Evolution of Moroccan defence diplomacy

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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses Morocco’s defence diplomacy through a consideration of two research matters. The first concerns the military and security cooperation of the country with the United States, the European countries, as well as the Arab and African ones. The second focuses on Morocco’s participations in United Nations and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) peacekeeping operations. The objective of this study is essentially to show to what extent Morocco contributes to restoring regional peace and security across the world.

KEYWORDS

Defence diplomacy; peace and security; military cooperation; peacekeeping operations

Introduction

Defence diplomacy is one of the tools used in the conduct of a country’s diplomacy. Its activities are necessarily undertaken in tune with the general foreign policy guidelines set by the state, taking into account, first and foremost, its national strategic interests. In this sense, military or defence diplomacy can be defined as ‘the use of military in diplomacy as a tool of national foreign policy’ (Muthanna 2011, 2) thus, ‘Militaries were, traditionally, associated with achieving national aims and objectives in international relations through the use of force’ (2).

Over the last decade there have been major changes in patterns of international defence diplomacy. Historically, defence diplomacy – military cooperation and assistance – has been used for realpolitik purposes in strengthening allies against common enemies. Since the early 1990s there has been a shift on the part of Western governments towards the use of defence diplomacy for a range of new purposes. These include support for multilateral regional military cooperation as a tool for conflict prevention; support for the democratization of civil–military relations and security sector reform more generally; support for countries attempting to rebuild and reform their armed forces after conflict or political transition; and support for the development of regional peacekeeping capabilities (Cottee and Forster 2013).

Focusing on Morocco as a peace-actor in the framework of the United Nations, a strategic ally of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and privileged European Union partner, Saddiki (2002), a Moroccan strategic affairs expert, pointed out that the military factor remains, since the early days of independence, one of the important determining factors of Moroccan foreign policy. The importance of this factor could be seen, either explicitly or implicitly, through various aspects: the participation in peacekeeping
operations and the use of the armed forces as a diplomatic instrument to enhance Arab solidarity and support all regional peace initiatives, have been the main ones (Saidy 2009–10). To this end, Morocco has established an operational brigade-size military force in constant readiness for deployment abroad, in the framework of humanitarian assistance or peacekeeping and security enforcement tasks, and specifically trained to be interoperable (El Kadiri 1996).

Although it has not created its own defence diplomacy plan, the latter is still considered to be part of Morocco’s foreign policy and national defence vision.2 In addition to the general objectives of this diplomacy,3 the Kingdom of Morocco aims, on the other hand, to achieve some specific goals through its military participation and security cooperation with the UN, the United States and Europe as well as the Arab and African countries. In the African area, Morocco seeks to play a significant role in the Community of Sahel-Saharan States, since ‘this region will remain strategically important for Morocco’s economic growth and future stability’ (Malka 2013, 6). Therefore, Morocco could expand its existing training programmes for African armies and security force for the sake of protecting peace in these countries, despite the kingdom’s non-membership of the African Union and the ongoing Western Sahara conflict, which may impede its efforts to carve out a more influential diplomatic and security role in Africa (Malka 2013). Regarding its security and defence relations with NATO states, Morocco aims at further developing ‘interoperability’ with the alliance’s members through the exchange of experiences and expertise, ‘professionalization’ as well as ‘modernization’ of its military. Besides, Morocco needs NATO to play an active role in favour of its national interests, namely, the territorial issues in either the north or the south of the country (Saidy 2012). As for the Arab world, Morocco as a major actor in the Middle East region seeks to deepen its close links and strong strategies with the Arab states, in particular with the Gulf ones, not only for ensuring financial assistance but also to strengthen the security cooperation with them as a ‘valuable source of trained manpower’ (Rousselet 2014, 5) in this field.

To achieve these objectives, Morocco employs different instruments, mainly military cooperation and participation in peacekeeping operations, as the most practical aspects of defence diplomacy.

Security ties and military cooperation

Since its independence, the Kingdom of Morocco has concluded longstanding military accords and agreements with Western as well as with African and Arab countries. While military relations with the United States, France and Spain are largely significant, cooperation with other countries seems to be limited, but important.

Moroccan–US defence relations

Throughout contemporary history, Morocco has maintained longstanding security and defence relations with the United States. During the Second World War, Morocco was aligned with Allied forces and provided support to both US and British troops. In 1942, the United States was then authorized by the kingdom to establish its first air-naval base in Kenetra (Daguzan 1998). The Americans set up three military bases in Nousser,
Ben Guerir and Sidi Slimane in 1952 (Parker 1990). At the same time, both countries had signed some agreements that facilitated and paved the road for America to use these bases in its fight against the proliferation of communism in the region during the Cold War. In recognition of this, the United States played a major role in reversing the war over Western Sahara in Morocco’s favour through large-scale economic and defence aid, military advisors (U.S. Aid 1997), as well as military training to wage war in this territory (Ohaegbulam 2002). Before the beginning of the Green March organized in November 1975, the Pentagon had sent, at the end of 1973, a group of high-level American experts to Morocco to survey the military situation there and identify its defence needs in that unstable period (Clement 1986). Indeed, during the Sahara war Morocco was provided with more than US$1 billion in American military assistance (Zoubir and Zunes 1999), which contributed largely to strengthening royal armed forces and positively affected the Sahara affair, as the IISS’s (2000) report noted.

Being a staunch ally in the region, the US backed all Morocco’s territorially limited confrontations with the so-called POLISARIO and Algeria, its main supporter. Thus, the White House’s position was entirely in favour of Morocco during the First Battle of Amgala between the Moroccan army and the Polisario Front (Kamil 1987). Likewise, the United States had sent different types of military equipment to Morocco straight after the Second Battle of Amgala erupted in February 1976.

From that date to 1981, the Jimmy Carter administration had reduced, if not refused, Moroccan’s military demands for many reasons. Later on, however, and thanks to the hard diplomatic efforts of King Hassan II, this policy had been revised. Thus, the two countries cultivated their defence relations through a series of fruitful high-level military visits. Being so, Moroccan arms acquisitions had increased significantly (Zunes and Mundy 2010). Generally, Morocco’s purchases of American-produced weaponry were financed with money provided by the United States through the Foreign Military Sales Financing programme (US$475 million in low-interest credits and US$200 million in grants between 1975 and 1990). The credits, however, had to be repaid with interest, thus forcing spending cuts for economic development and social services and increasing the burden of Morocco’s external debt. Other weapons purchases were funded either by Morocco itself or by the government of Saudi Arabia, which gave up to US$1 billion to the Moroccan government annually in grants until 1988, when it ended its financial aid programme (Zoubir and Zunes 1999).

I will shed more light below on different aspects of Moroccan–Arab security ties and military relations.

Since the end of the Cold War, US military assistance remained at a relatively low level because of developments that the military and political scene in the Maghreb has experienced. These include the agreement by the government of Morocco and the Polisario Front with the UN peace plan for Western Sahara in 1988, the agreement by the two combatants for a ceasefire and the arrival of a UN peacekeeping force (MINURSO) in the territory in 1991 (Zoubir and Zunes 1999). Consequently, Morocco has spent only US$690 million on its military expenditure throughout the following five years from that agreement.

However, Morocco has rebounded as an important ally. The first reason for this was Morocco’s support for the Gulf War, including sending Moroccan forces to Saudi Arabia. The second reason was instability in Algeria, and the role played by Morocco,
which was considered by America as the bulwark against extremist and anti-Western movements. The other reason is that Morocco regained its importance as a US ally through the role Morocco played in US-led peace initiatives, thereby clearly showing that Hassan II could still play an important part in supporting US strategic interests (Zoubir and Zunes 1999).

More recently, Morocco was among the first Arab states to denounce the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the United States and to declare solidarity with the American people in the so-called war against terror. Thus, when:

Global War on Terrorism became the US’s dominant policy directive, Morocco’s standing with the United States increased more and more as the US sought to draw closer ties of cooperation to help Rabat deal with rising jihadism in the country. (Zoubir 2005, 190)

Due to such outstanding efforts to thwart terrorism, Washington designated the kingdom a major non-NATO ally in 2004; the status allows Morocco to enjoy a privileged security relationship with the United States, and to be eligible for priority delivery of weaponry, participation in defence research and development programmes, and a beneficiary of US government loan guarantee programmes for the purchase of military materiel (Morocco–US Strategic Dialogue: Consultation, Cooperation, Progress, Moroccan American Center for Policy 2012).

Today, Morocco and the United States share a robust military relationship. From the Moroccan’s perspective, it appears to be largely about the acquisition of arms and competition with Algeria. Morocco is among the largest Third World purchasers of US military equipment, recently acquiring 24 advanced F-16 fighter planes for about US$2.4 billion, including training and services (Migdalovitz 2011). The sale of the F-16s was of particular importance since, as noted by the Pentagon’s Defense Security Cooperation Agency, it contributed to the foreign policy and national security objectives of the United States ‘by enhancing Morocco’s capability to support US efforts in the global war on terror’ (Morocco–US Strategic Dialogue 2012). But also, Morocco’s desire for such advanced US fighter planes is undoubtedly spurred by Algeria’s purchase of Russian MiG-29 fighters, as the regional rivals have been engaged in an arms race for decades.

Generally, Morocco benefits from important American military and security assistance programmes, namely:

- **Foreign Military Financing (FMF):** this programme provides grants and loans to assist foreign countries in purchasing US-produced weapons, defence articles and services, military training, supports regional stability goals, and enables allies to improve their defence capabilities. Morocco began purchasing military material from the United States since the independence of the country. It is considered within the major recipients of FMF funds, benefiting from US$9 million in fiscal year (FY)2010, US$8.982 million in FY2011, US$8 million in FY2012, US$8 million in FY2013 and US$7 million in FY2014.5

- **Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP):** Morocco is a partner in TSCTP, joining forces with the United States with the intent of rooting out extremist cells and networks from its territory (Cantrell 2014). The main functions of this multi-year inter-agency American programme are compressed into six categories: military capacity-building, law enforcement, anti-terrorism capacity-building, justice sector...
counterterrorism capacity-building, public diplomacy and information operations, community engagement, vocational training. Indeed, Morocco has become an active player in this military-to-military cooperation, contributing effectively to enhance regional security and stability through waging war on violent extremism and terrorism across the Sahel and Maghreb countries.

- State Partnership Program: alongside the African Lion, the State Partnership Program allies the Utah National Guard with the Moroccan military in an affiliation akin to ‘sister cities’ in support of the United States Africa Command, but predating regional alignment efforts. Since 2003, the Utah National Guard and Morocco have built ties through exchanges and joint training opportunities focusing on disaster response, civil disorder and border security, all of which harness the longer-term nature of National Guard assignments to create continuity in the relationship (Cantrell 2014).


- Operation African Lion: This is the largest annually combined US–Moroccan military exercise on the continent, designed to promote interoperability and mutual understanding of each nation’s tactics, techniques and procedures, focusing on small-unit infantry and staff training as well as humanitarian assistance. In April 2013, Morocco tended to suspend the annual exercise in response to the fact that US diplomats reportedly expressed support for adding human rights monitoring to MINURSO’s mandate, when the latter renewal was under discussion at the UN Security Council. Morocco, however, finally withdrew this decision.

Moroccan–European defence relations

Bilateral military cooperation agreements have been concluded with most Western European countries. In substance, they deal with aspects which Morocco is anxious to develop in specific fields of action, such as officer training, multi-service and joint exercises, technical assistance and various forms of military exchange (El Kadiri 1996), particularly with Spain and France.

The agreement between Morocco and Spain on Technical Cooperation and Mutual Assistance in the Field of Defence, signed in Rabat on January 21, 1987, and the Treaty of Friendship, Good-neighbourliness and Cooperation signed between the two sides on July 4, 1991, have been the legal framework of the bilateral military relationship of both countries. Article 2 of the latter states that:

The high contracting parties shall promote cooperation between their armed forces, devoting particular attention to exchanges of personnel and observers, the organization of training and advanced training courses, the comparison of experiences with teaching materials and the conduct of joint exercises. The objectives of this cooperation shall also include the organization of joint program for research into and the development and production of weapons systems and defence materiel and equipment designed to meet the needs of both Parties, through exchanges of technical, technological and industrial information.
For the last few years, Morocco has efficiently involved itself in collaboration with Spain and the European Union for the difficult joint management of the serious migratory problem, which affects more or less all countries in the Dialogue 5+5. This collaboration has been taking place since 2004 through the joint sea patrols of the Spanish Civil Guard and the Royal Moroccan Gendarmerie for irregular immigration control, and the fight against drugs and terrorism. The three services in both countries periodically carry out a wide range of exercises and exchanges; thanks to this, a progressive degree in knowledge and mutual trust between their respective commands has been achieved (Romeo Nunez 2012). Furthermore, it is necessary to add the joint work carried out by both countries either by the co-participation of their armies in the Mediterranean Dialogue organized by NATO, as well as in UN peace operations in Kosovo, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Haiti, or more recently in such operations initiated by the security alliance since the events of 9/11 which aim to fight terrorism, like Operation Active Endeavour (Echeverria 2007). In addition to the traditional naval manoeuvres carried out periodically by the two navies in the Mediterranean and Atlantic, both countries have recently participated in the so-called exercise ‘Tapon’ carried out in the Atlantic between the Canaries and Gibraltar, which gathers dozens of ships and submarines, the aim of which is to be well trained for protecting one of the most important seaways in the world. Alongside Tapon, Morocco has used its most powerful war vessel as well as the Hassan II frigate to participate in the multinational exercise led by the US Sixth Fleet ‘Phoenix Express’ (Echeverria 2007).

On the other hand, Spain has been one of the traditional suppliers of the Moroccan armed forces through several acquisitions programmes (Romeo Nunez 2012). During the last quarter of a century after 1977, Spain has been the primary supplier of the Moroccan navy, with both the Lazaga-class patrol vessel and the Descubierta-class corvette, which were, for years, the most useful naval vessels in Morocco’s possession (Echeverria 2007). Although Morocco has proceeded to diversify its arms suppliers over the last few years, Spain remains amongst the most important providers of the country, equipping Morocco with CN 235 light transport aircraft built by CASA; the army has received different types of vehicles and munitions supplied by the following technology companies: Inisel, Ceselsa, Santa Barbara, Expol and Ert, among others. In November 2006, Spain and the national defence administration signed numerous contracts to supply the Moroccan armed forces with military materials, including 1200 high-tactical-mobility vehicles and 800 military trucks that are similar to those used by the Spanish Civil Guard and Spain’s Coastal Surveillance (Echeverria 2007).

Finally, cooperation between Morocco and Spain in matters of security and defence is, in fact, an important factor to decrease the degree of discord and tension that has grown between the neighbouring countries over so many issues. Likewise, Morocco maintains robust military links with France. The latter is considered by France as a ‘privileged partner’. Defence cooperation between the two countries is carried out in both bilateral and multilateral agreements. Bilateral cooperation in the field of defence between Morocco and France is based on a Franco-Moroccan intergovernmental agreement on technical–military cooperation signed on October 11, 1994. Through this agreement, 31 Moroccan officers benefited from training at inter-armed college between 1997 and 2006. Moreover, 38 short-term missions were organized by 88 experts between 2001 and 2006.
To implement this cooperation agreement, the two armies undertake various actions, mainly promoting high-level military education; naval cooperation (naval aviation, security); teaching the French language to the army; participation in the seminars of the Higher Institute of National Defence Studies, etc. This cooperation has recently tended to develop into a true partnership, as illustrated in the following areas:

- intensifying cooperation for the development of superior military education;
- assisting Morocco in receiving a larger number of foreign trainers, particularly Africans, in their military academy; and
- supporting the Moroccan authorities to modernize their armed forces etc.

Alongside these bilateral defence relations, there are several frameworks of multilateral military cooperation between Morocco and France, namely the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (Barcelona Process) and NATO’s Mediterranean Dialogue, in addition to the Mediterranean Security and Defense Initiative launched by the French defence minister on July 27, 2004.

Furthermore, Morocco has often been ranked among the foremost and largest purchasers of French arms and weaponry in the post-Cold War era. During the war for Western Sahara, French military equipment comprised 50% of the arms obtained by Morocco, costing US$4 billion (Zunes and Mundy 2010). However, near the end of the war, France scaled back its military aid to Morocco for financial reasons, but not for ethical or legal ones. By mid-1990, when US arms came to dominate Moroccan imports, France’s share fell to 10% (Zunes and Mundy 2010). More recently, 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 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, the more modern AMX-10RCs, and VAB armoured vehicles. The Moroccan air force continues to use Mirage F-1 CH fighters.

The Moroccan navy has also been modernized in recent years with mostly French material, including PR-72 and P-92 high-speed patrol boats, Champlain BATRAL amphibian transport, logistic vessels, Floreal class frigates etc. (Echeverria 2007). Alongside Spain and France, Morocco concludes some security and military accords with other countries including Italy, Portugal, Belgium and Austria (Daguzan 1998).

Moroccan–Arab military cooperation

Morocco is linked to Arab countries principally through its membership of the Arab League. Article 6 of the League’s charter states:

> In case of any aggression or threat of aggression by one state against a member-state, the state which has been attacked or threatened with aggression may demand the immediate convocation of the council, which shall by unanimous decision, determine the measures necessary to repulse the aggression.

Accordingly, Morocco has cooperated and supported Arab issues, either during the Arab–Israeli conflict or during some other serious times of tension that may affect the area’s security and stability.
In the framework of this strategic relationship, Morocco sent its military contingents to Egypt in 1967 and to the Golan in 1973 to support Arab armies in their fight against Israel (Saidy 2009–2010, 130). During the October War, the Morocco’s well-equipped troops achieved great exploits despite intense enemy attacks. Their bravery caused the death of many valiant soldiers, including Colonel Abd-el-Kader Allam (El Merini 2014). Afterwards, Morocco sent the second contingent under the command of Colonel Hassan Hatimi to Egypt. This contingent was basically made up of troops who were well trained in using the tactics learned during the Sahara war. The main mission of these units, settled in the Suez Canal, was to defend the rear of the third Egyptian army. Moroccan forces made significant and heroic military achievements in these confrontations. At the end of the war, they withdrew from the front where they had fought for seven months, and returned to Morocco on April 30, 1974 (El Merini 2014).

It is a point of fact that Morocco seeks, through such favourable attitudes toward Arab issues, to gain wide Arab support for its territorial integrity. Hassan II expressed clearly that:

Morocco has, at all times, supported steadfastly the Arab world issues, in general, and the Palestinian cause, in particular. … Today, Moroccans ask for the same support and solidarity of these brotherly countries, as well as their effective deployment of resources, since the colonialists understand only the language of force. (Centre de recherche et d’Etudes Sur les Sociétés Méditerranéennes 1987, p. 126)

In 1985, Morocco granted technical aid to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and its forces were present in that country up to 1996 (Dumas 1992). Similarly, 1500 troops were dispatched to Saudi Arabia during the Gulf War led by the United States against Iraq in response to its invasion of Kuwait in 1991 despite the political cost both within the Arab world in general and among the Moroccan people themselves (Echeverria 1999). These states remained loyal to Morocco. During its war against the POLISARIO, Morocco benefited from a large influx of generous Saudi aid, receiving about US$1 billion per year of military aid from 1979 to 1981, and nearly one-quarter of such assistance the following years. In 1991, Morocco’s debt to Saudi Arabia was written off, a gesture of gratitude for the Moroccan participation in the first US-led war against Iraq (Echeverria 1999).

Recently, Morocco announced that it would increase intelligence and military support to the UAE, ramping up its involvement in the coalition against the so-called Islamic State (IS). This should come as no surprise, as Morocco has been the target of threats by IS and is also keen to maintain its position as a reliable Arab partner and funding recipient for the United States and Gulf powers against terrorism (Sakthivel 2014). This position comes to ‘reinforce long-standing security and military cooperation with Gulf countries, particularly the UAE, which was given new impetus in 2011 after the signing of a strategic partnership agreement between Morocco and several member-countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council’. Such support comes as part of a bilateral military cooperation agreement between the two countries signed in 2006.

Currently, Morocco supports the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in its efforts to defend its national security against the dangerous developments taking place in the Republic of Yemen. Thus, in response to the request of this latter, Morocco decided to join the Arab coalition for the preservation of legitimacy in Yemen.
This support includes putting the royal air forces at the disposal of this coalition, to enable Yemen to get out of the crisis in which it is involved and the bloody situation it is undergoing, and to face any foreign conspiracy against the country and against Arab and Gulf security.20

Participation in peacekeeping operations

Bearing in mind that humanitarian assistance and joint operations are the cornerstones of military diplomacy (Muthanna 2011), Morocco has deployed, since the 1960s, large amounts of personal and material resources in order to restore security and stability in African, Asian and European countries, either under the banner of the United Nations or those led by the NATO alliance. Thus, Morocco has been called upon to take part in diverse peacekeeping operations alongside its regional and international partners.

In fact, the major guidelines of the kingdom’s foreign policy converge largely with the principles and goals of the United Nations, whose aim essentially is to uphold and reinforce peace and security in the whole world. The concept of peace occupies a central place in the kingdom’s new constitution. In this respect:

Considering the imperative to reinforce the role which belongs to it on the international scene, the Kingdom of Morocco, active member within the international organizations, is committed to subscribe to the principles, rights and obligations enounced in their respective characters and conventions; it affirms its attachment to human rights such as they are universally recognized, as well as its will to continue to work to preserve peace and security in the world. […] as well as To protect and promote the mechanisms of human rights and of international humanitarian law and to contribute to their development within their indivisibility and their universality.21

The role of the royal armed forces in international peacekeeping operations is becoming increasingly significant.22 Its contingents are in three main areas: Africa, Asia and Europe (Echeverria 1999). Morocco’s pioneering experience in Africa was in the United Nations mission in the Congo (ONUC), from July 1960 to June 1964, a period in which the Royal Armed Forces (FAR) contributed two battalions, one of infantry and the other of paratroopers (Echeverria 1999) to maintain the territorial integrity and political independence of the Congo, restore peace and prevent the occurrence of civil war. 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 between 1989 and 1996 it had on the ground 15 military observers and 11 members of the civilian police (Echeverria 1999). This mission was set up essentially to support both the government of Angola and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (NUTIA), so as to implement the peace accords which tend to verify the ceasefire arrangements and the disarmament process, observe the electoral process, provide humanitarian aid, and extend the government’s authority over the whole country.

In Somalia, the Royal Armed Forces 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 installations, having sent five military observers prior to the deployment of 1430 troops to serve in the unified intervention force (UNITAF) in December 1992. Morocco also contributed to UNOSOM II from March 1993 to March 1994 (Echeverria 1999). For Hassan II, the Supreme Head of the Royal Armed Forces, the participation in this initiative was part of the African policy of the
Kingdom, and dictated by the duty of solidarity towards all Arab and African countries’ (El Merini 2014, 459).

Morocco also contributed to the UN peacekeeping mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) that began its operations in November 1999. In his speech to the soldiers and officers, Hassan II underlined that Morocco has sent its contingent to the Democratic Republic of the Congo in order to preserve the exceptional place of the Kingdom in the international community, responding favourably to the United Nations demand for defending the principles of Islam, namely, freedom and dignity … . (Al Merini 2014, 468)

After the creation of MINUCI by the Security Council in May 2004 to facilitate the implementation by the Ivorian parties of the peace agreement signed by them in January 2003, Morocco sent 300 soldiers (this number reached 700) to Ivory Coast at the end of May, which joined the French, Senegalese and Bangladeshi soldiers who had already been there. At the end of this operation in May 2006, the Moroccan contingent was rewarded by the United Nations for its outstanding participation (Al Merini 2014) (Table 1).

Beyond Africa, Morocco contributed to the UN mission in Cambodia (UNTAC) between August 1992 and June 1993, with 100 police officers. But its main effort was in Europe, specifically in the Balkans, from where Moroccans have gained considerable experience. Morocco was one of the longest servers in the area, having been under the UN mission (UNPROFOR) and then in NATO’s contingents (IFOR, SFOR and KFOR). In this respect, its continued presence in Bosnia-Herzegovina, as well as its subsequent contribution KFOR in Kosovo, have all provided valuable experience for the Royal Armed Forces in their cooperation with the alliance (Echeverria 1999). It is worth mentioning that Morocco is the only African country to take part in this large-scale European operation (Marsou 2008, 50) in which Morocco demonstrated through its participation in the management of the Bosnia-Herzegovina crisis since 1996 its firm desire to develop effective multilateral military cooperation with NATO and the European Union. Thus, the incorporation of Moroccan officers into Multinational European Union Force headquarters, which replaced NATO’s SFOR in late 2004, may help to reinforce such associative actions in the field of officer training, as well as promoting the idea of interoperability between armies (Marsou 2008). After having worked in a multinational environment and making contact with troops from other nations, the Moroccan soldiers have indubitably learned a new approach in the struggle for peace, particularly in terms of

Table 1. Major participations of Morocco in peacekeeping operations in Africa

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<th>Peacekeeping operations</th>
<th>Deployment</th>
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<td>MONUC (UN mission Congo)</td>
<td>July 1960–June 1964</td>
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<td>UNOSOM I (UN mission in Somalia)</td>
<td>April 1992–March 1993</td>
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<td>UNOSOM II (UN mission in Somalia)</td>
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<td>UNAVIMI II (UN verification in Angola)</td>
<td>May 1991–February 1995</td>
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<td>UNAVIMI III (UN verification in Angola)</td>
<td>February 1995–June 1997</td>
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<td>UNTAC (UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia)</td>
<td>March 1992–September 1993</td>
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<td>MONUC (UN mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo)</td>
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<td>UNOCI (UN mission in Cote d’Ivoire)</td>
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Source: Data are available from the official website of Moroccan Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, foreign affairs—peacekeeping operations, https://www.diplomatie.ma/arab/Politique%C3%A9trang%C3%A8re/ONU/OperationsdeMain tiendelaPaix/tabid/1630/language/en-US/Default.aspx (Arabic version).
its humanitarian dimension. The joint manoeuvres have enabled Moroccan soldiers and officers to take their first steps in learning the rules of international engagement (Marsou 2008).

Morocco also participated in the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), which was established on June 1, 2004, aiming principally to restore a secure and stable environment, to promote the political process, to strengthen Haiti’s government institutions and rule-of-law structures, as well as to promote and protect human rights (Table 2).

Conclusions

A broad set of diplomatic and security issues, if addressed effectively, can contribute largely to promote the efficiency of Moroccan defence diplomacy. Besides the need for intensifying its cooperation with its traditional allies, especially with the United States on a range of regional security matters (Thompson and McCants 2013), Morocco has to enlarge and diversify its relations in this area with other countries of the world, particularly with both the Russian Federation and the Republic of China.

To create favourable conditions for the development of such cooperation, a range of agreements have been already signed, including the Declaration on Strategic Partnership between Morocco and Russia, as well as military–technical cooperation agreement which was concluded on February 9, 2012. The latter could allow Morocco to diversify the sources of arms and obtain access to up-to-date Russian equipment, and, consequently, to reduce the negative impacts of dependency on its traditional suppliers, thereby removing itself from their influence. Recently, the Moroccan–Russian Intergovernmental Commission has revealed the similarity of their positions concerning international and regional issues, including the settlement of conflict in the Middle East and the establishment of the Palestinian state, the peaceful settlement of the conflict using political and diplomatic means, and the fight against terrorism and extremism (Gusterin 2014), as well as many other crucial regional security affairs. Based on such a promising relationship, Morocco has many chances to boost its relations with Russia, particularly to gain its potential support for Morocco’s stance on the Western Sahara issue. Alongside Russia, Morocco has to take the opportunity of boosting its strategic–military relations with China, as long as the African countries visited by high-level Chinese delegations, including Morocco, offer useful insights on the importance China attaches to military relationships (Shinn and Eisenman 2012).

Morocco has also to forge closer military and security ties with Arab countries, since broad regional cooperation is very crucial not only to counter the current security challenges but also to deal with all anticipated dangers and regional troubles that may threaten the safety and stability of the region. At the North African level, the need for common

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<th>Peacekeeping operations</th>
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<td>UNSTAMIH (UN stability in Haiti)</td>
<td>November 2004–March 2006</td>
<td>America</td>
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<td>IFOR (Implementation forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina)</td>
<td>December 1995–December 1996</td>
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<td>SFOR (stability force in Bosnia-Herzegovina)</td>
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<td>KFOR (peacekeeping in Kosovo)</td>
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Source: Data are available from the official website of Moroccan Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, foreign affairs–peacekeeping operations (Arabic version)
defence and security cooperation is, in fact, inherent in the main objectives of the treaty establishing the Arab Maghreb Union, particularly in Article 14 which states that ‘Any aggression against a member State is considered as an aggression towards other member States’. Yet, at the time of writing, such defence cooperation is still frozen, particularly because of the ongoing sharp differences between Morocco and Algeria on the Western Sahara issue and border disputes, among many other things.23

However, the dangerous security outcomes of the so-called ‘Arab Spring’ in the Sahel and Maghreb region, particularly after the collapse of the Libyan state and the unprecedented increase in transnational security threats coming from the coast and the desert, call the Maghreb states as well as all other African ones to cooperate fully in countering the common internal and external security threats, since each country’s defence is inseparably linked to that of its neighbouring countries. In this context, Morocco would take a leading role in coordinating such regional and sub-regional security cooperation initiatives, based upon its deep, decades-long, and unique military and non-military experience that has accumulated from the north-western African country’s terrain. Morocco should continue not only to provide effective training and military support but also to focus largely on all human insecurity aspects which dramatically feed and fuel conflicts and tensions in these fragile areas.

Notes

1. The origin of the term ‘defence diplomacy’ lies in the Strategic Defence Review carried out by the UK in 1998. Bearing in mind the changing nature of military cooperation, and aiming at getting out the most of this instrument, the UK coined the phrase to describe all activities carried out in favour of peace and stability by its armed forces and other Ministry of Defence organisms. It included activities directly linked to defence and security in Europe and around the world, especially in support of the Commonwealth. The term caught on among other leading countries and the concept is now widely perceived among these nations as an important instrument for global peace and security (see Defence Diplomacy Plan, Ministerio de Defensa, January 2012).

2. Moroccan military policy remains within the reserved domain of the king, who is Supreme Head of the Royal Armed Forces and President of the Superior Council Security, created by the new constitution. According to the latter, the bill of texts relative to military domain as well as the declaration of war are deliberated by the Council of ministers (Art. 49). This article gives the king, as president of this council, broad discretionary powers in all matters relating to defence policy-making. His constitutional position, either in the 2011 Constitution or in all preceding ones, also gives him the power to weigh in on all strategic internal and external politics of the kingdom. To know more about Moroccan military decision process-making, see Elhouaidaoui (2003).

3. To know more about the general Defence Diplomacy’s objectives, see, for example, Defence Diplomacy Plan, Ministerio de Defensa, January 2012.

4. US Congress members had pointed out many times that Morocco broke the bilateral military agreement signed between the two sides in 1960, which organized the final use of arms sold to morocco.

5. The source of these figures is from the State Department, Congressional Budget Justification for Foreign Operations, FY2010–14.

6. For more details about the functional categories of the TSCTP, see Wamer (2014).

8. Apart from the annual plan of action, six projects were developed at the heart of the initiative: Regional Virtual Center for Maritime traffic; 5+5 Defense School, a French proposal for the joint training of staff at three levels which became operational in October 2008 in France; Euro Maghreb Center for Strategic Researches and Studies for Western Mediterranean, with headquarters in Tunisia; a training centre for humanitarian demining; the contribution of the armed forces to the protection of civilians in disasters; and cooperation in search and rescue issues.

9. In this respect, the Spanish embassy in Rabat is used as the main diplomatic channel for NATO for all matters relating to this Mediterranean initiative.

10. For more about the disputes existing between the two states, see Boudchiche Baoucetta (2008).

11. See Draft Law no. 3276 that authorizes the application of the agreement between the French and Moroccan governments with regard to the state of their armed forces. See the report by Jean Roatta (2007) for the French Foreign Affairs Commission, February 6 (Roatta 2007, p. 7).

12. See Draft Law no. 3276.

13. See Draft Law no. 3276.

14. See Draft Law no. 3276.

15. See Draft Law no. 3276, p. 8.

16. See Draft Law no. 3276, pp. 7–12.

17. See Article 6 of the Character of the Arab League, signed on March 22, 1945.


19. For more details about the reasons and the consequences of Morocco’s participation in this Coalition, see Saddiki (2015).


23. For instance, instead of creating a common regional approach to counterterrorism in the region, the Algerian authority refrained from inviting Morocco to participate in the establishment of the so-called Joint Operational General Staff Committee in Tamanrasset in 2010. Thus, any regional collective security and defence initiative seems to be impeded by such serious obstacles.

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