

# The Politics of Morocco-America: A Partnership of Two and a Half Centuries

Farid Bahri,

Bibliomonde, 1st Edition, 2024, ISBN: 978-236-802-034-0, p. 160.

Reviewer: Serhat Tekin\*

Received: 24.10.2025 | Accepted: 27.10.2025

## Fas-Amerika Siyaseti: İki Buçuk Asırlık Bir Ortaklık

Farid Bahri,

Bibliomonde, 1. Baskı, 2024, ISBN: 978-236-802-034-0, s. 160.

Değerlendirmeyi Yapan: Serhat Tekin

Geliş Tarihi: 24.10.2025 | Kabul Tarihi: 27.10.2025

## سياسة المغرب والولايات المتحدة: شراكة تمتد لأكثر من قرنين ونصف

فريد بحري،

منشورات بيبليوموند، الطبعة الأولى، 2024، رقم الكتاب الدولي 978-236-802-034-0، 160 صفحة.

المراجع: سرحات تكين

تاريخ الاستلام: 24.10.2025 | تاريخ القبول: 27.10.2025

### Introduction

The work “*Maroc-Amérique, un partenariat de deux siècles et demi*” (Morocco–America: A Two and a Half Century Partnership), by historian and geopolitics expert Farid Bahri, offers a comprehensive examination of the deep-rooted and multi-layered relationship between the two nations. The book traces this enduring partnership through historical, strategic, and geopolitical lenses, beginning with Sultan Mohammed III of Morocco’s recognition of the United States in 1777, the first by a foreign ruler, and continuing to the present day. Bahri makes an original contribution to the scholarship by analyzing the underlying dynamics of this relationship between two countries that, while geographically distant, are connected through shared historical events and strategic interests. He also situates the partnership within its broader regional context, encompassing the Africa–Europe–Middle East triangle. Structured both chronologically and thematically, the book first explores the historical

\* Université Internationale de Rabat - Fas, E-mail: serhattekin25@gmail.com, ORCID: 0009-0003-2142-5227

foundations of Moroccan–American relations before turning to key issues of the modern era, including the Cold War, the fight against terrorism, and the Sahara question.

### Summary and Analysis

Bahri centers his analysis not on geography itself but on the ways in which historical events, strategic vision, and political decision-making have shaped this enduring partnership. The book’s central argument is that, despite their fundamental contrasts – one being a Protestant republic born of revolution and the other an Islamic monarchy grounded in centuries of continuity – the relationship between Morocco and the U.S. has been built upon a foundation of strategic complementarity. The structure of the work unfolds both chronologically and thematically, in a manner that supports and illustrates this core thesis. In the opening chapters, under the heading “*Le Maroc et l’Amérique*,” Bahri situates this “non-obligatory logic” within a geographical and historical framework. He noted that Morocco has long pursued a “variable-geometry geopolitics,” simultaneously oriented toward the Mediterranean and the Atlantic while maintaining a deep connection to the Sahara. This dual orientation, Bahri argues, positions Morocco as a natural bridge between regions and civilizations.

The book traces the concrete stages of this relationship through chapters such as “*L’Amérique au Maroc: la mer Méditerranée en mire*” (*America in Morocco: Eyes on the Mediterranean*). Bahri argues that Sultan Mohammed III’s diplomatic recognition of the United States in 1777 represented an early expression of Morocco’s “open-door policy” and its Atlantic orientation. This relationship assumed a tangible form during the Barbary Wars of the nineteenth century, when Morocco played a mediating role as the nascent American navy faced its first overseas challenge. The section titled “*D’une guerre à l’autre*” (*From One War to Another*) addresses one of the most critical turning points in Moroccan–American relations: the Second World War. In the chapter “*Opération Torch*,” Bahri emphasizes that the 1942 American landing in Morocco not only opened a second front against Nazi Germany but also reinforced Morocco’s strategic importance in the twentieth century. This operation placed Morocco at the center of a global conflict and laid the foundations for a lasting relationship of trust between President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Sultan Mohammed V – a relationship that, Bahri notes, included an implicit promise of future independence.

The Cold War era, examined in the chapter “*L’affrontement Est–Ouest*” (*The East–West Confrontation*), demonstrates how this strategic partnership deepened further. Owing to its geopolitical position, Morocco became both a bulwark against the spread of communism and a hub for American intelligence operations. King Hassan II’s pragmatic, pro-Western orientation – together with the establishment of U.S. military bases and close cooperation between the CIA and Moroccan intelligence – reveals the intricate character of this relationship. As Bahri underscores, provocatively phrased in the chapter “*Le Makhzen marocain, mercenaire de l’Amérique en Afrique*” (*The Moroccan Makhzen: America’s Mercenary in Africa*), this alliance served not only the foreign policy objectives of both nations but also the security and continuity of the Moroccan regime itself.

The final and most contemporary sections of the book – bearing titles such as “*Le Sahara: un conflit multipolaire*” (*The Sahara: A Multipolar Conflict*) and “*Amérique, Israël et Maroc: un ménage à trois*” (*America, Israel, and Morocco: A Triangular Relationship*) – address recent geopolitical developments. Bahri observes that while the United States initially adopted a neutral stance on the Sahara issue, it gradually aligned itself with Morocco’s position, reflecting a broader convergence of strategic and diplomatic interests in the region. In particular, the September 11 attacks and the ensuing “War on Terror” doctrine further amplified Morocco’s importance as a stabilizing actor in the Sahara from the American perspective. Bahri interprets the United States’ 2020 recognition of Morocco’s sovereignty over the Sahara as the logical culmination of a long historical and strategic trajectory. He argues that this decision, coupled with the normalization of relations with Israel under the Abraham Accords, has produced a new and far-reaching geopolitical configuration in the region.

## **Conclusion and Evaluation**

Bahri’s work offers a sophisticated analysis that moves beyond a romanticized historical narrative of Moroccan–American relations, grounding the discussion instead in the concrete realities of geopolitics and strategic necessity. The book’s principal strength lies in its holistic perspective, which weaves together two and a half centuries of history, key turning points, and the visions of the leaders who shaped them. Bahri convincingly demonstrates that this partnership is not a matter of destiny but the result of deliberate choices and reciprocal interests, continually reconstructed across diverse historical contexts. The work is particularly valuable in showing that Morocco has not been a passive actor within this alliance but an active partner – one that has

provided the U.S. with strategic depth, intelligence cooperation, and regional access. Finally, Bahri underscores that Morocco's position at the intersection of the Atlantic, the Mediterranean, and the Sahara–Sahel regions makes it indispensable to the U.S., and that this form of “geopolitical rent” has been skillfully leveraged by Moroccan diplomacy to strengthen the country's international standing.

However, the fact that the work is written in the form of an essay leads certain topics to be treated superficially. For instance, aspects such as economic relations between the two countries – including the free trade agreement and bilateral investments – as well as cultural exchanges, would have benefited from more extensive analysis. Likewise, the domestic political implications of this strategic partnership within Morocco, along with its effects on civil society and human rights – issues that have at times generated tension – remain largely beyond the geopolitical framework on which the book primarily concentrates.

Ultimately, *Maroc–Amérique, un partenariat de deux siècles et demi* stands as a foundational reference for both scholars and general readers interested in the subject. Bahri masterfully integrates the complexities of an international relationship, its historical context, and its contemporary strategic significance, producing a study that offers not only a synthesis of the past but also valuable insights into the future. This illuminating and thought-provoking work demonstrates how geographical distance can be rendered irrelevant in the face of strategic proximity, making it a compelling example of how enduring partnerships are constructed across time, space, and shifting global dynamics.