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*Spain and Morocco: A Case of Crisis
in Euro-Mediterranean Relations*

Presented by

Richard Gillespie

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Spain and Morocco: A Case of Crisis in Euro-Mediterranean Relations

RICHARD GILLESPIE

University of Liverpool

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In July 2002 Spain and Morocco almost came to blows over a small island near Ceuta, at the eastern approaches to the Strait of Gibraltar. The islet known to Spaniards as 'Perejil' (and thus to English speakers as 'Parsley Island') and to Moroccans as 'Toura/h' (Arabic) or Laïla (Berber) was occupied successively by Moroccan gendarmes and Spanish Legionnaires, before eventual US State Department involvement helped bring a return to the status quo ante. The events, whose seriousness was obscured for many by the comic-opera dimensions of the successive 'invasions', came during a protracted period of tension between the two countries, marked by the absence of the Moroccan ambassador from Madrid for more than a year. It seemed to many observers that the careful cultivation of increasingly 'interdependent' bilateral relations between the two countries in the 1980s and 1990s had ultimately come to nought, while at the multilateral level the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP)—to which both neighbours subscribed—had proved entirely irrelevant as a would-be security framework.

This paper examines the crisis in Spanish-Moroccan relations of 2001-03. It first establishes the nature of the crisis and its significance for the individual countries and for the broader canvas of Euro-Mediterranean relations. It then proceeds to question the official premises upon which the Hispano-Moroccan relationship was constructed, particularly the notion that growing 'interdependence' would make the cost of any future resort to violence prohibitive for both neighbours. Besides critically discussing the relevance of the theory of interdependence, several hypotheses are explored with a

view to arriving at a more complete account of the deterioration in relations. These include:

- A failure by the two states to address ‘difficult’ aspects of the relationship, even when relations appeared to be ‘good’.
- Changes in the external relations priorities of the two states, viewed in the context of changes in the international order and in domestic political elites.
- The emergence of new non-state foreign policy actors exerting an influence on the two states in their bilateral relations.

I. The Crisis

There is a general consensus that the deterioration in Spanish-Moroccan relations can be dated from the failure of the last fisheries negotiation between the EU and Morocco, finally ended by the European Commission in April 2001. This was certainly the event that prompted the prime minister of Spain—by far the largest beneficiary under previous fishing agreements—to declare (and in the Moroccan view ‘threaten’) that there would be ‘consequences’ for Morocco as a result of its ‘refusal’ to sign a new agreement; from this moment onwards official behaviour and tone on both sides became more negative. This said, one must add that Spanish policy towards Morocco in the first five years of José María Aznar’s premiership (1996-2001), based on People’s Party (PP) ascendancy, had been marked by notable neglect. While under previous Socialist Party (PSOE) administrations, foreign ministers had visited Morocco once or twice a year, Aznar’s first foreign minister Abel Matutes made just one stop-over visit in four years (*El País*, 13 Aug., 15 Nov. 1999). Moreover, there was already some anticipation of territorial disagreements between Madrid and Rabat provided by the controversy that ensued after the election of Melilla’s first Muslim mayor in June 1999: the rejection (and ultimate ouster) of Mustafá Aberchán by local Spanish conservative parties prompted the Moroccan prime minister Abderrahmane Youssoufi to rhetorically challenge Spain’s title to the small North African cities of Ceuta and Melilla.¹

None the less, it was in 2001 that a number of disputes and disagreements between Madrid and Rabat coalesced to form the ingredients of a bilateral crisis.

- After Rabat had insisted that it wanted the 1995 agreement to be the last [Damis, 1998: 70], the fisheries negotiation left Moroccans with a sense of

having been pressured and misrepresented by Spain.² It left Spaniards with a sense of being deprived of what they virtually regarded as their birthright (fishing access), and Aznar was said to have felt badly let down by Mohamed VI (there being indications that earlier the Moroccan monarch had given his personal assurance that Spanish fishermen would be looked after).³

- This negotiation, together with contemporaneous Morocco-EU talks on the modification of tariffs and quotas in the context of the association agreement, prompted Spanish fishermen and farmers to take direct action, aimed at disrupting Moroccan exports routed through Spain.
- The other major issue capable of triggering public unrest was unregulated northward migration, which Spanish officials claimed Morocco could do far more to control. The latter pleaded a lack of resources, but showed that it could at least momentarily reduce the number of ‘pateras’ (small craft carrying migrants) when an extraordinary effort was made—e.g. at the time of Mohamed VI’s visit to Spain in September 2000. Spanish Interior Ministry officials took the view that Rabat could regulate the flow of migrants at will, a suspicion reinforced in August 2001 when a total of 800 immigrants were arrested on the coasts of Andalucía in the space of just 72 hours, and again when the flow declined in the immediate aftermath of 9/11.
- While there were some steps to institute bilateral cooperation to counter illegal immigration and smuggling, official Spanish concern about drugs was heightened at this time by a French report published in April 2001. This showed Spain to be the main doorway to Europe for a variety of drugs including hashish—together with tourism and remittances, a major earner of hard currency for Morocco.
- Maritime delimitation issues, long set aside by Spain because of the broader sovereignty issues associated with them, began to become irritants in bilateral relations owing to an increase in international oil interest off the coasts of northwest Africa. First Morocco granted licenses to French and US companies to explore off the coast of the disputed Western Sahara, then the Spanish government authorised Repsol YPF to explore east of the Canary Islands, in waters forming part of an exclusive economic zone declared by Morocco but on the Spanish side of the median line recognised by Spain.

- At the elite inter-personal level, Spanish efforts to create a special relationship with the young new Moroccan king (crowned 1999) foundered, probably as a result of the influence of Francophile royal advisors. In contrast, Morocco's relations with France had been given a boost by the arrival of Mohamed VI, for whom Chirac began to play the role of favourite uncle [Tuquoi, 2002].
- Finally, during 2001 the United Nations was beginning to abandon its efforts to secure a resolution of the Western Sahara dispute based on a referendum on self-determination. With James Baker asked to explore other options and starting to articulate the idea that the Western Sahara should become a semi-autonomous region of Morocco, the perception among Moroccan power-holders was that the country's claims to the former Spanish colony might finally be endorsed by the UN. With the USA, France and the UK supporting the Baker Plan (whose initial version raised hopes in Rabat), it seemed to the Moroccan regime that Spain remained the main outstanding obstacle. Constrained by a large and very active pro-Saharawi movement in Spain, and satisfied to let the Western Sahara dispute drag on in order to divert Moroccan irredentist attention from Ceuta and Melilla, Aznar's government continued to insist that any formula to resolve the dispute needed to be acceptable to both parties to the conflict (including the Algerian-backed Polisario Front).

It is helpful for analytical purposes to divide the crisis up into a series of phases, punctuated by moments of initiative that became turning points in the process. Following the 'pre-crisis' or 'PP neglect' phase, the deterioration in relations reached true crisis proportions in October 2001 when ambassador Abdeslam Baraka was withdrawn by Morocco (without resorting to a complete break in diplomatic relations). The second turning point came in July 2002 with the events focused on Parsley Island, marking a transition from diplomatic gestures to military deployment. The Spanish ambassador, Fernando Arias-Salgado was withdrawn from Rabat at this time. A third turning point was October 2002 when there were clear signs that Morocco (as well as Spain) wanted to rebuild relations; this led eventually to a return of ambassadors in January 2003 and a long-delayed Moroccan-Spanish summit at the end of that year. This finally normalised the formal and some substantive aspects of

the bilateral relationship, though many Moroccans hinted that full co-operation by both sides would not occur before José María Aznar's departure from office.

To present the crisis in this schematic way helps clarify what the salient issues and general climate of relations were at different times, but this is an inevitably reductionist approach that is best adopted only as 'a first approximation' to analysis of the subject. In the interests of brevity, two qualifications of this depiction will simply be noted here. First, that behind and beyond the expressions of state policy, controversy and rival lobbying activities existed *within* each country, and were influential to such an extent that individual ministers were often inconsistent in their presentation of developments in the bilateral dispute. Neither 'state' nor 'country' were monolithic actors: Spanish officials in particular were mindful of the activities of civil society actors (economic interests, solidarity groups, journalistic comment), not to mention opposition parties and the leaders of certain Spanish regions (Catalonia, Andalucía, the Canary islands). Meanwhile in Morocco, where civil society was more controlled by the state, divergence was occasionally observable within the power structure: a few officials could be characterised as 'Hispanophiles', many more as 'Francophiles' and others as 'technocratic pragmatists'. Moreover, it is crucial to appreciate that following the downfall of the powerful interior minister Driss Basri in November 1999, the Moroccan military began to fill the resultant power vacuum after several decades of exclusion from the political system, and with powerful vested interests in annexation of the Western Sahara. The second qualification is that within each phase of the deterioration in relations, there were active diplomatic and para-diplomatic efforts made to *rebuild* relations, some of which failed when they appeared to be on the point of achieving official rapprochement; all too often such efforts were undermined by an aggravating ingredient introduced by other actors (at times deliberately), or by domestic power struggles that tended to paralyse constructive initiatives.

The nature of the crisis was initially one of gradual unfolding, with a series of issues piling up without effective attempts to resolve them. This was largely because each side saw the problem(s) differently. For Spain, the issue of migration was paramount. Indeed, the immediate pretext for the withdrawal of ambassador Baraka was an attempt by Spanish foreign minister Josep Piqué to summon him over an alleged Moroccan failure to seriously police migration (indeed, he went further and made allegations about corrupt police complicity). The spectre of xenophobic

violence had raised its head in the recent past, during the anti-Moroccan disturbances in El Egido, Almería, in February 2000, and the People's Party under Aznar had since begun to introduce a raft of hard-line measures against illegal immigration. Re-elected in March 2000 and now free of inter-party compromises after winning an absolute majority in Parliament, the PP vigorously pursued policies based on reinforced border controls, and insisted that Morocco do likewise. While Morocco was prepared to take back its own nationals expelled by Spain, a dispute flared over whether an existing readmission agreement between the two countries applied to third country nationals who had transited Morocco en route to Spain, many of them from West Africa. Rabat refused to take back sub-Saharan migrants who had reached Ceuta or Melilla for fear that this might imply recognition of Spanish sovereignty [Hernando de Larramendi, 1998: 424].

The Moroccan account of Baraka's recall is different: a whole catalogue of accumulated grievances had reached an intolerable level by this moment; the harsh language and arrogant behaviour of Spanish representatives was entirely contrary to the spirit of the Hispano-Moroccan friendship treaty of 1991; Spain was insulting and hurting Morocco while failing to acknowledge that it was doing so, or that there was a real problem; Spain was unjustly heaping all the blame for illegal migration and drug trafficking on Morocco; and finally the only way of halting the downward spiral was for Rabat to bring matters to a head—to withdraw ambassador Baraka until Spain saw the need to discuss the issues in a more cordial and serious manner, recognising the difficulties faced by Morocco as well as those of Spain.⁴ In other words, to make the situation worse in order to encourage reconsideration by the other side.

In the Moroccan version of events, disagreement over the Sahara was just the last of a number of issues that had emerged prior to Baraka's departure. The circumstantial evidence suggests, however, that it was qualitatively different to all the other issues in the sense that, while the others were generally complex problems where unspectacular piecemeal solutions were required, here was one where Moroccan officials believed that their ambitions might be decisively assisted by an abrupt change in the Spanish position. In other words, there was a strategic incentive for Morocco to 'up the ante' as it did in September 2001.⁵ Just a fortnight before Baraka left Madrid, Spain had thwarted moves by France to introduce into EU policy on the Sahara a particular emphasis on the new 'autonomy' formula embodied in the Baker Plan. Spain's traditional position remained unchanged (*La Vanguardia*, 29

October 2001; *El País*, 11 November 2001) [Obiols and Solanilla, 2002: 297]. There was no willingness in Madrid to make a concession to Morocco at a time when the latter was deemed to be acting in an uncooperative manner, and when no direct tangible benefit was being offered in return. Indeed, there was even the prospect of adverse resource consequences for Spain if the extension of the Moroccan Atlantic coastline were achieved with international support. Besides, the history of Moroccan expansion since independence in 1956 suggested that, should Western Sahara be absorbed successfully, the focus of Moroccan nationalist ambition would shift to the Spanish cities of Ceuta and Melilla.

If it were indeed simply a matter of accumulated grievances, or a desire to bring matters to a head, that lay behind the ambassador's departure, then surely Baraka's absence from Madrid would not have been so long-lasting? That it came at a time when Morocco was seeking actively to rally international support, by means of the first visit by Mohamed VI to the Sahara, suggests that the opening gambit in the diplomatic tussle was indeed strategic. In the short-term, Morocco stood to lose some of the benefits of cooperation with Spain but probably saw compensation in the recent determination behind French support over the Sahara and the promise of being able to release scarce national resources hitherto tied up in the Saharan military occupation, in the non too distant future. At this time, the EU's 'Wider Europe' plans were still in the early stages of formulation and one can imagine how, temporarily, a strategic resort to pressure against Spain over the Sahara might have seemed likely to bring immediate results at the price of only temporarily disrupting diplomatic overtures towards the EU. It may also be that the Moroccan authorities took note of the way in which Madrid preferred to tackle its own 'back yard' problems primarily at the bilateral level. Although occasionally Aznar was tempted to seek EU support against Morocco (e.g. his proposal during the 2002 Spanish Presidency for the EU to adopt sanctions against third countries refusing to cooperate over illegal immigration), generally he did not follow the route of European reinforcement; for Spain would have France to contend with in this context, as was proven during the Parsley Island crisis when moves to express EU support for Spain collapsed within the mechanisms of the CFSP [Monar, 2002].

The crisis became much more overt in July 2002 during the deployment of military and paramilitary personnel in the spat over the islet, just 200 meters off the Moroccan coast. This was what finally drew international attention to the Hispano-

Moroccan dispute, not least because of the apparent ease with which a small force of troops (or hypothetically irregulars) could seize an uninhabited yet politically-sensitive piece of rock, whether in the Strait of Gibraltar or elsewhere, and create an international incident. The official Moroccan account—provided by a Foreign Ministry communiqué—was that the government was establishing an observation post to aid the interception of illegal immigrants, smugglers and terrorists. That the gendarmes' raising of the Moroccan flag made this sound implausible was noted not only by Spaniards but also by some Moroccan commentators.⁶ Before long, some observers were linking the Moroccan deployment to recent Spanish military exercises held near the Spanish rock of Al Hociema (between Ceuta and Melilla), without prior notice being given to Rabat. In this interpretation, the presence of the gendarmes on Parsley Island formed part of a tit-for-tat dynamic; more certainly the recent naval manoeuvres had increased the annoyance level on the Moroccan side. Rabat failed to communicate directly with Madrid for four days after the gendarmes appeared on Parsley Island and the Moroccan media did not mention the occupation at all the day after their arrival; this suggests improvisation and/or disunity within the regime. It may be that different officials had different motives and privately used different justifications for the Moroccan initiative. Although Moroccan representatives expressed surprise at the eventual Spanish military response, it is difficult to believe that a strong reaction was not expected, giving Morocco an opportunity to appeal to a sympathetic international audience over its territorial grievances. The key movers have remained silent, but many interview subjects in both Spain and Morocco have since attributed strategic motives to the Moroccan occupation.⁷

Again, the circumstantial evidence is suggestive: since April there had been active US lobbying in support of the pro-Moroccan formula for the Western Sahara. Again, Spain was in the forefront of opposition, yet this time Morocco must have been encouraged by the fact that Madrid faced not only French but also American pressure. Meanwhile, Morocco's leaders were seeking to present themselves to the Bush Administration as reliable allies in the 'war on terror', notably by arresting so-called al-Qaeda suspects, charged with planning to launch attacks on NATO shipping passing through the Strait of Gibraltar. Changes in the international environment were being used by Morocco to claim a more privileged role as US ally, with the reward for solidarity coming in the form of American support for Moroccan ambitions over the Western Sahara. The complication for Morocco was that Spain (and regional rival

Algeria too) was thinking very much along the same lines. Madrid saw the Spanish role in the war on terror partly in terms of a stronger military presence in and around the straits of Gibraltar, where several of the delimitation disputes with Rabat were to be found.

What some saw as Spain's precipitate use of military force over Perejil, partly explicable in terms of the government's global ambitions, also had other immediate causes. These included: the nullifying of possible EU support for Spain by France; Spanish anxiety over Moroccan plans to invite foreign journalists to the island; and—presumably—a strong sense in the Moncloa that a military move against Morocco, even if somewhat symbolic, would play well at home.⁸

Spain's response—the military eviction of Moroccan forces from the island after six days, in a special forces operation that was seen in Morocco and in much of Europe too as an 'excessive' act of 'gunboat diplomacy'—further escalated the conflict, though fortunately, in the absence of Moroccan resistance, there were no casualties. Aznar's 'Falklands moment' was seized upon by Morocco to launch an international diplomatic offensive (a foreign ministerial press conference in Paris, the threat of an embarrassing high-profile ministerial visit to Brussels), not focusing on the question of Parsley Island so much as other issues of sovereignty. This was against a domestic reaction that included (small) popular demonstrations of opposition to Spain's 'colonial' behaviour and territorial presence. The main emphasis in the Moroccan discourse now shifted to Ceuta and Melilla (as opposed to the Western Sahara), prompting some observers to suspect an inversion of Morocco's historical strategic priorities. It is more likely, however, that Ceuta and Melilla had forced their way back into the official Moroccan discourse at this time because of (a) the nationalistic response to the Spanish occupation⁹ and (b) the progress of the Anglo-Spanish talks on Gibraltar (a related issue in Moroccan diplomatic thinking). In any case, there was already an established track-record of Moroccan representatives raising the issue of Ceuta-Melilla when in fact possessing a more tangible immediate purpose: a change of position on the Western Sahara on the part of Spain [González Campos, 2004: 9], which in 2003 was due to occupy a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council.

Clearly, by this time the crisis had outgrown its original proportions. Within the bilateral context it had become militarised, and thus a deliberate or unintended flare-up of violence seemed possible. Meanwhile it had become a multilateral issue:

the subject of a miserable CFSP failure for the EU and sufficiently threatening as a harbinger of conflict in the western Mediterranean (not least owing to its proximity to Ceuta) for Washington to become involved in order to snuff out the smouldering conflict. Two days of telephone diplomacy by Colin Powell, apparently at the request of Spain,¹⁰ finally brought a return to the status quo ante when the Spain ended its occupation on 20 July, after nine days of successive military occupations.

Significance of the Crisis

For some, the Parsley Island spat was of real historical importance: ‘the first military invasion of western European soil since the second world war’, as Giles Tremlett put it (*The Guardian*, 13 July 2002). In fact, Spain’s claims to the rock were not firmly grounded and were doubted by many Spanish officials [Cajal, 2003: 218-19]. None the less, there was alarm at the fact that the status of the rock had been changed unilaterally, through the agency of paramilitary personnel, and that Rabat showed reluctance to withdraw its forces. The Moroccan occupation of an islet so close to Ceuta awakened memories of King Hassan’s invasion of the Western Sahara in 1975, and even (indirectly) of colonial defeats in northern Morocco way back in the 1920s.

More immediately, what was significant was that the conflict involved two neighbours that had deliberately cultivated their relationship with considerable success during the 1980s and early 1990s. While Felipe González and King Hassan II were in power, great pragmatic efforts had been made to build relations—trade, investment, joint energy projects, civil society links and defence co-operation. Spain became Morocco’s second economic partner, after France, and the relationship in general became more substantial and dense. Spain’s expectation was that, through building economic relations in particular, it could assist Morocco to become more stable and modern, and the danger of it vigorously pursuing its territorial claims to Ceuta, Melilla and nearby rocks and islets under Spanish sovereignty would recede. For as economic interdependence grew, so too would the costs of conflict to self. Spanish officials spoke of building a *colchón de intereses comunes* (loosely, a ‘pool of shared interests’) that would encourage their Moroccan counterparts to adopt a pragmatic emphasis on ‘business’ and ‘business as normal’. They also hoped to deter Moroccan territorial claims by means of Spain becoming a useful ally of Morocco within the EU (although constrained in this regard by some conflicts of economic interest). Morocco showed enthusiasm both for the expansion of co-operation with

Spain and for the possibility of Spanish support within the EU; in recent years its foreign policy has shown signs of being based increasingly on economic and commercial interests and imperatives and less on traditional lines of solidarity [Sehimi: 2003: 97-111]. Yet, while there had been some considerable periods of pragmatic diplomacy under King Hassan, fishing agreements and Ceuta/Melilla continued to be used as instruments of pressure; territorial demands were raised periodically as part of a central strategy of 'consolidation of royal power' and the Moroccan kingdom sought to exploit southern European rivalries when faced with pressure from Europe.¹¹ Moroccan representatives did not question the logic behind Spain's North African strategy but did doubt its sincerity. Always mindful of their northern neighbour's position on the Sahara, they accused Spain of saying that it wanted a stable Morocco while really acting against this objective by adopting a position at the UN that contributed to stalemate in the Western Sahara and regional rivalry in the Maghreb.

None the less, the Spanish diplomatic strategy seemed to be prospering, especially in 1991 when Spain and Morocco signed a friendship and cooperation treaty (Spain's first with a North African or Arab country). Under this, both sides agreed, among other things, to resolve their differences peacefully and to hold annual summit meetings as part of much more regular institutional contacts. The fact that summits continued to be held infrequently, owing to disputes and misunderstandings between the two regimes, shows that in practice the friendship treaty was less of a milestone than it seemed initially. On the other hand, the game of postponing summits in order to indicate displeasure to the other side, and to apply pressure for concessions, was qualitatively more 'friendly' than the tactics used during the crisis of 2001-03. This crisis was significant as a demonstration of the inadequate logic that has informed Spain's strategic approach to relations with Morocco. Growing economic interdependence did not prevent conflict from breaking out, even if it did prevent the Parsley Island incidents from causing a major setback to economic relations.¹²

In addition, the crisis holds relevance for the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP). The Partnership set out to enhance Euro-Med co-operation across a wide range of policy areas and its architects saw it as a framework through which a security community might eventually be established (of course, in practice the free trade area project has proven to be more central). Spain and Morocco were widely seen as key

players in this enterprise. Spain made a substantial contribution to the initiation and design of the EMP, stole the limelight by hosting the founding ministerial conference in Barcelona in 1995 and was also at the heart of attempts to reinvigorate the Partnership at the Valencia Conference in 2002. Morocco meanwhile made clear its desire for a special relationship with the EU (in fact well before the EMP was launched), was one of the first countries to sign a new generation association agreement thereafter and has been one of the Mediterranean Partners showing the greatest readiness to discuss issues of political reform and human rights—and moreover to take some (at times faltering) steps in this direction as part of a process of transition at home. That these countries should clash at the diplomatic and almost at the military level was a bad omen for the future of the EMP, especially when the two were clearly earmarked as likely members of the ‘sub-regional’ coalitions that had been given the green light to go ahead and collaborate while the EMP as a whole was stalled as a result of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Not only did EMP considerations fail to deter those Spanish and Moroccan policy actors who made aggressive moves or statements against the other during the bilateral crisis: the Partnership also proved devoid of appropriate structures or instruments for preventing or resolving conflict.

In fact, both Spain and Morocco tried to keep their problems out of the EMP, and though each country appealed for support or understanding from the EU at the height of the Parsley Island incidents, they did not actually try to instigate EU mediation. While the EMP with its lack of an effective security capacity proved irrelevant to their immediate needs in the dispute, both saw it as a valuable framework, best not contaminated with the political germs of a western Mediterranean conflict. This was not so easy to ensure in practice, however, since during its dispute with Morocco Spain under Aznar took steps (through a friendship treaty and new gas pipeline project) to raise the status of its relations with Algeria—Morocco’s traditional rival in the Maghreb—and thus seemed to be acting contrary to the official EMP doctrine of promoting South-South horizontal co-operation in general and Maghreb regional unity in particular.

Finally, the Spanish-Moroccan dispute has significance in the context of post-9/11 developments and US efforts to orchestrate a global war on terror. Rather than give any sustenance to the ‘clash of civilizations’ thesis, the Spanish-Moroccan conflict involved a dispute between a European country possessing a consolidated liberal democracy and an Arab state noted for its liberal, pro-western orientations, that

had taken steps to reform closed economic and political systems and was headed by a largely Francophile elite. It is worth adding in qualification of this broad picture that under Aznar and the PP, the Spanish government often showed itself to be arrogant and condescending—some would even say contemptuous of the Moroccan authorities. Spain's political masters often seemed to need a negative Moroccan 'other' as a counterpart to the upholding of Spanish (or Castilian) nationalism, an identity seen as threatened by Basque nationalists as well as by Moroccans (though immigration, claims to Ceuta/Melilla, etc.). Meanwhile the traditional orientations of Morocco may also have been upset momentarily by political circumstance: a young, inexperienced king was on the throne, reliant on advice from a Francophile inner circle, his authority affected by the re-entry of the military into the political arena and indirectly challenged by the increasing strength of the country's Islamist movement. Especially at a time when the balance of forces on the UN Security Council seemed to be moving in Morocco's favour over the Western Sahara, the new king was being tested over an issue with direct import for the legitimacy of the monarchy. On top of that, some observers, claiming insights into Mohamed VI's psychological makeup, believe he was trying to compete with his father: trying to consolidate the position of the monarchy by means of a major step forward in the territorial aggrandisement of Morocco, comparable to Hassan II's 'Green March'. If not the prelude to realizing Moroccan dreams of acquiring Ceuta and Melilla, as some commentators thought, Parsley Island is seen by many as a first step towards completing the integration of Morocco's proclaimed 'southern provinces' (i.e. the Western Sahara).

What is significant in the post 9/11 context is that both Morocco and Spain were American allies, equally keen to align with the US in President's Bush's war on terror and yet well capable of becoming side-tracked into a bilateral conflict of largely their own making. Even the USA, as the main (or sole) security power in the Mediterranean, was not able to discipline its local allies to prevent conflict, though it was able through its 'good offices' to bring them back from the brink after each had made hostile moves against the other. In the end, the Parsley Island crisis was sufficiently alarming to the US for Colin Powell to devote two days of his working life to defusing it. There is no evidence to suggest that American leaders themselves drew any real political conclusions from this episode.

A Crisis of Interdependence?

Why has increased interdependence not brought a more harmonious relationship between Morocco and Spain? In fact the conceptual debate about interdependence has never been very satisfactory: definitions have often been imprecise and have tended to vary according to regional context. When Keohane and Nye coined the term 'complex interdependence' during the 1970s, the aim was to analyse a new pattern of interactions between mature industrial democracies involving NGOs, multinational corporations and treaty organizations as well as states. Interdependence would give rise to cooperative international regimes, able to maintain western security and the international economy even in the absence of a dominant western power [Keohane and Nye, 1977]. In a different, North-South context, 'interdependence' meanwhile became a central though contentious concept as part of the critique of dependency theory and its application to Latin America. Harold Brookfield rejected radical dependency theories on the grounds that advanced industrial countries were even more dependent on the world economy than the underdeveloped countries were [Brookfield, 1975; Kay, 1989: 183]. Latin Americanists who latched on to this notion tended to reject the *dependentistas'* fatalistic contention that the development of advanced countries inevitably entailed the underdevelopment of poorer ones. This was essentially a debate about development, and as such should perhaps draw our attention to the fact that the economic gap between Morocco and Spain has continued to grow alarmingly despite the expansion of bilateral economic ties since the 1980s [Moré, 2004].

Thus, we have here one discussion about the changing pattern of international relations in the West generally, which does associate interdependence with security but may be difficult to translate to a bilateral relationship, and another addressing patterns of North-South relations, this time applicable to bilateral relationships but essentially concerned with development prospects rather than security. This is the rather vague conceptual background against which the Spanish Socialists developed their country's strategy towards North Africa in the 1980s, influenced too no doubt by the practice of the European Community: a body then lacking security and defence instruments yet using its trade and aid instruments partly with a view to serving security objectives. One has to conclude that there was no very clear model, whether theoretical or practical, upon which the Spanish strategy was based. Indeed, with the benefit of hindsight it would seem that too much confidence was placed in a rather

simplistic notion of interdependence that failed to appreciate fully even the theory that had been developed. For example, one publication optimistically described Spanish-Moroccan relations at this time in the following terms: ‘Spain and Morocco talk increasingly of business and less and less of politics. When the relations between the two countries add up to good business, the remaining problems will find a solution in mathematics’ [Gillespie, 2000: 65].

While one certainly cannot say that the wisdom of pursuing interdependent relations has been disproved by the recent conflict, the latter has shown the Spanish strategy, as applied, to have been too narrowly-based—based on incomplete, rather than entirely faulty, premises. Interdependence in Spanish strategy involved a prime emphasis on economic relations. It was calculations of economic self-interest that were relied on to prevent any future recourse to military force in support of the Moroccan claims to Ceuta and Melilla. However, the economic relationship itself has continued to be problematic, for despite increased bilateral trade and Spanish investment, the general picture is not so rosy: overall Spanish economic involvement in Morocco remains small in relation to the totality of Spain’s external economic relations, and adverse terms of trade give little incentive to Morocco to expand its relations with Spain (Moré, 2004); fisheries issues and Moroccan agricultural access to the EU market remained sources of conflict right into the present century (though with some signs of diminution, given the ending of EU-Morocco fisheries agreements and EU agricultural concessions to Morocco in the context of the association agreement); and there is now the possibility of future conflict over oil resources [Moré, 2002].

There are several subjects of tension too within non-economic areas, particularly justice and home affairs, over the policing of irregular migration, the treatment of Moroccan immigrants in Spain and efforts to combat drug-trafficking (not to mention terrorism—a more recent basis for potential cooperation).¹³ In addition to these issues, the institutional contrast between the two countries’ political systems may be crucial for the prospects of the interdependence thesis. Besides (i) non-resort to military force in the case of conflicts thanks to other (e.g. economic or environmental) overriding considerations, the classic depiction of complex interdependence involved (ii) the existence of different channels of financial, social and intergovernmental communication, and (iii) an absence of hierarchy between issues [Keohane and Nye, 1977: 24-28; Haddadi, 2002, 81]. Yet the ‘channels’

referred to above seem to have been clearly deficient in the case in point. For Morocco the development of the relationship with Spain has relied very heavily in the past on the monarch and key royal advisors; even constitutionally there is a lack of symmetry with Spain, with the royal prerogative extending to the design and execution of foreign policy while the government simply has a joint role in its execution [Gillespie, 2000: 58-60; Hernando de Larramendi, 1997: 77-118]. Formal political institutions are a poor guide to the real location of power, residing in the *Makhzen*, the ruling circle and apparatus supporting the monarch, which itself became an arena of competition following the death of Hassan II. On the Spanish side, meanwhile, the initiative to build a closer bilateral relationship was at first governmental/diplomatic and under the PP governments in particular there was invariably official mistrust not only of NGO activities (often involving criticism of the national authorities) but also of pragmatic efforts by regional governments to develop links with Morocco. The remaining aspect of complex interdependence—military issues lack primacy—is also an area of partial doubt in the Spanish-Moroccan case given that in exceptional international circumstances, such as those influencing the Sahara question in 2001-02, territorial issues, at least, *have* been prioritised by Morocco, eventually eliciting a Spanish military response.

Spanish diplomatic strategy proved simplistic also because the pursuit of interdependence focused excessively on bilateral relations, ignoring the role played by third parties, which might even seek to undermine or thwart Hispano-Moroccan intimacy. In aspiring in the long run to become Morocco's main external partner, Spain came up against the problem of French rivalry, seen not only over the Western Sahara but also in relation to economic interests in general. For instance, the telephone consortium Meditel (including the Spanish Telefónica) has suffered from the preferential treatment given by the regulatory authorities to Maroc Telecom (including Vivendi).¹⁴ Efforts to apply the logic of interdependence have been complicated too by the way in which governments seek to offset the damage caused by a crisis in one bilateral relationship by reinforcing some other relationship. As Manuel Marín has commented, when Morocco falls out with Spain, it tends to boost its relations with France while Spain for its part, makes overtures to Algeria.¹⁵

A further potential complication is that Spain is a member of more powerful international organizations than Morocco is. Thus the costs to Spain of the failure of the 2000-01 EU-Morocco fisheries negotiations, for example, were ameliorated by

financial compensation to the fishermen involved (for 12 months) and by support for a decidedly belated restructuring of the Spanish fishing fleet. Morocco meanwhile had to weigh up the possibility of EU solidarity with member-state Spain during the dispute. Spain used its EU membership to defend national producers against Moroccan competition to a degree, but in general did not really try to flex its European muscles to incline the balance during its dispute with Morocco.¹⁶ Rather, it sought to contain the dispute as much as possible to the bilateral level, up to July 2002.

Finally, the assumptions made by Spanish diplomats about interdependence failed to appreciate the importance of the historical-cultural dimension of contemporary Hispano-Moroccan relations. It is only now, in the aftermath of 9/11, that policy-makers in Madrid are beginning to realise the importance of the negative historical legacy of Spain's colonial involvement in Morocco (on which more below) and are placing more emphasis on the value of inter-cultural dialogue and cooperation. In addition to 9/11, one suspects that the experience of protracted disagreement and mutual suspicion between the two countries was a factor in Spain's eventual reappraisal of the third basket of the EMP (the 'partnership in social, cultural and affairs'), leading to the successful Spanish proposal of a Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for dialogue between cultures, approved at the Valencia Conference of 1992 [Gillespie, 2002; 2003].

II. New Environment, New Actors

From the above discussion, we can conclude that the crisis in bilateral relations occurred as much because of insufficient interdependence between Spain and Morocco in practice as because of weaknesses in the guidelines that this offered as a theory. While it is useful to analyse the events of 2001-03 in terms of the theory that (at least for Spain) informed the relationship, it cannot provide a completely adequate theoretical framework for the analysis of the crisis, given that its translation to the Spain-Morocco context is problematic, as seen above. One aspect of this particular relationship that interdependence theory fails to accommodate is the lack of political symmetry between the two countries, both in terms of political regime and membership of international organisations. But from within interdependence theory one can at least draw one hypothesis, namely that the channels of communication between Spain and Morocco had been insufficiently developed in certain important

areas. In order to lay a pragmatic foundation for enhanced relations in the 1980s and 1990s, there had been a *deliberate decision by the two states not to address 'difficult' aspects of the relationship*, even when relations appeared to be 'good'.

It is not surprising that, despite a shared history dating back to the eighth century that had seen much cooperation and achievement as well as war and conquest, the dominant stereotypes of the 'other' on each side became overwhelmingly negative. The historical memory left by bitter colonial warfare in the 1920s (when Spanish forces were almost defeated by the guerrillas of Abdel Krim el Khattabi), the appalling use made by Spain of chemical weapons in efforts to pacify the Rif rebellion and the later deployment of Moroccan troops by Franco to intimidate Republican forces during the Spanish Civil War all helped to provide very negative images of the 'other' in succeeding decades [Balfour, 2002]. Equally, Spain's image among Moroccans suffered from an undistinguished role as promoter of development during and after the Protectorate (1912-56), in comparison with the main colonial power, France, although this image began to change as a result of Spanish entry to the EC and as Moroccans began to value Spain's political evolution, rapid modernisation, economic development and capacity to influence Community decisions [Hernando de Larramendi, 1997: 407]. Meanwhile the images of Moroccans entertained by Spaniards were replenished with more recent prejudices following the arrival of (and media obsession with) *pateras* conveying migrants to Spain, reinforcing an association of Moroccans with poverty, illegality and even, for some, 'invasion'. Failure to address these negative images, stereotypes, prejudices and fears meant that they continued to survive in the background, ready to aggravate and generalise what began as specific disputes (e.g., over rival fishing interests), not always easy to resolve, but containable were it not for the combustible historico-cultural backcloth. At the same time, Madrid's refusal to discuss the future of Ceuta and Melilla,¹⁷ seen as integral parts of Spain and not (as in Moroccan perceptions) relics of an incomplete process of decolonisation, led to the creation of a taboo subject. Official bilateral decisions to set this sensitive issue aside (and effectively any real discussion of the Western Sahara question as well), and to concentrate dialogue instead on more mundane, less political matters, worked in the short run, yet they helped maintain mistrust on both sides and left Hispano-Moroccan relations in fact quite 'fragile'—especially when taken in conjunction with a lack of agreement on sea limits and a huge gulf in national prosperity [Hernando de Larramendi, 2003: 51].¹⁸

In addition to pre-existing problems in the Hispano-Moroccan relationship, one must consider new developments that affected it by the time of the crisis. Here one must consider: first, *changes in the external relations priorities of the two states*, viewed in the context both of changes in the international order and in domestic political elites; and, second, *the emergence of new non-state foreign policy actors* exerting an influence on the two states in their bilateral relations.

The first of these hypotheses has already been suggested above: as a result of developments in the international environment, Morocco derived new impetus to use pressure in relation to the Western Sahara, and to raise the issue of 'Sebta' and 'Melilia', while Spain had reason to prioritise immigration much more than under previous governments. The events of 9/11 and American responses to them contributed to the generation of new features of the Saharan and migration policy debates such as greater western acceptance of the Moroccan annexation of the Western Sahara and 'securitized' concerns about Muslim immigrants. However, these issues also had their own dynamics: this was a time of growing international questioning of the practical viability of the traditional UN approach to the Sahara question, and of concern within Spain that PP immigration policy was failing as well. It is also fairly clear that the renewal of domestic political elites contributed to the origins of the bilateral crisis, demonstrating the inadequacy of structuralist explanations of the crisis. On the Moroccan side, one can speculate whether a different, or more experienced, monarch would have allowed the ambassadorial absence from Madrid to last so long, or would have sanctioned the initial occupation of Parsley Island. The youth and inexperience of Mohamed VI certainly seems relevant in that in no previous diplomatic crisis between Morocco and Spain was there so much conjecture about the specific roles and actions of royal advisors, at a time of evident competition for influence within the regime. One must note too that the monarchy was being questioned, albeit fairly quietly, by sectors of the Islamist movement: hence the need for Mohamed VI to strike popular, nation-building poses and the pressure on him to produce an international 'success'.

While analysis of the internal workings of the Moroccan power structure remains difficult, greater transparency on the Spanish side reveals even more clearly the importance of foreign policy actors. A lot could be written about the different personalities and approaches to Morocco of the different foreign ministers, other cabinet members and diplomats who were entrusted to represent Spain in its dealings

with Morocco. There was also a clear absence of the kind of personal chemistry that had existed between González and Hassan in the relations between Aznar and Moroccan leaders. Worse still, there was the threatening posture adopted by Aznar and some of his ministers during the crisis and the PP leaders' discouragement of more constructive approaches adopted by other political actors. In a relationship whose construction had seen very positive inputs provided at the level of monarchy (between Hassan II and Juan Carlos), it was certainly unhelpful when Aznar's government, citing the absence of ambassador Baraka from Madrid, made it clear that it would not allow the Spanish king to attend the wedding celebrations of Mohamed VI in 2002. Moreover, the Spanish government voiced strong disapproval of the visit to Morocco of opposition leader José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero in December 2001, the PSOE leader being refused access to Aznar upon his return.

A lot too could be said about the significance of party alternation at government level in the development of the Hispano-Moroccan crisis [Gillespie, forthcoming],¹⁹ though here the key turning point was not 1996, when the PP replaced the PSOE in office, but rather March 2000, when it acquired an absolute majority in Parliament, and thus became free of the need to compromise on policy with other parties; and then a further spin was given to foreign policy orientations by the impact of 9/11 [Barreñada et al., 2003; Heywood, 2003]. Whereas efforts to present a popular centrist image had been evident during the first PP government, more right-wing attitudes prevailed during the second legislature, redolent of old 'Africanista' attitudes towards North Africa resurrected from the Franco years. Moroccan elites reacted sharply against these attitudes and (along with the national press) laid great stress on the personality of the Spanish prime minister in their depiction of who was responsible for the crisis. Aznar himself showed great reluctance to become directly involved in crisis management or resolution until the Moroccan gendarmes had arrived on Parsley Island, when a crisis cabinet was formed. Rather, his style and character were confrontational [Woodworth, 2004].

The second hypothesis, about the relevance of non-state actors, also finds some confirmation. Non-state actors played both positive and negative roles in the development, if not greatly in the origins, of the bilateral crisis. NGOs in Morocco were far too weak to have any bearing on the origins of the crisis, but they did stage demonstrations against the Spanish occupation of Parsley Island and thus contributed to a nationalistic outcry that helped ensure that the rebuilding of relations would take

many months to achieve after the island crisis itself was resolved. The clearest case of a negative NGO role was the intense annoyance caused to Moroccans by the mock referendum held in Andalucía in September 2001, in which 125,000 participants voted massively in support of questions asking whether the Spanish and Andalusian governments should support the urgent celebration of a referendum on self-determination in the Western Sahara, and also whether the Polisario Front should be accredited as the legitimate representative of Saharawis in Spain. Organized by pro-Saharawi friendship associations with support from Izquierda Unida, what upset the Moroccan authorities in particular was that part of the event took place in the Andalusian regional parliament, where voters included local politicians, civil servants and journalists (*El País*, 29 October 2001). In Moroccan eyes, this implied not only authorisation by the Socialist regional government but the approval too of central government, for the reality of regional autonomy was not fully grasped in Rabat.²⁰

It was not so much any direct NGO influence upon Aznar's government that worried Rabat so much as the mobilisation of public opinion around an issue that had engaged the interest of the Spanish people since the 1970s, and continued to stir passions (including guilt) within the political class as well as in society.²¹ In this respect, government in Spain was under much more pressure from civil society than was its counterpart in France, where there was far less public awareness of the Saharan conflict and a decidedly more marginal solidarity movement [Vaquer i Fanés, 2004: 99]. More generally, Moroccan leaders were not happy with the way that Spanish politicians aired their grievances against Morocco through the media, sometimes in a manner they found insulting.²² The temptation among PP ministers to make strong statements condemning Morocco while rarely in fact applying real pressure to back them up showed them to be torn between a pragmatic interest in rebuilding diplomatic relations and awareness of the extent of anti-Moroccan hostility within Spanish society—not least among PP voters. Meanwhile, opponents of the PP argued that improved relations with Morocco required not only more constructive inter-governmental efforts but also a major pedagogical effort *in Spain*, aimed at convincing public opinion that there were areas of common interest between Spain and Morocco and that the former would benefit from a more developed, stable Morocco [Núñez Villaverde, 2004: 4].

The press and TV played an important mediating role between government and public opinion, and the former in particular was criticized by 'doves' for playing

a negative, even politically-manipulated role. There is evidence of certain senior government officials/royal advisors in Morocco, identified in Spain as ‘anti-Spanish’, briefing media personnel at different junctures during the crisis, on one occasion apparently to subvert reconciliation efforts and later in support of Mohamed VI’s rapprochement gestures.²³ Among Moroccan officials, there was a tendency to see Spanish newspapers as similarly open to government suggestion, or even as the mouthpieces of specific institutions, such as the intelligence service or the army. The degree of press freedom in Spain was often not understood by Moroccan officials, though at times they had good reason to be suspicious. In February 2002, on the occasion of a hoax involving the Spanish Ambassador in Rabat, the Aznar government and *El Mundo* newspaper, which reported a non-existent secret meeting between Felipe González and prime minister Youssoufi, there were allegations in Spain that the government had fed an unsubstantiated story to the main anti-Socialist newspaper in an effort to discredit the PSOE opposition. One of the Aznar government’s worst fears during the dispute was that a leading Socialist figure might become the architect of reconciliation.

While recognising the existence of widespread unsympathetic attitudes to the neighbouring ‘other’, and occasional controversial activities by NGOs, one must also acknowledge the constructive efforts made by people on both sides to mitigate the effects of the crisis, keep open existing channels of dialogue and cooperation, and confine the reach of the dispute within the bilateral relationship. Cases in point included entrepreneurs and trade promotion officials, a majority of NGO representatives, academics and cultural actors. Although a substantial amount of civil society activity was halted by the suspension of aid programmes as a result of failures to sign cooperation agreements, the activities of those who were prepared to flex their muscles were contested throughout by individuals in both countries committed to the ideal of harmonious Hispano-Moroccan relations.

III. Conclusion

Examination of the Hispano-Moroccan crisis reveals the rather limited value both of the specific theory of complex interdependence and of looser notions of interdependence as strategic guidelines for efforts to achieve stable, constructive relations between Spain and Morocco. The theory did not contemplate the existence of territorial sovereignty issues or the cultural tensions rooted in past conflicts.

Spanish governments compounded the theoretical deficit by defining these matters as non-issues or taboo subjects; Morocco at times agreed to set them aside, yet they continued to haunt the relationship periodically. Both sides placed huge emphasis on economic cooperation as a value in itself and also as a pragmatic incentive to ignore more controversial issues, yet the latter kept cropping up, often because of difficulties in the economic relationship. In addition to partial clashes of economic interest, there was the widening gulf between the two national economies, which now acted as a powerful impulse behind northward migration. Along with contraband in drugs (and to a greater extent than this), migration became a new focus of controversy, adding to the existing 'difficult' issues.

Spain trusted that stable relations would be guaranteed by an interdependence generated by growing cooperation in a broad yet still limited range of areas of cooperation. Its simplistic strategic assumptions about interdependence, however, proved faulty. They did not accommodate the importance of Spanish-Moroccan political regime differences, the significance of third party roles or the tensions emanating from the historico-cultural domain. In these respects, the crisis of 2001-03 was in part a result of pre-existing problems and weaknesses in the Hispano-Moroccan relationship. But it was also a result of movement in the international context and changes at the level of elite actors. Civil society actors, while showing potential for a more influential role in the future, did not play a major direct role in the origins of the crisis. None the less, they were a factor in Spain, denying national authorities the degree of control over relations with Morocco that they had exercised in the past. At the level of societies, what had changed too was the growing presence of Moroccan residents in Spain, which the government was prone to associate with security concerns rather than appreciate its economic and social value.

Finally, this paper may serve as a cautionary tale about the capacity of multilateral frameworks to ensure stable and peaceful relations between neighbours along the borders of Europe. Although both Spain and Morocco had strong European associations, their actual relationship to the EU was basically different and this greatly affected the prospects of harmony emerging from bilateral economic interdependence. Both too were enthusiasts of the Barcelona Process, but their clash served to underline the real limitations of the EMP. Eventually, it was US intervention that was the mechanism that drew the countries back from military confrontation. Meanwhile, the actual process of reconciliation after July 2002 (to be addressed elsewhere) actually

had to be worked out at the bilateral level. The European Neighbourhood policy arrived too late on the scene to provide fresh incentives for Hispano-Moroccan cooperation during the crisis. Even though such incentives may now be in the offing, it must be questioned whether the new EU policy itself will either address, or serve to dilute, the more difficult issues that remain to be resolved between these two western Mediterranean neighbours.

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NOTES

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¹ Eventually, Aberchán was unseated in July 2000, angering not only Muslims in Melilla but also the Moroccan population of the Rif as well. See Gold [2000]; *El País*, 18-22 July 2000.

² According to a key member of the Moroccan negotiating team (personal interview, January 2004), Morocco in the end made a substantial offer to the EU, only for Spain to block a possible deal; yet Spain accused Morocco of responsibility for the failure of the negotiations.

³ Interviews with Spanish Foreign Ministry and Moncloa officials, 2003-04.

⁴ Interview with Abdeslam Baraka, Madrid, 1 December 2003; see too, for foreign minister Mohamed Benaissa's answer to a question in the Moroccan Parliament, *El País*, 1 November 2001.

⁵ Recent analysis of the Sahara dispute, from a variety of perspectives, includes Mohsen-Finan [2002], Maghraoui [2003], Ruiz Miguel [2003] and Vaquer i Fanés [2004]. In fact the paramount nature of the Western Sahara issue was already well-established in Morocco [Damis, 1987].

⁶ For example, by Nadia Salah in *L'Economiste* (Casablanca), quoted in *El País*, 22 July 2002.

⁷ Personal interviews in Morocco and Spain, 2003-04.

⁸ In fact, in an opinion poll 80.8% of Spaniards opposed the Moroccan occupation and 75.5% supported the subsequent Spanish occupation (*El País*, 27 July 2002).

⁹ While this response certainly existed, there was also a widespread attitude among Moroccans that the island spat was an elite 'political' affair that did not matter to them or affect their lives.

¹⁰ Spanish Foreign Ministry and Moncloa officials interviewed by the author suggested (without claiming direct knowledge) that the initiative had come from the State Department, but Colin Powell in

the one available participant account of the ‘mediation’ has said that it was Spanish foreign minister Ana Palacio who first phoned him. Interview in *GQ* magazine, June 2004, reported in *El País*, 7 May 2004.

¹¹ Hernando de Larramendi (1997: 356, 389, 418-19): ‘Territorial demands would be activated and pushed forward so long as they helped achieve this objective [the consolidation of royal power]. Otherwise they would be left dormant, for utilisation as a legitimizing resource in the domestic context and as an additional instrument of pressure in bilateral relations, but not as an immediate or prioritised objective’ (p. 356).

¹² Spanish tourism fell, investment and aid declined only momentarily, bilateral trade continued to grow.

¹³ Following the Casablanca and Madrid bomb attacks in May 2003 and March 2004 there was much talk about cooperation in this domain, but so far this has not materialized.

¹⁴ I am indebted here to Spanish economist Iván Martín of the Universidad Carlos III de Madrid, correspondence 15 May 2004. Algora Weber {2003: 104} attributes changes in the French and US positions on the Western Sahara to their interest in the territory’s oil resources.

¹⁵ See his debate with Gustavo Arístegui of the PP, ‘Los dos principales partidos políticos españoles coinciden en la importancia estratégica de Marruecos’, *Afkar / Ideas* (Barcelona) 2, pp. 47-55 (p.47). When Spain boosted its relations with Algeria in 2002, however, this was also a result of the end of internal conflict in that country [Gillespie: forthcoming].

¹⁶ Del Sarto [2003: 115, 304] notes how, during the fisheries dispute, Spain persuaded the EU to impose extra quota certificates for Moroccan tomatoes on the grounds that Morocco was exceeding its duty-free quota; but before long the European Commission lifted these restrictions. None of the Moroccan or Spanish diplomats interviewed for this research project claimed that Spain tried to use its EU Presidency to apply economic pressure to Morocco; indeed it was during this presidency that the EU-Morocco negotiations on liberalisation of the terms of its Euro-Mediterranean association agreement, scheduled to commence in 2000, eventually started [Haddadi, 2002: 95].

¹⁷ It is likely that Spain’s attitude will change in the future, so long as the agenda for dialogue is not reduced to the sovereignty issue. Spanish diplomats accept that Ceuta and Melilla face two major challenges in the years ahead: most immediately, the effects of the EU-Morocco free trade area, a process due to be completed by 2012, which will undermine the contraband basis of the two cities’ (informal) economies; and thereafter the effects of demographic shifts that are expected to leave Muslims in a majority.

¹⁸ An essential part of the restoration of diplomatic relations since 2003 has been an expansion of the range of subjects on which dialogue has been sanctioned, to embrace both sea limits and the Western Sahara—but still not Ceuta and Melilla.

¹⁹ Party alternation has occurred in Morocco too, in 1998, but with no obvious foreign policy repercussions, mainly because of royal control over foreign policy, referred to earlier.

²⁰ The lack of familiarity with devolved systems of government again seemed evident in May 2004 when Mohamed VI sent Zapatero, as prime minister, a letter of thanks for the more positive attitude

towards Morocco shown recently by the traditionally pro-Saharawi centre-right regional government of the Canary Islands.

²¹ The decision to allow the Andalusian parliament to be used for the referendum was taken unanimously by all the party representatives, including that of the PP (interview with Rocío Canterla, Responsable de Comunicación, Asociación Provincial de Sevilla de Amistad con el Pueblo Saharaui, Seville, 10 June 2004.

²² For instance the way in which foreign minister Piqué in October 2001 announced to the press that he was about to summon Ambassador Baraka over rising illegal immigration from Morocco.

²³ On the first occasion, they told Moroccan newspaper editors that the Spanish intelligence agency CNI was trying to destabilise Morocco by spreading misinformation about an alleged anti-corruption faction in the army. On the second occasion, the aim was to discourage negative news coverage of Spain. See *El País*, 31 October, 3 November, 22 December 2002.