

MOROCCAN SAHARA

**From the Green March to the opening of
Consulates General in Laayoune and Dakhla**

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I- Introduction:

Based on extensive studies, a reading of international sources and references and historical facts, one can only conclude to the right of Morocco to its Saharan territories, the legitimacy of its full sovereignty, and the existence of legal and sovereign ties between the Sultans of Morocco and the Sahara.

The ruling dynasties in Morocco have been confronted to continuous attempts to separate the Sahara region from the north of the Kingdom. Morocco has experienced a unique colonial situation, with the concentration of French colonialism in the center of Morocco and Spanish colonization in the north and south, and the presence of various international powers in Tangier. However, after the end of French protection, the Kingdom of Morocco gradually regained the territory of Tarfaya in 1958, Sidi Ifni in 1969 and the southern provinces in 1975.

Morocco has thus been able to liberate and reunify its territory thanks to the ferocity of the Moroccan resistance for several decades, as well as to its decision to enter negotiations, through which Morocco reaffirmed to the world that the Moroccan Sahara in particular has been and will continue to form its natural extension, a link between it and its African depth.

In the midst of Morocco's efforts to free the region from colonialism, the "Polisario" did not exist yet, and therefore it was not possible to talk about the "Sahrawi people", but rather Moroccan Sahrawis who paid political, religious and social allegiance to the Moroccan authorities over decades[1].

This led to the fact that it never established any political organization or real entity that is independent of Morocco, until the Spanish colonization of 1884 dominated Sakia El Hamra region, Oued Ed- Dahab, and tearing up the territorial unity of Moroccan. Nevertheless, as we will see later through the international agreements concluded by Morocco, the international powers have continued to recognize the sovereignty of Morocco over its entire southern territories because they have consistently resorted to the Moroccan Sultan to protect their ships and the activities of their nationals in the Sahara, and those agreements have included the Sahara. The 1906 Algeciras Agreements, which placed Morocco under a "protectorate", provided for the demarcation of Morocco's borders up to Oued Ed-Dahab[2].

It is true that the issue of the Sahara has been in existence for a long time, and today it ranks among the longest-standing territorial disputes of modern history, but we must constantly summon, as we address this issue, that this conflict is of political and geo-political nature, linked to the consequences of the Cold War and the ideological hostility to Morocco's international sovereign choices and to Algeria's and the Gaddafi regime's role.

This is because the Moroccan Sahara issue today is a case that falls within the framework of the Kingdom's completion of its territorial integrity, and not within the framework of the decolonization, as Morocco's opponents to its territorial integrity argue.

Thus, the process of decolonization of the Sahara ended with the Madrid Accords, which were registered with the United Nations on 10 December 1975. In accordance with this agreement, Spain has put an end to the responsibilities and powers it has enjoyed in the territory as an Administering Power.

Today's calls for the "decolonization of the Moroccan Sahara" are nothing but the expression of opposition to Morocco's historical rights and vital interests, and reflect systematic hostility and misalignment between two countries linked by history and a common destiny.

The Sahara issue has to do, above all, with the political and diplomatic behavior of Algeria, the eastern neighbor of Morocco, which is using all its capabilities in international forums, to support the "Polisario" separatists and to promote their obsolete rhetoric, and has been for more than forty years sheltering separatists and holding Sahrawis as hostages in the Tindouf camps, on its soil. While the history of French colonization of Algeria attests to Morocco's concern for Algeria's independence and territorial integrity, is this how Algeria returns the favor?



To simplify the inquiry into this conflict, the focus will be on four keys to understanding the Sahara issue:

- Section I: Internal evidence of Morocco's sovereignty over its Sahara.
- Section II: External evidence of Morocco's sovereignty over its Sahara.
- Section III: Legal and sovereign ties that confirm Morocco's rights over the Sahara.
- Section IV: The international sovereign approach supporting the Moroccaness of the Sahara: Opening of Consulates General.

I- Internal evidence of Morocco's sovereignty over the Sahara

There are coherent arguments and clear evidence that prove Morocco's right over the Sahara. After all, the dynasties that set out to rule Morocco from the 11th to the present century necessarily have Saharan origins and extensions. All of them were born from the Sahara, and they have continued to exercise their complete sovereignty over it. Thus, the ruling dynasties were never just a hegemonic power in the region or authorities exercising mere administrative powers over a "dependency".

Morocco's centuries-old sovereignty over the Sahara is confirmed by the reality of history and its overwhelming arguments, the logic of the law, and political practice, all of which have established the foundations of allegiance and the Commandery of the Faithful. The dynamic of the history of the Sahara attests to its inclusion in the whole of the Moroccan entity, which has been fully and spontaneously integrated, as throughout that history the Moroccan Sahara has been the line of defense of the Cherifian Kingdom, its so-called strategic depth.

It is worth mentioning that the Sahara has been a starting point for the dynasties of Morocco, the monarchies, be it the Marinids, the Saadians or the Alawites. The population of the Sahara, with its various Arab, Amazigh, and Hassani tribes, has maintained extensive links with northern Morocco with respect commercial, religious and social matters that ignore ethnic or cultural borders.

A number of edicts and documents issued by the Moroccan authorities are evidence of the existence of an organic association between them and the Saharan tribes in the Sahara region of southern Morocco, and document the geographical and institutional extension of the Moroccan State in the Sahara. All tribes in the region have maintained their allegiance to the Moroccan Sultan in order to ensure the safety of the trade routes linking northern and southern Morocco. More than that, they have remained ready to defend northern Morocco against external ambitions and hostile military campaigns.

Upon reading the Royal Decrees (Cherifian Dahirs), it is clear that caïds, walis, governors, civil servants and judges are appointed to many Sahara tribes, and that the Sultans of Morocco are keen to organize their public life, including taxes, trade movement, secure trade routes, and the activity of "zawayah". These are the areas of the organic and historical interrelationship between the Moroccan State and its strategic depth in the Sahara[3].

This is what the Moroccan monarchs' correspondence with the sheikhs of the Sahara tribes, the tours of the Moroccan Sultans in the southern regions, and the allegiance of the Sahara tribes to Moroccan kings. What is now called "Western Sahara" is a Spanish heresy to undermine the political and social unity of Morocco's southern region.

The first dynasty to rule Morocco established a number of zawayah, notably the Al-Sheikh Maa al-Enein al-Adrisi zawayah in Smara, the Sheikh Sayed Ahmed al-Arousi and the Sheikh Sidi Ahmed al-Rakibi zawayah, all of which spread in the Sahara and continue to be loyal to the central authority in Fez.

Under the guidance of the Moroccan Sultan, these zawayah have strongly confronted all attempts of foreign domination and control over the Sahara, thanks to the spirit of jihad that was instilled by the Moroccan authorities in the souls of the tribal sheikhs and "zawaiah", which remained keen on their ideological and cultural unity. This clearly shows the capacity of Morocco's rulers to provoke jihad as a duty to preserve the unity and sovereignty of the nation. We therefore conclude by emphasizing the historical and political unity that has linked Morocco to its southern territories.





On the basis of these considerations, the Sahara has been a strategic line of defense of the Moroccan State since immemorial times, and we can even say that the Sahara has woven Morocco's history and its African depth, establishing trade routes that Morocco's monarchs have ensured their security, trade safety and spiritual security as well.

In this regard, we mention the appointment and dismissal of the khalifahs, caïds and judges in the Sahara regions by the Moroccan Sultans based in the successive capitals of Morocco, including Fez and Marrakech, the correspondence of Moroccan monarchs with the sheikhs of the Saharan tribes, as well as the tours of the Moroccan sultans of the tribes of the South. Morocco's kings also received allegiance from the Sahara tribes.

We expose to the reader the following historical events that demonstrate the extent of Morocco's sovereignty in the Sahara:

At the level of appointments and correspondence:

- The Merinid Sultan appointed "Yacoub Bin Abdul Haq" one of his bases as a worker behind a armor, and the Mariniya state had settled there between a mukhak and a Malawiya.
- In the time of the Saadian dynasty, great interest in the Moroccan desert regions has grown.
- Sultan Moulay Al-Hassan directed Sidi Ahmad Bin Mohamed Bal-Aamesh to administer justice in the Tjkant tribe relying the jurisprudence of the tribe and the rulings of the Maliki madheb.
- Upon receiving allegiance, Moulay Hassan has made a number of trips to the areas south of the Souss and the Draa. In 1882, during his trips to the Sahara, he ordered the building a port on the Atlantic Ocean so that the Sahara regions could be reached via the sea for military and economic purposes, and on that occasion, he appointed caïds and walis in the Sahara.
- Cherifian Dahirs were issued to appoint scholars and jurists to spread science and knowledge, such as the appointment by Sultan Moulay Al-Hassan of the Sheikh Maa El Aynine.[4]

Tours of the Moroccan Sultans in the Sahara:

- In 1678, Moulay Ismail Alawi made a large tour of the Sahara, where he met all the tribal chiefs. He also appointed caids on the occasion, including his son, Abdul Malik Khalifa, who was appointed to the area of Draa.
- Moulay Hassan I made his first trip to the Sahara in 1880, and then a second one in 1884, which lasted for a long period, during which he inspected the living conditions of the population, making contacts with the tribal chiefs, who informed him of their anger at the Spaniards, who were trying to secure control of the region.
- Sidi Mohamed Bin Abdullah, in 1755, paid a visit to the Sahara, and appointed Al Mahjoub Bin Qaid as the caïd over the region.

Exchange of missions:

- Moulay Abdul Aziz's mission to Smara in 1905;
- Receiving Saharan missions to Sultan in late 1905 under Moulay Abdul Aziz.
- Sultan Moulay Abdul Aziz's construction of the city of Smara as a headquarters for Jihad, a resistance center to fight the French and Spanish colonizer, through which instructions from the Sultan can be easily implemented.

Exchange of correspondance :

- Letter of protest by Sultan Moulay Abdul Aziz addressed in 1900 to the caïd "Abdullah Bin said", a representative of the Makhzen Tangier, against the entry of the French forces and their incursion into the Sahara;
- The letter of Sultan Sidi Mohammad Bin Moulay Abdul Rahman Bin Hisham to Sheikh Habib Birouk, by which he orders him to transfer a Spanish prisoner who was arrested by the Saharans to Taroudant and then to Essaouira, and urges him to respect the ships that landed on the Saharan coasts and to transfer their shipments to the Makhzen authorities in the capital;
- Hassan I's message to Habib Ibn Sheikh Mubarak Al-Wadnuni Al-Jilmi, on the subject of arresting two Spanish renegades leaving the coasts of Essaouira;
- The message of Hassan I to Ibrahim Bin Mubarak Al-Zarki, in which he assures him of his exemption from all taxes, except the Zakat;
- Moulay Abdul Aziz's message to the caïd Ibrahim Al-Shtuki Al-Tekni, instructing him to monitor the coastline from Tarfaya to Cape Boujdour;
- Moulay Abdul Aziz's message to caids Mohammad Al-Amin and Bin Al-Amin Bin Abdullah, mandating them to manage the ports of the South;
- The message of Moulay Abdul Hafid Bin Al-Hassan to the caids Mohammad Bin Bilal and Ibrahim Bin Mubarak from the Tkna tribes, in which he orders them to expel a Christian from Tarfaya.

Missions dispatched to the Sahara:

- Moulay Abdul Aziz dispatched a mission to Smara in 1905, composed of Sharif Moulay Idris Bin Abdul Rahman Ibn Sulaiman, the Sultan's representatives in the Sahara, and the Minister Mohamed Al-Hassan Benyaich.

In the same vein, the Sultans of Morocco supported the efforts of the Sahrawi tribes to combat various invaders. A particular mention should be made of the support to the struggle of Sheikh Ma al-'Aynayn against the French-Spanish occupation, the control by the central authority of the area south of Oued Draa, and the pacification of the situation in the Moroccan Sahara.

These appointments, correspondence, tours, missions highlight not only the extent of the loyalty and allegiance between the Sahara tribes and the Moroccan sultans, but also a very advanced style in the decentralized governance of the Sahara, and the contribution of those caids, walis and judges to the establishment of Morocco's sovereignty over the Sahara. These acts of sovereignty were carried out in the spirit of the Moroccan state, based on the concept of the unity of religion and written allegiance, which is a political and social covenant between the Sultan and his subjects, through which the parties aspire to establish loyalty in exchange for defense over the security and safety of the Sahara territory.

We conclude through these historical arguments to the capacity of the dynasties that have ruled Morocco from Almoravides to the Alawites to establish sovereignty over the Sahara, embodied by political, religious and social practices in their relations with the tribes of the Sahara. These practices are based on the principle of allegiance and duty to safeguard the interests of the Sultan's subjects.

II- External evidence of Morocco's sovereignty over the Sahara

Since the advent of the Idrissid dynasty and the implementation of its administrative division of Morocco, the Sakia El Hamra and the Oued Ed-Dahab have been subject to the same laws as the rest of the country. The Moroccan Sultans have signed numerous international treaties and agreements with various foreign countries, that all shared provisions recognizing the sovereignty of the Sultan over the whole territory of the Cherifian Kingdom, including the Sahara. The international community explicitly recognized Morocco's legal and sovereign ties with the Moroccan Sahara. In this regard, due to the abundance of these treaties and the diversity of their subjects, we shall limit ourselves to providing some examples.



The international treaties of which Morocco was the subject establish the existence of an actual Moroccan authority over the Saharan territories, especially two treaties of the 15th century, the Alcáçovas Treaty and the Cintra Treaty signed between Spain and Portugal. The first treaty defined the agreement of the two parties on the borders of the "Kingdom of Marrakesh" in the south of Cape Boujdour, and the second treaty provides for the borders of the Kingdom of Fas, Morocco. The two treaties not only confirmed the sovereignty of the Sultan but also recognized that the Moroccan authority was extending beyond Cape Boujdour[5].



First, the Treaty between Morocco and Spain, concluded on 1 March 1767, states that "Moroccan sovereignty extends beyond the Nunn Valley", meaning that it extends to the south of the region adjacent to the Sakia El Hamra, as this article states: "His Majesty the King warns the population of the Canary Islands against any attempt to fish on the shores of the Nunn Valley and beyond, and he bears no responsibility for what will happen to them by the Arabs of the region to whom the decisions are difficult to apply. They do not have a single living place, they move as much as they like, and they build their tents wherever they find it suitable." This clearly shows the existence of a Moroccan authority over the Nun Valley and beyond in the Sahara, as well as these tribes' allegiance to the Sultan [6].

The contents of this agreement were reinforced on the eve of March 1799 by another treaty, article 22 of which stipulates that "if a Spanish ship sinks beyond Sous and the Valley of the Nun, then, in the spirit of the amicability of the King of the Spaniards to the Sultan, all necessary searches shall be made to rescue the endangered sailors and return them to their country". It is worth mentioning that Spain was attempting to establish Spanish commercial facilities in the southern Moroccan coasts in order to exercise full control over these coasts, but Sultan refused the demands of Spanish King Charles IV.

Second, the Treaty between Morocco and the United States of America in 1786, contained provisions by which Sultan Sidi Mohamed bin Abdullah pledged to provide the necessary assistance and protection to ships that navigate in the Atlantic. In its tenth article, it states that "if an American ship crashes on the banks of the Nun Valley or on the banks adjacent to it, its passengers remain safe until it is possible to return to their country, God willing."

Thirdly, the treaties that regulate the Moroccan-British relations, which have included provisions focusing on the Saharan region. One of them was the 1801 Peace and Reconciliation Treaty between Moulay Sulaiman and King George III of England, which provides for the rescue of English ships: "In the event of a ship sinking in Oued Noun or in the vicinity, the Sultan of Marrakech shall deploy all efforts to rescue its crew. The English Consul or his deputy is allowed to participate in the search and retrieval of the wreck in the region, under the supervision of the representatives of the Sultan of Marrakech."

The Anglo-Moroccan Treaty of 1895 states in its first article that "no power can make claims on territory between Oued Draa up until Cape Boujdour and Tarfaya. It is because these lands belong to Morocco".

We conclude that, according to the agreements, the Moroccan Sultan has been committed to using his authority to rescue and rescue sunken ships and their passengers, thus having effective powers in the Saharan coasts localities, and that he held the power to license consuls to participate in the search for shipwrecks.



Having considered these treaties, especially their provisions relating to the Sahara, we can make the following conclusions:

- The Moroccan Sultan is committed to using his authority to rescue and rescue sunken ships and their passengers.
- Second, relief, rescue and assistance operations are carried out under the supervision of the Moroccan governors in the region.
- Third, the Consuls of foreign countries that undertake rescue and relief operations are authorized to do so only upon permission by the Moroccan Sultan. The same applies to the foreign States with respect to fishing or exercising authority over ports.

In fact, in their international undertakings relating to the Sahara, the Moroccan sultans have been keen to ensure that their sovereignty for the region is effectively recognized.

The French-Spanish competition for Moroccan soil, which led to negotiations between the two countries in 1902, considered Sakia El Hamra and the Oued Ed-Dahab as exclusively Moroccan territories, to pave the way for Spain's 1904 domination of Sidi Ifni and Tarfaya. However, the resistance of tribal chiefs, as was the case of Sheikh Ma El Ainin was conducted as that of a liberation movement under the authority of the Sultan of Morocco.

III- Legal ties and sovereign ties that confirm Morocco's rights over the Sahara.

The Sahara region remained under Spanish colonization for almost nine decades. The Spanish ambitions have focused on the region because of its strategic importance. This colonial reality was created by the conspiracies of colonial powers against Morocco, and by secret agreements aimed at destroying its territorial integrity, which neither Sultan Abdul Aziz nor his successor, King Abdul Hafiz, were able to confront.

In 1479, the Treaty of Alcáçovas between Spain and Portugal, endorsed the occupation of the Canary Islands and the south of Morocco. The Treaty of Alcáçovas provided for the recognition of the Portugal's influence in the Kingdom, while Portugal, for its part, recognized Spain's sovereignty over the Canary Islands. Thus, starting in 1865, Spain went to expand its influence on the southern Moroccan coast to expand its influence, exploit its maritime resources and control the commercial routes of the region [7].

Until 1884, thanks to the ferocity of Moroccan resistance on the one hand and the economic crisis it was experiencing at that time, Spain could not dominate the whole of Morocco's Saharan territories, and only controlled the commercial center of the city of Dakhla.

However, in 1884 Spain declared its protectorate of the Moroccan Sahara's coastline beaches from Cape Boujdour to Ouad Dahab, considering the whole region a colony.





The Moroccan Sahara's tribes have responded with a brutal resistance to the Spanish colonizer, in this regard, through the armed attacks of Sheikh Maa al-Aynin's followers on some Spanish facilities, and the organization by caid Saleh Ibn Birouk of offensive operations against two Spanish commercial ships. The Ouled Dalim and Ouled Bousboua resisted Spanish interests in the region.

The Aït Baamrane revolution was also crucial to the departure of Spaniards from the Sidi Ifni area, and has forced the Spanish military to recognize the end of its occupation of Tarfaya in 1958 and to withdraw from Sidi Ifni in 1969.

Since 1958, Morocco has been demanding Spain to leave the rest of the Moroccan territory occupied by its armies. It is useful to recall in this context the visit of the late King Mohammed V to the region of Mahamid Al-Ghazlan in Oued Draa, where the tribes of the region renewed their allegiance to him. In view of Morocco's insistence on ending colonization in its southern regions, making use of the choice of resistance and negotiations at the same time, and Morocco's diplomatic efforts to liberate the Sahara from the Spanish colonization, the Kingdom secured the adoption of resolution 2072, which referenced resolution 1514 adopted on December 14, 1960. This resolution urged the Government of Spain, as the Administering Power of the Sahara, to immediately take all necessary measures for the liberation of the Sahara region, the provinces of Ifni and Oued Ed-Dahab, and to enter into negotiations on the problems of sovereignty raised by these two territories.

Consequently, the international community has recognized the colonial situation of the Moroccan Sahara by Spain, and that it must be immediately liberated, pursuing to the UN resolution on the granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples. In the face of pressure from international public opinion and the resistance of the Moroccan Sahara's tribes, Spain in 1966 proposed to organize a referendum in the Sahara, with a view to sow the seeds of instability in the Sahara. Spain refrained from direct recognition of the Moroccaness of the Sahara, and resolved to keep the region separated from the rest of the Moroccan territory. In doing so, it ignored the historical facts of the resistance of the Moroccan Sahara's tribes for decades, and continued to oppose Morocco's sovereign rights. It was supported by Algeria, which in turn encouraged a secessionist movement that has proclaimed itself as "Polisario front".

After the success of the Green March, Morocco signed the Madrid Agreement[8] with Spain which recognizes Morocco's rights to its Sahara. In turn, Algeria created the "Polisario" and hosted it on the territory of Tindouf, with a view to further its interests over the issue of borders with Morocco. All Saharans know that during November and December 1975, "Polisario" asked many Sahrawis to come to a gathering in Guelta Zemmur, and when they came there, they were directed to another gathering in Bir Lehlou. Later, they were asked to come to Tindouf in order to be made hostage. To date, they are still being held there, prevented from leaving, and monitored day and night, to prevent their return to their homeland, Morocco.

At Morocco's request, the Saharan region was registered on the agenda of the UN Fourth Committee at Morocco's request in 1963. Morocco demanding the decolonization of the territories occupied by Spain, 10 years before the "Polisario front" was created in 1973[9].

The issue of the Sahara was dealt within the Special Committee charged with examining the situation with regard to the implementation of the 1960 Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial countries and Peoples, followed by the Commission's decision on the subject (resolution 2072), which stated: "Urgently calls upon the Government of Spain, as the administering Power, to take all necessary measures immediately to liberate the territories of Ifni and the Spanish Sahara from colonial domination[10].

Since Spain's withdrawal from the Sahara region and its recovery by Morocco in 1975, the Sahara cannot be classified as a Non-Self-Governing Territory, with the following considerations:

- The liberation of the Spanish colonial authority by the Saharan tribes;
- The United Nations General Assembly and the Security Council have never asked Morocco to report on the situation in the Territory;
- No legal opinion was issued by the United Nations describing the Sahara as a "colony" or Morocco as an "occupier";
- Following the signing of the Madrid Agreement by Morocco and Spain, the transfer of authority between the Spanish and Moroccan governments took place, in the sense that Morocco's sovereignty over the territory has become effective and legitimate;
- The agreement of the Saharans and all tribes to decolonize the Sahara region, reintegrate into Morocco and Mauritania, and settle the situation on the basis of historical facts and the rights of the region's inhabitants.

Thus, we note that Spain's departure and the return of the Sahara to Morocco in 1975 put an end to the decolonization of this region, and Morocco completed its territorial integrity.

After its withdrawal, Spain, in a letter to the United Nations General Assembly dated 26 February 1976, declared that it considered itself "free of any responsibility of an international nature with regard to the administration of the said Territory", while stopping its contribution to the Interim Administration that had been created [11].

Thus, His Majesty King Muhammad VI stressed in a previous speech that "Morocco in its Sahara was never an occupying power, or an administrative authority. It exercises its sovereign powers on its territory land" [12], for the concept of "occupying power" refers to the occupation of the territory of a State already in existence during an international armed conflict, which does not apply to the situation of the Moroccan Sahara [13].

Following the approval by the United Nations General Assembly in 1963 of Morocco's request for the inclusion of the Saharan region in the agenda of the Committee of 24, the General Assembly in 1974 requested the International Court of Justice to provide an advisory opinion, in light of resolution 1514 on the "Granting of Independence to Colonial countries and Peoples", on the situation of the "Spanish" Sahara. It must be recalled that Spain strongly rejected and opposed the International Court of Justice's opinion on the legal and sovereign character of the Saharan region.

After 27 public hearings, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) issued an advisory opinion dated October 16, 1975, which answered the following questions[14]:

- Was "Western Sahara" (Rio de Oro and Sakiet El Hamra) at the time of colonization by Spain a territory belonging to no one (terra nullius)?
- What were the legal ties between this territory and the Kingdom of Morocco and the Mauritanian entity?



The first question was answered by the Court, that, in the wake of the Spanish colonization of the Sahara region, the Sahara was not a terra nullius, nor was it a no-man's land, but inhabited by politically and socially organized tribes under the authority of the sheikhs. Spain itself, having extended its influence over the region, has invoked agreements with local sheikhs.

Prior to answering the second question, what legal links had the region, the Kingdom of Morocco and the Mauritanian group been linked? The Court has defined as "legal links" all the links that can affect the methodology for eradicating colonialism from the Sahara. On the specific question of links with the Kingdom of Morocco, the Court explained that it took into account:

- The Kingdom of Morocco affirms the existence of sovereign links to the Sahara stemming from the historical possession of the Territory.
- It takes into account the special structure of the Moroccan State in that historic era.

After having examined internal events, including the appointment of governors, tax collection, armed resistance, the Sultans' tours of the region and correspondence, and external events, including the conclusion of international treaties, agreements and diplomatic correspondence, which Morocco considered to be an affirmation of international recognition by other Governments of such historic sovereignty, the court concluded that there are spiritual, religious and political relations between the tribes of the region and the Moroccan Sultan.

This is a recognition by the International Court of Justice of Morocco's exercise of its effective sovereignty, which affirms its historical rights over the Territory. The Court's reasoning was realistic and satisfactory to Morocco, but the conclusion was not logical, as it contained a contradiction between the recognition of the existence of legal allegiance ties between the Saharan population and the Moroccan Sultan, including the existence of land-related rights, and the absence of recognition of sovereignty ties. At the same time, it denies territorial sovereignty links between the population of the Sahara and the Kingdom of Morocco. The links of legal allegiance and territorial rights recognized by the Court were, in fact, a logical consequence of territorial sovereignty ties. There was also an overlap between the legal link and the sovereign link, which could never be separated.

In the light of the initial recognition of the International Court of Justice that Morocco had effectively exercised authority over the Sahara region as evidenced by history, and Morocco's conviction of its historical rights, the late King Hassan II, organized a Green March in 1975, a confirmation March that crossed the artificial borders between Morocco and the Sahara left by Spanish occupation. Morocco was able to return to its territorial unity, especially after November 14, 1975, when the Madrid Agreement signed a final withdrawal of Spain from the Sahara, thus settling the colonization of the region.

Following this new reality, Algeria and the "Polisario" separatist movement launched raids on the Saharans, and Algeria has taken a number of the Saharan population into Tindouf camps. To this day, the international community has been unable to determine neither their legal status, whether "refugees" or detainees, their number, nor even the political and judicial authority responsible for the camps. Many questions contained in the relevant Security Council resolutions have not yet been addressed, owing to Algeria's media blackout, the denial of access to special rapporteurs and human rights organizations, as well as the concealment of the reality of slavery and the state of misery and oppression suffered by the hostages of the Tindouf camps in Algeria.

IV- International sovereign approach supporting the Moroccanness of the Sahara: Opening of Consulates General.

The sovereign decision of the twenty-two countries of three continents (Africa, Asia and America) to open consular representations in Dakhla and Laayoune comes on top of the internal and external arguments that prove the Moroccanness of the Sahara.

This sovereign diplomatic decision is in itself a strong basis that translates in practical terms political positions in support of the Moroccanness of the Sahara, a legal act confirmed by international law and diplomatic practice, particularly the 1963 Geneva Convention.

The growing international presence in the Moroccan Sahara is a clear recognition of the sovereignty of Morocco over its Sahara, and an affirmation of Morocco's legitimate rights, based on history, the law, and reality on the ground. Thus, we are witnessing a change in the positions of a number of African countries, especially after Morocco's return to the African Union, accompanied by a development-oriented economic diplomacy, as well as a policy linking the Autonomy Initiative with a new development model in line with regional aspirations to security and stability.



Moroccan diplomacy, through the approach of consular diplomacy in the Moroccan Sahara, has thus established a new international approach based on support to the Autonomy Plan as a realistic and credible solution for a final settlement of the regional dispute over the Moroccan Sahara, a conviction that development is a prerequisite for stability in the whole region, and the view that stability is a key challenge for the Maghreb.

This new international approach was crowned by the decision of the United States of America to recognize the sovereignty of Morocco over its Sahara, forming a turning point in the history of the region that is crucial to solving the regional dispute over the Moroccan Sahara.

The American recognition of the Moroccanness of the Sahara constitutes a decisive stage in dealing with the issue of Moroccan Sahara. This resolution comes on top of the great efforts made by the United States of America, as a country that has been the penholder of all Security Council resolutions on the issue of the Moroccan Sahara to reach a final political solution to this regional conflict.

The opening of more than twenty Consulates General in the city of Dakhla and Laayoune underscores the international community's responsiveness and conviction that conflict resolution can be achieved only within the framework of the Autonomy Initiative under Moroccan sovereignty, with a view to promote regional stability.

The qualitative breakthrough of Moroccan diplomacy is the culmination of His Majesty King Mohammed VI's Vision of transition from management to transformation, and of an action-oriented diplomacy to defend firmly Morocco's vital interests and respect for international law.



Following these positive changes in the positions of a number of States on the issue of Moroccan Sahara, we have noted the concern of some opponents of Morocco's interests and their unjustifiable hostile attitude and incitement against Morocco's interests. In fact, they have expressed their dismay at the impending final settlement of this territorial dispute, prompting the Moroccan diplomacy to be more assertive, to unveil the true intentions behind hostility to Morocco's interests, and to address the real causes of the dispute as an alternative to flight forward.

This hostile behavior against Morocco has recently materialized by seeking to persuade the United States of America to rescind its sovereign decision to recognize Morocco's full sovereignty over its Sahara.

On the basis of these internal and external arguments and the sovereign resolutions of a number of countries supporting the territorial integrity of the Kingdom, the United Nations, as a logical consequence, has to invoke the international recognition of Moroccanity of the Sahara when considering this territorial dispute. In view of Morocco's Autonomy Plan and the discarding of all unrealistic proposals in Security Council resolutions, the Sahara region is today a rising economic hub, and an attractive destination for international investment (3 billion dollars is allocated to the region by the US Agency for International Development (USAID) within the framework of the Prosper Africa Initiative), and a safe home for self-determination of the population within the framework of local democracy and good governance.

In order to overcome the stalemate in the Sahara issue, Morocco proposed in 2007, in response to the demands of the Security Council, the Moroccan Initiative for the Negotiation of an Autonomy for the Sahara Region, which is a realistic and internationally credible solution, as an alternative to the referendum, which has proven to be an unrealistic option.

For decades, the Kingdom of Morocco has bet on a comprehensive development approach to the Sahara region. Today, the New Development Model for the Southern Provinces launched by His Majesty King Mohammed VI has strengthened this approach, while the enemies of Morocco's territorial integrity have been trading in the tragedies of Sahrawi hostages in the Tindouf camps, in Algeria.

When will Algeria recognize its historical responsibility over the legal status of the Tindouf camps and the reality of their oppression, deprivation and slavery? When Algeria realizes that its approach has become obsolete, it must make up for the time wasted, by working towards economic integration and a shared future between Morocco and Algeria!

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