



# Dramatic Shifts: Interpreting Morocco's Diplomatic Alteration towards Israel through the Eyes of Defensive Realism

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## ABSTRACT

Abraham Accord, supported by the United States, marked a dramatic shift in the Middle East and North Africa in December 2020. Several Arab states, including Morocco, were involved in the pacification process to establish diplomatic relations with Israel because they persistently resisted Israel and supported Palestine's quest for freedom. Given that Morocco faces many external and internal challenges, its position is unfortunately in constant danger. Not confined to problems related to water scarcity, climate change, and underdeveloped agricultural sectors, Morocco faces the growing threat of Algeria. Morocco's relations with France also deteriorate due to the scandals of using espionage software. In this article, I analyze why Morocco normalized its diplomatic relations with Israel using the defensive-realist arguments provided by Mearsheimer. Mearsheimer argues that countries utilize power for the sake of their survival. Hence, I hold a view that Morocco's participation in the accord is to neutralize the threats it is facing for the sake of its survival. Using the qualitative method, I discovered that the aforementioned challenges prompted Morocco to enact diplomatic relations normalization with Israel.

## KEYWORDS

Abraham Accord; Defensive-Realism; Diplomatic Relations; Dramatic Shift; Morocco

## INTRODUCTION

Since the end of the First World War, which involved several powerful countries from numerous regions, there has been a significant power shift in the regions occupied by the losing side. One of the regions is the Middle East, whose hegemonic actor was the Ottoman Empire for centuries. In the ensuing combat, the empire was utterly crushed and had to concede many areas to the Allied Forces. The Allied Forces, consisting of some of Europe's most powerful nations, such as France and England, divided the areas the Ottoman Empire once occupied in the Middle East. England was given a mandate in Palestine, while Syria was under French rule. These two areas, under separate controls, once belonged to the same province in the Ottoman Empire ([Yakoubi, 2022](#)).

Palestine was a strategic foothold for the emerging Zionist movement in Europe and under the British control at that time. The declaration of Balfour, facilitated by the British government, became an evident source of the Jewish mobilization to Palestine ([Nurjannah & Fakhruddin, 2019](#)). This would eventually cause constant controversies among Arab states, in particular after the end of the Second World War and the internationally recognized independence of Israel in 1948. Unwilling to accept the independence of such a nation, various Arab states were engaged in battles to annihilate the country but ultimately lost. One of the chiefly responsible countries in the battles was Egypt, which, in the end, normalized its diplomatic relations with Israel in the 1970s ([Abadi, 2019](#)).

In the contemporary era, the region saw one of the most significant alterations when several Arab states, Morocco, Sudan, and the United Arab Emirates, got involved in the Abraham Accord with Israel ([Jewish Virtual Library, 2020](#)). The accord, facilitated by the United States of America, was to render peace possible in the region. Through this accord, the aforementioned Arab states agreed to normalize their diplomatic relations with Israel. It is sufficient to say that this accord is one of the most dramatic shifts in the geopolitical relations in the region, as previously, Arab states were the actors that adamantly resisted the Israeli existence in the region. It was done in order to support the oppressed Palestinian state. Due to the religious and cultural similarities, Arab states constantly rallied support for the independence of Palestine. However, unorthodox turns occurred when this accord took place in December 2020 ([US Department of State, 2021](#)). Not only did they normalize diplomatic relations with Israel, but they also recognized Israel's independence through this accord.

One of the Arab states that got involved in the 2020 accord with Israel was Morocco. Located in the northern-western part of Africa, Morocco is a country that France and Spain once occupied. Morocco's involvement in the accord was motivated by its own survival against the emerging new threat externally and internally. This is evident from the colonial histories of the country. Morocco encounters threats from Polisario rebels in Western Sahara ([Ariyati, 2020](#)). The Moroccan government and the separatist forces have perennially disputed this area. This is because France once occupied the current Moroccan government's

territory, and Spain occupied that of Polisario rebels. Moreover, the undisputable presence of abundant natural resources in Western Sahara to support Moroccan industries is of paramount substance. In order to resolve the threats, Morocco necessitates America's role. Such help would only be obtained through Abraham's accord, as explicated priorly.

In this article, I analyze the motivation of Morocco behind the normalization of its diplomatic ties with Israel. Internal menaces, such as the Polisario rebels in Western Sahara and America's role in the Abraham Accord, prompted Morocco to normalize its diplomatic relations with Israel. I also argue that such steps taken by Morocco are for its survival in the geopolitically changing region. The arguments that I present are best suited to be explained through the scope of the defensive-realist point of view as argued by John Mearsheimer.

Defensive realism argues that countries exercise power in the international system to guarantee their survival. Excessive pursuit of power by a country will coerce other countries into doing so, hence causing endless conflicts among states. Morocco utilizes the opportunity created by this to garner America's support to neutralize its internal menace. If Morocco loses the area to the separatist forces, Morocco will lose valuable natural resources like Uranium, Titanium, and Vanadium. This will prove difficult for the national economy and industry. This is crucial for Morocco since the current international demands are transforming into climate-friendly industries, reducing dependence on oil and focusing on using alternative energy sources. Diversifying economic sectors is also the key to the country's survival. Without Western Sahara under Moroccan control, this diversification will encounter defiant challenges. This can be seen from Morocco's position as the 123<sup>rd</sup> biggest oil producer globally. Regarding oil reserves, Morocco is 97<sup>th</sup> globally ([Worldometers, 2016](#)).

Agreeing to normalize its diplomatic ties with Israel signifies obtaining America's support and access to the necessary weapons to fight the rebels. Hence, using the logic of defensive realism, actions enacted by Morocco are, at its core, dedicated to its own defense and survival, which is similar to my previous arguments. From my previous explication, Morocco's survival heavily hinges on the ensuing accord. Morocco will obtain what is necessary to neutralize the menace that it is encountering at the moment. Hence, the question that I shall answer in this discussion is, "*What position do the defensive realist interpretations, according to Mearsheimer's argument, have to say regarding Morocco's decision to normalize diplomatic relations with Israel?*".

This article will serve to fill the gaps of the previous studies, since they only focus on the Abraham Accord. This is evident in what Pasztor writes. He only points out the significance of the normalization, not emphasizing on the survival motivation of Morocco ([Pasztor, 2022](#)). Besides, this study was published in 2022. This study did not include crucial events such as the deterioration of diplomatic relation of Morocco and France. In addition, although Morocco normalized its diplomatic relations with Israel, this development has



never been analyzed using Mearsheimer's argument of defensive-realism, which I shall further discuss in the literature review section.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

[Abdiel \(2020\)](#), in *"Individual Foreign Policy Analysis of Donald Trump: A Case Study of the U.S. Embassy relocation to Jerusalem,"* argues that America is the chief supporter of Israel. In the article, he states that America regularly donated weapons and necessary instruments for Israel's self-defense ([Abdiel, 2020](#)). He also stresses that the mounting support of America towards Israel peaked when America recognized Jerusalem as the capital city of Israel instead of Tel Aviv. The colossal support of the U.S. towards Israel gave birth to yet another controversy in the region since this city has been the subject of a tremendous and perennial dispute between Israel and Palestine. Palestine considers this to be its capital city since historically Jerusalem was conquered by Muslims centuries ago. Conversely, Israel considers this its real capital city instead of Tel Aviv. This was based on the historical fact of the founding of the country, which can be traced back thousands of years.

[Farrel and Newman \(2012\)](#), in *"Weaponized Interdependence: How Global Economic Networks Shape State Coercion,"* argue that the power distribution in the international system is asymmetrical. There are countries with less power and influence and those with more power and influence. They further demonstrate that countries with more power and influence tend to weaponize them. This is evident from America's SWIFT, an international payment system solely developed by America. Using this, America can access any information it deems important to track certain transactions. America can also block access to this, which can be seen in Iran's case when this country could not access SWIFT due to the failed nuclear treaty with America, enraging thousands of international or national corporations operating in Iran. They refer to this capability as the panopticon and chokepoint effect, the very capability of accessing information exclusively or limiting and even restricting some actors from accessing the required information. Farrel and Newman's argument is useful in understanding Morocco's current condition. America, with its abundant power in terms of weapons sales, has become a preferred producer and seller for countries around the world. This is due to the extensive technological development that the country has. With its optimal weapons quality and advanced technologies, many Arab states, for example, Saudi Arabia, were and are the preferred clients of the USA, including Morocco.

The power distribution in terms of weaponry is asymmetrical, meaning that some countries are less developed, and some are more developed. America, with its most advanced weaponry, weaponizes this to indirectly coerce Morocco into making peace with Israel. Welcoming the accord facilitated by America finally opened its access to weaponry for Morocco, enabling it to purchase necessary weapons to neutralize its threat. This is evident from the deal made by the two countries, which is worth 1 million U.S. dollars after

the accord was made ([Sicca, 2020](#)). Such a strategy is the chokepoint strategy employed by America, limiting and opening access to those whom America finds necessary.

[Mearsheimer \(2001\)](#), in *The Tragedy of Great Powers Politics*, argues that defensive realism holds that power should be instrumentalized as the tool for survival only ([Mearsheimer, 2001](#)). Mearsheimer points out that excessive pursuit of power by any country would mean that every country will do the same, causing security dilemmas. On the other hand, offensive realism is an antonymous version of this. While defensive realism emphasizes using power as the tool of survival, offensive realism argues that countries should and must pursue power at any time. Power should be used to conquer others to neutralize potential threats.

The argument of Mearsheimer can be understood in Sauer's *The Origins of the Ukraine Crisis and the Need for Collective Security between Russia and the West* (2017), in which he argues that Russia's aggressive action against NATO was verily provoked by the constant pursuit of power by NATO itself ([Sauer, 2017](#)). Sauer argues that this stems from Russia's willingness to join NATO shortly after the fall of the Soviet Union. However, this amiable request was profoundly refuted by America. After such an event, NATO began expanding by adding numerous new state members, which silently enraged Russia. Another factor contributing to the enmity is NATO's unauthorized bombings in the Balkans that hurt Russia's feelings. Fearing such a treacherous menace, Russia began to act aggressively by invading Georgia in 2008 and by going as far as annexing Ukraine's Crimea in 2014 ([Biersack & O'lear, 2014](#)). According to the defensive-realist interpretation, Russia's aggressivity was provoked by constant competition for power in the region and the impossibility of incorporating Russia as one of the parts of the alliance. This, in turn, leaves Russia with no choice but to defend itself from any potential threats. Despite this, Sauer's argument in reflecting that of Mearsheimer is only circumvented to discussing the antagonizing relation of Russia and Ukraine due to the constantly colossal expansion of NATO. His argument, however, is applicable when it comes to understanding the motivation of Morocco in the diplomatic relations normalization process with Israel. Morocco is motivated by its desire to survive due to the increasing aggressivity of its neighbor, Algeria. Both countries have been engaged in a plethora of political conflicts since the inception of their respective independences.

Despite a plethora of previous literature that discussed the emergence of this normalization of diplomatic relations between Arab states and Israel, they only concentrate on Arab states that participated in the accord or the United Arab Emirates, not giving specific emphasis on Morocco and not using the defensive realism argument as proposed in this research. This is evident from Kurd's *The Paradox of Peace: The Impact of Normalization with Israel on the Arab World* (2023). He argues that, according to the illiberal peace concept, despite the normalization efforts of various Arab states, it only strengthened the authoritarian rules of certain Arab countries ([El Kurd, 2023](#)). He further argues that



diplomatic ties opened endless opportunities for cooperation, particularly in technological cooperation. In the end, it allowed Israel to transfer their technologies to new Arab countries. Kurd argues that, on the other side, this would ameliorate states' repressive actions, as they control access to all technologies. He exemplified this from the Bahraini government, which forbade Palestine-related activism since the Abraham Accord took place.

Another article that discusses similar topics, such as "*From Foes to Friends: The Normalization of the United,*" is by [Baqi \(2022\)](#). In the article, he argues that the enmity between the UEA and Israel was durable. However, that became radically altered when this Abraham Accord took place. He emphasizes that the common interest of self-protection provoked this. The UEA needed technology from Israel. On the other hand, Israel needed to secure an alliance with Arab states against the treacherous Iranian threat towards it. [Sundari et al. \(2023\)](#) *Israel's Foreign Policy Interests in Normalizing Relations with the Middle East* show that this normalization was motivated by changes in Israel's national interests. They mentioned that Israel wanted to tighten its grip on the region by creating official representations in Arab states that are involved in the accord. They also stress that this normalization would benefit Israel, as Israel would have definite access to investment from wealthy countries such as the UEA. This would benefit the technological development of the country as well.

The defensive-realist perspective will be useful in understanding why Morocco, motivated by its survival, normalized its diplomatic relations with the country it swore to fight. Concomitantly, Morocco is facing both external and internal menace. Such internal menaces are water scarcity, and the fact that Morocco necessitates help from America to quell the Polisario rebellion in the west-Sahara, but on the other side, Morocco is encountering a radically changing geopolitical condition. The use of such a theory can be justified by Morocco's hostility against Algeria, which continues to worsen since Algeria shut down its diplomatic ties with Morocco back in 2021 ([Haden & Harr-Siebenlist, 2023](#)). Not to mention, Morocco also has problem regarding its citizens in France due to the new restriction by the French government. Thus, Morocco is constantly encircled by colossal and treacherous menaces. Thus, the use of Mearsheimer's argument in this article is to provide a particular emphasis that normalizing such diplomatic relations with Israel is seen as the sole solution amid a plethora of dangers Morocco is encountering.

This article shall contribute to the further comprehension of the motivations that provoked Morocco to enact the normalization of diplomatic ties with Israel according to the principles and ideas of defensive realism. It will also advance the use of defensive-realist arguments in diplomatic initiatives to maintain power, which helps study the states' behavior concerning this kind of issue. It is also important to point out that this research will demonstrate the connections the concepts of the Panopticon and the Chokepoint effect have with the defensive-realist argument. In addition, this article will provide an in-depth understanding of the geopolitical changes in the region.

## METHODS

This article employs qualitative methods. In explaining the data, I use concise yet argumentative paragraphs ([Sugiyono, 2013](#)). The use of qualitative method is of paramount importance. This method will allow the use of extensively argumentative paragraphs to analyze the phenomena based on the data that I obtain according to the theory employed in this research. In order to accumulate the data, I use the library research method. It is a method that hinges on collecting the necessary data through articles and scientific journals available online ([Suharsimi, 2006](#)). The library method will allow me to collect pivotal data, be it qualitative or quantitative data in a shorter amount of time ([Mas' oed, 1994](#)). This library research will also allow me to gaze upon the previous studies conducted in the similar topic and will allow me to fill the gap.

## DISCUSSION

### **Abraham Accord: A New Dawn of Diplomatic Era**

Before the advent of the Abraham Accord, Arab states had been perennially engaged in a plethora of conflicts against Israel, rendering the region chaotic, diminishing the hope for peaceful coexistence of people with different religious backgrounds. In addition, various Arab states, prior to this accord, profoundly refuted the existence of Israel. However, that took a dramatic turn when America, under Trump's administration, initiated a peace project among Arab states with Israel in January 2020. This is evident from what Trump said regarding this. He states *"Thanks to the great courage of the leaders of these three countries, we take a major stride toward a future in which people of all faiths and backgrounds live together in peace and prosperity."* ([US Department of State, 2021](#)).

The USA became a considerable actor in the creation of such an accord. In addition to creating peace and an amiable sphere in the region, this accord can be understood as a form of America's national interest securitization. What I mean by that is America was and is still facing double threats. Arab states are the top clients in America. This can be seen from the UEA, the first country to sign a peace treaty with Israel in the accord. The UEA ranks sixth overall regarding military expenditures globally ([International Trade Administration, 2023](#)). In 2021, after the accord, the UEA purchased F-35 fighter jets, armed drones, and other unmanned weapons from America that are worth 23 billion Dollars ([Zangerle, 2021](#)). The staggering amount of weapon sales makes it the strategic U.S. partner in the region. On the other hand, due to the unavailability of diplomatic ties with Israel, there is a higher chance that this would debilitate America's grip on the region. Other factors, such as Iran's threat, also prompted the U.S. to be the mediator in the accord, uniting Arab states and Israel against their common enemies.

Sudan would then follow this on October 23, 2020, which agreed to open diplomatic relations and recognize the independence of Israel in the region ([Jewish Virtual Library, 2020](#)). Subtly similar to Morocco's case, Sudan's involvement in the accord was motivated by

the ultimate threat to the country's survival. This was due to the recent independence of South Sudan from Sudan. The civil war in the country significantly debilitated the government economically. This would then coerce Sudan into accepting America's proposal of giving economic assistance by agreeing to such a normalization with Israel. Then, on December 10, 2020, Morocco became the following country to normalize diplomatic relations with Israel. This resulted in imminent America's recognition of Western Sahara, which has long been disputed against the Polisario rebels ([Ariyati, 2020](#)).

A new era of diplomatic relations in the region is dawning. With more and more Arab states that have recognized Israel's sovereignty, the Palestinian authority considered this to be a form of betrayal towards the Palestinian struggle to obtain complete independence. A survey was conducted by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research to comprehend Palestinians' views on this matter. 80% of the respondents expressed that this normalization was a form of insult and betrayal ([Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, 2020](#)). Hamas also commented on this issue, stating that Arab States should continue the anti-normalization issue. Such a normalization would serve Zionist regional interests ([Holmes, 2020](#)). Hence, the situation proves more difficult for the Palestinian Authority to gain complete independence due to this change.

However, despite the diplomatic relations normalization, enacted by Morocco with Israel, the Moroccans protested the step taken by their government. In November 2023, a massive protest in Casablanca erupted ([Shamala, 2023](#)). This was due to the intensive attack in October 2023 carried out by Israel against Palestine, which has already consumed countless lives. The Moroccans demanded that the government annulate the normalization process. Despite the colossal protest, the government still shows no sign of abating. In April 2024, Abdul Rahman Zankad, a Moroccan demonstrator against the normalization, was arrested by the Moroccan police and was given five-year prison sentence ([Agencies, 2024](#)).

### **Understanding Morocco's Survival Motivation**

Morocco officially recognized Israel's independence in December 2020 and since then has opened diplomatic relations with Israel. This significantly alters Morocco's political stance. Prior to this normalization of diplomatic relations, Morocco has always been a consistent supporter of Palestine's independence. Similar things to other Arab countries that agreed to open diplomatic relations with Israel at the end of 2020. However, this alteration leaves us with more questions than a definite answer: Why does Morocco act so? What motivates it to enact this alteration? Does Morocco perceive that the constant support for Palestine is not viable anymore for its interests? This section is dedicated to analyzing and arguing answers that are posed in this research.





Figure 1. Map of Morocco. Source: [Barbour & Miller \(2024\)](#)

### Great Power and Morocco's Interest

Mearsheimer perceives that hegemonic actors in an international system tend to have lingering effects on countries that do not possess as much power as the hegemonic actors do. He further points out that these hegemonic actors influence how the international system works. This can be seen in many countries that tend to follow the leadership of these actors, falling into their sphere of influence. Mearsheimer's argument, for example, can be seen when America won the Second World War, rendering it potent. A plethora of international agreements are based on America's interests, for example, the founding of the Breton Woods system, which establishes the use of the dollar in international trade, the propagation of liberal ideas, and so forth ([Sørensen et al., 2013](#)).

Morocco's step towards normalizing its diplomatic relations with Israel is to adapt to the regional great power, which is America. America exercises excellent influence, particularly in the Middle East and North Africa. This can be comprehended when America became the preferred supplier of weapons and arsenals of Saudi Arabia and its allies during the invasion of Yemen ([Nainggolan, 2020](#)). During the early phases of the invasion, America

supplied Arab states with countless sophisticated weapons and military vehicles to drive off the Houthi rebels, neutralizing the regional threat.

Instrumentalizing its regionally hegemonic position, America employs the chokepoint effect, giving access and revoking it to those whom America deems crucial to America's interest in the region. We can see this in Morocco's case, in which, shortly after the agreement, the American government agreed to conduct weapon sales that are worth 1 million dollars at the end of 2020 and at the very beginning of 2021. Morocco purchased unmanned drones, several fighter jets, and more from the U.S. ([Kompas, 2020](#)).

In August 2022, Morocco set a new deal with the U.S. government to purchase other weapons necessary for national defense. Kasraoui, in August 2022, wrote that the deal between the two countries potentially reached 141.1 million U.S. dollars ([Kasraoui, 2022b](#)). Morocco would purchase Multifunctional Information Distribution System Joint Tactical Radio Systems (MIDS) through the deal. This will allow Morocco to exchange military information and intelligence more secretly. In addition, Morocco also purchased additional equipment to ensure a secure line of military communication, cryptographic devices, and some sort of software and hardware to sustain this classified communication ([Kasraoui, 2022b](#)).

The weapon sales give Morocco colossal opportunities to upgrade its defense sector. Again, in August 2023, Morocco brokered another deal with the U.S. government, Joint Stand-Off Weapons (JSOW). The deal reached a staggering amount of 250 million dollars ([Reuters, 2023](#)). Through the deal, Morocco purchased weapons such as dummy air training missiles, captive flight vehicles, containers, mission planning, munitions storage security, and many more. The report made by America also suggests that Morocco intends to use the missiles bought from America on its F-16 jet fighters. This will enhance the fighters' capability when in combat.

Morocco's movement toward the re-establishment of diplomatic ties with Israel as to obtain access to America's sophisticated weapons. Morocco is using this normalization issue to further its defense interest. It is evident because Morocco purchased 90% of its weapons from America. It purchased the rest from France and other countries ([Kasraoui, 2022b](#)). The colossal portion of the U.S. in the Moroccan weaponry renders it dependent on America in terms of weaponry.

This also can be seen from the deteriorating relations with France since 2021. France was one of Morocco's strategic partners until the espionage scandal occurred in August 2021. The Moroccan government is known to have been involved in espionage software called Pegasus on several high-ranking French officials, including Emmanuel Macron the president of France. This incident was precipitated by the diplomatic incident between both countries back in 2021. France restricted the number of Moroccan immigrants that are permitted to stay in France. This diplomatic incident alienated both countries. In 2023, for example, despite being hit by an earthquake, Morocco refused to accept humanitarian aids

from France. This refusal further ignited latent conflicts between both countries, which would result in such an event in the discussion. Pegasus can extract sensitive information from text messages and phone calls from the Pegasus-infected devices (RTS, 2023). This, in turn, led to the deterioration of relations with France (TV5Monde, 2021). It is evident from the statement made by Laurent Richard, the director of Forbidden Stories, a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving free speech among oppressed journalists. He stated:

*“On a trouvé ces numéros de téléphone, mais on n’a pas pu faire d’enquête technique évidemment sur le téléphone d’Emmanuel Macron” pour vérifier s’il a été infecté par ce logiciel et donc “cela ne nous dit pas si le président a été réellement espionné” (RTS, 2021) (English: “We have found the list of the phone numbers, but we could not verify whether this software has infected Emmanuel Macron’s phone number. We cannot clarify that the president has been spied on.”<sup>1</sup>*

This Pegasus scandal has caused tension with Morocco and France, not to mention Israel's involvement in the process. Israel is known to have developed the software to conduct this espionage, giving Morocco access to the software. In addition, France's neutral stance towards Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara further deteriorates the diplomatic relations. Morocco demanded that its allies give unwavering support, calling for Moroccan sovereignty over the region (Elbasri, 2023). Other countries, such as Germany, agree to assist Morocco regarding this issue. On the other hand, France demands that the problem be solved peacefully. Morocco considers France's demand to be unsupportive towards the interest. This resulted in Morocco's refusal to accept France's aid when the country was hit by a massive earthquake in 2023 (Elbasri, 2023).

The deteriorating diplomatic relations with France are one motive that drove Morocco to augment its dependency on America. Through the accord to which Morocco has agreed, Morocco is trying to find and enlarge its sources of weaponry, aiming at its survival in the region. This is evident from the increasing weapons sales from America after the accord was conducted and after the change in diplomatic relations with France. This has left Morocco with no choice but to accept and fall under America's chokepoint strategy, as America is the only viable option as the great power in the region willing to help the country. Hence, using Mearsheimer's logic of defensive realism, Morocco considers America to be the ideal choice to augment its national security problem after a plethora of problems it experienced in the region.

### **Geopolitical Competition in the Region**

Another driving factor is the geopolitical competition in the region, particularly with Algeria and the dispute in the Western Sahara region. Algeria and Morocco are two countries in Africa that France once occupied. Decades after the end of the Second World War, France

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<sup>1</sup> I wrote the English translation myself since I can understand French; it is essential to this article.

decided to retire its forces from the region, giving Morocco and Algeria independence. After that, Spain decided to retire its forces from the Western Sahara region. Prior to this, Morocco supported the liberation of Algeria from France.

However, that eventually altered when both countries gained independence from the colonizers. They were engaged in a dispute of two areas, namely Béchar and Tindouf, two areas bordering the two countries ([Pavia et al., 2022](#)). In 1962, 1 year after the independence of Algeria, Morocco and Algeria were engaged in a military conflict, namely The Sand War, to dispute the sovereignty over the areas. In 1975, when Spain announced that it would leave Western Sahara, Algeria supported the independence of Western Sahara, challenging Morocco's sovereignty over the area ([de Orellana, 2009](#)).

This condition persists until today. In November 2020, approximately one month prior to the signing of the accord, the Moroccan military entered Guerguerat, a demilitarized zone. The locals of Western Sahara saw this as a breach of the cease-fire treaty and called for the U.N. to solve the problem. Shortly after, Morocco signed the Abraham Accord in December 2020, becoming the motivation to reclaim the area. Algeria protested that the U.S. proclaimed Morocco's sovereignty over Western Sahara after the accord's signing. It exacerbated the tension between the two countries. Moreover, Morocco was known to have utilized spy software, Pegasus, not just towards French officials, but also to Algerian officials ([Abderrahmane, 2025](#)).

Ultimately, in August 2021, Algeria cut all diplomatic relations with its neighboring country, Morocco. It resulted in Algeria banning Morocco from using its air space a month later. Morocco is in quite a calamitous condition since Algeria refused to renew the contract of oil transport with Morocco, from which Morocco regularly obtained 7% of its national revenues. Algeria would transport its oil through pipes to Spain and other European countries, passing Morocco.

Another interesting fact is the arms race between the two countries. After the independence of both countries and the ensuing conflict dispute in some areas, they have already engaged in a prolonged arms race. In 2020, Algeria spent 9.7 billion dollars to purchase weapons before the Abraham Accord. 70% of its purchase was from Russia. In contrast, Morocco only spent 4.8 billion dollars in 2020 ([Pavia et al., 2022](#)). Since Morocco has enacted a deal of peace agreement with Israel, this will catalyze Morocco's supplies of weaponry, as explicated previously.

In addition, the two countries' competition today is also backed by great powers' competition in the region. While the greater portion of Algeria's weaponry was purchased from Russia, Morocco obtained it from America. America even calls Morocco the most strategic non-NATO ally. It is evident from the fact that after the successful event of pacifying Morocco with Israel, Morocco served as the strong foothold for America against the rising power of China and Russia in the region. This competition for power in the region is due to Algeria's closer position with Russia.

Moreover, Morocco is also motivated by abundant natural resources in the Western Sahara region. Western Sahara contains necessary resources such as phosphates and shale gas, which are the nuclear elements for global food production. These natural resources are paramount to securing food supplies. Other factors include the plan to construct a 1-billion-dollar port in the coastal area of Western Sahara, namely Dakhla. This port holds great substance for Morocco because the Atlantic coast of Western Sahara possesses abundant natural gas resources, rendering it essential for Morocco's economic advancement ([Jacobs, 2020](#)). However, these areas are off-limits due to the ongoing conflict with the disputing factions over the area. Morocco will exploit the natural gas resources, and Dakhla will serve as the hub to enhance the country's maritime economy.

The key point is that the first one is the imminent threat from Algeria, which has long been Morocco's rival. By normalizing diplomatic relations with Israel, Morocco will be given definite protection from any menaces posed by its rival. The second one is to win the long-standing arms race against Algeria. This is evident because Morocco's normalization with Israel has allowed it to purchase more and more weapons from the U.S., increasing its purchasing budget. The third one is the geopolitical competition of great powers. Using the chokepoint strategy, America tried to recruit Morocco to fend off the incoming and rising superpowers such as Russia and China. The fourth one is the dispute of Western Sahara. By agreeing to such a normalization, Morocco has granted itself the direct and definite support of the U.S., one of the hegemonic actors in the disputed region. Morocco necessitates abundant natural resources from the region for its interests.

### **Cooperation with Israel: A Colossal Advantage for Morocco**

The economic sector, which is substantial for Morocco's national interest is also the driving factor of the normalization. [Link \(2022\)](#), in "A Gateway to Africa? Economic Opportunities in Israel-Morocco Relations," argues that the Abraham Accord in 2020 opened up multiple opportunities for Morocco to enact economic cooperation with Israel ([Link, 2022](#)). He stresses that Morocco heavily hinges on the agricultural sector, the sector that contributes the most to the national economy. Despite this, Morocco faces many challenges from its agricultural sector, including vulnerability to climate change. This is because Morocco's agricultural methods are highly dependent on traditional methods, causing problems in the current days. [Link \(2022\)](#) then demonstrates that this is reflected in the data released by the World Bank. Morocco is categorized as a country with low productivity in terms of the agricultural sector. This, in turn, will have a number of lingering impacts on the national economy.

On the other hand, in the region of MENA<sup>2</sup>, Israel has become the leading country in the sector. In recent years, Israel has become an international player in the agricultural sector, with the national export of agriculture-related products reaching as high as 1.9 billion

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<sup>2</sup> MENA stands for Middle East and North Africa. Morocco belongs to one of the countries located in the region.



U.S. dollars in 2019 ([Link, 2022](#)). It has successfully developed its agricultural sector by producing necessary chemicals and fertilizers. One of the grandiose achievements of Israel's agricultural sector is creating the capability to convert arid desert lands into arable lands. One can see this from the extensive use of greenhouses in the country, which provides farmers with stark agricultural capabilities in the middle of the desert ([Mitnick, 2022](#)). This was, in fact, motivated by Israel's program of self-reliance. The newly created state of Israel was invaded by its neighboring Arab countries, refusing the country's existence. It, in turn, resulted in a chronic food shortage in the country. Left with no other choice, Israel focused on developing its agricultural sector. In addition to converting arid desert lands into arable lands, Israel also developed a sophisticated water irrigation that allows farmers to obtain an unlimited water supply for their plantations ([Tal, 2007](#)). Hence, this program profoundly contributed to the country's success in the sector.

The agricultural sector of Israel is one of the most substantial factors that unconsciously motivated Morocco to normalize its diplomatic ties with the country. Morocco, driven by its urgent agricultural necessities, necessitates information to modernize its agricultural sector. The information I found on the website of Data Privacy Framework. It is a website created by the cooperation of the E.U., Switzerland, the U.K., and the USA to facilitate transatlantic commerce. This website gives valuable information for business owners who would like to invest in certain countries that fall under the category set by the website. This website gives robust information concerning the countries' potential and economy in transatlantic commerce. The program states that Morocco's agricultural sector is entirely traditional ([Privacy Shield, 2023](#)). It further states that Morocco uses only a limited number of fertilizers and chemicals. It proves challenging to ameliorate the sector. In addition, the increasing land prices prove to be a colossal obstacle, hindering the development progress. Another factor that contributes to this is the inherited land status. This, in turn, leaves the politicians and policymakers with the most challenging choice of modernizing the agricultural system.

Thus, when this article was written in September 2023, Mohammad Sadiki, the current Moroccan agricultural minister, brokered a new deal with Israel concerning the agricultural sector ([Rahhou, 2023](#)). The deal aims to construct a knowledge-sharing hub of both countries to improve the sector's quality. The construction of this knowledge-sharing hub of both countries as a way in which Morocco can obtain the necessary information to ameliorate its sector. Morocco needs to learn to modernize its agricultural sector from Israel's already modernized agricultural sector. Modernizing the sector will be extremely useful to Morocco, as it will alleviate the poverty caused by this underperformed sector, bolster the national economy, etc.

Agriculture-related information sharing is also of paramount importance for Morocco. Morocco aims to be the most influential country in the African Free Trade Continental Area, which encompasses almost all African countries. [Link \(2022\)](#) discovers that Morocco's export



to this free trade was only 7.7% of its total exports in 2020. [Link \(2022\)](#) then argues that having successfully obtained the necessary information from Israel, particularly concerning the agricultural sector, Morocco would like to take advantage of this to influence the agricultural sector in Africa. Thus, this will render Morocco potent in terms of this sector.

Morocco also encounters water scarcity problems. This is due to the geographical condition of the country. World Bank states that Morocco is located in a region that is profoundly affected by climate change. This converts it into the most water-stressed region on the planet ([World Bank, 2023](#)). In 2030, if this problem is not addressed quickly, the country's water supply is expected to worsen, reaching the threshold of 500 cubic meters of water per person. What does this information tell us? Referring to Wästerström's *Global Water Stress Indices: An Example of Industrial Usage* (2016), she sets a threshold related to the water supply using the Annual Renewable Water Supply per Person standard. The threshold was established by a worldwide survey conducted in 2000.

Table 1. Water Scarcity Threshold

| Level   | Score in cubic meter per year | Assessment       |
|---------|-------------------------------|------------------|
| Level 1 | > 4000                        | Abundant         |
| Level 2 | 1700 - 4000                   | Sufficient       |
| Level 3 | 1000 - 1700                   | Stress           |
| Level 4 | 500 - 1000                    | Scarcity         |
| Level 5 | < 500                         | Extreme Scarcity |

Source: [Wästerström \(2016\)](#)

The table above shows us that Morocco is heading towards definite water scarcity in 2030. This is true since the water availability for every person in Morocco by 2030 is projected to be 500 cubic meters per annum. Hence, this falls in the assessment of scarcity. With Morocco's growing population and water as a primary need, water is a significant element that can contribute to its survival as a country. The decreasing water availability in the country reflects Morocco's intention to preserve its life by getting involved in the normalization of diplomatic relations with Israel.

This is because Israel has eloquently solved this scarcity by creating a new technology that enables it to reuse wastewater. According to the report made by the Jerusalem Post, Israel is trying to establish a new kind of diplomacy, hydro-diplomacy. It is a diplomacy conducted through Israel's water conversion technology. The report suggests that this resulted in the strengthening of relations between Morocco and Israel. The report also suggests that Israel is the world's leader in water technology. One can refer to Israel's capability of reusing 90% of its wastewater and reproducing its drinking water utilizing what is known as the desalination process ([Ipost, 2022](#)).

Hence, in November 2022, Morocco signed a deal with Israel concerning the information-sharing hub concerning water technology. This is to solve the water availability problem in Morocco. This deal with Israel is also part of the program to improve Morocco's water supply for drinking water and for irrigation to support the agricultural sector from 2020 to 2027 ([Kasraoui, 2022a](#)). Cooperation with Israel also plays a crucial role in motivating Morocco to normalize its diplomatic ties with Israel. The points from my argument are that climate change, underdeveloped agricultural sector, and water scarcity. Climate change debilitates Morocco, rendering several sectors feeble, because many of Moroccan population are dependent on agricultural sectors.

Agricultural sector's setback signifies the national economy's downfall since it still hinges on traditional methods with limited use of contemporary technologies. The third factor is the water scarcity, which threatens the entirety of the country. By 2030, using the threshold established in the journal, Morocco is heading towards definite water scarcity, as the number hits as low as 500 meters cubic per annum by 2030 ([Cherif et al., 2023](#)). Morocco considers Israel the sole solution to all the problems and challenges Morocco is encountering. Israel has gained such a position through its outstanding agricultural and water supply technology innovations. One can see this in the successful conversion of desert lands into arable lands that sustain its agricultural sector. In addition, Israel manages to recycle its wastewater. Despite being in arid land, Israel will be fine with the water supply. Morocco would like to obtain such access, as its survival hinges on improving its condition.

## **Conclusion**

Mearsheimer believes that power is essential to a country's survival and should be used to nurture it. The obsessive pursuit of power may only cause others to do so. What I mean by survival in this paper is the ability of a country to protect itself from any imminent threats. In facing these threats, countries will do anything in their power to survive the treacherous conditions. These actions may include betraying their very own political principles and stance towards their allies. This can be understood when Morocco got involved in the Abraham Accord with Israel, ultimately recognizing the country's sovereignty. Morocco was always persistent when it came to supporting Palestine, but that profoundly changed when this accord took place. This was done as a response to Morocco's internal and external menaces and problems.

Furthermore, Morocco is trying to align itself with the interests of America as the great power in the region. After successfully enacting the accord, Morocco was given access to purchasing weapons from the USA. Another factor that contributes to this is the geopolitical competition with Algeria and the espionage scandals with France. While the USA is not the only supplier, some countries like France also supply Morocco with weapons. However, that took a sudden turn when Morocco used Pegasus to spy on French and Algerian officials. The diplomatic relations of the two countries deteriorated, leaving America as the ideal



choice to supply Morocco with weapons. The constant motivation to find weapons is also deeply rooted in the arms competition with Algeria. Despite the cultural and religious similarity, Morocco has been perennially involved in conflict with Algeria, particularly concerning Western Sahara. Other factors contributing to this event are natural resources, climate change, water scarcity, and the underdeveloped agriculture sector.

To sum up, in terms of survival, Morocco is rigorously trying to defend itself from any external and internal dangers. Morocco perceives normalizing diplomatic relations with Israel as the key to the country's survival. This article found that Morocco is trying to protect itself while at the same time using this event to its own ends: becoming a regional power in terms of survival, defeating its Algerian rival, and conquering and exploring a new source of natural resources. These perceptions that I can finally form and motivate how Morocco acts regarding this issue according to the logic and arguments provided by Mearsheimer.

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