Morocco may help support
the Official Narrative.**



Synagogue in Fes. Charles Landelle, oil on canvas, 1866. Paris, private collection.

Image: scene from a synagogue in Fez, Morocco, 1866²³

This chapter will illustrate the coexistence of Jewish and Muslim communities in Morocco throughout history and may serve as an explanatory support to the recent revival of the relations between Morocco and Israel, despite ideological and religious conflicts that may stand in the way of normalisation. The identity of the nation would most likely be described as predominantly one of Arab and Muslim, but also, in part, Arab and Jewish. As an example of Jewish identity present until today in Morocco may be mentioned that Jewish advisors to the King and his court have a long-standing tradition, as recognized in one of the sources of this research: *“We wish in particular to pay tribute here to André Azoulay, adviser to the king of Morocco, who has encouraged the trend toward acknowledging the Jewish share in the configuration of national identities, not only in his own country but also elsewhere in the Maghreb and the Arab East.”*²⁴

²³ Abdelwahab Meddeb and Benjamin Stora, *A History of Jewish-Muslim Relations : From the Origins to the Present Day* (Princeton, UNITED STATES: Princeton University Press, 2013), 227, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/dalib-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1323629>.

²⁴ Meddeb and Stora, 22.

It is important to consider the complexity of the identity question when looking at the relations between various ethnic and religious groups in the Middle East and North Africa, since the people of the region share cultural and socio-economic spaces that overlap and where interaction was or is common. Examples from the region's history will show this in more detail. Considering the historical connections of about 800.000 Israelis of Moroccan descent, and examining the topic with a deeper, historical perspective, may help understand the normalisation process as one of mutual interest. While history shall not be considered the primary reason for normalisation, it may well explain the motivation behind and the trust of the ruling elite to impose such a deal on Morocco, hoping the necessary level of support or tolerance among its own population can be drawn from this narrative.

Jewish life has been documented in what is now Morocco since the era when the region was under control of the Roman Empire. This was the reign of Emperor Augustus in Rome, so roughly from the year 30 B.C. until 30 A.D., though there seems to be a lack of documentation of Judaism in the region from the late Roman rulership until the first Arab conquests²⁵.

The Arabs, coming from the Arabian Peninsula and swiftly conquering vast areas of the Middle East, carried out their conquest of North Africa from around 650 A.D. until the early 700's A.D., which is the time at which Morocco became part of the Islamic Empire²⁶. By the year of around 900, *Islamization* of the Maghreb had been completed: *"By the tenth century the Maghrib had been to all intents and purposes Islamized and, in spite of the influence of European rule since the nineteenth century, Islam remains the religion of practically the whole population of the region and the Arab-Islamic culture is still dominant."*²⁷

Moving forward to the Muslim rule over Al-Andalus on the Iberian Peninsula during the early 12th century, Jews were accused by the Muslim rulers of siding with the Christian Aragon ruler Alfonso I. and were subsequently deported to North Africa. Many of the Jews settled in today's Salé (just north of today's capital Rabat) and Meknès (near Fez)²⁸. But the main factor for the influx of Jews into the Maghrib was the 1492 persecution and expulsion of around 107.000 Jews from the Aragon kingdom on the Iberian Peninsula²⁹.

²⁵ Nordman, 'À Propos d'une Histoire Du Maroc', p. 936.

²⁶ Abun-Nasr, Jamil M., *A History of the Maghrib in the Islamic Period*. (West Nyack: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 33.

²⁷ Abun-Nasr, Jamil M., *A History of the Maghrib in the Islamic Period*. p. 26

²⁸ Jamil M. Abun-Nasr, ed., 'The Maghrib under Berber Dynasties', in *A History of the Maghrib in the Islamic Period*, 1st ed. (Cambridge University Press, 1987), 86, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511608100.005>.

²⁹ Meddeb and Stora, *A History of Jewish-Muslim Relations : From the Origins to the Present Day*, 147.

Increased levels of antisemitism and intolerance, and even pogroms against Jews in Morocco started becoming more common towards the end of the 15th century, possibly linked to the large-scale immigration of Sephardim Jews. *“Many scholars of the Maghrib, (...) condemned al-Maghili’s campaign against the Jews and refuted the religious arguments he used in justifying it. But the fact that a prominent Muslim scholar conducted this campaign and could gain some support for it, reflected the spirit of intolerance which swept over the Maghrib at the end of the fifteenth century”*.³⁰

With the expulsion of Jews from Spain, also known as the Sephardim, the Jewish population in Morocco grew quickly, though not without discontent and suspicion by the residing population:

*“For Moroccan Muslims, the arrival of the Sephardim meant overcrowding, competition for jobs, and increased prices in the souk. Even in the south, where far fewer Sephardim settled, their presence was destabilizing, a fact that lies behind Mawlay ‘Abd al- Ghalib’s creation of a walled Jewish quarter (mellah) in Marrakesh, where the Jews could be better contained and monitored.”*³¹

However suspiciously regarded by the Muslim population, the Sephardim brought with them not only customs, traditions, food and clothes, but also valuable technology and know-how: *“They (the Sephardim) were also responsible for bringing the first Hebrew printing press to Morocco, making Fez among the earliest publication centres since the end of the fifteenth century”*.³¹

What is remarkable about the influx of the Sephardim is that the “Spanish” Jews did not, as one might think, collaborate with the indigenous Moroccan Jews who had been living there before, but rather kept their communities entirely apart from one another. This seems to illustrate a cultural difference between the two entities who, despite their unity in terms of religious identification as Jewish, wanted to preserve their respective specific customs and practices. Assumingly, this aimed to highlight the cultural differences that had evolved within the groups.

With the emerging Moroccan nation under the Saadi dynasty, the Portuguese, who had conquered vast territories of today’s Morocco from the early 15th century onwards³², were driven out in 1578³³. This came as a relief to the Sephardim who had fled and feared the threat of Christianisation from Spain. Thanks to Morocco’s emergence as a trade partner for the Netherlands, England and France, this opportunity was particularly seized by the Sephardim who had maintained good trading contacts and networks

³⁰ Abun-Nasr, ‘The Maghrib under Berber Dynasties’, 143.

³¹ Meddeb and Stora, *A History of Jewish-Muslim Relations : From the Origins to the Present Day*, 223.

³² Malyn Newitt, ed., ‘The Portuguese in Morocco’, in *The Portuguese in West Africa, 1415–1670* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 25, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511779954.010>.

³³ *Abgadiyat*, Editors. “ - 915 دراسة في مضمون النقوش الكتابية على عمائر الأشراف السعديين بالمغرب الأقصى (1658 - 1510 هـ / 1658 - 1510 م) ” *Abgadīyyāt* 9, No. 1 (2014): 150–94. <https://doi.org/10.1163/22138609-90000027>, n.d.

all over Europe. This in turn granted many of them a rapid accession with proximity to the ruling elite. The Atlantic city of Essaouira, formerly known as Mogador, is one example where the emerging Jewish trade dynasties settled, with half the population being Jewish around the year 1800.

But the period of centralization under the Saadi dynasty rule in the 16th century was soon replaced by the sharifian dynasty of the Alawi family, Morocco's ruling family from 1659 to this day, who had emphasised their descentance from the prophet. Their rule was far less tolerant of Jews in the beginning. In the early years of Alawi rule, synagogues were destroyed, and Jews persecuted. It shall be mentioned at this point that Morocco was suffering from long periods of draughts and hunger in the 17th century, a time in which both the Jewish and the Muslim Moroccans suffered huge human losses.

Sabbateanism is a mystic strain of Judaism which emerged in the early 17th century, comparable to Sufi practice in Islam, and spread among Jews within the Ottoman Empire. It was also present among the Jewish communities of Morocco, predominantly among the Sephardim. In contrast to other regions of the Ottoman Empire, Jewish communities in Morocco integrated Sabbateanism into the "mainstream" Jewish customs, where it was "controlled" and assimilated, some of the Sabbatean practices remain part of normative Moroccan Judaism today. It is argued that these concessions helped Moroccan Judaism sustain and prevented major splits among Jewish groups, as they happened elsewhere in Europe.³⁴

While the late 17th century proved as a prosperous time economically, both for Muslims and Jews in Morocco, with the reconstruction of synagogues and the erection of *mellahs* in major cities under Mawlay Ismail, there were also growing tensions between the faiths due to the Jews' increased influence and success in coastal cities, engaging in trade and serving as intermediaries for European actors that intervened increasingly in North Africa.

As mentioned earlier, Morocco's main port for trade with Europe became the city of Essaouira (or Mogador, as it was called by the Portuguese, and the Jewish population became an integral part of the city's social and economic life. As in other parts of the country, Jews settled in the separate *mellah* quarters, however, that did not imply that the communities lived separately in their daily business: "*While Jews lived somewhat separate lives, the mellah was hardly a place of confinement, and Muslims and Jews interacted in the marketplace, port, and regional weekly markets.*"

This helped connect the two communities by relying on each other: "*The interdependency between Muslims and Jews helped maintain a system of relative trustworthiness: Muslims depended on Jewish brokers to market their merchandise, while Jews depended on Muslim transporters to convey their goods over long distances.*"³⁵

³⁴ Meddeb and Stora, *A History of Jewish-Muslim Relations : From the Origins to the Present Day*, 228.

³⁵ Meddeb and Stora, 232.

But due to the increased success and often-times being perceived as “arrogant”³⁶, Jews of the Moroccan coastal cities were accused of disrespecting the rules of behaviour imposed on them. Further separation of the Jewish community in Morocco from the majority of Muslims was fuelled by the spread of Jewish philanthropic ideas in the 19th century, both politically and ideologically. The distribution of journals by European Jewish associations gained popularity among the Jewish communities and the large diaspora of Moroccan Jews all over the world. This gave the Jews of Morocco an increased globalised identity, which did not match the local customs and traditions of the Muslim Moroccan population.³⁷

Old resentments between the Arabic-speaking, “indigenous”, “Berber” Jews and the Spanish-speaking Sephardim also remained or resurged by the end of the 19th century.

In 1912, the French established their Protectorate over the Moroccan kingdom of Sultan Moulay Abdelhafid³⁸. The treaty of Fez was the constituting document of the French rule over Morocco, which should last until Moroccan independence in 1956.³⁹

Under the French Protectorate of 1912, Moroccan Jews could, for the first time, refer to a centralized authority to organise Jewish life centrally: The High Rabbi Tribunal, and the Institute of Higher Jewish Studies, both located in Rabat, and other institutions all over Moroccan cities. One of the major European Jewish actors in the early 20th century is the *Alliance Israélite Universelle*, a Paris-based Jewish organisation that was granted full authority under the French Protectorate of 1912 to manage the Jewish communities in Morocco. Thanks to the authority under the French rule and the fragmentation among the existing Jewish communities, the *Alliance* was greatly successful in monopolising its own authority over the Jews and was responsible for an education rate among Jewish children of 60%, compared to only 13% among Muslim children by the time Morocco gained its independence from France in 1956.⁴⁰

However, the transformation of Moroccan society under the French Protectorate also meant a Europeanisation of life, for all of society and in all aspects of daily life. This included “*the adoption of European clothing habits, the gradual abandonment of the traditional Jewish quarter or mellah, the entry of women into working life, the drop in the number of tradesmen and craftsmen and, finally, the creation of a still very modest sector of liberal professions*”.⁴¹

³⁶ Michel Abitbol, ‘De la tradition à la modernité : les juifs du Maroc’, *Diasporas. Circulations, migrations, histoire*, no. 27 (27 October 2016): 19–30, <https://doi.org/10.4000/diasporas.439>.

³⁷ Abitbol.

³⁸ ‘Maroc, Traité de Fès 1912, Protectorat Français, MJP’, accessed 23 April 2022, <https://mjp.univ-perp.fr/constit/ma1912.htm>.

³⁹ André de Laubadère, ‘Le statut international du Maroc depuis 1955’, *Annuaire Français de Droit International* 2, no. 1 (1956): 122–49, <https://doi.org/10.3406/afdi.1956.1228>.

⁴⁰ Abitbol, ‘De la tradition à la modernité’.

⁴¹ Abitbol.

In contrast to the European process of Jewish assimilation to modern ways of life, which was seen as an advancement by the majorly non-Jewish authorities and societies and was regarded as a positive development in order to unify society, the opposite happened in Morocco, where the Jews adapting the colonially imposed, Europeanised habits were seen as increasingly disintegrating from Moroccan, Arabic traditions and customs. This shows how the French rulership sowed division in society by means of cultivating religious and cultural hierarchies. Furthermore, the Moroccan Jews obeyed to the French colonialists more willingly and even aspired to obtain the French citizenship.⁴² While the majority of Moroccan Jews assimilated with the imposed rule of the French over Morocco, the Arabic speaking, as well as Muslim intellectuals of Morocco started propagating their ideas of a new Arab nationalism. Coupled with nationalism on the rise in Europe, as well as the spread of fascist and antisemitic ideas, and due to the emerging Jewish-Palestinian conflict, there was now room for overt antisemitism in Morocco as well.

The outbreak of the Second World War and the consecutive founding of the state of Israel were the major driving forces that created a mass exodus of Jews from Morocco. Israel's victory in the 1967 Six-Day War came as a frightening event to Jews all over the Arab world, where they were confronted with violence from the local populations. King Hassan II., together with Tunisia's President Bourguiba, were the only Arab leaders who condemned these violent attacks against Jews.

Nevertheless, during the 1960s, Morocco's authorities facilitated mass emigration of Jews from Morocco, with the particularity of banning leaving Jewish Moroccans to leave for Israel. The ferry companies in charge of the mass exodus set up offices in the port cities of Morocco (Casablanca and Tangier), where Moroccan Jews would receive tickets with invented destinations, since they were not allowed to declare Israel as their true destination. A paradox situation in which the Moroccan authorities, aware that Jewish exiles would go to Israel, issued passports that included the detail "*Valid for all nations except Israel*".⁴³ Many of the Moroccan Jews left for Israel (with the mandatory layover and change of ship in Marseilles), others went mainly to France and Canada, where large communities of North-African Jews remain to this day.

Despite the struggles of Jewish communities living in Morocco over centuries and under various ruling dynasties and powers, there remains a strong emotional connection of descendants from Moroccan Jews, especially in Israel, to their homeland. This can be observed among other factors in the high number of Israeli tourists claiming Moroccan heritage.⁴⁴ It is in this spirit that the Moroccan strategic narrative in the normali-

⁴² Abitbol.

⁴³ Abitbol.

⁴⁴ Souad Anouar-Morocco World News, 'Morocco Expects the Arrival of 200,000 Israeli Tourists in 2022', <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/>, accessed 1 June 2022,

sation process promotes the idea of reviving the connections of many to the country of their ancestors, as the analysis will show. *“Moroccan Jews have never been so attached to their country of origin and its civilisation as since there are fewer and fewer of them living there”.*⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Abitbol, ‘De la tradition à la modernité’.

Analysis of the Narratives

Press release by the Moroccan MFA, 10 December 2020:

“THURSDAY 10 DECEMBER 2020

His Majesty King Mohammed VI, may God assist him, had a telephone conversation today with His Excellency Mr. Donald Trump, President of the United States of America. During these talks, President Trump informed His Majesty the King of the promulgation of a presidential decree, with all that this act entails as an undeniable legal and political force and with immediate effect, on the decision of the United States of America to recognize, for the first time in their history, the full sovereignty of the Kingdom of Morocco over the entire region of Moroccan Sahara.

In this context, and as the first concrete expression of its sovereign initiative of great importance, the United States of America has decided to open a consulate in Dakhla, with a primarily economic vocation, to encourage U.S. investments and contribution to economic and social development, including for the benefit of the inhabitants of the southern provinces.

On this occasion, the Sovereign expressed, in his personal name and on behalf of all the Moroccan people, to the American President His deep gratitude to the United States of America for this historic position.

His Majesty the King also conveyed His sincere thanks to the U.S. President and his team for this frank and unambiguous support to the Moroccan Sahara. Such support strengthens the powerful strategic partnership between the two countries and raises it to the level of a true alliance that encompasses all fields.

(...) This constructive position of the United States of America reinforces the dynamics of the consecration of the Moroccan Sahara, confirmed by the positions of support by a group of friendly countries, as well as by the decisions of many countries to open consulates in our Southern Provinces.

It also comes after the decisive and effective intervention of the Royal Armed Forces in Al Guerguarat area, to maintain security and stability in this part of the Moroccan territory and to ensure the free movement of people and goods with the brotherly African countries.

During these talks, His Majesty the King and His Excellency the U.S. President exchanged views on the current situation in the Middle East region.

In this regard, His Majesty the King referred to the consistent and balanced positions of the Kingdom of Morocco on the Palestinian question, stressing that Morocco supports a solution of two states living side-by-side in peace and security and that negotiations between the Palestinian and Israeli sides remain the only way to achieve a final, lasting and comprehensive settlement of this conflict.

(...) The Sovereign also insisted on the respect of the freedom to practice religious rites for the followers of the three monotheistic religions, as well as the respect of the Islamic

character of Al-Quds Asharif and Al-Aqsa Mosque, in accordance with the Al-Quds/Jerusalem Call signed by His Majesty the King, Commander of the Faithful, and His Holiness Pope Francis, during his visit to Rabat on March 30, 2019.

In view of the historic role that Morocco has always played in bringing the peoples of the region closer together and in promoting peace and stability in the Middle East, and given the special ties that unite the Jewish community of Moroccan origin, including in Israel, to the person of His Majesty the King, the Sovereign informed the U.S. President that Morocco intends:

- To grant authorizations for direct flights for the transportation of members of the Moroccan Jewish community and Israeli tourists to and from Morocco;*
- Resume official contacts with counterparts and diplomatic relations as soon as possible;*
- Promote innovative relations in the economic and technological fields, including working to reopen liaison offices in both countries, as was the case previously and for several years until 2002.*

His Majesty the King stressed that these measures affect in no way Morocco's permanent and sustained commitment to the just Palestinian cause and its determination to continue to contribute effectively and constructively to a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

Then, His Majesty the King and the U.S. President discussed the efforts to resolve the crisis at the level of the Gulf Cooperation Council.

In this regard, (...) the King expressed the hope that the positive developments recorded so far will lead to the achievement of the desired reconciliation. This will consolidate security and stability in the Gulf region and achieve comprehensive Arab security and economic and social development for the benefit of the peoples of the region.

In view of the special and strategic relations between Morocco and the Arab countries of the Gulf, His Majesty the King expressed his gratitude for the important role played by the United States in the decisive steps that have been taken, reiterating his support for the Kuwaiti mediation to end this dispute.⁴⁶

Analysis:

- 1) Character of Actors:** this declaration clearly emphasizes on the importance of the U.S. as the strong political ally, referring to a phone call between the King of Morocco and the President of the USA, an exchange at the highest possible level between the two actors. The mentioned opening of a General Consulate by the U.S. in the Western Saharan (or Moroccan) city of Dakhla represents a major step for the Kingdom's sovereignty of the southern desert territories bordering with Algeria and Mauritania. There is also reference to the King's chairmanship of the Al-Quds Committee, a non-state actor associated to the Organisation for Is-

⁴⁶ 'His Majesty King Mohammed VI Had a Phone Call with the President of The United States Mr. Donald Trump', Ministry of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Moroccan Expatriates, accessed 20 April 2022, <http://www.diplomatie.ma/en/his-majesty-king-mohammed-vi-had-phone-call-president-united-states-mr-donald-trump>.

Islamic Cooperation, whose goal is the protection of Jerusalem's holy sites⁴⁷. The press release also names the Kingdom's efforts to preserving Jerusalem as a peaceful city of the three monotheistic religions, a principle that was strengthened by a signed declaration of King Mohammed VI. and Pope Francis in 2019⁴⁸. The statement then goes on to the king's expressed will to establish diplomatic and commercial relations with Israel, before also highlighting its commitment to the Palestinian cause. A further mentioned actor is the Gulf Cooperation Council, a political and economic union of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates⁴⁹. In this context, the king expresses his wish for the gulf countries to "*reconciliate*" with Qatar and extends his gratefulness to Kuwait for mediating in this conflict dating from 2017. Qatar had been boycotted by neighbouring gulf countries, following accusations of financing terrorism⁵⁰.

- 2) **Setting/environment/space:** Firstly, the importance of the U.S. cooperation with Morocco in terms of economic perspectives is highlighted: "*the United States of America has decided to open a consulate in Dakhla, with a primarily economic vocation, to encourage U.S. investments and contribution to economic and social development*". Secondly, the recognition of Moroccan sovereignty in the Sahara speaks for the Kingdom's enhanced position as a regional actor, also militarily (the army is mentioned), with U.S. backing. Then, the position on the Palestinian conflict is underlined with Morocco's "*determination to continue to contribute effectively and constructively to a just and lasting peace in the Middle East*". Finally, Morocco's role as a mediator in the Gulf crisis makes the country stand out as a successful broker with peace ambitions for conflicted parties of the MENA region.
- 3) **Conflict or action:** Positive future prospects for the own population are described: "(...) *to encourage U.S. investments and contribution to economic and social development, including for the benefit of the inhabitants of the southern provinces*", emphasising on the people's benefit from the political decisions. The most prominent "*temporal*" reference can be found in the following sentence: "*In view of the historic role that Morocco has always played in bringing the peoples of the region closer together and in promoting peace and stability in the Middle East and given the special ties that unite the Jewish community of Moroccan origin, including in Israel*". Morocco wants not only to continue its historical role as a mediator, but also "unite" Israeli Moroccans' descendants with their country of origin.

⁴⁷ 'History', accessed 20 April 2022, https://www.oic-oci.org/page/?p_id=52&p_ref=26&lan=en.

⁴⁸ 'Papa-Francesco_20190330_appello-Marocco.Pdf', accessed 22 April 2022, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2019/march/documents/papa-francesco_20190330_appello-marocco.pdf.

⁴⁹ 'UNTC', accessed 22 April 2022, <https://treaties.un.org/Pages/showDetails.aspx?objid=08000002800e04ff>.

⁵⁰ 'Morocco Supports Kuwait Mediation in Gulf Crisis', accessed 22 April 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/6/13/morocco-supports-kuwait-mediation-in-gulf-crisis>.

- 4) Resolution or suggested resolution:** Three conflicts are mentioned, which the narrative of the statement promises to resolve: The authority over the Western Sahara, the Palestinian question, and the 2017 Gulf crisis.

Opinion piece by the French-language journal “L’Opinion”, 15 December 2020:

“A triumphant start for Donald Trump!

Written by Aziza Benkirane on Tuesday 15 December 2020

If he cannot stay, Donald Trump triumphs by taking in his luggage the agreement between Israel and the most pro-Palestinian country, as well as the recognition of the Moroccanity of the whole (Atlantic) Sahara by the USA. Pointing out that Morocco was the first country to recognise the United States of America in 1777, Trump presents this as a great way to thank Morocco 243 years later.

Given the joyous demonstrations in Laayoune (Moroccan city in the Western Sahara) and Israel, one wonders why such an upheaval did not happen before. Certainly, the corrupt Algerian military junta had to demonstrate, by its management of the Algerian people, and the sequestration of the Tindouf camps, that the people mattered so little to them. It took the militia facade of the Algerian generals, the Polisario, behaving like highway robbers in Guerguarat, and trying to starve Mauritania, for the world to realise that the ideal that Algeria wanted to make people believe in for 45 years was a big lie. But above all, the petrodollars of the eastern neighbour had to melt like snow in the sun, and could no longer allow it to buy rallies, and camouflage its aims and practices under very honourable disguises.

But what is France doing, through the media financed by the Elysée Palace? President Macron has openly declared that he would do everything possible to support the "courageous Tebboune", at the great expense of the Algerian people. Why does France 24 continue to repeat Algerian theses, for example of a 1/3 of the Sahara allegedly liberated by the Polisario Front, to designate the no-man's-land administered by the MINURSO? Why does France insist that this US decision will increase tensions in the region? When Morocco has just taken out insurance against Algeria's almost daily threats of war, not to mention its change of constitution allowing the Algerian army to operate beyond its borders.

What if France had been playing a double game from the beginning, in the history of the Sahara. Like when it raised the tribes to surround the Sultan Moulay Hafid in Fez, to send a false telegram calling for help, and to impose the signature of the protectorate on him in 1912. This was the "peaceful penetration" of Jean Jaurès and Saint-Aulaire. Is there such a thing as 'peaceful neo-colonialism'? Will France ever admit how it balkanised the Cherifian Empire, dragging in its wake Spain, which nevertheless allowed Friday prayers in the name of the Sultan, despite the deportation of Mohamed V? Was it Franco or France that used Algeria underhandedly to keep the region under its control

and not to have a Morocco (or United Maghreb) capable of defending itself and competing with it in Africa?

*Does France play the famous Moroccan proverb of spending the night with the thieves and waking up with the landlords?*⁵¹

Analysis:

- 1) Character of Actors:** This article names numerous actors in the context of normalisation, some of which are directly linked to the recent diplomatic deal, others that refer to events dating back decades and centuries. The actors are the U.S. with then President Trump, followed by describing “joyous” demonstrations in Israel and Laayoune about the normalisation deal. Next up comes the perceived enemy of national interests and security, Algeria and the Polisario Front, a military group fighting for the rights of the Sahrawi people and recognised as such by the UN⁵². The Polisario had resumed armed conflict with Moroccan forces in late 2020⁵³. Mauritania is also mentioned in the text, claiming that Algeria had starved the population there. The author then turns to France’s involvement in the conflict, naming President Emmanuel Macron and the media outlet France 24 as actors reproducing Algerian narratives and thereby harming the Algerian population itself. Then, Mrs Benkirane mentions MINURSO, the UN mission originally mandated to monitor the ceasefire between Morocco and the Polisario Front in the Western Sahara⁵⁴. Further actors enounced are the Cherifian Empire, Spain and the Franco dictatorship, as well as Moroccan King Mohammed V.
- 2) Setting/environment/space:** Firstly, the article points to the gained strength of Morocco internationally with U.S. recognition of the Western Sahara. Then, the largest part of the publication focuses on France’s role in apparently siding with Algeria and hindering peace efforts initiated by Morocco.
- 3) Conflict or action:** Numerous historical references are featured in the text. The starting point of the statement is Morocco as the first nation in the world that recognised American Independence in 1777 and Trump’s “gift” in return to recognise the Western Sahara 243 years later. After this, all historical references are pointing at France’s responsibility and actions in the region; namely the besieging of the Sultan Moulay Abd El-Hafid in Fes by local tribes, when the Sultan called on France for military intervention, after which the French Protectorate over Morocco was installed in 1912 and the country was governed under French supervision

⁵¹ Aziza Benkirane, ‘Un départ triomphant pour Donald Trump !’, L’Opinion Maroc - Actualité et Infos au Maroc et dans le monde., accessed 23 April 2022, https://www.lopinion.ma/Un-depart-triomphant-pour-Donald-Trump-_a9533.html.

⁵² ‘NR037664.Pdf’, accessed 23 April 2022, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/376/64/IMG/NR037664.pdf?OpenElement>.

⁵³ ‘Sahara occidental: trois Algériens tués dans un bombardement attribué au Maroc’, L’Express.fr, 3 November 2021, https://www.lexpress.fr/actualites/1/monde/sahara-occidental-trois-algeriens-tues-dans-un-bombardement-attribue-au-maroc_2161671.html.

⁵⁴ ‘Mandate | MINURSO’, accessed 23 April 2022, <https://minurso.unmissions.org/mandate>.

until Morocco's independence in 1956⁵⁵. The author questions the theses of French socialist Jean Jaurès, in which he comments on the events in Morocco and the French involvement, criticising his term "peaceful penetration"⁵⁶. Summing up, the author rejects France's criticism towards Moroccan normalisation with Israel, pointing to the historical responsibility of France in suppressing Moroccan pursuits of self-determination.

- 4) **Resolution or suggested resolution:** Benkirane calls Morocco the "most pro-Palestinian country", reminding the support for the resolution of the conflict, though without further developing the topic. Secondly, she points to the recently granted further operational rights by Morocco for the Algerian army in its bordering region with the kingdom, highlighting the peaceful intentions of Morocco.

Statement by the Royal Office of Morocco, 25 December 2020:

"FRIDAY 25 DECEMBER 2020

His Majesty King Mohammed VI, may God assist him, had today a telephone conversation with the Prime Minister of the State of Israel, Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu.

During this meeting, His Majesty the King recalled the strong and special ties between the Jewish community from Morocco and the Moroccan Monarchy. The Sovereign also reiterated the consistent, unwavering and unchanged position of the Kingdom of Morocco on the Palestinian Question and the pioneering role of the Kingdom in promoting peace and stability in the Middle East.

It is in this context that His Majesty the King welcomed the reviving of cooperation mechanisms between the Kingdom of Morocco and the State of Israel, and the resumption of regular contacts, within the framework of peaceful and friendly diplomatic relations.

*For his part, the Israeli Prime Minister assured His Majesty of his determination to implement all the commitments made, according to a precise schedule of implementation. The trilateral declaration between the Kingdom of Morocco, the United States of America and the State of Israel, signed before His Majesty the King on December 22, is the frame of reference for the development and evolution of these relations."*⁵⁷

Analysis:

- 1) **Character of Actors:** The actors in the press release are King Mohammed VI. and Israeli then PM Benjamin Netanyahu. Just a few days after the phone con-

⁵⁵ 'Maroc, Traité de Fès 1912, Protectorat Français, MJP'.

⁵⁶ Fabre, Rémi. "La Campagne de Jaurès Sur Le Maroc. Entre Pacifisme et Colonialisme." *Cahiers de La Méditerranée*, No. 91 (2015): 101–13. <https://doi.org/10.4000/Cdlm.8109>, n.d., p. 6-7.

⁵⁷ 'Statement by Royal Office: His Majesty the King Had a Telephone Conversation with the Israeli Prime Minister', Ministry of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Moroccan Expatriates, accessed 20 April 2022, <http://www.diplomatie.ma/en/statement-royal-office-his-majesty-king-had-telephone-conversation-israeli-prime-minister>.

versation between the King and U.S. President Donald Trump, this statement informs the public about the next step in the normalisation process, taken personally by the monarch and “leader of the believers”, as Mohammed VI. is referred to in Morocco. Once again, Palestine is mentioned in this context, too.

- 2) **Setting/environment/space:** Resuming diplomatic relations between the two actors was highlighted in the phone call. The king also insisted on Morocco’s “unchanged” position on the Palestinian question in the conversation with Netanyahu.
- 3) **Conflict or action:** The king highlights the “special tie” of the Jews to the Moroccan monarchy, referring to the historical protection and freedom for Jews under the Moroccan kings.
- 4) **Resolution or suggested resolution:** No explicit statement on conflict resolution is given, however the reference to the Palestinian issue is present. Given that the publication reflects on the first bilateral exchange between the two leaders after the signing of the tripartite declaration, this seems understandable: in light of the daring and young political project, both actors had to be cautious of delivering great promises of peace and prosperity. This is still the very early stage of the normalisation narrative.

Opinion piece by the French-language journal “L’Opinion”, 17 December 2020:

“The Moroccan-Israeli agreement ... a calm read

Written by Dr. Salem Al Ketbi on Thursday 17 December 2020

The recent official announcement of the normalisation of relations between the Kingdom of Morocco and Israel has been met with a state of controversy in Arab and Islamic media circles, as well as across social media, a situation that is absolutely unrelated to any political decision or act that has taken place in the Middle East region specifically in recent years. (...)

This (“polarisation of opinions”) happened with regard to the sovereign decision taken by the United Arab Emirates before establishing official relations with Israel, and it was also repeated - albeit to a relatively lesser degree - in the Bahraini and Sudanese cases, and finally with regard to the case of the Kingdom of Morocco's decision to take a step similar to what other Arab countries have decided.

There is another point that must be emphasised (...) before addressing the Moroccan decision to establish relations with Israel, namely that such decisions of a very important strategic nature are sovereign decisions of states, and this has two important meanings, the first of which is that they are decisions related to the exercise of acts of national sovereignty of states. That is to say, they are a purely internal matter that no external party, be it a state, an individual, an organisation or an entity, can interfere with and attempt to influence in any way, and such decisions are one of the pillars of independence of national decision-making on issues and matters directly or indirectly related to the

strategic interests of states and peoples. (...) And when we come to the agreement of the brotherly Kingdom of Morocco regarding the normalisation of relations with Israel, we must examine it - analytically and objectively - in the light of several considerations, including the fact that this is not the first decision of its kind in the Arab world, as there are similar Arab measures in place since the last quarter of the 20th century, as well as what has been concluded in recent months, including the position of the Palestinian Authority itself, which is the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, to establish official relations with Israel. The other consideration is that this is a sovereign decision which belongs to the aforementioned decisions of a particular nature taken by states on the basis of carefully considered national accounts. Therefore, no one should make accusations of treason or any other suspicious accusation when considering or commenting on such decisions, and this, of course, does not deny that it is permissible to agree or disagree with such decisions, as is the case with any policy, decision or measure taken by certain countries in accordance with the imperatives of their national interests.

There is also another consideration, no less important than the above, namely that the decision of the Kingdom of Morocco to establish relations with Israel was not a gratuitous political subsidy, nor was it without reasons of national interest from which it emanated. Just as the UAE's decision to establish relations with Israel came as a historic breakthrough in the stagnant, if not icy, waters of the rigid Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, and as an out-of-the-box thinking away from traditional solutions to advance the peace process and take advantage of the opportunities for cooperation available with Israel in the scientific, technological and economic fields, in a way that would not only benefit the country but would also help it to achieve its goals, technological and economic fields in a way that enhances the UAE's global competitiveness plans, the Kingdom of Morocco's decision was also accompanied by a very important strategic return: The US recognition of Morocco's sovereignty over the Sahara. This is a recognition that Moroccan diplomacy has been seeking for a long time, and which responds to one of the most important national priorities of the Moroccan state and people to preserve the sovereignty and territorial integrity, and anyone who does not appreciate the importance of such a priority, does not know well what the Sahara issue represents in the Moroccan history and national consciousness.

In international relations and in the world of politics in general, the language of interests should not be absent, and emotions and feelings should not dominate. (...) Moroccan diplomacy has achieved a victory and a vital gain without changing or altering its position to support and sustain the Palestinian cause and people until this brotherly people obtains its legitimate rights and establishes its independent state.”⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Salem Al Ketbi, 'L'accord maroco-israélien ... une calme lecture', L'Opinion Maroc - Actualité et Infos au Maroc et dans le monde., accessed 23 April 2022, https://www.lopinion.ma/L-accord-maroco-israelien-une-calme-lecture_a9626.html.

Analysis:

- 1) **Character of Actors:** Six actors appear in this opinion piece: Morocco as the sovereign decision-maker in the normalisation. The consequence of which, according to the author, had caused a “polarisation of opinions” throughout the Arab media landscape. The media, depicted as a negatively influencing and polarizing element, is the second actor. In the same context, author Dr. Ketbi mentions the third group of actors: Bahrain, Sudan and the United Arab Emirates, all having faced similar polarisation of discourse following their respective decision to normalise with Israel. Following this argument, the author also recalls the normalisation of Egypt and Jordan with Israel in the late 20th century. The next actor is the Palestinian Authority (PA), which itself maintains relations with the state of Israel, a fact that the author reminds the reader of. Lastly, the U.S. and its recognition over the Moroccan authority in the Western Sahara, are praised in the opinion.
- 2) **Setting/environment/space:** The addressed points concerning the setting of the narrative is described as threefold: Firstly, the fact that normalisation with Israel is not a newly invented idea by the Kingdom of Morocco but had already been happening in the late 20th century, as well as with the Abraham Accords. Secondly, the enhanced cooperation in the fields of sciences, technologies, and economics, or trade, with the state of Israel. Thirdly, the newly confirmed territorial integrity for Morocco with the U.S. recognition of the Western Sahara, also enhancing its regional standing.
- 3) **Conflict or action:** In terms of achievements, the author describes the Western Sahara recognition by the U.S. as the most important historical milestone for Morocco that came with the normalisation. He goes on in claiming that anyone who would disagree on the strategic importance of that recognition lacks sound historical knowledge of the case.
- 4) **Resolution or suggested resolution:** The author calls Morocco’s decision a “victory and gain” for the country, without having changed the position on solidarity with Palestine. The country’s status quo in the regional hegemony over the Western Sahara is declared to be a resolved issue. It also portrays the polarized views in the Arab world concerning Morocco’s decision as being unjustified.

Statement by King Mohammed VI., 29 November 2021:

“MONDAY 29 NOVEMBER 2021

His Majesty King Mohammed VI sent on Monday a message to the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, H.E. Cheikh Niang, on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. Here follows the full text of the royal message:

"Your Excellency Cheikh Niang, (...) On many occasions in the past, I affirmed our immutable position regarding the justness of the Palestinian cause, which remains the central element of the conflict in the Middle East. Indeed, the region's stability and prosperity hinge on achieving an equitable, lasting solution to this just cause, in accordance with the two-state solution based on the June 4, 1967, borders and in keeping with the resolutions of international legitimacy. I should like to take this opportunity to reiterate our full solidarity with the Palestinian people and our support for their legitimate right to establish an independent, viable state that coexists in peace and security with Israel. I should like to point out, in this respect, that the Moroccan position does not change according to circumstances; nor is it governed by some pointless political outbidding tactics. Rather, it is the embodiment of a conviction which is deeply rooted in the consciousness of the Moroccan people and which is backed by serious, purposeful diplomatic endeavours as well as tangible work on the ground for the benefit of the just cause of Palestine and of Al-Quds al-Sharif. In the letter I sent on December 18, 2020 to my brother, His Excellency Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, President of the State of Palestine, I stressed that the Moroccan position in support of the Palestinian cause remains unchanged. (...)

The impasse in the Middle East peace process places a heavy burden as well as a great responsibility on the international community - and more particularly on the influential countries - to overcome the complex, intertwined obstacles that prevent any breakthrough in the political domain (...).

I therefore call, once again, for the launching of an intensive and effective diplomatic effort to get the parties back to the negotiating table in order to settle the Palestinian issue within the framework of the two-state solution and thus build a promising future for upcoming Palestinian and Israeli generations. Until the appropriate conditions for a settlement of the conflict are in place, trust between the two sides must be nurtured. However, no matter how sincere the intentions may be, no effort can succeed in the face of unilateral measures that destroy the chances of peace and fuel violence and hatred. In this respect, Morocco will press ahead with its efforts - building on its status and its constructive relations with all the parties concerned and with the influential powers – in order to bring about the right conditions for a return to the negotiating table as the only means to put an end to the conflict and ensure security and stability in the Middle-East region. (...)

It is important to make sure the holy city is open to the followers of the monotheistic religions, who should coexist in an environment where fraternity, affection and peace prevail. As the Chairman of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation's Al-Quds Committee, I have been doing my utmost and using all possible means to preserve the special, unique status of the holy city as a the meeting point of the three revealed religions and as a common heritage of humanity - a land of coexistence and cohesion, as stated in the Appeal for Jerusalem, which I signed with His Holiness Pope Francis during his visit to the Kingdom of Morocco on March 30, 2019. (...) I therefore call, once again, on our Palestinian brothers - whatever their affiliation - to put aside their differences and expe-

*dite Palestinian reconciliation so as to serve the lofty national Palestinian goal. I should like, in this regard, to express my full support for the Palestinian National Authority, under the leadership of my brother President Mahmoud Abbas, in its efforts to fulfil the aspirations of the Palestinian people for freedom, independence, unity and prosperity. I commend the esteemed Committee on its sincere endeavours and reiterate my full support for its praiseworthy efforts to uphold legitimate Palestinian rights and contribute to the action of the international community to achieve peace, stability, coexistence and prosperity for the benefit of all peoples in the region. I wish you every success. Wassalamu alaikum warahmatullah wabarakatuh.*⁵⁹

Analysis:

- 1) **Character of Actors:** About a year after the telephone call between the king and Benjamin Netanyahu, now follows a communication by King Mohammed VI. to the Palestinian “Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People”, specifically to its chairman Mister Cheikh Niang. Israel is mentioned just one single time in the context of Morocco’s support for a two-state solution in accordance with the state of Israel. Pope Francis is once again mentioned as a partner in the endeavours to preserve Jerusalem as a holy city. This is directly linked to the king’s role as Chairman of the Al-Quds Committee by the OIC (Organisation of Islamic Cooperation). Mahmoud Abbas, President of the Palestinian Authority is also referred to, in a sentence that stresses Morocco’s expressed and continuous support of Palestine. No other actors appear in this statement.
- 2) **Setting/environment/space:** this release points to Morocco’s unchanged support of the Palestinian cause and the pursuit of a two-state solution, in regard to the territorial issue of the conflict.
- 3) **Conflict or action:** The references to the king’s role as Chair of the Al-Quds Committee, as well as the clearly stated efforts to the Palestinian cause show a historical constant that this narrative tries to carry on.
- 4) **Resolution or suggested resolution:** The positive impact of Morocco’s actions for all the peoples of the region is highlighted in the concluding phrase of the statement: “*I (...) reiterate my full support for its praiseworthy efforts to uphold legitimate Palestinian rights and contribute to the action of the international community to achieve peace, stability, coexistence and prosperity for the benefit of all peoples in the region*”. A peaceful and prosperous future is the outlook that this communiqué wants to convey to the reader.

⁵⁹ ‘His Majesty the King Sends Message to Chairman of Committee on Exercise of Inalienable Rights of Palestinian People’, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Moroccan Expatriates, accessed 20 April 2022, <http://www.diplomatie.ma/en/his-majesty-king-sends-message-chairman-committee-exercise-inalienable-rights-palestinian-people-0>.

News article by the Moroccan media outlet bladi.net, 24 December 2021 ⁶⁰:



Maroc-Israël : des manifestants contre la normalisation dispersés

Image: "Morocco-Israel: protesters against the normalisation dispersed", in the background: Moroccan House of Parliament, Rabat.

Translation of the banner: "Moroccans for Jerusalem and Al-Aqsa.. Against Zionist aggression.. against normalisation"

"24 December 2021 - 08:20 - Morocco - By: A.T

In parallel to the commemoration of the first anniversary of the restoration of ties between Rabat and Tel Aviv, several Moroccans expressed once again their opposition to this new diplomatic line.

They were several hundred in the streets, carrying banners with messages against this normalization, several local media reported, adding that these protesters brandished their hostility and demanded the withdrawal of Rabat from this agreement described as "catastrophic".

On the posters published on social networks one can read, "Morocco is a free land, Zion is out", "Palestine resists and the regimes negotiate", "O Zion the cursed, Palestine is in the eyes", "From Morocco to Palestine one people and not two", or "No, no to normalization and submission".

In Rabat and Casablanca, police forces intervened to prevent the gatherings."

⁶⁰ 'Maroc-Israël : des manifestants contre la normalisation dispersés', Bladi.net, accessed 24 April 2022, <https://www.bladi.net/maroc-israel-manifestants-contre-normalisation,89110.html>.

Analysis

- 1) **Character of Actors:** the actors of this news report are protesters who voice their discontent about Morocco's normalisation with Israel. The banner points to the actors perceived as the enemy: Zionists who are the aggressors of the Palestinian people and the occupiers of the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. In the report, we find citations from posters retrieved on social media that criticise Rabat's decision to normalise and to engage in negotiations while the conflict remains ongoing. The Moroccan law enforcement authorities are mentioned in the final sentence, describing their efforts to contain the protests and prevent them from taking place.
- 2) **Setting/environment/space:** the article describes several protests happening simultaneously throughout Morocco. No references on international or official reactions to the protesters' movement is given.
- 3) **Conflict or action:** the root of the problem in the eyes of the protesters lies in the concluded normalisation agreement between Rabat and Israel. They insist on the support of the Palestinian cause and on the free access to the Al-Aqsa Mosque.
- 4) **Resolution or suggested resolution:** The suggested solution of the problem would be the withdrawal of Morocco from the normalisation agreement, as well as an end to what is perceived Zionist aggression and occupation of holy sites and Palestinian territories.

Press release by the Moroccan MFA, 22 December 2021:

"WEDNESDAY 22 DECEMBER 2021

The commemoration of the 1st anniversary of the Morocco-US-Israel Joint Trilateral Declaration is not a celebration of a mere diplomatic event, it is a rather a celebration of a shared past, present and future, said Wednesday the minister of Foreign Affairs, (...) Nasser Bourita.

It is a renewal of a promise at three levels, namely a genuine commitment to People; a concrete building of Partnership and an active engagement for Peace, the Minister pointed out during a videoconference (...), with the participation of the Israeli Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ya'ir Lapid, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and the Chargé d'Affaires of the United States embassy in Morocco, David Greene.

The signing, last year, of the Joint Trilateral Declaration before His Majesty King Mohammed VI "was a trigger in bringing our nations even closer," said MFA Bourita, adding that it is also a trigger for strengthening the long-standing bonds that have always existed between our people.

Highlighting the Jewish component of the centuries-old Moroccan identity, the Minister stressed that in order for this Declaration to be meaningful, People should remain at the very beginning and at the receiving end of this partnership.

"We could consider that we have succeeded, when the one million Israelis of Moroccan origins can renew with their heritage and visit the land where their ancestors have lived in peace and harmony, under the protection of the Moroccan Monarchs," he said.

By asserting the recognition of Morocco's sovereignty over its Sahara, as well as by reactivating the relationship with the State of Israel, the Joint Trilateral Declaration carries a very high message of peace, he pointed out.

The Joint Trilateral Declaration is a valuable tool that can help move forward the cause of peace in the region, improve security and unlock new opportunities for all, MFA Bourita stressed.

Morocco, as a historic bridge-builder and credible actor of peace and stability, is firmly committed to help achieving a lasting peace in the region, he said.

"Under the Guidance of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, the Kingdom will continue its endeavor in supporting a just, lasting and equitable peace based on the two-state solution: the State of Israël, and an independent Palestinian state within the borders of June 4, 1967, both living side by side in peace and security," the Minister underlined.

Moreover, as Chairman of the Al Quds Committee, His Majesty King Mohammed VI is calling for the preservation of the "unique and sacred character of Al-Quds Acharif, and its spiritual significance and special vocation as a city of peace," he recalled.

The Trilateral Declaration confirms and amplifies the vast potential for cooperation, not only between the three countries, but also by moving towards trilateral partnerships open to other countries and regions, MFA Bourita noted.

In line with the Royal Vision, "we are keen to have a Partnership of action: one that is on the move, on a clear path for concrete and win-win cooperation. A partnership that touches on all areas: health, education, security, economy, trade and investment, tourism, culture, agriculture, climate change and sustainable development," the Minister stressed.

*The Minister underlined that Morocco has implemented the commitments made in the declaration, saying that diplomatic missions are up and running; agreements have been signed; official visits have been exchanged; and, sectorial cooperation is on the right track.*⁶¹

Analysis:

- 1) Character of Actors:** This publication addresses first and foremost the actors Israel, USA and Morocco, highlighting the efforts of all three to conclude the Joint Trilateral Declaration. A hint at actors involved in the Western Saharan conflict is included in the following sentence: "(...) asserting the recognition of Morocco's sovereignty over its Sahara"⁶², ad-

⁶¹ 'M. Nasser Bourita : Accord tripartite Maroc-USA-Israël, une célébration d'un passé, d'un présent et d'un avenir communs', Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, de la Coopération Africaine et des Marocains Résidant à l'Etranger, accessed 15 April 2022, <http://www.diplomatie.ma/fr/m-nasser-bourita-accord-tripartite-maroc-usa-israel-une-celebration-dun-passe-dun-present-et-dun-avenir-communs>.

⁶² 'M. Nasser Bourita'.

dressed to those actors opposed to Morocco's claim of the territory, but also to its own population, which supports a Moroccan Western Sahara. Further mentioned is also the monarch's position as Chairman of the Al-Quds Committee, whose goal is the protection of Jerusalem's holy sites⁶³.

- 2) **Setting/environment/space:** The statement conveys an enhanced political cooperation with the U.S. and Israel: "*The signing, last year, of the Joint Trilateral Declaration before His Majesty King Mohammed VI was a trigger in bringing our nations even closer (...)*". It further refers to the regional dynamics affected by the Declaration: "*Morocco, as a historic bridge-builder and credible actor of peace and stability, is firmly committed to help achieving a lasting peace in the region*". The minister promises that Morocco is "*keen to have a Partnership of action: one that is on the move, on a clear path for concrete and win-win cooperation. A partnership that touches on all areas: health, education, security, economy, trade and investment, tourism, culture, agriculture, climate change and sustainable development (...)*".
- 3) **Conflict or action:** Here, the communication clearly emphasises on the historical narrative of proximity with the Jewish population: "*it (the Declaration) is also a trigger for strengthening the long-standing bonds that have always existed between our people.*", or "*Highlighting the Jewish component of the centuries-old Moroccan identity*". This narrative praises the role of the Moroccan Monarchy as a guardian of Moroccan Jews: "*We could consider that we have succeeded, when the one million Israelis of Moroccan origins can renew with their heritage and visit the land where their ancestors have lived in peace and harmony, under the protection of the Moroccan Monarchs*". In terms of prosperity and outlooks for the country, the Minister states: "*The Joint Trilateral Declaration is a valuable tool that can (...) unlock new opportunities for all*".
- 4) **Resolution or suggested resolution:** Reference to the peace process in the Middle East: "*The Joint Trilateral Declaration is a valuable tool that can help move forward the cause of peace in the region*". The suggested resolution for the Palestinian issue is stated: "*Under the Guidance of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, the Kingdom will continue its endeavor in supporting a just, lasting and equitable peace based on the two-state solution: the State of Israël, and an independent Palestinian state within the borders of June 4, 1967, both living side by side in peace and security*". This is a very clear position on the territorial question and stands in line with international peace efforts for the Palestinian conflict. It is also a declared policy by Morocco that enhances its reputation as a geopolitical actor and supports efforts of the international community.

⁶³ 'History'.

News article by the Moroccan media outlet bladi.net, 27 December 2021⁶⁴:

"Moroccans still up in arms against Morocco-Israel normalization

27 December 2021 - 12h00 - Morocco - By: S.A

One year on, opposition to the normalization of diplomatic relations between Morocco and Israel is not weakening. The protest is still massive in the country.

On the web, many Moroccans continue to express their anger against the Morocco-Israeli rapprochement. "Today, tomorrow... and always: Moroccans, in all languages of the world, say: down with normalisation. All honourable people are asked to support this blessed grassroots campaign #FreePalestine," Driss Bougrin Amrani posted on Twitter on 22 December 2021.

Civil society activists continue to mobilise online to reiterate their rejection of normalisation with Israel. They support Palestine and call for an end to Israel's occupation of its territories using the hashtags: "Down with normalisation" and "Normalisation is treason". An anti-normalization demonstration was also organized in Meknes on the occasion of the first anniversary of the joint agreement between Israel and Morocco, on 22 December 2020.

For their part, Morocco, Israel and the United States soberly celebrated the first anniversary of the resumption of diplomatic relations between the kingdom and the Jewish state during a videoconference meeting last Wednesday. All hailed it as a "positive step" towards peace in the region."

Analysis:

- 1) Character of Actors:** The actors are Moroccan protesters against the normalisation deal, both online and on street protests. They criticise Morocco's decision of normalising with Israel, Israel's occupation of territories and stand in full support of Palestine. The USA are mentioned in the context of the official celebration to mark the one-year anniversary of normalisation.
- 2) Setting/environment/space:** Various protests in Moroccan cities are described, as well as the official position that promotes the normalisation as a "step towards peace in the region".
- 3) Conflict or action:** The main factor driving the protesters is the one-year anniversary of the deal with Israel, an agreement that they see as treason. "Today, tomorrow, and always" is the reference that points to the unchanged position of the protesters on the Palestinian issue.
- 4) Resolution or suggested resolution:** The protesters call for an end of Morocco's normalisation, a "free Palestine", though without explaining the specific border arrangements with Israel and an end of Israel's occupation in Palestine.

⁶⁴ 'Des Marocains toujours vent debout contre la normalisation Maroc-Israël', Bladi.net, accessed 24 April 2022, <https://www.bladi.net/marocains-contre-normalisation-maroc-israel,89179.html>.

Press release by the Moroccan MFA, 22 December 2021:



Picture by the Moroccan MFA, published on the Ministry's Facebook page⁶⁵.

“WEDNESDAY 22 DECEMBER 2021

The agreement signed one year ago between Morocco, the United States and Israel is a "diplomatic achievement", which has opened a new era of peace, stability, opportunities and understanding, said Wednesday the U.S. Secretary of State, Mr. Antony Blinken.

The U.S. top diplomat was speaking in a video message broadcast on the occasion of the first anniversary of the trilateral agreement, at a video conference with the participation of the minister of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Moroccans Abroad, Nasser Bourita, the Israeli Foreign minister, Yaïr Lapid, and the Chargé d'Affaires of the U.S. embassy in Morocco, David Greene.

Blinken recalled that following the signing of the joint declaration, Morocco and Israel opened their airspaces, "for the first time in decades", with nearly ten direct flights a week between the two countries.

He also said that the two countries have signed several agreements on joint military exercises and strengthened economic relations, noting that a new Morocco-Israel Busi-

⁶⁵ 'Facebook', accessed 22 April 2022,
<https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=284354860386787&set=pcb.284310633724543>.

ness Council helped setting up more than 30 partnerships in the sectors of technology, agriculture, water, textile, health and renewables.

Discussions are underway to collaborate in desalination projects and set-up exchange students programs, he added, noting that the establishment of diplomatic ties also created greater opportunities for cultural connections among the one million Israelis of Moroccan heritage.

"These steps aren't positive only for Israel and Morocco, they're also positive for the region as a whole," Blinken pointed out.

Through the resumption of their relations, Morocco and Israel show the way for other countries to discuss openly and constructively their common goals and points of disagreement, seize mutually beneficial opportunities and bring people together, he underlined.

"The United States is committed to supporting and expanding the Abraham Accords," he stressed in this regard.

"We're grateful for your continued efforts to deepen and strengthen the bond between two great partners and friends of the United States, and we're committed to continuing our work together to build a more peaceful and prosperous region," Blinken said."⁶⁶

Analysis:

- 1) **Character of Actors:** The actors in this press release about a video conference are: The United States Department of State, with Secretary Anthony Blinken, Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid, Moroccan Foreign Minister Nasser Bourita, and the Chargé d'Affaires of the U.S. Embassy in Rabat at the time, David Greene. Contrary to other statements by the king, this represents a communication at the diplomatic level, the countries' highest representatives. Furthermore, the newly established Morocco-Israel Business Council is praised in the release.
- 2) **Setting/environment/space:** Here, the text focuses on the concrete achievements of the Tripartite Declaration: *"following the signing of the joint declaration, Morocco and Israel opened their airspaces, "for the first time in decades", with nearly ten direct flights a week between the two countries."* About the *Morocco-Israel Business Council*, Blinken highlights the *"setting up (of) partnerships in the sectors of technology, agriculture, water, textile, health and renewables."* And that *"Discussions are underway to collaborate in desalination projects and set-up exchange students programs (...) the establishment of diplomatic ties also created greater opportunities for cultural connections among the one million Israelis of Moroccan heritage."* The statement also refers to Blinken's praise for the normalisation which, in his view, might have a positive spill-over effect on other countries faced with regional conflicts.

⁶⁶ 'Mr. Blinken: Morocco-US-Israel Trilateral Agreement, Diplomatic Achievement', Ministry of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Moroccan Expatriates, accessed 20 April 2022, <http://www.diplomatie.ma/en/mr-blinken-morocco-us-israel-trilateral-agreement-diplomatic-achievement>.

- 3) **Conflict or action:** The significance of resuming commercial flights “after decades” refers to the historical achievement of the accords. A direct link between the two countries may help strengthen a renewed relationship.
- 4) **Resolution or suggested resolution:** In terms of conflict resolution, two elements can be identified, namely: that the U.S. is “*committed to continuing (their) work together (with Israel and Morocco) to build a more peaceful and prosperous region*”, hinting at conflicts of the MENA region, such as the Palestinian territorial question.

Media communication by the Moroccan news outlet bladi.net, 22 January 2022⁶⁷:

“Morocco-Israel: end of the honeymoon?

22 January 2022 - 21h20 - Morocco - By: S.A

The absence of David Govrin, head of the Israeli liaison office in Morocco, who has not yet presented his credentials to King Mohammed VI at the ceremony of reception of foreign ambassadors by the sovereign raises questions. One year after the normalisation of diplomatic relations between Morocco and Israel, is the magic of the beginning beginning to fade?

David Govrin had revealed on his Twitter account on October 10 that he had been appointed Israeli ambassador to Morocco, but he has not yet presented his credentials to King Mohammed VI. On Tuesday, the Israeli diplomat was absent at the ceremony of reception of foreign ambassadors by the sovereign which took place at the royal palace in Rabat. An absence that has raised questions.

Questioned during a press conference last Thursday, Mustapha Baitas, spokesman for the Moroccan government, tried to justify the absence of the head of the Israeli liaison office in Rabat by protocol issues. "To answer the question about ambassadors, I can say that Morocco respects the provisions of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, which governs all protocols related to this area," he said, without giving further details.

"Rabat's reticence on Govrin's (Israeli ambassador) status is probably due to the Biden administration's indecision on the US recognition of Morocco's sovereignty over Western Sahara," a political scientist told The New Arab on condition of anonymity. "While the Biden administration continues to hesitate to express recognition [of Morocco's sovereignty over Western Sahara] and build the promised consulate in Dakhla, Morocco will not go further in normalisation or say more about Govrin's real position," he added. Under the aegis of the United States, Morocco normalised its diplomatic relations with Israel on 10 December 2020 in exchange for the US recognition of the kingdom's sovereignty over the Sahara. Morocco controls 80% of the Sahara, which is considered a "non-self-governing territory" by the UN and is proposing broad autonomy under its

⁶⁷ ‘Maroc-Israel : Fin de La Lune de Miel ?’, accessed 26 April 2022, <https://www.bladi.net/maroc-israel-fin-lune-miel,89941.html>.

sovereignty. *The Polisario Front, protected by Algeria, is calling for a referendum on self-determination.*”

Analysis:

- 1) **Character of Actors:** The principal actor of this article addresses the issue of Israeli ambassador to Morocco, David Govrin, not having presented his credentials to the Moroccan king Mohammed. Since the absence raised questions among media representatives, the spokesperson of the Moroccan foreign ministry answered by mentioning the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations which regulates such issues. The article then points to the slow-down of Morocco’s position on normalisation with Israel, since the Biden administration had not reiterated its full support for the Western Saharan recognition.
- 2) **Setting/environment/space:** The dependence of the Moroccan government on U.S. recognition over its claimed Western Sahara becomes obvious in this apparent absence of communication from officials. If Morocco had triumphed previously with the success of recognition by the Trump administration, it now has to wait for the Biden administration to confirm this decision. Without the backing of the most important political ally for a Moroccan Western Sahara, now the normalisation with Israel may not seem as attractive anymore to the administration of the kingdom. Morocco’s authority in Western Sahara had been the prime justifying argument of earlier narratives by the government announcing the Tripartite deal.
- 3) **Conflict or action:** This article makes no reference to the Palestinian question but focuses only on the stagnation of the normalisation process, due to the hesitant position of the new U.S. administration. The author does not call for action but limits the reporting to the factual analysis of the situation.
- 4) **Resolution or suggested resolution:** The article points to the unsolved question of the Western Sahara and the Polisario’s wish to hold a referendum on self-determination of the Saharaoui people. It reminds that 80% of the Sahara is under Moroccan control.

Official communication by the Moroccan Press Agency (MAP)⁶⁸, 21 February 2022:

“Morocco-Israel: Fettah and Barbivay discuss promotion of economic and financial co-operation

Monday, February 21, 2022 at 13:36

Rabat - The promotion of economic and financial cooperation between Morocco and Israel was at the centre of discussions, Monday in Rabat, between the Minister of

⁶⁸ ‘Maroc-Israel: Mmes Fettah et Barbivay Discutent de La Promotion de La Coopération Économique et Financière’, lundi, février, à 13:36 2022, <https://www.mapexpress.ma/actualite/economie-et-finance/maroc-israel-mmes-fettah-barbivay-discutent-promotion-cooperation-economique-financiere/>.

Economy and Finance, Nadia Fettah, and the Minister of Economy and Industry of Israel, Orna Barbivay, who is on a three-day working visit to the Kingdom.

This meeting, which was attended by the Minister Delegate in charge of the Budget, Fouzi Lekjaa, was an opportunity for Mrs. Fettah to welcome the progress made in the implementation of economic cooperation instruments between Morocco and Israel, in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding signed between the two countries on December 22, 2020.

The minister stressed, in this regard, the importance of the agreements being negotiated between the Moroccan and Israeli Ministries of Finance, particularly in the areas of investment promotion, taxation and customs cooperation. These agreements should contribute to the promotion of economic and financial cooperation between the two countries.

Mrs. Fettah also referred to the significant potential for the development of investment relations between Morocco and Israel. In this respect, she expressed her willingness to work, jointly with Mrs Barbivay, to promote business relations between economic operators of the two countries and to explore the investment opportunities offered by Morocco, due to its exceptional geographical position and the diversity of its growth springs.

For her part, Mrs Barbivay welcomed the constant evolution of bilateral relations between Morocco and Israel. She also reaffirmed the Israeli government's willingness to build a strategic partnership with the Kingdom of Morocco that will give a constructive and lasting impetus to economic relations between the two countries.

It should be recalled that Morocco and Israel concluded, on December 22, 2020, a Memorandum of Understanding in the field of finance and investment which provides, among other things, for the opening of negotiations between the two parties aimed at the conclusion of an Agreement on the reciprocal promotion and protection of investments, a Convention on the avoidance of double taxation and an Agreement on mutual administrative assistance in customs matters.

The meeting was also attended by senior officials from the Moroccan Ministry of Economy and Finance and the Israeli Ministry of Economy and Industry.”

Analysis:

- 1) Character of Actors:** The main actors are the Ministers of the Economy and Finance (Morocco) and of the Economy and Industry (Israel), Mrs Nadia Fettah and Mrs Orna Barbivay. They have convened for a meeting on economic and industrial exchange between the two states, as part of the 2020 normalisation deal.

- 2) **Setting/environment/space:** Over a year after the signing of the normalisation deal, Morocco and Israel continue to engage in bilateral cooperation as laid out in the Agreement. The ministers stress primarily the economic opportunities for the countries: “*the significant potential for the development of investment relations between Morocco and Israel*”. Israel’s engagement in support for Moroccan interests is reaffirmed by the Israeli minister: “*She (Israeli minister) also reaffirmed the Israeli government's willingness to build a strategic partnership with the Kingdom of Morocco that will give a constructive and lasting impetus to economic relations between the two countries*”. This statement contains promising outlooks for Moroccan businesses and industry.
- 3) **Conflict or action:** Rather than talking about conflicts of the Middle East or the Western Sahara, the report sticks to the competences of the respective ministers and focuses on positive developments for the economy and industry.
- 4) **Resolution or suggested resolution:** An enhanced cooperation on the economic level may be interpreted as a positively convincing argument to persuade critics and influence public opinion on the normalisation deal.

News article by the Moroccan news outlet bladi.net, 1 April 2022⁶⁹



Image: Protesters outside Houses of Parliament, Rabat. Burning of a presumed Israeli flag, waving the Palestinian flag.

⁶⁹ ‘Nouvelle manifestation contre la normalisation Maroc-Israël’, Bladi.net, accessed 24 April 2022, <https://www.bladi.net/manifestation-contre-normalisation-maroc-israel,91974.html>.

"New demonstration against Morocco-Israel normalisation

1 April 2022 - 15:00 - Morocco - By: S.A

Many Moroccans continue to show their opposition to the normalization of diplomatic relations between Morocco and Israel. They organised a pro-test march last Wednesday.

Nearly a year and a half later, the anger against the normalization of relations between Morocco and Israel does not wane. Hundreds of Moroccans took to the streets last Wednesday in more than thirty cities in the kingdom to denounce the rapprochement between Rabat and Tel Aviv. "The demonstrations that took place on Wednesday in 38 Moroccan cities are a reminder that Moroccans will continue their struggle to defeat normalization with the occupying state, because normalization is a danger for our country," Tayeb Madmadh, a member of the Moroccan Front for the Support of Palestine and Against Normalization, told The New Arab.

In Rabat, demonstrators from various political backgrounds, including secular leftists and young people from Morocco's largest Islamist association, Al Adl Wal Ihssane (Justice and Benevolence), which is officially banned by the kingdom, staged a sit-in in front of the parliament. A demonstration framed by police in riot gear. The protesters chanted "Infiltrators of the Negev, colonisation is terrorism". The sit-in took place four days after the participation of Nasser Bourita, Minister of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Moroccans Living Abroad, in the Negev summit in Israel.

Israel has recently arrested dozens of Palestinian Bedouins and demolished their homes in the Negev region. This provoked strong reactions from the demonstrators. They burned the Israeli flag and chanted: "Palestine resists and the regimes negotiate" and "No normalization, no redirection of the resistance forward"

Analysis:

- 1) Character of Actors:** Protesters on the streets in 38 Moroccan cities. Rally against the normalisation deal of Morocco with Israel. One of the organisers was the "*Moroccan Front for the Support of Palestine and Against Normalization*". Political parties that had called for the rallies, both from the left-secular, and from the right Islamic political spectrum are represented among the protesters. The Islamist organisation *Justice and Benevolence*, officially banned in Morocco, was also present. Moroccan FM Nasser Bourita is criticised by the protesters for participating in a summit in Israel.
- 2) Setting/environment/space:** Domestic protests against domestically decided political agreements, though in support of the Palestinian cause and clearly against recognition of the state of Israel.
- 3) Conflict or action:** In contrast to the last report on the protests, this rally was not organised at an anniversary of the normalisation, but on the occasion of Moroccan FM Bourita traveling to Israel for the Negev summit.

- 4) Resolution or suggested resolution:** Call for an end to Israeli occupation in Palestine, end of the normalisation between Morocco and Israel.

Official communication: press release by the official Moroccan press agency (MAP), 25 March 2022⁷⁰:

"A musical and cultural event brings together Muslims and Jews from Morocco and Israel on 30 and 31 March

25 March 2022

Casablanca - A musico-cultural event bringing together Muslims and Jews from Morocco and Israel will take place on 30 and 31 March in Rabat and Casablanca respectively, on the initiative of the Moroccan Association of Andalusian Music (AMMA) and the Israeli Andalusian Orchestra of Ashdod.

Organised under the aegis of the Ministry of Youth, Culture and Communication, and in partnership with Casablanca Event and Animation, this event is placed under the theme "The plural richness of Moroccan music: a cultural and spiritual heritage at the confluence of civilisations, to be promoted for future generations", indicates a press release of the AMMA.

Morocco, a thousand-year-old land of tolerance and sharing, has always been a haven of peace and a source of inspiration for the peoples of humanity. Located at the confluence of several civilizations, the Kingdom has been impregnated throughout the centuries with diverse influences, while enriching in turn many countries with its multifaceted culture, the same source noted.

The particularity of the Moroccan civilisation model will be commemorated during this event where artists - musicians and singers - will celebrate diversity and the joy of living together under the leadership of the great master Mohamed Briouel.

During this unique cultural event, the artists will perform not only Andalusian music, but also an anthology of Melhoun, Gharnati, Chgouri and Sufi songs, drawing their inspiration from the richness of the Jewish and Muslim repertoires.

(...) "Preserving the Moroccan musical and cultural heritage and promoting it through exchanges between civilisations and nations is the leitmotiv of the Moroccan Association of Andalusian Music, whose members spare no effort to perpetuate it," said AMMA's founding president, Fatima Mabchour, quoted in the press release."

⁷⁰ 'Une Manifestation Musico-Culturelle Réunit Musulmans et Juifs Du Maroc et d'Israël, Les 30 et 31 Mars | MapNews', accessed 26 April 2022, <https://www.mapnews.ma/fr/actualites/culture/une-manifestation-musico-culturelle-r%C3%A9unit-musulmans-et-juifs-du-maroc-et-disra%C3%AB>.

Analysis:

- 1) **Character of Actors:** This article presents a cultural event held by the Moroccan Association of Andalusian Music (AMMA) and the Israeli Andalusian Orchestra of Ashdod. The project was organised by the Moroccan Ministry of Youth, Culture and Communication, and in collaboration with the Casablanca Event and Animation group. This shows the enhanced cooperative level, not only between political and economic representatives, but also for cultural diplomacy, bringing together artists and musicians from both countries.
- 2) **Setting/environment/space:** The described project highlights the possibility to connect two seemingly separate people by reminding the common cultural heritage that bonds Moroccans and Israelis historically, particularly Jewish communities from both countries.
- 3) **Conflict or action:** In terms of temporality, this text focuses heavily on the historical connection between the countries and on Morocco's role as a bridge-builder: *"Morocco, a thousand-year-old land of tolerance and sharing, has always been a haven of peace and a source of inspiration for the peoples of humanity. Located at the confluence of several civilizations, the Kingdom has been impregnated throughout the centuries with diverse influences, while enriching in turn many countries with its multifaceted culture, the same source noted"*. The music project is described as a cultural achievement that promotes shared values through music.
- 4) **Resolution or suggested resolution:** The preservation of shared cultural heritage may be regarded as a uniting factor for Moroccans and Israelis, however no reference to broader impact on existing conflicts are expressed in the report.

Media communication: opinion piece from the French-language journal *hespress.com*⁷¹, 21 April 2022:

"The Moroccan-Israeli alliance, a strategic bridge between the Mediterranean countries and the Mena region.

By Mehdi Hijaouy

Thursday 21 April 2022 - 20:18

After the formalization of the resumption of Moroccan-Israeli relations, the conclusion of important actions and contracts, of a strategic nature, continues to multiply on both sides

The appointment of respective ambassadors, the signing of numerous partnership agreements, including one in the field of security and defence, recognised as being the

⁷¹ 'L'alliance maroco-israélienne, un pont stratégique entre les pays méditerranéens et la région Mena', *Hespress Français*, 21 April 2022, <https://fr.hespress.com/259525-intelligence-securitaire-lalliance-maroco-israelienne-un-pont-strategique-entre-les-pays-mediterraneens-et-la-region-mena.html>.

only one of its kind with an Arab country, the appointment for the first time of a Hebrew Consul in Rabat, the operation by the RAM of the new air link serving Casablanca-Tel Aviv and the visit of an important delegation of Moroccan businessmen to Tel Aviv, the initiatives follow one another(...).

In less than sixteen months, the Abraham agreements which formalized the resumption of relations between the two brotherly countries on December 10, 2020, have proved to be very conclusive in more than one respect.

The Moroccan-Hebrew partnership is shaking Europe.

The Kingdom of Morocco, under the wise and forward-looking leadership of King Mohammed VI, is shaking the world and particularly the old continent.

The power of the Kingdom resonates beyond its borders and its proactive and coercive diplomacy is not the result of chance.

It is a strategic roadmap that has been meticulously prepared and well-studied, starting with the report on the new development model and the formalization of relations with the Jewish state.

A Morocco that no longer tolerates pleasing only others, but that realizes that everything should be done in absolute reciprocity and without blackmail.

Starting with the neighbours who do not manage to realise that Morocco and Israel are not mere friends, but a real family, whose age-old links are indeed historical, characterised by nearly 800,000 Hebrews of Moroccan origin, most of whom are highly influential personalities in the five continents.

A single umbilical cord links the two brotherly peoples: a fact that could be appreciated through the effective implementation of the various bilateral partnership conventions, concluded recently.

Moreover, the two countries complement each other, and their strength lies in the power of their intelligence services which feed, in real time, their decision-makers, thus tailoring, to the millimetre, their internal and external policies.

Thus, a good number of European countries that had been affected quickly realised the harmlessness of such an alliance, in terms of conquest, particularly of Africa, but also from the point of view of total independence from the West, on the economic, technological, sanitary, tourist and geostrategic levels where a new world balance is currently being scratched.

(...)

Algerian corporals, forced to adhere to the Moroccanity of the Sahara.

A Kingdom that signs a contract of the century (Morocco-US-Israel tripartite agreement), the United States of America recognising the Moroccanity of the Sahara, the opening of foreign consulates en masse in the southern regions, a wise and soft Royal Diplomacy, patiently traced, that abstains from participating in the vote of the United Nations General Assembly, concerning the resolution of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, A first-rate mediator for the resolution of the Libyan crisis, an emissary who unblocked the tensions between Qatar and its Gulf neighbours, a Germany that got carried away but which, in

vain, ended up stalling to regain the friendship of a regional power and an unavoidable strategic partner, and a Spain that turned its back on Algeria in order to recognise the Moroccan nationality of the Sahara.

All this makes Morocco the undisputed pioneer of the region and even beyond, thanks to its privileged strategic position and its outstanding leadership, certain advantages, deeply rooted by the royal prospective force, but also by Imarat-Al-Mouminine (Commandery of the believers), a unique quality of the August Sovereign on a universal scale.

Moreover, the former French Prime Minister, Alain Juppé, did not fail to point out, during a recent interview (16 March 2022), given by Pascal Boniface, founder and director of the Institute of International and Strategic Relations, that: "France is competing in Africa, in particular, with China, Turkey and Morocco.

Finally, this Maghreb country (Algeria) no longer knows which front to turn to and is unaware that the Moroccan and Israeli powers are in the process of marking out a historic and primordial role in the construction of a strategic bridge between the Mediterranean countries and the Mena region, and even in the stability and return to peace in Africa, particularly in the sub-Saharan region.

Hence the Kingdom's support for the Hebrew State to become an observer member of the African Union.

It is therefore time for the Algerian corporals to come to their senses and understand, once and for all, that Morocco and Israel could bring a great deal to their country and on all levels.

If not, with the amateurism of the Algerian leaders, it would be the end of the military regime in their country and of the cold war inspired by Russia! Lay down your weapons because today, the history of clans is outdated and 2022 only accepts real intentions, based on common sense and credibility.

**Expert in security, safety, intelligence and economic and strategic intelligence, Founder of the Washington Strategic Intelligence Center"*

Analysis:

- 1) Character of Actors:** This article celebrates Morocco as a bridge-building "pioneer in the region", by asserting its power status between the Mediterranean and Africa. Algeria is depicted as a government of failure that has lost credibility and reliable allies. The author also recalls Morocco's abstaining from the UN Security Council Resolutions on the war of Russia on Ukraine for the third time, as a way of asserting a neutral position strategically^{72 73}. He also recalls the successful

⁷² Oussama Aamari-Morocco World News, 'Russia-Ukraine War: Morocco Absent Once Again From UN Session', <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/>, accessed 27 April 2022, <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2022/04/348222/russia-ukraine-war-morocco-absent-once-again-from-un-session>.

⁷³ 'En.Pdf', accessed 27 April 2022, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/pdf/view/17313/en>.

brokering of Morocco in the Gulf Crisis with Qatar, the fact that Germany has resumed friendship with the kingdom and, most recently and perhaps surprisingly, Spain's recognition of Moroccan authority in the Western Sahara⁷⁴. Finally, France is mentioned as a major actor in Africa, which has officially claimed that Morocco is now a competitor on the continent, together with Turkey and China. The author recalls Morocco's intention to invite Israel into the African Union as an observer state.

- 2) **Setting/environment/space:** Clearly, the author puts a strong focus on the enhanced geostrategic position of Morocco. This argument starts with the normalisation deal, goes on to the U.S. recognition of the Moroccan Western Sahara, onto the success in the Gulf Crisis resolution, as well as major European actors like France, Spain and Germany on its side. In particular, the article recalls the importance of stability and peace for the Sub-Saharan region.
- 3) **Conflict or action:** Once again, the historic component of Moroccan Jews and Moroccan Israelis is mentioned. Several regional achievements make Morocco, the main actor, stand out as a driver of change, development and peace for the region and as a reliable partner for the U.S., the EU, Israel, but also Sub-Saharan Africa, the Gulf countries and the MENA region.
- 4) **Resolution or suggested resolution:** There is a clear call on Algeria at the end of the article, advocating for an end of the armed conflict in the Western Sahara: *"Lay down your weapons because today, the history of clans is outdated and 2022 only accepts real intentions, based on common sense and credibility"*. Other regional conflicts are not mentioned, but the resolution of the Gulf Crisis may be interpreted as a guiding case for other regional actors and conflict resolutions.

Official communication by the state press agency MAP, May 6th 2021⁷⁵. Interview with FM Nasser Bourita:

"The resumption of relations between Morocco and Israel, an element to strengthen the dynamics of peace in the Middle East.

The re-establishment of diplomatic relations is a response to a double call: a call from the Moroccan Jewish community, eager to deepen its relationship with Morocco, but also a call for peace and the development of the original dynamic, conducive to a lasting peace in the Middle East," Bourita said in an interview granted to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) television channel, on the sidelines of its annual meeting.

⁷⁴ 'Spain's Sanchez Visits Morocco, Marking "New Phase" after Western Sahara Reversal', France 24, 7 April 2022, <https://www.france24.com/en/africa/20220407-spain-s-sanchez-on-historic-morocco-visit-after-western-sahara-reversal>.

⁷⁵ 'La Reprise Des Relations Entre Le Maroc Et Israël, Un Élément Pour Renforcer La Dynamique de Paix Au Proche-Orient (M. Bourita) | MapNews', accessed 2 June 2022, <https://www.mapnews.ma/fr/actualites/politique/la-reprise-des-relations-entre-le-maroc-et-isra%C3%ABl-un-%C3%A9l%C3%A9ment-pour-renforcer-la>.

He added that for Morocco, a "pioneer in the action for peace in the Middle East since the late King Hassan II", this is a "normal step, a step of conviction, but also an investment in peace and a way to deepen the strong relationship between Morocco and the Jewish community.

"His Majesty King Mohammed VI said that the decision taken by Morocco in December was not an opportunistic decision. It is a decision of conviction and a natural decision because of its links with its Jewish community and Morocco's historical involvement in peace," the minister recalled.

He added that "the regional dynamic is very important. Regional stability is very important to promote peace between Israel and Palestine. Morocco has played a pioneering role in the Middle East peace process and today it is also ready to contribute to it.

"We hope that all efforts will be made on all sides, including Israel, to promote a true peace, a peace that will preserve Israel's security, the security and stability of its people, but which also allows Palestinians to assert their rights," he said.

Referring to the exceptional relationship between Morocco and members of its Jewish community, Bourita said that "to understand the relationship with Israel, you should link it to the relationship with the Jewish community".

"The relationship is very old and the link between Morocco and the Jewish community is very deeply rooted. And I wonder if we can talk about Morocco and the Jewish community as separate entities because they are one community," the minister said, recalling that "the Jewish population has lived in Morocco for centuries. It is part of the Moroccan population. It has enriched the Moroccan identity. And this is why our constitution is perhaps the only one in the Arab and Islamic world that mentions the Jewish component among the important components of the Moroccan identity.

He continued that it is also a question of "the relationship between the Jewish community and the Kings of Morocco, a very long history going back to the 15th century when the Jewish community was expelled from Andalusia, to be welcomed in Morocco. The late King Mohammed V rejected the anti-Semitic laws of the Vichy regime and refused to hand over the Moroccan community to the Nazi regime.

Referring to the important efforts made to preserve the Moroccan Jewish identity and heritage, Bourita said that "His Majesty King Mohammed VI works to preserve this heritage. The Moroccan constitution refers to the Jewish tributary. His Majesty has also ordered the renovation of nearly 170 cemeteries and holy places in Morocco, and more than 20 synagogues have been restored.

"Today, in our school curriculum, the reference to the Jewish components of Moroccan history is there, which is a unique fact in the Arab and Islamic world. And Morocco is the only Arab and Islamic country where a Jewish community still lives with its synagogues, its court and with all its structures as a normal component of the Moroccan identity and the Moroccan people," Bourita said.

This relationship is very strong, he added, and the one million Moroccan Israelis living in Israel or the hundreds of thousands of Moroccan Jews living in North and South Ameri-

ca, or in Europe, have kept close ties with their country and with their Kings for centuries.

"That is why this relationship is very special, it is unique in the Arab world. And it has been safeguarded by the commitments of the Kings of Morocco, but also by the will of the Moroccan people," the minister noted.

Since then, "we have taken concrete steps to translate this declaration into action, liaison offices have been opened in Rabat and Tel Aviv, and they work normally today with diplomats and participate in events in Israel and here in Morocco.

"The Morocco-US agreement is the oldest agreement in force signed by the United States. And today we will celebrate 200 years of the oldest American property outside the United States, which is in Tangiers," he said, pointing out that this relationship "has adapted to different times.

Finally, referring to Iran and its destabilising role in the region, Mr Bourita said that "people know more about Iran's nuclear activities, but Iran also acts through proxies to destabilise North and West Africa."

Analysis:

- 1) Character of Actors:** Actors involved are the Moroccan monarchy, the U.S., Israel, Palestine, but also Iran. Bourita describes the cooperative attitude of all actors involved in the normalisation process, which of course excludes Iran, named as a destabilising actor for progress in the region.
- 2) Setting/environment/space:** The promise arising from the context of normalisation is the potential for sustainable peace for the MENA region, initiated and revived by Morocco, especially thanks to its monarchs. Bourita highlights the close ties with the U.S., reminding that the kingdom shares the oldest bilateral ties and hosts the U.S.' first possession overseas, in the coastal city of Tangier.
- 3) Conflict or action:** There is a predominant focus on the historical connections of Judaism worldwide to the kingdom of Morocco, its territory and its monarchs. Bourita emphasises the monarchs' efforts in acting as a protector and providing a safe area for Jews for many centuries. This includes the mentioning of having introduced Moroccan-Jewish history into Moroccan school books, apparently unique in the Arab and Islamic world.
- 4) Resolution or suggested resolution:** The promise of bringing a constructive element into the Palestinian-Israeli peace process in the interest of both the Moroccan and the Israeli people, as well as ensuring stability on the regional and international level are the main benefits promoted in this interview.

Media publication by hespress.com⁷⁶, June 1st, 2022:

"The relationship between Morocco and Israel obsesses Algeria.

Yasmine Saih.

Morocco obsesses the Algerian media to the point of inventing stories and publishing fake news. Israel is a subject that often comes up in Algerian attacks on Morocco.

While Algeria broke off diplomatic relations with Morocco last August, the two countries no longer speak to each other, and Algiers refuses mediation. And if the official channels of dialogue have been broken off, reflecting Algeria's desire to completely cut its ties with the kingdom, not a day goes by without the official Algerian press agency mentioning Morocco by defaming it, publishing false information or supporting the separatist Polisario militia.

Interference in Moroccan internal affairs is a daily occurrence in Algeria. It is criticised for having diplomatic relations with Israel, although these are not new, and Morocco is the only Arab and Muslim country with the largest Jewish community with over 700,000 people.

Algeria criticises this alliance between the two countries, calling Israel a "Zionist entity" that would come and settle near its borders to create a "Zionist" military axis supposedly against it.

And while the attacks were directed at Morocco, Algeria was also indignant that Rabat had let the head of Israeli diplomacy make statements from Morocco mentioning Algeria.

Algerian officials even put a requirement linked to Israel in the scales for a possible return to diplomatic relations with Morocco, according to Saudi mediators who tried to lower the tension. Algiers is said to have demanded that Morocco not have any security or military cooperation with Israel.

In a new attack on Morocco, apparently wanting to create the illusion of social disorder, the official Algerian agency APS, took statements from the president of the Moroccan Anti-Normalisation Observatory, Ahmed Ouihmane, to manipulate them and claim that Morocco had "set in motion the countdown to the collapse of the kingdom".

Ahmed Ouihmane criticized "the approach of the Ministry of Higher Education, which is part of the process of normalization with the Zionist entity", and added that "Moroccans must be aware of this danger which has already started the countdown to the collapse of the kingdom, with all that is so precious, its history and its honor.

If the protesters of the resumption of diplomatic relations with Israel exist in Morocco, they are a minority and they have the right to express their opinions freely, unlike in Algeria where the slightest form of criticism is forcefully repressed.

"The social front is boiling in Morocco. The rise in the price of basic necessities has brought Moroccans out into the streets, who, in passing, are expressing their rejection

⁷⁶ 'La relation entre le Maroc et Israël obsède l'Algérie', Hespress Français, 1 June 2022, <https://fr.hespress.com/265739-la-relation-entre-le-maroc-et-israel-obsede-lalgerie.html>.

of normalisation with Israel," wrote the Algerian electronic newspaper TSA, always including a reference to Israel.

The hatred of Israel in Algeria goes even further, since the last Mundiavocat, a football competition between lawyers in the world held in Morocco, was boycotted by Algerian lawyers because of the presence of Israeli colleagues in the competition."

Analysis:

- 1) Character of Actors:** Morocco, Algeria, Saudi Arabia (mentioned as a mediator) and Israel are the state-actors named by this article. Furthermore, the report elaborates on the behaviour of Algerian media and journalists, supposedly defaming Morocco for maintaining diplomatic relations with Israel. The Polisario and a Moroccan anti-normalisation activist are also mentioned. The latter is described criticising the Moroccan ministry of education for being responsible promoting a wrong image of the "Zionist" state to Moroccan pupils. Algeria is reported to have boycotted an international football tournament of lawyers on grounds of Israeli presence there. Lastly, protesters against the normalisation in Morocco are mentioned, describing their liberty of expression in the kingdom as opposed to repression in Algeria.
- 2) Setting/environment/space:** The report focuses on the recent freezing of diplomatic relations between Morocco and Algeria since August 2021. The two countries have an ongoing territorial conflict over territories in the Western Sahara, a conflict that was fuelled by U.S. recognition over Moroccan Sahara and the normalisation with Israel.
- 3) Conflict or action:** According to the report, a Moroccan anti-normalisation activist had reportedly said that the normalisation would ultimately provoke the collapse of the kingdom. The author then states that opposition to normalisation in Morocco is a legal way to express opinions and that only a minority opposes the kingdom's relations with Israel anyway.
- 4) Resolution or suggested resolution:** Although the article reports on the various anti-Moroccan media campaigns in Algeria, it remains neutral on the issue of normalisation with Israel and does not hint at a broader impact of the policy. It focuses on the apparent obsession of Algerian media with Morocco's normalisation deal.

Conclusion

Having examined the narratives of Moroccan media and official communications over the period of about 18 months, a more detailed insight into the strategic narrative is possible. Firstly, I will outline the results of the four key concepts that I applied to the content analysis, namely: 1) Character of Actors, 2) Setting, Environment, Space, 3) Conflict or Action, 4) Resolution or suggested resolution. Then, I will present a threefold argument that explains the success of the narrative in reaching the desired outcome in public opinion. Finally, I will summarise the research in a concluding paragraph and describe potential implications of normalisation.

Results of the four key concepts

Character of Actors: The actors mentioned most often and with positive credit in the official narrative are the U.S, as the initiator of the deal and the driving force behind the recognition of Moroccan authority in Western Sahara. The Al-Quds Committee, of which King Mohammed VI. is the Chairman, is used as an argument of support for the Palestinian people's cause. Other important constituencies in the official releases are Pope Francis and Mohammed VI.'s 2019 signing of a joint declaration to preserve the holy sites of Jerusalem, as well as the cultural ties between the countries and the constructive exchange between officials from both Morocco and Israel. The media narrative equally mentions the positive role of the U.S., as well as the Abraham Accords' other signatories (namely Bahrain, Sudan and the U.A.E.) to support an emerging new discourse in the Arab world on relations with Israel. One article argues that just as much as the Palestinian Authority maintains relations with Israel, so should Morocco be able to do likewise. On the negative side, the official narrative blames Iran and Algeria as destabilising actors for peace efforts in the MENA region and beyond, whereas the media narrative criticizes several actors for obstructing the Moroccan initiative and its potential: France's Macron and the TV channel France 24 are accused of reproducing Algerian narratives on the Western Saharan conflict, the Algerian media and the Polisario Front are criticized for polarizing an explosive conflict, and there is expressed scepticism about the support by the Biden administration concerning sovereignty over the Western Sahara.

Setting, Environment, Space: The official narrative promotes the idea of Morocco emerging as a regional power that supports the peace process in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, siding with the international community's stance on the territorial issue of the state of Israel. It emphasises on the success of Morocco as a mediator in the 2017 Gulf Crisis and speaks of a spill-over effect that its normalisation deal may have for a substantive peaceful change. The idea of Morocco and the U.S. acting as allied partners in the region is portrayed as an option that may bring peace to the region. The media narrative claims enhanced prestige of Morocco as a state-actor, both regionally and inter-

nationally, praises the excellent cooperation that the deal has enabled between Morocco and Israel on various levels, and highlights recent positive developments in the relations with Spain, France and Germany. Only in the early stages of the normalisation, France was depicted as an ally of Algeria, whereas now, the media expresses concerns that the benefits of normalisation might be flawed due to the lack of support by the Biden administration for a “Moroccan” Sahara.

Conflict or action: Potential benefits of the normalisation are expressed in the official narrative, in terms of promises of economic prosperity, but also highlighting on the historical bond between Moroccans and Israelis. Increased U.S. investment in the region is mentioned, as well as the role of the Moroccan monarchy as a historic bridgebuilder and mediator in the region. The monarchy is also praised as a historic guardian of Jews, and shared values and culture between Morocco and Israel are highlighted. Finally, educating Moroccan pupils about Jewish history is named as a historic First in the Arab world. The media narrative also focuses strongly on historical bonds and responsibilities, such as Morocco being the first nation to recognise the United States in 1777 and the remaining bond between the kingdom and the U.S. Morocco is depicted as a reliable partner for all actors having pursued interests in the region. The media also calls to mind the historical burden of the French in Morocco, describing how France had repeatedly suppressed Morocco’s interests, as was the case with the creation of a Protectorate in 1912, from which Morocco only gained independence in 1956.

Resolution or suggested resolution: Looking at the potential to resolve issues or conflicts related to normalisation, the official narrative repeatedly claims to actively contribute to the peace process in Palestine and Israel. The signing of the Abraham Accords, according to the published content, have solved the issue of the Western Sahara territorial issue and will eventually help solve the Palestinian peace process, just as Morocco had solved the Gulf Crisis in 2017. Economic and political prosperity and stability are promised for the region and the world. Similarly, the media recalls the peaceful intention of Morocco’s normalisation deal, calling it a victory for the kingdom, while equally supporting the cause of the Palestinian people. Criticism or opposition is accepted, though argued as unjustified. Reports on street protests against normalisation are published, but not given too much attention.

Both the official statements and the media reports in Morocco describe the normalisation of the kingdom with the state of Israel as a promising, positive and meaningful decision which supports the peace process in the region, secures Morocco’s claim over the Western Sahara and opens new economic and political potential on all sides. Three arguments help explain why the strategic narratives of this case may be successful in having a substantial impact on public opinion. Firstly, the historic struggle of Morocco’s sovereignty in the Western Sahara enjoys strong public support. Therefore, it

could be seen as the most convincing argument for the public, a long-sought goal of the kingdom achieved in return for normalisation with Israel. Secondly, the sovereign, King Mohammed VI., has a highly respected status in society that is rooted in the religion of the majority, the country's history, and traditions. The Abraham Accords have been approved by the king personally and as the analysis has shown, the monarch was personally involved in implementing normalisation. And thirdly, the historical argument shall not be underestimated: Jewish history is a visible part of Morocco to this day, where the old Jewish quarters and synagogues remain, as well as a small but considerable Jewish community in the bigger cities. The huge Moroccan-Jewish diaspora in Israel, and all Jews identifying as Moroccan descent, are equally important for a broader buy-in of the deal, at least on the international level. This could in turn have influenced public opinion positively in Morocco.

The signing of the Tripartite Declaration is a fact that supports the argument of a change of dynamics in Arab-Israeli relations, at least on the inter-governmental level for the time being. It is true that the kingdom used the momentum for the conclusion of a cooperation agreement with Israel under the Trump administration and built the narrative around normalisation on a sound foundation of shared history, culture and values, thus gaining important strategic benefits. The large proportion of Moroccan-descent Jews in Israel's population will surely influence public opinion, since enhanced tourism from Israel to Morocco and economic exchange already flourish and impact the local economy of Morocco positively⁷⁷. Moreover, the geographical distance of Morocco to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict makes it easier for the kingdom than for most Arab nations to uphold claims of support for the Palestinian cause, while simultaneously maintaining close ties with the state of Israel, since no own territorial or strategic interests are directly impacted by the conflict. Although the normalisation is concluded, the relations and developments in the region remain dynamic. As the issue with the Biden administration's reserved stance on recognition of a "Moroccan" Western Sahara shows, the story is far from finished and it is not granted that public opinion in Morocco will support the normalisation with Israel, should drastic political or territorial changes occur on either side of the signatories. On the other hand, it seems unlikely that the current political and ideological climate in Morocco could bring forward a considerable threat to the newly revived ties with Israel. Whether the normalisation will eventually foster a substantive peaceful change in the region has yet to be assessed.

⁷⁷ 'Morocco Sees Uptick in Demand for Hebrew Studies', *Www.Israelhayom.Com* (blog), 15 May 2022, <https://www.israelhayom.com/2022/05/15/morocco-sees-uptick-in-demand-for-hebrew-studies/>.

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