



## **The Role of the Royal Armed Forces (FAR) in Modern Morocco**

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A sovereign state since 1956, the Kingdom of Morocco has a number of features that make it a particularly interesting subject of study from the perspective of international relations, security and defence. To quote someone with great knowledge of Moroccan social and political conditions, Professor Bernabé López García, the Royal Armed Forces (*Forces Armées Royales*, FAR) constitute, 'the institution of modern Morocco about which we know least'. We fully agree with Professor López's verdict and this article is an attempt to tackle the intellectual challenge of finding out more.<sup>1</sup> It is an attempt driven not only by geographical proximity but by the need to explore opportunities, some of which have been available for years, of fruitful cooperation with Spain and its armed forces aimed at generating confidence, enhanced regional security and a mutual contribution to defence against the daily more difficult challenges of a modern globalised society.

Our approach to the FAR will cover the conventional issues relating to all armed forces: the kind of missions of which they are capable, the units they comprise, their weaponry and its sources and their personnel.<sup>2</sup> In the case of the FAR this has to be contextualised within the framework of the recent complex history of independent Morocco, a young nation set on longstanding foundations.

### **The FAR: from traditional objectives –defence of sovereignty, territorial integrity and monarchy– to newer missions**

This opening section takes a quick but necessary look at recent events in the history of the FAR as far as fulfilling its traditional role is concerned: that of defending the country's independence, territorial integrity, and the monarchy that rules it. Following this is a survey of the FAR's newer missions, similar to those that other armed forces around the world have had to take on board.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to note that the FAR as such and their relations with other state institutions are not covered at any depth in such recent overly critical, polemical or journalistic works such as that of Gilles Perrault (*Nuestro amigo el Rey*, Barcelona, Plaza y Janés, 1991) or the more recent treatise by Jean-Pierre Tuquoi (*El último Rey: Crepúsculo de una dinastía*, Barcelona, Galaxia Gutenberg/Círculo de Lectores, 2002).

<sup>2</sup> The structure of this approach, which we consider highly enlightening, is explained in detail by General Francisco Laguna Sanquirico, *Modelos de Fuerzas Armadas*, *Ejército* nº 673, June 1996, pp. 52-56.

<sup>3</sup> They include the fight against illegal trafficking, terrorism, and peace missions in the widest sense. All such missions were amply described by the then General Abdelhak El Kadiri in the talk he gave to a delegation of the Assembly of the Western European Union (WEU) on 29 October 1996; see *Morocco's approach to security and defence in the Mediterranean* in the Lipkowski Report (Political

This latter section will look, from a technical standpoint, at the different stages of the conflict over the Western Sahara, particularly the role played by the Engineering Corps which, by building 2,000 kilometres of defensive walls, decisively changed the course of the war, bringing about first a cease-fire and then a peace accord.

### **The defence of independence and territorial integrity**

After achieving independence in 1956 the first task of the Moroccan monarchy, looking back half a century later, was to resolve what it called its 'sovereignty deficit', inherited from the colonial period. To date, the deficit has been compensated at Spain's expense, although from a Moroccan point of view the process is not yet complete. However, debates about the precise limits of the old kingdom of Morocco also led to territorial disputes with its largest neighbour, Algeria, and it was the Algerian threat that the FAR first had to meet in mid-October 1963, in the so-called "Sand War".<sup>4</sup> According to King Hassan, it was the insistence of the former Algerian President, Ahmed Ben Bella, on control of the frontier post of Hassi el Baida that resulted in a war which, though brief, saw bitter fighting in the oases of Figuig and Tinduf.<sup>5</sup> At a summit meeting of the Arab League held at Cairo in February 1964, the two countries signed an agreement establishing a demilitarised zone on their common border to avoid such outbreaks in the future. Nonetheless, there were skirmishes on a number of occasions until the matter was settled, at least in theory, by the Treaty of Ifran in 1969 and the Rabat Convention of 1972, although the Treaty remained unratified until 1989.<sup>6</sup>

After Spain handed over Tarfaya (1958) and Sidi Ifni (1969), Moroccan attention switched to the Spanish Sahara, a territory pending decolonisation in which Algeria backed a national liberation movement, the Polisario Front. This southern flank has long been and remains a central issue in Moroccan irredentism, which traditionally also included Mauritania, not recognised as an independent state by Morocco until 1969. In 1974 Morocco created the Liberation and Unity Front, to cover the FAR's operations against the threat of the emerging Polisario and, equally, against Spanish forces. Finally, the trilateral agreements of Madrid, signed on 14 November 1975, allowed the FAR to occupy that same day the northern end of the Spanish colony, from where it could formally initiate engagements with the Polisario and, on occasions, with Algerian regulars.<sup>7</sup> Thus began a conflict that can be divided into three phases.

In the initial phase, which lasted until 1979, the Polisario's military initiative dominated. The pro-independence movement controlled almost the entire territory and focused its offensive capability on the weakest of its opponents, Mauritania. The debilitation of this country led to the overthrow of the government of Moktar Uld Daddah on 10 July 1978 and the signing in Algiers of a peace accord between the Polisario Front and Mauritania, with the backing of Algeria and Libya. This, in turn, was an incentive for the FAR to occupy the former Spanish colony in its entirety. In this first phase, the Polisario Front was particularly effective as a result of the availability of heavy armament provided by Algeria: the 'Huari Bumedian' offensive, in 1979, allowed the Saharais to attack Tantan, Bir-Nzaran, Lebirat, Samra, Bucraa and Zag.

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Committee) *Security in the Mediterranean region*, WEU Assembly n° 1543, Appendix III, 4 November 1996, pp. 36-39.

<sup>4</sup> López García, Bernabé, *Marruecos en trance. Nuevo rey, nuevo siglo, ¿nuevo régimen?*, Madrid, Política Exterior-Biblioteca Nueva, p. 32.

<sup>5</sup> See the interview by Eric Laurent, *Hassan II. La Mémoire d'un Roi*, Plon, Paris, 1993, p. 81.

<sup>6</sup> Sainz de la Peña, José Antonio, *Las fuerzas armadas del Magreb*, in Marquina, Antonio (ed): *Seguridad en el Mediterráneo. Nuevos planteamientos*, Madrid, Fundación Universitaria San Pablo-CEU, Anales n° 7, 1992, p. 138.

<sup>7</sup> In January 1976 Morocco captured 102 Algerian servicemen near Amgala (Western Sahara), when an Algerian column attempted to relieve Saharai refugees fleeing the former Spanish Sahara.

From this period date the first contacts between Morocco and the US, by which the latter supplied arms, and negotiations began on what would later become the bilateral military cooperation agreement of 1982, described in the third section of this report.

The event marking the second phase (1979-88) was the construction by the FAR of a series of six defensive walls with a total length of over 2,000 kilometres that proved decisive to the outcome of the conflict. It is worth noting that the building of the sixth wall in April 1987 led to a cooling of relations between Morocco and Mauritania as it was sited only 40 kilometres from the frontier between the two countries. Two months earlier, in February 1987, the bloody attack carried out by the Polisario, using armoured vehicles and SAM-6 missiles, in the area around Mahbes and Al Farsiya, close to the frontier between Algeria and Mauritania, was publicised by the FAR in what proved to be the first move of a growing preparedness by the Moroccans to release information on the struggle, as it became increasingly clear that the decision to build the walls eliminated the possibility of a Saharawi victory. In May of that year, a motorised column of FAR troops, comprising 60 men, crossed the border with Algeria in the Bechar region and was intercepted by Algerian forces, who captured 31 prisoners and killed two Moroccan soldiers.

The third phase, which is where we are now, began in 1988 with the acceptance by both sides of UN mediation, which ended in an initial ceasefire and a subsequent peace plan. This phase was made possible by the conclusions reached by both parties on 30 August 1988. The ceasefire was observed and the UN established the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara or MINURSO, as guarantor, although it has not prevented tension and the threat of a return to hostilities, some of them of recent date. As an example, in January 2001, at the time of the stage of the Paris-Dakar rally through Western Sahara, the Polisario Front took as a breach of the 1991 ceasefire the presence of an FAR contingent to protect the competitors, warning of a possible recourse to war.<sup>8</sup>

In the view of many analysts, the conflict in the Western Sahara has kept the FAR busy and allowed those responsible for national security to secure their positions.<sup>9</sup> In terms of funding, at the end of the 1980s it was estimated that a third of the country's defence budget was being spent on deployment in the Western Sahara, a proportion that has diminished as a consequence of the 1991 accord but which remains bearing in mind that the need to maintain a significant military presence there has not diminished.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, the present stalemate carries added bitterness for the FAR in the sense of frustration at the bleak outlook for Moroccan PoWs held by the Polisario Front. On 17 January 2002, during Spain's presidency of the European Union, mediation by primer minister José María Aznar managed to achieve the release of 115 Moroccan soldiers. At that time, according to the Red Cross there were still 1,362 Moroccan servicemen in Saharawi hands, some of them having been

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<sup>8</sup> On 22 December 2000 the Polisario Front had decreed a return to military action following manoeuvres in November. By January 2001 the situation was sufficiently tense to oblige not only William Eagleton, the American representative of the UN Secretary General, but the Commander-in-Chief of the Algerian armed forces, General Mohamed Lamari, to intervene to defuse the confrontation. See *Sáhara Occidental. La solución que no llega, Informe Semanal de Política Exterior*, Nº 251, 15 January 2001, p. 7.

<sup>9</sup> López García, B., op. cit., p. 19.

<sup>10</sup> See Stenhouse, Mark, *The Maghreb, the rediscovered region, International Defense Review-Defense '95*, p. 87.

held for over twenty years.<sup>11</sup> A year prior to Aznar's intervention, the then French presidency of the Union managed to secure the release of 201 prisoners.<sup>12</sup>

### *Defence of the monarchy*

The role played by King Hassan II as Commander-in-Chief of the FAR in defence of the stability of the political system has been emphasised again and again both within and without the country. Article 30 of the 1962 Constitution and those of its successors of 1970, 1972, 1992 and 1996 established the King as the 'Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Armed Forces. He appoints both civilians and servicemen and may delegate this task,' and Article 35, also in all versions with the same wording, gives the monarch the right to call a state of emergency whenever territorial integrity or the stability of the Constitutional order come under threat.<sup>13</sup> Immediately following independence, in January 1957 the then Crown Prince Hassan quashed the dissidence of the governor of Ksar el-Suk in the Tafilalet region, Addi ou Bihi. He also directed, alongside the then Colonel Ufkir, the repression of the Rif uprising in 1958, which spread from Alhucemas to Taza.<sup>14</sup>

Together with this early and direct use of the FAR to smother domestic social and political unrest, it is important to underline the use of the armed forces as an instrument of government throughout the 1960s, particularly in matters of appointments by the King.<sup>15</sup> In this period Hassan saw the FAR as one of his soundest defensive strongholds, symbolised in the motto 'God, Country, King'. It was thus a tremendous blow to him when on 10 July 1971, while celebrating his 42nd birthday at his summer residence of Skirat on the outskirts of Rabat, Hassan suffered his first attempted coup, led by the head of his military household, General Mohammed Medbouh. From that tragic moment – which resulted in the death of 200 people, 138 of them rebels – a new period began in the relations between the Moroccan royal family and the FAR.<sup>16</sup>

That first attempt at a coup cost the lives of seven of the twelve generals then commanding the FAR (four by firing squad and three, including Medbouh, killed during the revolt). 74 officers and NCOs were imprisoned while 1,000 cadets who took part in the uprising were finally released without charges. Ufkir, who took over from Field Marshal Mizian as Minister of Defence, assumed responsibility for winking out the remaining malcontents among

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<sup>11</sup> See *España-Marruecos. Del Sáhara a las Canarias, Informe Semanal de Política Exterior*, N° 301, 4 February 2002, p. 7.

<sup>12</sup> See Echeverría Jesús, Carlos, *Relaciones hispano-marroquíes: una compleja agenda*, Madrid, Real Instituto Elcano de Estudios Internacionales y Estratégicos, Working Paper 2002/05, 30 September 2002, p. 9.

<sup>13</sup> Basri, Driss; Rousset, Michel; Vedel, Michel (ed.), *Trente années de vie constitutionnelle au Maroc*, Paris, Librairie Générale de Droit et de Jurisprudence, 1993, pp. 646, 660, 674 and 690. At the same time, the Crown Prince (and in this respect the present King, Mohammed VI, follows the tradition) bears until the decease of his father the rank of four-star general and the title of Coordinator of the Joint Sections and Services of the Staff of the FAR, thereby making him in theory the armed forces' second-highest staff officer, although more an honorary than real position.

<sup>14</sup> See López García, B., op. cit., pp. 21 and 25. Years later, in March 1965, Ufkir was the man responsible for the savage repression of political unrest in Casablanca, with hundreds being killed and more than 2,000 arrested.

<sup>15</sup> On 20 August 1964, just a year after the 1963 plot against the King and a year before the serious disturbances in Casablanca of 1965, Ufkir was made Minister of the Interior and Mizian Minister of Defence. See López García, B., op. cit., p. 32. The possible involvement of Ufkir in the kidnapping and assassination of the opposition leader Ben Barka in Paris is still, as of January 2003, the subject of investigation both in France and Morocco. See *Maroc. Le procès pour diffamation*, *Le Monde*, 9 January 2003, p. 4.

<sup>16</sup> On the two coup attempts, see the events narrated by Hassan II himself in Laurent, E., op. cit., pp. 159–172 and Orgambides, Fernando, *Un error de la policía marroquí revela que los cuatro hijos del general Ufkir se encuentran bajo arresto*, *El País*, 27 Abril 1987.

officers and other ranks of the FAR after this first attempt at deposing the King.<sup>17</sup> The post of Minister of the Interior fell to another military man, Colonel Ahmed Dlimi, answering directly to the monarch under the idiosyncratic system in Moroccan politics which includes a number of ministerial posts, considered 'Crown' positions, whose holders are appointed directly by the throne.<sup>18</sup>

The King's mistrust of the FAR was to deepen further when on 16 August 1972, only thirteen months after the first attempt, a second coup took place, doubly galling by being inspired this time by none other than the Minister of Defence himself, Ufkir.<sup>19</sup> Since then the posts of Minister of Defence and Chief of Staff have been abolished, promotions within the FAR were frozen until 1984 and weaponry and munitions were kept in ordnance depots under the guard of the Royal Gendarmerie, the country's main armed police force, directed for over a decade now by Lieutenant-General Housni Benslimane. Routine activities such as parades or manoeuvres were scaled down, closely controlled or simply abandoned, as the sight of six F-5 fighters attacking the royal Boeing 727 left a lasting impression on the King.

Having said that, although precautionary measures were indeed adopted, at times the attitude of the leadership to the FAR has softened considerably. For example, in September and October of 1991, most of the officers arrested for their part in the two coup attempts were released under royal decree.<sup>20</sup> At the same time, political developments in Morocco, with the gradual transition to democracy that began in the last years of Hassan's reign and has continued under his son Mohammed, made for a very interesting period. At Hassan's death on 23 July 1999, the new King surprised everybody by inviting the top military leadership to the ceremony of the 'Bay'a' –the traditional swearing of loyalty to the Sultan– a new departure for the Moroccan crown. It inspired a number of onlookers to see a gradual restoration of the role and influence of the FAR in Moroccan affairs. The replacement of Driss Basri as Minister of the Interior in November 1999 after twenty years in office, or the appointment two months earlier of Colonel-Major Hamidu Laanigri as Director of the Territorial Security Division (TSD), the domestic intelligence service, previously headed by a civilian under Basri's orders, are thus seen as the first significant steps in this direction.<sup>21</sup> At the same time, the fact that Major-General Abdelhak Kadiri held on to the job of head of Studies and Documentation, ie, foreign intelligence, left the military in complete control of all classified information provided to the head of state. Even the King's security, after the fall

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<sup>17</sup> Although Mizian was not himself directly implicated in the attempted coup, he was dismissed for being the father-in-law of one of the ringleaders. López García, B., op. cit., p. 35.

<sup>18</sup> In 1982 the by then General Ahmed Dlimi, the man who had built the walls in Western Sahara, led a plot which also failed. See, Faria, Fernanda, *Políticas de seguridad au Maghreb. Les impératifs de la stabilité intérieure*, Lisbon, Instituto de Estudos Estratégicos e Internacionais (IEEI)-Cahiers de Lumiar nº 1, September 1994, p. 26; Sainz De La Peña, J.A., op. cit., p. 134 y López García, B., op. cit., p. 179.

<sup>19</sup> The aircraft in which Hassan was returning from Paris, after a stopover in Barcelona, was attacked by six F-5 fighters. According to the official version Ufkir committed suicide on hearing that the attack had failed. On 5 January 1973 the eleven air force officers involved were executed. See López García, B., op. cit., pp. 36–37.

<sup>20</sup> See the Roseta Report (Political Committee), *Security in the Mediterranean*, Western European Union Assembly nº 1371, 24 May 1993, p. 10.

<sup>21</sup> Driss Basri himself is an army colonel. At the end of the 1970s Hassan made him head of the General Directorate of Territorial Security (DGTS), the counterintelligence arm of the DTS. See [www.fas.org/irp/world/morocco](http://www.fas.org/irp/world/morocco) and Canales, Pedro and Cembrero, Ignacio, *El Ejército recupera un papel político en Marruecos*, *El País*, 25 March 2001. With respect to the figure of Hamidu Laanigri, we should not forget that the incidents at Laayoune in September 1999 led the King to dismiss Mohammed Lulichki, Ambassador Coordinator to MINURSO, and to move Laanigri to the DTS. See López García, Bernabé, *Le Maroc, singularité d'une relation historique. Le Maroc de Mohamed VI, in Maghreb: perception espagnole de la stabilité en Méditerranée, prospective en vue de l'année 2010*, various authors, Madrid, Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos (Ministry of Defence)-Cuadernos de Estrategia nº 106-B, January 2001, p. 220.

from grace of the head of royal security, Haj Mediuri, fell to the military, specifically to General Benslimane's Royal Gendarmerie.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, it was the Royal Gendarmerie that in February 2001 was entrusted with investigating some 10,000 cases of suspected corruption.<sup>23</sup>

Aware that the stability of the system depends on maintaining good relations with the FAR, Mohammed VI has gradually made gestures in their direction. In August 2000, the King attended in Errachidia the first major manoeuvres with live ammunition that had been held for almost 30 years, and in the same month promoted a number of officers and created the rank of Lieutenant-General (*Général de Corps d'Armée*). In January 2001 military pay was raised, with privates receiving the minimum national wage. Months later, in August, General El Kadiri, one of the leading figures of the regime, was appointed Inspector General of the FAR, after almost 20 years at the head of the foreign intelligence services, where his job was taken over by Brigadier Ahmed Harchi.<sup>24</sup>

### *New missions*

It was not until very recently that the role of the paramilitary (the Royal Gendarmerie and the Auxiliary Forces) and the FAR (Royal Moroccan Navy) was given a higher profile in the struggle against smuggling in general and illegal trafficking in undocumented immigrants in particular. However, at a theoretical level, the situation had already been fully outlined in 29 October 1996, by the then Major-General El Kadiri in a talk he gave to a delegation of the WEU on a visit to Rabat in which he included smuggling (both human beings and drugs) and Islamist terrorism.<sup>25</sup> On 8 September 2001 the Royal Gendarmerie recovered 13 bodies and a survivor from an illegal expedition on a fishing boat which foundered in Sidi Taibi, 40 kilometres from Rabat, while on the following day, as the Royal Gendarmerie was picking up five additional survivors from the same wreck, the Royal Moroccan Navy arrested a launch with 39 illegal immigrants aboard en route to Spain. The increasing involvement of the Moroccan authorities in the fight against illegal immigration came to the fore in 2002. On 11 September of that year the Royal Moroccan Navy launched two operations, one in Alhucemas and the other in Tangiers, in which it intercepted 72 illicit travellers; on 17 September it picked up 241 in Tangiers, 111 of them from sub-Saharan countries. According to the official news agency –the Maghreb Arab Press (MAP)– Morocco had by then repatriated 1,223 sub-Saharan citizens from Tangiers.<sup>26</sup> Giving the full figures for 2002 in the control of illegal migration, the Moroccan authorities reported in January 2003 that the Royal Gendarmerie in Tangiers and Laayoune had arrested a total of 2,533 undocumented migrants.<sup>27</sup>

Terrorism, though far from absent in Morocco in recent years, bears no comparison either

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<sup>22</sup> Within the FAR it is important to note the presence of the Royal Guard, devoted in the main to representative functions, which has remained at a constant strength of 1,500 for the past ten years and has seen pass through its ranks such well-known military figures as Mohammed Cherkaoui or Mimoun Mansouri.

<sup>23</sup> It was the pressure of citizen's associations such as 'Transparence Maroc' that succeeded in persuading the government to take this initiative. See *Mediterráneo. Cooperación en asuntos de interior*, in *Informe Semanal de Política Exterior*, nº 276, 16 July 2001, p. 7.

<sup>24</sup> See, *Marruecos. Crisis económica, desafío político*, in *Informe Semanal de Política Exterior*, nº 280, 3 September 2001, p. 6.

<sup>25</sup> The general also highlighted the role of Morocco in the K4 Group, the successor to the former Group of Trevi, responsible for such matters in the EU. See the article quoted in note 3.

<sup>26</sup> See *Mediterráneo. Las rutas de Gibraltar y Sicilia*, in *Informe Semanal de Política Exterior* nº 331, 30 September 2002, p. 7.

<sup>27</sup> The precise figures were 1,297 detainees in Tangiers and 1,236 in Laayoune, most of them (1,380) sub-Saharan. 1,147 were Moroccans and six Tunisians. Operations also included breaking up 20 gangs involved in immigrant trafficking and the confiscation of 95 boats, 26 vehicles and 20 outboard engines. See Cembrero, Ignacio, *Marruecos dice que ha detenido a 2.533 emigrantes irregulares*, *El País*, 7 January 2003, p. 22.

now or in the past with what has occurred in Algeria since the early 1990s. This, combined with the specific conditions of the Moroccan political system, means that the FAR have not had to become involved to anything like the extent their Algerian counterparts have in the anti-terrorist struggle, although both their domestic and foreign intelligence services have already played, and will continue to play in the future, an increasingly significant role. The issue should clearly not henceforth be absent from the minds, or the planning, of Moroccan defence circles, not only as a result of the increased activities of Islamist militants within the country, but also because of its rapidly growing international ramifications, which affect Morocco as a country and, to a growing extent, its people. On radical Islamist activism within Morocco it is important to note how the daily newspaper *Libération* warned at the end of March 2002 of the presence in various parts of the country of 'fundamentalist gangs organised as private militia groups spreading a reign of terror among the suburbs', giving as an example the city of Fez, where terrorists had gone as far as to set up road blocks to identify drivers and hunt down alcohol users, something that carries an ugly ring of events in Algeria in the 90s, when Islamist violence first broke out on a large scale. Meanwhile, outbreaks of street violence occurred in Casablanca and Rabat in 2000 and 2001, together with spontaneous demonstrations in Casablanca and Salé in 2002, which caused considerable damage and clashes. They included Islamist protests on 2 April before the US consulate in Casablanca. Although these incidents were dealt with appropriately at a political level and, where necessary, by the police, the mere fact of their occurrence requires careful consideration by Moroccan policy-makers.<sup>28</sup> Fear of infiltration by Islamist extremism within the State's own ranks is another danger, as it proved to be in neighbouring Algeria. In January 2003, the Royal Gendarmerie arrested a sergeant of the FAR, Yusef Amani, who was discovered to have stolen 'Kalashnikov' assault rifles from the Guercif barracks with the intention of handing them over to an Islamist cell in Meknes.<sup>29</sup>

As for the international activities of Islamist terrorism and the presence of Moroccans in its midst, this is an issue of growing concern to the security forces, the intelligence service and the FAR itself. The terrorist threat in neighbouring Algeria, both from the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) and the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) –the latter a 'specialist' in bloodthirsty attacks against the armed forces and the police– arouses concern in Morocco, as do the clear signs of links between these groups and Moroccan Islamists,<sup>30</sup> all of which points to the urgency with which North African counter-insurgency cooperation is required. Thus, the Algerian Minister of the Interior, Nuredin Yazid Zerhuni, said in Beirut on 29 January 2002 at the start of a meeting of Arab Interior Ministers, that there should be greater inter-Arab cooperation in the fight against terrorism and, at almost the same time, on 28-29 January, the Ministers of Justice of the member states of the Union of the Arab Maghreb (UAM), holding their first meeting since 1994 in Nuakchott, sought common criteria with which to analyse terrorism on a joint basis.<sup>31</sup>

On 11 May 2002 a combined operation by the head of the DTS, General Laanigri, prevented bloodshed in Morocco, including (according to Moroccan sources) attacks against Western warships in the Straits of Gibraltar, thus demonstrating the presence of an increasingly globalised and sophisticated Islamist terrorist network extending throughout North Africa and

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<sup>28</sup> See Marruecos. *Avance islamista*, in *Informe Semanal de Política Exterior* n° 310, 15 April 2002, p. 7.

<sup>29</sup> This information, confirmed by official sources, adds the arrest of six other military personnel, together with the flight of a further four. At the same time, the staff of the Auxiliary Forces, the other Moroccan armed police force, along with the Royal Gendarmerie, sent out a circular to all unit commanders prohibiting both beards and the use of the 'hiyab' or Islamic veil. See *Paramilitary Forces in Morocco Ban Beards and Islamic Veils*, *El País*, 14 January 2003, p. 7.

<sup>30</sup> On such links see the revealing article by François Soudan, *Maghreb—États-Unis. L'ami algérien*, *Jeune Afrique/Intelligent* n° 2121, 5-11 January 2003, p. 39.

<sup>31</sup> See *Argelia. Rebrote terrorista*, in *Informe Semanal de Política Exterior* n° 302, 11 February 2002, p. 7.

Europe.<sup>32</sup> The 17 Moroccans held in Guantanamo Bay provided the information required to arrest three Saudis apparently acting as liaisons for Al Qaida –one of them close to Abu Zubeida, responsible for recruiting for Osama Bin Laden’s network– and four Moroccan accomplices.<sup>33</sup> They had apparently received their instructions from Mullah Bilal, responsible for Al Qaida operations in North Africa and the Middle East, on carrying out terrorist attacks in Morocco. After appearing in court in Casablanca on 13 June, it seems clear that since the start of 2001 the suspects had been recruiting prospective terrorists from among the activists of the Moroccan wing of the *Group Islamique Combattant* (GIC), active in Casablanca and Fez and with links with the Algerian GSPC.<sup>34</sup>

And, last but by no means least, nor most recent, mention should be made of the FAR units assigned to protecting the economic interests of the country, on a broad front. Of such duties, the most important is the job of keeping an eye on foreign fishing fleets in Moroccan waters. For this task five ‘Rais Bargach’ patrol vessels of the Royal Moroccan Navy have been assigned to the Ministry of Fisheries, as have four of the six ‘El Wacil’ and two of the four ‘El Lahiq’ patrol boats of the Moroccan customs service.<sup>35</sup> In recent years the oil prospecting that has been conducted with increasing intensity in Morocco’s Atlantic waters and off the coast of Western Sahara by companies such as TotalFinaElf, Agip and others has created and will continue to create the need for more human and material resources to police these waters, as evidenced by the order for two ‘Floreal’ class frigates from France in 1998, one of which, the ‘Mohammed V’, was commissioned in 2002.<sup>36</sup>

### **FAR operations in Morocco**

We now move on to describe the rather special command structure –with the King as Supreme Commander and Chief of Staff of the FAR, and no Minister of Defence– and the territorial deployment (the three traditional commands: Northeast-Atlas, Frontiers and South),<sup>37</sup> completing our analysis with reference to the progress achieved by each of the three armed services and the paramilitary forces, the changing emphasis of the national defence budget and the most significant acquisitions of weaponry. A special mention is reserved for the two paramilitary forces –the Royal Gendarmerie and the Auxiliaries– due to their significant manpower (42,000), which has held steady for the past ten years, but risen in the last two years to deal with additional responsibilities.

All matters relating to the FAR are reserved for the King, who holds the posts of Supreme Commander-in-Chief, as stated in Article 30 of the Constitution, Head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Minister of Defence since the abolition of the latter ministry in 1972. The duties of administering the FAR fall to the General Secretary of the National Defence Administration and, in part, although at a lower level, to the Inspector General of the FAR,<sup>38</sup> two posts occupied always by officers enjoying the King’s full confidence, as was for many years the

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<sup>32</sup> Morocco arrested 15 alleged members of Al Qaida in the period between April and June 2002. See *The Military Balance 2002-2003*, p. 95.

<sup>33</sup> Other sources put the number of Moroccan detainees in Guantánamo at 24, of whom ten have dual nationality. See, Soudan, F., *Maghreb–États-Unis...*, op. cit., p. 39.

<sup>34</sup> Two leaders of the GIC, Zakaria Miludi and Abu Hafs, were arrested in May 2002 inside Morocco. See *Terrorismo. Al Qaeda en el Magreb*, in *Informe Semanal de Política Exterior*, N° 321, 1 July 2002, p. 7.

<sup>35</sup> *The Military Balance 1998-1999*, p. 137.

<sup>36</sup> See *Petróleo. Estrategias en el norte de África*, in *Informe Semanal de Política Exterior*, n° 297, 31 December 2001, p. 4. On the order for French frigates, see *The Military Balance 1999-2000*, p. 126, and, on the commissioning of the first of them, *The Military Balance 2002-2003*, p. 113.

<sup>37</sup> See the battle order (ORBAT) of the FAR in *Fuerzas Militares del Mundo*, 1 and 2, for September and October 2002, the first giving the main commanders and the second those of the Southern Command.

<sup>38</sup> Sainz de la Peña, J.A., op. cit., pp. 141-142.



case with General Mohammed Achabar as General Secretary and General Driss Benaïssa as Inspector General. The main handicap of this system is the absence of rapid decision-making. This was particularly noticeable during the conflict in the Western Sahara, with a full-blown war being conducted against the Polisario Front. The complex network of military governors and aides-de-camp had to arrange for formal meetings with the King whenever an operation had to be set up.

As far as human resources are concerned, between 1990 and 1996, the manpower of the three armed services remained constant: of the total of 195,500 men, 175,000 were in the army, the strongest service, 75,000 of them well-trained regulars and 100,000 conscripts carrying out their 18 month compulsory national service; 7,000 members of the Royal Moroccan Navy (including 1,500 marines); and a 13,500-strong Royal Moroccan Air Force.<sup>39</sup> Although long considered the weakest arm of the FAR, in 1997 it was perceived that the Navy had begun to increase in terms of influence, partly as a result of its growing numbers; these rose from 7,000 to 7,800, as a result of the increasing number of tasks assigned. In 2000, the manpower of the Navy increased to 10,000, the present number, bringing the full headcount of the FAR to 198,500 serving members. As well as serving troops, there are 150,000 reservists, made up of males up to the age of 50.

The FAR are deployed in three main regional commands: Northwest-Atlas; Frontiers, whose significance began to wane after 1993; and South, with its headquarters in Agadir, an always sensitive area on account of the Saharan conflict and, in recent times, the rising number of cases of smuggling and other illegal activities.<sup>40</sup> The Army of the Sahara, which for many years accounted for 90% of the troops of the FAR, under the leadership of General Abdelaziz Bennani, and which took over total control of the entire region, is likely to start to diminish in strength and deployment, not only if there is a final solution to the conflict, but also if the long-awaited reform of territorial control is implemented. In March 2001 it was common knowledge in Morocco that the election by universal suffrage of the Royal Consultative Council of the Sahara, the body set up by the King himself in September 1999 as a means of defusing the Saharais' frustration at the lack of political progress, could end up relegating, when it genuinely assumes territorial responsibilities, the presence of the FAR in the region.

In terms of budgetary allocation and material resources, as far as the FAR are concerned we have to refer once again to the conflict in Western Sahara, particularly with respect to the 1980s and 1990s, and the strategic rivalry with Algeria, two longstanding problems to which we should add in recent years the need to update weaponry to meet new challenges. Morocco doubled its defence spending between 1976 and 1982, at the height of the Saharan conflict, from US\$684 million to US\$1.33 billion. Later, in the 1980s, the allocation moved up more slowly, from US\$1.14 billion in 1986 to US\$1.36 billion in 1990, when the conflict had reached a stalemate thanks to the desert walls referred to earlier. Spending on defence accounted for 5.2% of GDP, a high percentage which did not prevent King Hassan II from estimating in 1987 the need for a major investment to modernise the FAR –to which

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<sup>39</sup> The conflict in the Western Sahara led to the number of troops in the FAR trebling from the 65,000 accounted for in 1973 to 195,500 in 1990, moving through the figures of 90,000 in 1976 and 141,000 in 1982. See Sehim, Mustapha, *Les risques de sécurité dans la région méditerranéenne: la position particulière des pays du Maghreb*, in Centre d'Études de Défense, *Europe 1992: réalités et perspectives pour une nouvelle architecture de sécurité. 2ème partie*, Brussels, CED-Cahiers de Sécurité et Stratégie n° 38, October 1992, p. 65.

<sup>40</sup> Apart from the existence of the peace plan since 1991, there is also the matter of the forces ascribed to the Polisario Front. Whereas in 1990 these were reported at between 10,000 and 15,000 strong (4,000 of them active on a continuous basis), a steady decline has set in since: 10,000 in 1992, 9,000 in 1993 and between 3,000 and 6,000 as a recurring estimated from 1994 onwards. As for the deployment of MINURSO, this moved up from 370 in 1992 to approximately 250 today. See *The Military Balance* from the 1990-91 edition onwards.

he himself set the figure of US\$1 billion, never allocated.<sup>41</sup> In 1991, the year the peace plan for the Western Sahara was agreed, the defence budget fell back to US\$983 million, only to slowly increase in the following two years (US\$1.1 billion) and steadily move upwards since then: US\$1.23 billion in 1994, US\$1.3 billion in 1996, US\$1.70 billion in 1999, US\$1.3 billion in 2001 and US\$1.7 billion again in 2002.<sup>42</sup>

As for rivalry with Algeria, this was the overriding concern at the outset of the 1990s, with both countries seeking to match their rival in terms of human and material resources, and in their respective arms purchases. Though this situation still exists, the conflict in the Western Sahara has become less of a military and more of a political and diplomatic issue than formerly, while Algeria's military attention has been absorbed by the need to tackle the onslaught of Islamist terrorism. Rivalry still exists in acquiring certain types of ordnance and, as a rule, both sides attempt to maintain an equilibrium in the operability and capacity of their weapons systems, as was well stated by Mark Stenhouse in the mid 1990s, 'Traditional rivalry between Morocco and Algeria could induce the latter to buy updated Mig-29s in response to the purchase by Morocco of F-16s'.<sup>43</sup> In 1994 Morocco closed the border with Algeria and imposed a visa requirement on all its nationals wishing to cross. This was in the wake of the accusation by Rabat that the Algerian secret services were at the bottom of an Islamist terrorist attack in which two Spanish tourists were killed in the Atlas Hasni Hotel in Marrakesh.<sup>44</sup> In more recent times (February 2001), when rising oil prices allowed Algeria to modernise its military capacity with acquisitions from China and South Africa, as well as to sign, in January 2001, a military cooperation agreement with Russia, Morocco regarded the purchases as a sign of the North African giant trying to improve its regional position rather than resolve domestic problems, ie, Islamist terrorism.<sup>45</sup> It is in this context rather than any other that one should view the acquisition by Morocco of 48 T-72 tanks from Byelorussia in 2001.<sup>46</sup>

The international situation has had an understandable impact on arms acquisitions and on defence spending. At the beginning of the 1990s, as a result of the talks on conventional forces in Europe (CFE), the possibility of acquiring surplus equipment for North African armed forces in need of re-equipping was discussed in the context of a reassessment of the security situation in the region.<sup>47</sup> In 1990 Morocco received 60 M-60A1 tanks formerly used by the US force in Germany, followed up by an additional batch of 240 of the M-60A3

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<sup>41</sup> See Sehim, Mustapha, *Les risques...* op. cit. pp. 64 and 66.

<sup>42</sup> The figures are taken from *The Military Balance*, op. cit., 1991-92 and 2002-03 editions.

<sup>43</sup> See Stenhouse, Mark, *Proliferation and the North-South divide. The prospects for arms control*, in *International Defense Review-Defense '95*, p. 132.

<sup>44</sup> See *Magreb. Argelia y Marruecos, a la greña*, in *Informe Semanal de Política Exterior*, nº 307, 18 March 2002, p. 7.

<sup>45</sup> Algeria has bought 20 Sukhoi-24 bombers for US\$120 million, making this one of the biggest arms contracts between Russia and an African nation for many years. Algeria also bought replacement parts for its T-72 tanks and began talks on purchasing radar stations, plus air-to-ground and land-to-sea missiles.

<sup>46</sup> *The Military Balance 2001-2002*, p. 126. Whereas in *The Military Balance 2000-2001*, p. 148, the number of tanks in service with the FAR were only 224 M-48A5s and 420 M-60s, A-1 or A-3, all US, on page 142 of the same publication the 100 T-72s are also included as operational. Byelorussia, Russia and Ukraine are increasingly popular sources, and not just for Morocco, of new weapons systems.

<sup>47</sup> On the new security assessments at that time see the publication of Marquina Barrio, Antonio (ed), *Desarme convencional y seguridad europea*, Madrid, Universidad Complutense, 1990, particularly the chapters by Moratinos, Miguel Angel, *La seguridad europea y el Mediterráneo*, pp. 117-135, and by Cremasco, Maurizio, *Problemas de seguridad en el flanco sur de la OTAN en la década de los noventa*, pp. 137-152.

version of the same tank.<sup>48</sup> Meanwhile in 1993 Morocco also attempted to acquire two Italian-built 'Assad' class corvettes originally ordered by the Iraqi Navy, but blocked by the international embargo on Baghdad. Its efforts, which it kept up throughout the decade, proved fruitless.<sup>49</sup>

The need to undertake new operations forced Morocco to acquire patrol boats to keep an eye on foreign fishing fleets in the waters of the Western Sahara. At the end of the 80s, the FAR opted in the end for mostly Spanish and French craft.<sup>50</sup> Of these the most significant was the order for France in 1988 for two 'Floreal' class frigates, the first of which was commissioned in 2002.<sup>51</sup>

When speaking of new missions and their increasing importance, mention must be made of the two paramilitary services, which have always been important but especially so of late.<sup>52</sup> Already in 1990 the Royal Gendarmerie, dependent on the FAR, had 10,000 men, while the Auxiliary Forces, which are responsible to the Ministry of the Interior, had 30,000 men, including a Mobile Intervention Force 5,000 strong. These figures remained fairly static until 1994, when the Royal Gendarmerie increased its manpower to 12,000, only to rise to 18,000 in 2001 and 20,000 in 2002. The Gendarmerie has 18 coastal patrol vessels and a modern fleet of utility and transport helicopters.<sup>53</sup>

### **The importance of the FAR's foreign capability in the context of Morocco's defence policy**

This point covers both the regional context of North Africa and the longstanding defence agreements with the US, commencing in 1982 with the inclusion of transit facilities for the then emerging US rapid deployment force,<sup>54</sup> and the later agreement with Spain (1989) and the fruitful relationship with France, as well as with other Arab and some sub-Saharan countries. Finally, special reference will be made, both on account of its potential for modernising the FAR in all respects and of its importance in Morocco's defence policy, of the armed forces' role in international missions, either under the auspices of the UN (Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cambodia, Congo and Somalia) or NATO (IFOR/SFOR and KFOR).

#### *North-West Africa*

As described in the first section, recent political history shows that North-West African

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<sup>48</sup> For the first delivery, see *The Military Balance 1990-1991*, p. 99; for the second see the KOTSONIS (Committee of Public and Parliamentary Relations of the WEU Assembly) report, No. 1485, 6 November 1995, p. 20, together with *The Military Balance 1994-1995*, p. 122.

<sup>49</sup> *The Military Balance 1993-1994*, p. 110. See also *The Military Balance* for 1994-1995, 1996-1997 and 1997-1998.

<sup>50</sup> In the course of the 1990s Morocco acquired various launches, of small size and without changing in any significant way its sources of supply. Such is the case of the four coastal patrol vessels of the 'Osprey' class, renamed 'El Lahiq', acquired in Denmark together with 100 light armoured vehicles of the type 'SK Kuerassier', or the purchase from the US of the amphibious vessel 'US Newport', with a capacity for 400 marines and renamed the 'Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdallah'. See *The Military Balance 1991-1992*, p. 99, for the former purchase and *The Military Balance 1996-1997*, p. 142, for the latter.

<sup>51</sup> With the commissioning of the frigate 'Mohammed V', the Royal Moroccan Navy has considerably strengthened its capabilities. Prior to this its largest vessel was the 'Descubierta' class corvette and Moroccan flagship 'Lt Colonel Errahmani'. See *The Military Balance 2002-2003*, p. 113, which as usual describes this Spanish-built vessel as an Ffg2 frigate.

<sup>52</sup> See Faria, F., op. cit., p. 40.

<sup>53</sup> See *The Military Balance 1990-1991*, p. 114; *1994-1995*, p. 147; *2001-2002*, p. 142; and *2002-2003*, p. 113.

<sup>54</sup> In terms of the traditional friendship between the US and Morocco it is important to note that between 1956 and 1991 Morocco received US\$2.0 billion in US aid, most of it in the form of grants. See Stenhouse, M., *The Maghreb ...*, op. cit., p. 88, and for the Bilateral Agreement of 1982, Seimi, M., *Les risques de sécurité*, op. cit., pp. 76-77.

politics have prevented good regional cooperation on security and defence. Nevertheless, the establishment of the Union of the African Maghreb (UAM), with the signing of the constituent treaty on 17 February 1989, opened up a period for discussion and the design of future accords.<sup>55</sup> Two of the articles in the treaty, 14 and 15, concern regional security and defence. The first includes a clause of automatic defence: 'Any act of aggression against one of the member states will be considered an act of aggression against the other member states.' Article 15 consecrates an undertaking by the five signatories, 'not to allow on their soil any activities or organisations liable to threaten the security, territorial integrity or political system of any other member state', including 'any political or military alliance aimed at undermining the political independence or territorial integrity of another member state'.<sup>56</sup>

Subsequent events in the political relations between the two leading members of the UAM, Algeria and Morocco, prevented implementation of the treaty in almost all respects but particularly in matters of security and defence.<sup>57</sup> The crisis of the UAM that began in 1992, with the application of the UN embargo against Libya –accused of two acts of terrorism (the explosion on the PanAm flight over Lockerbie in December 1988 and the flight of the French airline UTA which crashed in Niger in 1989)– and the outbreak of terrorist violence in Algeria were the main internal difficulties in fleshing out the terms relating to defence and security, and sub-regional development in the political field was blocked for almost a decade until recent attempts to revive it in 2001-02.

#### *Relations with the US*

The agreement with the US was signed at the height of the Cold War and amidst the offensives by the Polisario Front, backed by Algeria and Libya. It was the time when the US was strengthening its worldwide deployment. By virtue of the agreement a Joint Military Committee was set up, under which Morocco granted facilities to the US in the event of the need for deployment in the region.

Bilateral cooperation received a significant boost with the visit to Rabat in December 1996 of the then Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger. It was followed by a significant increase in US military aid to Morocco, a country with which the US holds yearly military exercises.<sup>58</sup> An agreement signed in January 1987 between the Royal Moroccan Air Force and the NASA converted the airbase of Benguerir, located between Casablanca and Marrakesh, into the longest airstrip on the Western Europe-North African axis, to be employed for emergency landings by US space shuttles. In mid 2001, the alarm created in the Department of State about possible terrorist attacks against US interests in Morocco led to the closure of the NASA installations.

Morocco's ties with the US are and will remain sufficiently strong to guarantee plenty of room

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<sup>55</sup> For a legal analysis of the treaty in terms of defence and security see the work commissioned by the Centre for Strategic Studies in Rabat (CESR), Mustapha Sehim, *La UMA et la sécurité régionale*, *L'Espace Marocain* N° 1, March-April-May 1991, pp. 30–32.

<sup>56</sup> For the Treaty of Marrakesh of 17 February 1989, see *L'Union du Maghreb Arabe-The Arab Maghreb Union*, Tunis, CETIMA (Maghreb Centre for International Studies), 1991, p. 118.

<sup>57</sup> On this point see also the interesting article by Major Mohammed Senoussi, *Pour une stratégie maghrébine en matière de défense et de sécurité*, in *L'Espace Marocain*, N° 3, October-November-December 1991, pp. 6–7, following on pp. 8–9 by a commentary on the summit meeting of heads of state held in Casablanca on 15–17 September 1991 in which, interestingly, reference to security and defence was noticeably absent. *Ibid.* pp. 8–9.

<sup>58</sup> Of these the first, named 'African Eagle', was the most significant, both in terms of the size and the quality of the military hardware employed. Held in 1987, it included B-52 bombers, F-16s of the Sixth Fleet and, on the Moroccan side, F-1 and F-5 fighters. The previous year amphibious forces from both sides carried out manoeuvres in Tan Tan, near the northern border of the Western Sahara. See Orgambies, Fernando, *Maniobras militares de EEUU y Marruecos cerca de Melilla*, *El País*, 16 November 1987.

for cooperation in the mid and long terms. In December 2000, the flagship airline, Royal Air Maroc (RAM) chose Boeing as opposed to Airbus to upgrade its fleet, acquiring two B-337 and two B-767, scheduled for delivery this year. This was a continuation of its traditional use of Boeing airliners such as the 707 or the KC-130H transport planes for in-flight fuelling and CH-47 transport helicopters, all employed for military purposes. In 1995 the Army also received 224 M-48A5 tanks and 300 M-60s (60 A-1s and 240 A-3s).<sup>59</sup>

### *Relations with France*

For its symbolic significance it is worth mentioning that only a few weeks before his death in August 1999, King Hassan II attended, as guest of honour of President Chirac, the 14 July parades in Paris, in which a Moroccan battalion took part.<sup>60</sup> This was by no means simple window dressing. It was the result of strong ties dating back many years. The proximity of the two armies on matters of security and defence is reflected in the annual manoeuvres carried out by all three services and the paramilitary forces and by the material acquired from France, which ranges from electronic surveillance equipment for the walls in the Sahara to AMX-13 tanks, now old, and the more modern AMX-10RCs, a squadron of which is currently deployed in Kosovo, and VAB armoured vehicles;<sup>61</sup> the Royal Moroccan Air Force continues to use the Mirage F-1CH fighters and, finally, the Royal Moroccan Navy has been modernised in recent years with mostly French material: PR-72 and P-92 high-speed patrol boats, Champlain BATRAL amphibian transport and logistics vessels and, more recently, the order in 1998 of two 'Floreal' class frigates, one of which entered service in 2002. At the same time France devotes much energy into promoting the Morocco-Mauritania-Senegal axis in an effort to strengthen its regional presence and counterbalance the increasing presence in the area of the US.<sup>62</sup>

The exchange of visits between both civilian and military personnel is another symptom of the significance of these ties. We highlight as an example the visit to Rabat on 4 November 2002 of the French defence minister, Michèle Alliot-Marie, only a week following the official visit of her colleague, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dominique de Villepin, as another means of strengthening the bilateral contacts which France has been engaged in over the last two years.

### *Relations with Spain*

Relations between Morocco and Spain have been fruitful in all those areas in which Spanish laws establish a groundplan for relations with other countries in matters of defence.<sup>63</sup> Based on the Agreement on Cooperation in Matters of Defence signed on 27 September 1989 and rounded off with the Treaty on Friendship, Good Neighbourliness and Cooperation of 4 July 1991, in which both states agree not to use force to settle any possible disputes, both texts have served as a legal framework for annual joint exercises by the air forces and navies of the two countries, along with an increasing number of manoeuvres involving ground forces (paratroop brigades from either Alcalá or Kenitra, armoured divisions, etc).<sup>64</sup> In June 2001, the joint committee on defence affairs met in Madrid. The Moroccan delegation was led by Lieutenant-General Abdelaziz Bennani and Spain's by the head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

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<sup>59</sup> *The Military Balance 1995-1996*, p. 142.

<sup>60</sup> The Moroccan military participation was the culmination of the Morocco Year in France. See López García, B, op. cit., p. 17.

<sup>61</sup> In 1993 the Moroccan army enhanced its artillery capability with the purchase from France of ten AMX-10P AIFVs. See *The Military Balance 1993-1994*, p. 110.

<sup>62</sup> See *España-Marruecos. Tramas externas*, in *Informe Semanal de Política Exterior* N° 291, 19 November 2001, p. 7.

<sup>63</sup> See Silva Palma, Juan José, *Relaciones Bilaterales en el Ámbito de la Defensa*, in *Ejército*, N° 730, December 2001, pp. 76-81.

<sup>64</sup> Exercises had already taken place before this agreement. Of them, the most important were the naval exercises conducted in Mediterranean waters between Alhucemas and Nador.

(JEMAD), Admiral Antonio Moreno Barberá.<sup>65</sup> Shortly afterwards, in mid summer, the navies of the two countries, along with others (US, France, Greece, Italy, Portugal, the UK and Turkey) took part in the 'Tapón 01' manoeuvres, aimed at sealing the Straits of Gibraltar in the event of an international crisis.<sup>66</sup>

In terms of hardware, Spain has since 1977 been the main supplier of the Royal Moroccan Navy, with four 'Lazaga'-class patrol boats and the 'Descubierta'-class corvette in service now with the name 'Lt.Col. Errhamani'. For years these were most useful of the Moroccan naval vessels. Their crews receive training in Cartagena (Murcia). The aircraft builder CASA has supplied Morocco with CN-235 light transport aircraft; the technology companies Inisel and Ceselsa provide software and training; and ordnance and vehicle manufacturers such as Santa Bárbara, Expol and Ert supply the Moroccan army with transport and munitions.

Bilateral relations are even more important seen against the backdrop of the problems existing on both shores, something that makes close cooperation in matters of security and defence an essential prerequisite to increased confidence between the two countries.<sup>67</sup> In this respect, we highlight not only the annual joint manoeuvres, but the quieter but longer-lasting effect of training. Drawing up the annual review in the traditional Easter celebrations for the Spanish armed forces, the Chief of Staff of the Spanish army emphasised the presence of Spanish training personnel in the 'Staff Training Colleges of Morocco, Central and South America'.<sup>68</sup> Of the military training academies in Morocco, the most important are the Staff College in Kenitra, which is also home to the Training School of the Ministry of the Interior; the Royal Military Academy in Meknes; the renowned Military Academy of 'Dar El Beida', the country's oldest and best-known academy since colonial days; and the Royal Moroccan Air Force College in Marrakesh.

Spain also lends a helping hand in ensuring that international institutions in matters of defence and security take into account Europe's southern flank. Spain was largely responsible for the pioneering work in encouraging the WEU's increasing dialogue with Morocco and other Mediterranean countries begun in 1992. It also gave its full backing to the Mediterranean Initiative set up by NATO in February 1995. The Spanish embassy in Rabat is used as the main diplomatic channel for NATO, as is the embassy in Nouakchott, Mauritania, for all matters relating to the Mediterranean Initiative.<sup>69</sup>

Cooperation between the paramilitary forces of the Royal Gendarmerie and Spain's Civil Guard has been based in recent years on coordination in the fight against smuggling in whatever form and in joint training programmes. Together with liaison officers in each

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<sup>65</sup> See Canales, Pedro, *France/Espagne/Maghreb. Jeux d'alliances en Méditerranée Occidentale*, in *Arabies*, September 2001, p. 50.

<sup>66</sup> See *España-Marruecos. La extraña crisis*, in *Informe Semanal de Política Exterior*, N° 289, 5 November 2001, p. 6.

<sup>67</sup> Although there are many studies on the various phases and crises that affect bilateral relations, we give a brief selection. An interesting one is that by a former Spanish ambassador to Morocco, Alfonso de la Serna, *Al sur de Tarifa. Marruecos-España: un malentendido histórico*, Madrid, Marcial Pons-Historia, 2001; also very interesting is the work by the journalists Javier Valenzuela and Alberto Masegosa, *La última frontera. Marruecos, el vecino inquietante*, Madrid, Ediciones Temas de Hoy, S.A., 1996.

<sup>68</sup> Santayana y Coloma, Alfonso de, *Ejército 2001: El Ejército de la Eficiencia*, in *Ejército* N° 720, January-February 2001, p. 14.

<sup>69</sup> See Estévez Payeras, José Manuel, *Hacia un diálogo eficaz de seguridad en el Mediterráneo*, in *Diálogo Mediterráneo. Percepción española*, various authors, Madrid, Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos (Ministerio de Defensa)-*Cuadernos de Estrategia* n° 113, May 2001, p. 200. The positive experience of the NATO-Morocco relationship was highlighted in 1996 by the then Brigadier El Kadiri, who insisted on Morocco's readiness for dialogue and cooperation with international security forces as had been shown since 1992 when the WEU first launched its pioneering Mediterranean programme. See the Lipkowski Report, op. cit., p. 37.

country there are a number of ways of improving both formal contacts and practical methods of cooperation, adapting them to the changes in the nature of security challenges and to technological developments in tackling them.<sup>70</sup> One recent example among the many available was the effective cooperation on 9 November 2002 when a group of 41 illegal immigrants were discovered by the Royal Gendarmerie on the Moroccan beach of Beliones near Ceuta, after being tipped off by Spain's Civil Guard, who had spotted them thanks to the modern techniques employed by the Integrated Surveillance System (ISS).

### *Relations with other states*

It is important to emphasise Moroccan foreign relations with two regions of the world having obvious defence significance: its relations with the Arab world, particularly the Arab and Persian Gulfs, and with sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>71</sup> In recent times Rabat has had growing relations with East European states, Byelorussia, Russia and the Ukraine, in acquiring military hardware: its most important contract was the purchase of 48 T-72 tanks from Byelorussia in 2001.<sup>72</sup>

Morocco's ties with some of the Gulf states have important political and diplomatic implications. They are also key to the acquisition and/or funding of military material. At the same time, this relationship of dependence on Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates<sup>73</sup> and other Gulf States explains one of the most notable exploits of the FAR in recent times: the deployment of 1,200 men in Saudi Arabia in the context of the 'Desert Storm' operations in 1991, despite the political cost both within the Arab world in general and among the Moroccan population itself.<sup>74</sup>

As regards sub-Saharan Africa, we highlight Morocco's longstanding interest in promoting its interests in the region, as reflected in diplomatic efforts<sup>75</sup> and the deployment of bilateral forces or its contribution to peacemaking operations, not to mention its constant struggle with Algeria and the Polisario Front, particularly within the framework of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), today the African Union (AU). In its efforts to gain the hearts and minds of African leaders, in general, and to increase its influence in the sub-region of Western Africa, Morocco is heavily involved in training military officers of countries such as Senegal, Mauritania, Chad and Nigeria, as well as of other more distant countries such as the Congo,

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<sup>70</sup> On the excellent results of the course see *La frontera sur de Europa*, in *Cuadernos de la Guardia Civil*, N° 18, 1997; Echeverría Jesús, Carlos, *Los nuevos riesgos y su incidencia en Marruecos*, in *Cuadernos de la Guardia Civil* N° 24, 2001, pp. 89–98; and Macarrón, Santiago, *La protección de las fronteras de la Unión Europea*, in *Guardia Civil* N° 696, April 2002, pp. 28–31.

<sup>71</sup> In another Arab scenario, in 1967 and 1973, the FAR took part in the Middle Eastern wars. See Alaoui, Assia Bensalah, *Proche-Orient: le Roi médiateur*, in *Géopolitique* n° 57, 1997, p. 145.

<sup>72</sup> See *The Military Balance 2001-2002*, p. 126.

<sup>73</sup> In the UEA Morocco had in 1990 a total of 5,000 personnel, including members of the FAR, the Royal Gendarmerie and the national police. From around 1993 onwards this presence was significantly reduced, to around 2,000, mostly employed in training and security support activities. See all years of *The Military Balance*, particularly 1990-1991, p. 113 and 1996-1997, p. 142.

<sup>74</sup> Although the Moroccan contingent saw no combat against Iraqi forces, the political cost of this operation was due to the perception promoted by Islamist and Pan-Arab groups that it was 'participation in a multinational coalition waging a Western war against a brother "Arab and Moslem" country'. On the repercussions of the war against Iraq in 1991 in the Arab world and in Moroccan society, see *La guerre du Golfe et l'avenir des Arabes. Débats et réflexions*, various authors, Tunis-Casablanca, CERES-EDIFF, Morocco, 1991. On the Moroccan military deployment, see Stenhouse, M., *The Maghreb...*, op. cit., p. 88.

<sup>75</sup> In terms of diplomacy, one should stress the mediation of King Mohammed VI between the Presidents of Guinea Conakry, Liberia and Sierra Leone, which resulted in the signing of a peace treaty in Rabat on 27 February 2002. See Pérez Moreno, Alberto, and Echeverría Jesús, Carlos, *Observatorio internacional de conflictos: Cachemira, Filipinas, Río Mano, Sudán*, in *Ejército*, N° 737, July-August 2002, p. 108.

Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and the Central African Republic.<sup>76</sup> Historically, in Equatorial Guinea, the Moroccan presence has helped to support the presidentialist regime of Teodoro Obiang Nguema.<sup>77</sup> The case of Senegal was particularly interesting. Its President, Abdoulaye Wade, said on 21 January 2001 that his country's support for Morocco with respect to the Western Sahara was complete. More and more Senegalese military officers receive training in Moroccan military academies.<sup>78</sup> Morocco's involvement in security and defence affairs in Africa extends to exporting the military material produced by its small but growing defence manufacturing sector; an example is the contract signed with Gabon at the outset of the 1990s for the sale of military hardware.<sup>79</sup>

#### *The role of the FAR in international peace-keeping operations*

The role of the FAR in this area is significant.<sup>80</sup> Its largest contingents are in three main areas: Africa, Asia and Europe. The final paragraph of the preamble to the 1992 Constitution, amended in 1996, states that the Kingdom of Morocco 'reaffirms its determination to work for the furtherance of peace and security throughout the world'.<sup>81</sup> This goal is also reflected, as from 1996, in the permanent deployment at brigade level in peace operations both for the UN and NATO.<sup>82</sup>

Morocco's pioneering experience in Africa was in the UN mission in the Congo (ONUC), from July 1960 to June 1964, a period in which the FAR contributed two battalions, one of infantry and the other of paratroopers, to maintain order, restore peace and keep warring groups apart. Also in Africa it is important to note Morocco's role for the UN Mission to Angola, particularly in the second phase (UNAVEM II), in which it had on the ground between 1989 and 1996 fifteen military observers and eleven members of the civilian police.<sup>83</sup>

As for its role in Somalia, it had a difficult job in a complex scenario intended originally to be a show of solidarity with a fellow Arab and Islamic country.<sup>84</sup> The difficulties were made apparent dramatically when on 3 October 1993 there was a gun battle in the Olympic Hotel in Mogadishu, when a Moroccan soldier with the UN peacekeeping forces was killed together with another infantryman from Malaysia and 18 US Rangers.<sup>85</sup> In Somalia, the FAR contributed in two phases: in UNOSOM I (April 1992-March 1993) they oversaw the ceasefire in Mogadishu, as well as protecting the arrival of humanitarian aid and UN

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<sup>76</sup> Feliú Martínez, Laura, *La situation du Maghreb sur la scène internationale actuelle*, (*The situation of the Maghreb in the present international scenario*, in *Maghreb: perception espagnole de la stabilité en Méditerranée, prospective en vue de l'année 2010*, Madrid, Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos (Ministry of Defence)-*Cuadernos de Estrategia*, N° 106-B, January 2001, p. 48.

<sup>77</sup> *The Military Balance 1990-1991*, p. 113. In 1990 Morocco had a battalion of 360 men in Equatorial Guinea.

<sup>78</sup> See, *Marruecos. Recuperación económica*, in *Informe Semanal de Política Exterior*, N° 265, 30 April 2001, p. 7.

<sup>79</sup> See article by Captain Mohammed Cherkaoui, *L'Avenir de l'industrie aeronautique au Maroc*, in *L'Espace Marocain*, N° 2, June-July-August 1991, pp. 6-8.

<sup>80</sup> The most up-to-date information on the contribution of Morocco to international peacekeeping operations can be consulted on Morocco's United Nations website with the URL [www.un.int/morocco/francais/peace.html](http://www.un.int/morocco/francais/peace.html).

<sup>81</sup> [www.pm.gov.ma/gouvernement/attributions/constitution.asp](http://www.pm.gov.ma/gouvernement/attributions/constitution.asp).

<sup>82</sup> See the speech of General El Kadiri in the Lopkowski Report, op. cit., p. 38

<sup>83</sup> See the progress of the Moroccan presence in Angola in *The Military Balance 1991-1992*, p. 113; *1992-1993* p. 118; and *1994-1995*, p. 147.

<sup>84</sup> See Benbrahim, Brahim, *Les dimensions stratégiques et humanitaires dans les relations maroco-africaines: l'action du Maroc en Somalie*, in Saaf, Abdallah (ed), *Le Maroc et l'Afrique après l'indépendance*, Rabat, Institut des Études Africaines, 1996, pp. 123-132.

<sup>85</sup> See Echeverría, Carlos, *Kofi Annan. Un africano al frente de una ONU en transformación*, in *Personajes africanos del siglo XX. Sheik Anta Diop, Nelson Mandela y Kofi Annan*, various authors, Madrid, Cuadernos del CIDAF, Vol. XVII, N° 1, January-February 2003, p. 17.



installations and personnel, having sent five military observers prior to the deployment of 1,430 troops to serve in the Unified Intervention Force (UNITAF) in December 1992. Morocco also contributed to UNOSOM II from March 1993 to March 1994.

Morocco also contributed to the UN peacekeeping mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) that began operations in November 1999 and is still in progress. Morocco has 614 military personnel stationed there, together with four staff officers and a level-two hospital. It also has military observers on the ground, together with a contingent of police officers.<sup>86</sup>

Outside of Africa, Morocco contributed briefly to the UN mission in Cambodia (UNTAC) between August 1992 and June 1993, with 100 policemen. But its main effort outside its own continent was in Europe, specifically in the Balkans, from where the country has gained and is still gaining considerable experience. Morocco is one of the longest servers in the area, having been under the UN mission (UNPROFOR) and now in the NATO contingent (IFOR/SFOR and KFOR). In this respect its continued presence in Bosnia-Herzegovina, as well as its subsequent contribution to KFOR in Kosovo, have all provided very valuable experience for the FAR in their cooperation with the Alliance. It should be borne in mind that with the changeover from UNPROFOR to IFOR, the Moroccan presence switched to a single military authority, the Commander-in-Chief of NATO, and that, furthermore, each country started to fund its own contingent.<sup>87</sup> The Alliance established criteria for selecting participant countries based on their self-sufficiency in specialised logistics, requiring minimum equipment supplies in areas such as health and transport. In confirmation of our earlier comments regarding France's traditionally close relations with Morocco, it is worth noting that France gave Morocco considerable help in the logistics for its operations, as it also did to Egypt and the Ukraine.<sup>88</sup>

In its contribution to the IFOR, the FAR were present until the mission's completion on 20 December 1996, having contributed a contingent of 1,300 men<sup>89</sup>. As for its successor, the SFOR, the Moroccan contingent has been there since the outset in December 1996 and remains there today, though reorganisation of the SFOR means that its contingent has been reduced to 350 men.<sup>90</sup> Moroccan military experience in its cooperation with the Alliance is also reflected in its participation with a battalion in the South-Eastern Multinational Division (SEMD)<sup>91</sup> This is currently stationed at Mostar airport and consists of two combat companies, one under permanent French command and the other undertaking support services.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> See also *The Military Balance 2000-2001*, p. 149 and *The Military Balance 2002-2003* p. 113.

<sup>87</sup> See Rivas Aramburu, Ignacio de las, *El paso de la UNPROFOR a IFOR*, in *Ejército* N° 677, November 1996, pp. 53-54.

<sup>88</sup> See Castellero Tejedor, José, *PCD IV Multinacional. Experiencia bosnia*, in *Ejército* N° 675, September 1996, p. 31. On the location of the Moroccan forces and other details see the same author, *Búsqueda de la paz en Bosnia-Herzegovina. Operación 'Esfuerzo Concertado'*, in *Ejército* N° 672, May 1996, pp. 17-23.

<sup>89</sup> *The Military Balance 1996-1997*, p.142, numbered the Moroccan contingent in IFOR at 1,250 men including a battalion of motorized infantry. An interesting report on this contingent can be found in Debay, Yves, *Le contingent marocain de l'IFOR en Bosnie*, in *Raids*, n° 125, October 1996, pp.26-31.

<sup>90</sup> In 1999, in the SFOR II phase, the number of Moroccan military personnel still stood at 800. See *The Military Balance 1999-2000*, p. 142. In the following edition, *The Military Balance 2000-2001*, p. 149, the same figure of 800 for SFOR II is shown. 279 should be added for KFOR, as far as the Balkans are concerned.

<sup>91</sup> Castillejo Tejedor, J., *PCD... op. cit.*, p. 26.

<sup>92</sup> See Donestevé Goyoaga, Javier de, *Bosnia-Herzegovina, Hoy*, in *Ejército*, N° 741, November 2002, p. 93.

The contribution to the NATO forces in Kosovo (KFOR) began in November 1999 with a FAR medical battalion comprising 279 personnel, the number of which rose to 560 in January 2003, to attend to the local population and carry out humanitarian missions.<sup>93</sup> Located to the south of Mitrovica, this mobile hospital is supported by a command and support company and a company integrated in the Motorised Battalion (BIMOTO).<sup>94</sup>

There is every likelihood that bilateral cooperation between Morocco and NATO will continue. However, it is unlikely that Morocco will be able to take part in NATO's Mediterranean Initiative, due to Israel's presence in the force.<sup>95</sup> Although much progress has been made, there is still a cultural gap in perceptions on both sides.<sup>96</sup>

### **Winds of change for defence and security in Morocco?**

Over the FAR's 46 years of existence, one can see the surviving presence of two basic elements, although both are undergoing major changes: tradition, which has made the FAR an effective force for national defence, the *raison d'être* of all armies, whether in defence of the territory or political institutions, with the monarchy at its head; and modernisation, which is reflected in Morocco's increasing participation in new activities (peacekeeping, the fight against smuggling, the strengthening of relations with countries, among which Spain has had and should continue to play a leading role, etc), and which sooner rather than later should also lead to its redefinition within a state progressing towards further democratisation.

A first step has taken place in the reign of Mohammed VI, when national immersion in the debate on the State's necessary democratisation has involved the FAR, as it has other state institutions. What some analysts see as the growing influence of military figures in Morocco should be seen as part of a natural process of change in which it is now possible to talk about an institution which was previously closed and even demonised as being unworthy of trust. As in any other process of democratisation, the FAR's internal role, its growing participation in peacekeeping missions throughout the world,<sup>97</sup> the definition of new civil-military relations and the need to professionalize the armed forces –including the debate about a reduction in headcount to bring them in line with normal defence requirements, a debate which has already started in Algeria despite a continuing, although reduced, terrorist threat- are matters to consider in an increasingly normal framework. In this context, the need to redefine the role of the FAR in the Western Sahara, which has been and still is the pretext

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<sup>93</sup> See *KFOR Chronicle. Medical Help From Morocco*, of 2 January 2003, in [www.nato.int/kfor/chronicle/2002/chronicle\\_19/11.html](http://www.nato.int/kfor/chronicle/2002/chronicle_19/11.html) and *The Military Balance 2002-2003*, p. 113.

<sup>94</sup> The best description of the Moroccan contribution to KFOR is, naturally, that of the person who ran it. See the contribution of Colonel Mohammed El Habib Berrada, *Une évaluation de la participation des FAR dans les opérations de maintien de la paix dans les Balkans*, in OSE, Laure and Dieter Borgomano-Loup, (ed): *Shaping a New Security Agenda for Future Regional Co-Operation in the Mediterranean Region*, Rome, NATO Defense College-Seminar Report Series N° 14, 2002, pp. 213-222.

<sup>95</sup> It is worth recalling how in a different scenario but one that is similar in being a multinational event with the participation of Israel such as the planned air-sea manoeuvres in the Western Mediterranean within the Peace Process for the Middle East, brought significant controversy and denials of any involvement by various North African countries, including Morocco. See *Maroc dément toute participation à des manoeuvres navales avec Israël*, in *Le Matin du Sahara et du Maghreb*, 22 February 1995, p. 1.

<sup>96</sup> See Maalmi, Abdelouhab, *L'OTAN et le Sud de la Méditerranée. Les malentendus d'un dialogue*, in *Annuaire de la Méditerranée 1996*, Paris-Rabat, Publisud-GERM, 1996, pp. 52-55.

<sup>97</sup> On Moroccan participation in peace-keeping operations and possible benefits for the FAR as an institution in the progress or civilian and military relations in Morocco and, eventually, for the establishment of the kind of shared confidence in the Mediterranean area, see Echeverría, Carlos, *Cooperation in Peacekeeping among the Euro-Mediterranean Armed Forces*, Paris, Western European Union Institute for Security Studies-Chaillot Paper n° 35, February 1999. From the same author, see also *La herencia de Hassan: la esperanza*, in *Diario de Sevilla*, 29 July 1999, p. 17.

for preserving an over-dimensioned military establishment, will inevitably mean a breach of a longstanding taboo which has weighed heavily on the political and cultural life of the nation. Similarly, there is the need to redefine relations with its neighbours, particularly with Algeria, as well as including transnational terrorism and smuggling as permanent threats to security.

To channel an informed debate on issues of security and defence in general, and on the FAR in particular, there is already an instrument in place: the Centre for Strategic Studies in Rabat (CESR). Set up as an initiative of the crown in October 1987, it forms part of the Faculty of Legal, Economic and Social Sciences of Rabat's Mohammed V University.<sup>98</sup> Aimed at strengthening strategic analysis and decision-making, it was founded to serve Morocco's historical and geostrategic requirements, with the following aims: to promote and coordinate the study of political, strategic and international economic issues and all matters relating to the security of Morocco and North Africa; to draw up its own view on regional security; and to provide training, proper information and cooperation with similar centres and institutions, both in the 'North' and 'South', and international bodies.<sup>99</sup> The CESR is only the embryo of what it will no doubt become, a dense network of centres and institutions establishing a true 'security community' devoted to the study of strategy and channelling and stimulating such studies in a civil society undergoing rapid development. This is urgent because the debate is already involving large sections of the population, from the media to political parties and including numerous non-governmental organisations. As an example, the publication in November 2000 by the Moroccan Human Rights Association (AMDH) of a communiqué demanding an investigation into 14 senior officers for their alleged involvement in the disappearance of 112 political dissidents (the official figure as opposed to the 600 claimed by the Association) caused discomfort in these institutions and the closure of three weekly journals –*Le Journal*, *Assahifa* and *Demain*– by prime minister Abderraman Yussufi. At the same time the recent appearance of the self-styled Moroccan Movement of Free Officers, a reminder of the nefarious Algerian Movement of Free Officers as a vehicle for continuous and systematic cavilling at an institution and the country it protects, makes it all the more necessary to introduce systems of careful consideration and study to correct the balance.<sup>100</sup>

As far as the Western Sahara is concerned, the decision by the King to create the oft demanded Development Agency for the Southern Provinces (ie, Western Sahara) approved by parliament and rubber-stamped by the cabinet meeting held in Tangiers at the beginning of August 2002, chaired by the King himself,<sup>101</sup> although not contributing directly to the solution of this complex problem, will at least have the effect of bringing about political, administrative and military changes in the area. This, if combined with the democratisation of the Royal Consultative Council of the Sahara, set up in 1999, could mean an important step on the road to the withdrawal of the FAR together with the gradual 'civilianizing' of the management and administration of the territory in the expectation of a final solution as to its status.

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<sup>98</sup> See *Centre d'Études Stratégiques de Rabat*, in *L'Espace Marocain* N° 1, March-April-May 1991, p. 32.

<sup>99</sup> The CESR has its own organ, the *CESR Annuals*. The CESR has co-organised five international research seminars on the Mediterranean in the NATO Defense College (NADEFCOL) in Rome since 1998, specifically those held in December 1998 and November 2001.

<sup>100</sup> Soudan, François, *Maroc. Qui se cache derrière les 'officiers libres*, in *Jeune Afrique/l'Intelligent* N° 2182, 4-10 November 2002, pp. 43-45.

<sup>101</sup> See *Madrid-Rabat: vuelve la política*, in *Informe Semanal de Política Exterior* N° 327, 2 September 2002, p. 7.