

MOROCCO IN ITS EURO-MEDITERRANEAN SPACE: CRADLE OF THE FUTURE

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this policy paper is to develop the idea that Europe, in its regional relations, needs two model partner countries in the South, as in the East, to act as the locomotive for other countries. In a region full of turmoil, Morocco, through its various advances, stability and reforms of all kinds, is entitled to position itself as a 'pilot country' and a 'privileged partner'. Nature abhors a vacuum, the Mediterranean likewise! In addition, this hypothesis seems largely corroborated by the history of European construction. France and Germany are the two countries that have placed their cooperation under the auspices of European construction more than any others. Morocco remains an exceptional country, in terms of all its multifaceted advances, and it is entitled to position itself in the role of a 'pilot country' and 'privileged partner' and to establish itself as the only Mediterranean country with which the EU could develop a deep relationship.

INTRODUCTION

Morocco has learnt how to retain and preserve its assets. However, its influence on the regional scene tends to be growing in real terms - all the more so, since Morocco's Mediterranean and international policies appear today to be aligned with not only regional and global changes, but also with the very evolution of its own society.

Due also to its geographical position, Morocco is a tree whose roots plunge deep into the soil of Africa, which breathes thanks to its foliage rustling with the winds of the Mediterranean, Europe, the Arab world and the Atlantic. The Kingdom of Morocco shares ties with centuries-old civilisations, as well as human and geographic relationships with Africa, which represents its natural extension and strategic depth. Morocco has always been, and will be even more so in the future, a link between the Mediterranean Europe and Africa.

That being so, Morocco is the only country that is an exception - compared to its neighbours - for having progressed democratic rule further since the 1990s. This has allowed the country to avoid the destabilising protests that changed the political landscapes of Tunisia or Egypt.

Since the independence of Morocco, the Moroccan leadership has had the foresight to operate a societal choice, based on multi-party politics and a liberal economy.

During the decades which followed, the consolidation by Morocco of its traditional relations with other countries constituted a priority of governmental action and the ensuing results largely demonstrated the relevance of this choice. Relations with the European Union have developed from simple preferential trade agreements into an advanced "sui generis" status, integrating Morocco, without membership, in all EU programmes.

However, the successive enlargements of the EU to the South and East of Europe, the agreements with the ACP (Asia, Caribbean, Pacific) and preferential agreement with Latin American countries, the dismantling of the multifibre Agreement - AMF - combined with globalisation,,which has had the

consequence of greater market opening - have led to real competition in the most promising market for Morocco, which is Europe.

In this study, we develop the idea that Europe in its regional relations needs two model partner countries in the South, as in the East, to act as the locomotive for other countries. Morocco, through its various advances, its stability in a region full of turmoil and through reforms of all kinds, is entitled to position itself as a pilot country and a privileged partner. Nature abhors a vacuum, the Mediterranean likewise!

In addition, this hypothesis seems largely corroborated by the history of European construction. France and Germany are the two countries that have placed their cooperation under the auspices of European construction more than any others. It was, in fact, from their desire for rapprochement, symbolised by Schuman's declaration of May 9, 1950, that the European Community of Steel and Coal (ECSC) was born, followed by the two Treaties of Rome in 1957, establishing the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom). This particular relationship quickly established the two nations as a "Franco-German couple", spanning future decades and inspiring the major stages of European construction. In addition, from the election of the European Parliament by universal suffrage and the creation of the European Monetary System in 1979 - on the initiative of Helmut Schmidt and Valéry Giscard d'Estaing - to the great advances initiated under the impetus of François Mitterrand and of Helmut Kohl (the creation of the single market, the constitution of the Schengen area, the creation of a common currency, a common foreign and security policy, and European citizenship) and the gradual adaptation of the common agricultural policy, initiatives and Franco-German cooperation has been at the heart of European construction.

Geopolitical considerations must regain priority. Strategic challenges are not being supported by significant exports or spectacular budget surpluses. The "chances of Morocco" in the Mediterranean region and in Africa are probably greater than those of other countries. Thus, Morocco and the pivotal countries of the northern Mediterranean can speak with one voice, or almost.

MOROCCO, A KEY PLAYER IN THE EURO-MEDITERRANEAN AREA

Morocco has learned to understand the international system and has established itself as an actor that is now essential both politically and diplomatically, as well as economically, socially and culturally. This is explained by a story that must be grasped in its complexity. Through diplomacy, Morocco has been able to convert its position and its advances at every level and, in relation to all the countries of the region, into a magnitude that is expressed more qualitatively than quantitatively. It is remarkable to note here that Moroccan diplomacy understood from the start that the future of international relations does not lie solely in the relative North-South partnership but in the rich and promising certainties of North-South and South-South relations. Morocco, like all Mediterranean countries including France or Germany, is not big enough to act alone, but it has enough assets and is ambitious enough to participate within the peloton of those countries who intend to succeed together. This is an idea that turns out to be productive. Nowadays, a country like France or Morocco is too weak to go it alone in the regional and in the international arena, but also too strong to step aside and occupy a subordinate position: the typical dilemma of any medium-sized power....

Bilateral and multilateral relations, together with African, Mediterranean, European, Arab and overseas relations, therefore, aim to provide Morocco with the status and influence to which an influential country aspires. On the other hand, the democratic, social, economic and other advances of the past two decades have differentiated the image of Morocco as a southern country from other countries in the region. Morocco has been able to understand the various conundrums of globalisation that a number of other countries refuse to understand, and this is a sign of great success.

As we will see, HM King Mohamed VI enjoys a charismatic leadership both inside the country and on the international diplomatic stage. He has been able to strengthen the country's diplomatic and political capital, which has granted Morocco a remarkable platform from which to negotiate the emerging dynamics that are prevalent within the international system. Begin to build the partnership on a "win-win" basis, otherness, live with flows of populations, of ideas, of beliefs that we are not often familiar with, take into account the contribution of others, even knowing how to make it a part of our common heritage is the great challenge that Morocco has embraced. It is of crucial importance to mention here what Bertrand Badie writes with talent in his latest work, "We are no longer alone in the

world", that European countries do not want to admit that we are not alone in the world and that the simple universalisation of the Western model is no longer on the agenda.¹

EVOLUTION OF MOROCCO-EU RELATIONS:

The geographical proximity, the richness of its common history and the scale of human, cultural and commercial exchanges make Europe Morocco's primary partner. Both parties are well linked by dense and diverse relations developed over several decades².

The European Union remains Morocco's major customer, supplier, investor, first partner for financial cooperation, as well as its main source of tourists and hard currency from Moroccans living abroad. This rapprochement can also be explained by the adherence of both parties to the same universal principles and values. In this context it should be noted that, politically speaking, Morocco has committed itself to an irreversible process of strengthening democracy and the rule of law ever since its independence. On the economic level, the Kingdom also opted for an open, transparent and competitive economy.

Trade Agreement 1969:

Relations between Morocco and the EU have their origins in the Treaty of Rome which established the European Economic Community (EEC). Indeed, in 1957 the signatories of this treaty affirmed in a statement of intent their willingness to conclude conventions for economic association with partner countries, including Morocco. Protocol 1/7, annexed to the Treaty, grants preferential arrangements for a number of agricultural products having access to the EU market.

¹ Bertrand Badie, *Nous ne sommes plus seuls au monde. Un autre regard sur « l'ordre international »*, La Découverte, Paris, 2016.

² See the remarkable work that the late Menaour Alem had done at our request on relations between Morocco and the European Union and that we published in the Moroccan Yearbook of Strategy and International Relations, L'Harmattan, Paris, 2013, pp. 87-100.

Thus, in 1963, Morocco requested the opening of negotiations for an economic partnership with the EEC. Discussions between the two sides reached a conclusion in 1969 with the first Association Agreement, relating essentially to agricultural products.

Cooperation Agreement - 1976:

In accordance with this agreement, which provides for the development and the deepening of relations between Morocco and the EEC through the negotiation of a new agreement on a wider basis, in 1976 the two parties reached a second cooperation agreement covering economic cooperation, technical cooperation and financial cooperation in the social field.

This new agreement, which took into consideration the objectives and priorities of plans and development programmes in Morocco, was part of a wider logic corresponding to the setting up by the EEC of a global Mediterranean policy to strengthen its cooperation with the countries on Mediterranean's southern shore.

Amongst the examples that demonstrate the level of relations between Morocco and the EEC at that time, it is useful to cite the creation of a cooperation council to oversee collaboration between the two parties. Morocco was also granted financial assistance and loans from the European Bank of Investment (see below) and a representation of the European Community, the first outside Europe, opened in Rabat.

Agreement Association - 1996:

Relations between the EEC and Morocco have developed and diversified throughout the years, revealing some limitations, however, regarding the achieving of the desired objectives of development and economic integration. These limitations, combined with the profound changes that characterised the international stage (the end of the Cold War, the fall of the Berlin Wall, and enlargement of the EEC), led both parties to launch negotiations that sought to put in place a new framework of cooperation.

For Morocco, the main objective of this exercise was to develop its relations with the EEC from the logic of assistance to the logic of partnership, based on mutual rights and obligations. In this context, the Association Agreement, which was concluded in February 1996 and came into force in 2000, placed relations between the two parties onto a new path towards partnership. At the same time, it

encompassed, economic, commercial and socio-cultural aspects, as well as the dimensions of security policy and the transformation of unilateral commercial concessions into reciprocal relationships in both industry and agriculture.

This Agreement, originally included as a bilateral arrangement and later in the extension of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership launched in Barcelona in 1995, is based on the following fundamental pillars, namely: the establishment of a political dialogue; the gradual creation of a free trade zone; and the deepening of economic, financial and technical cooperation in social and cultural matters.

Since the Association Agreement came into force, its implementation in political, economic and social fields has experienced a positive dynamic through various achievements.

Advanced Status - 2008:

Linked to Europe by an exceptional relationship, Morocco had voiced some expectations and legitimate ambitions, like how to move from a simple framework of an association to a new horizon. The Moroccan request, formulated by His Majesty King Mohamed VI for an advanced status, defined as more than just an association but a little less than membership, reflects the kingdom's high level of legitimate ambition and confirms its strategic choice to deepen its roots in Europe.

The proposal, positively welcomed by the European community, mainly targetted the multiplication of dialogue structures and exchange, as well as the diversification of instruments and areas of cooperation between the two parties, with a view to provide Morocco-EU relations with a new legal instrument well beyond the Association Agreement.

In 2003, the voice of Europe through that of Mr. Romano Prodi, then President of the European Community, joined Morocco in establishing a strategic and dynamic European Neighborhood Policy that promises stability and prosperity throughout the Mediterranean.

This European momentum materialised in the adoption by the Union of this policy - one that is strong, open and innovative towards the Mediterranean countries and their neighbours on the southern shore of the continent. Morocco supported this initiative based on reinforced cooperation, a proactive approach and a differential rhythm, which allows the development of relations according to the ambitions of each partner; it also allows the preserving and developing of Euro-Mediterranean gains, which constitute the common basis of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership.

In this context, on 12 July 2005, Morocco and the EU adopted a plan of joint action for the implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy over a five year period. This was preceded by several rounds of negotiations.

The constant willingness of Morocco to confer a more ambitious dynamic on its relations with the EU resulted in the achievement of several actions that at times exceeded the objectives of the Association Agreement and the Neighbourhood Action Plan, which helped propel this relationship to the Advanced Status.

As an example, it is worth mentioning Morocco's participation in the ALTHEA operation in peace-keeping, in the Balkans and Bosnia in particular, the conclusion of the Comprehensive Aviation Agreement (Open Skies), the conclusion of a cooperation agreement allowing Morocco the possibility to participate in the Galileo programme and the conclusion of a scientific and technological cooperation agreement.

For the realisation of this concept, Morocco observes the principles of joint ownership, differentiation (source of positive emulation) pooling of interests and, finally, the centrality of the Barcelona Process (today UfM) as the crucible from which to pour these gains; because any ultimate progress serves our Euro-Mediterranean common ideal.

Thus, a study was conducted using an inclusive approach, associating all the forces of the Moroccan nation (government, parliament, private sector and civil society) which was then extended to several economic and academic actors, as well as to European associations.

Strengthened by these achievements, Morocco committed itself, along with the EU, to a process of dialogue that helped define the guidelines of the Advanced Status, whose mission is to provide political and strategic visibility to the relations between Morocco and the EU through a broader and deeper cooperation. Thus, , on October 13, 2008 on the occasion of the 7th Council of Morocco-EU Association held in Luxembourg, Morocco and the EU adopted the document on the Advanced Status, an ambitious roadmap to further strengthen bilateral relations between the two parties and to inject new momentum through the following three areas of cooperation:

A political and strategic axis, to strengthen the channels of dialogue and consultation by institutionalising political and strategic dialogue.

An economic axis to establish a common Economic Space through the approximation of the legislative and regulatory framework of the common gain, the conclusion of a deep and comprehensive

Free Trade Agreement, connecting Morocco to trans-European networks, in addition to cooperation and financial support.

A human axis which should play a central role through the reinforcement of cultural, educational and scientific exchanges and the promotion of space for dialogue and consultation amongst new public, territorial and private actors, as well as associations.

In summary, it is a matter of defining a new strategy that combines legal and human aspects, economic and commercial aspects, as well as a gradual integration in the Community Agencies and Programmes identified by the two parties.

The integration of the national economy into the global economy is an expression of the strategic decision for openness and liberalism, adopted by Morocco since its independence. This openness, made necessary by globalisation, is governed by multilateral trade negotiations at the WTO level and the implementation of free trade agreements concluded by our country, particularly with the EU, EFTA along with the signatories of the Agadir Agreement, Turkey and the USA.

That said, as an extension of the Association Agreement, in June 1997 Morocco signed an agreement of association with the European Association for Free Trade Area (EAFFTA). The agreement came into force on March 1, 2000 and it provides for a gradual dismantling of industrial products over 12 years, as in the Association Agreement with the EU.

For agricultural products - unlike the EU - EAFTA does not have a common agricultural policy and member states make concessions to one another.

Moreover, in the process of Euro-Mediterranean regional integration, on February 25, 2004 the kingdom signed a quadrilateral FTA (ALE) with Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia, in accordance with the Agadir Declaration reached on May 8, 2001. This agreement seeks to put in place a quadripartite free trade zone, whilst remaining open to all Arab Mediterranean countries. The foreign affairs ministers of the four countries met in New York in September 2011 and formalised Palestine's membership of the Agadir Agreement.

The said agreement provides for a full exemption of custom duties, as of the date of coming into effect (1 January 2005), for all industrial and agricultural products except those excluded for security, health and environmental reasons.

In the same vein, Morocco and Turkey signed an FTA in Ankara on April 7, 2004. This provides for the gradual introduction of an industrial free trade zone over a period of 10 years, starting from the date of entry coming, into effect, with asymmetric treatment for Morocco.

Moroccan industrial products benefitted from full exemption upon entry of the agreement coming into effect. Regarding agricultural products concessions were exchanged.

Finally, Morocco and USA signed an FTA on June 15, 2004. It came into effect on July 1, 2005. This is a comprehensive agreement that touches all economic sectors from trade in goods; from trade in services, the protection of intellectual property rights to social and environmental concerns.

Exclusively economic and commercial by vocation, this agreement aims to organise the development of trade in goods and services between the two countries in a controlled framework, with regards to differences in socio-economic development.

Sector based cooperation:

For more than a decade, quantitative and qualitative cooperation between Morocco and the EU progressed steadily, guided by the many economic reforms undertaken by the public authorities, in order to meet the challenges of the 21st century confronting our country in matters of job creation, fighting poverty and social development.

In this respect, the continued improvement of sector based cooperation with its main partner, especially in areas of transportation (Open Skies Agreement, interconnection of transport networks), energy (renewable energy including solar energy) and the signing of the agreement that said the agricultural and fishing industries should contribute to deepening economic relations between the two parties.

The dynamics of sustained growth in recent years, in spite of the international financial and economic crisis, results mainly from the uninterrupted consolidation of economic and trade relations between the EU and Morocco concerning the sectors mentioned above.

The many opportunities for a Morocco-EU partnership have been encouraged by the various sector-based development strategies and development programmes implemented by the Moroccan authorities.

These strategies, it must be remembered, gave Morocco a global and coherent vision, as well as visibility regarding the evolution of each productive sector concerned, both for domestic and European operators. This did not fail to result in significant advances.

The Euro-Moroccan Partnership for Shared Prosperity, 2019:

In a joint political declaration, adopted at the end of the fourteenth meeting of the Morocco-EU Association Council, the two sides voiced their wish "to give a new impetus to their strategic, multidimensional and privileged relationship, an impetus consistent with their mutual expectations and the challenges of today's world, by developing a true 'Euro-Moroccan partnership for shared prosperity'."

The EU-Morocco partnership is more necessary than ever to respond to such challenges, the document says, noting that its political stability and the many reforms carried out within it, make Morocco one of the European Union's key partners in the region.

Furthermore, a convergence of views on numerous issues has made it increasingly possible for the European Union and Morocco to develop mutually suitable responses to issues, in line with the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

The partnership will aim at further deepening bilateral relations, on the basis of common ambitions and the development of each of the parties; it will also aim at strengthening regional and Euro-African cooperation and supporting effective multilateralism, it said.

Building on their common experience, they commit themselves to protecting the partnership which unites them, strengthening its resilience and stability and ensuring its continuity in case of difficulties, particularly through early consultation, strengthened coordination and use of the working structures established under the partnership.

In line with this objective, the European Union and Morocco will work to define a new framework for relations, one that is comprehensive and resilient, according to the same source.

At the bilateral level, the 'Euro-Moroccan partnership for shared prosperity' will be based on four structural areas:

*An area of convergence of values, based on the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, the Moroccan constitution and the international commitments of the two parties. The aim of this area will be to facilitate an alignment around the partnership's founding and guiding principles, namely democracy, the rule of law, good governance, justice, efficiency, responsibility and transparency of institutions, human rights and fundamental freedoms, particularly the freedom of assembly, the freedom of expression (including that of the press), and the rights of women and young people, equality between men and women, the fight against hate speech, intolerance, stigmatisation and

discrimination, as well as the protection and exchange of personal information and the right to privacy. Particular attention will be paid to developing opportunities available to young people. The two partners will work to ensure the development of a resilient, inclusive, dynamic and open society, in which civil society plays its role to the full.

- An area of economic convergence and social cohesion. This area will be based, in particular, on the implementation of the economic strand of the Association Agreement. This will involve making better use of the possibilities offered by the bilateral trade relationship, the relaunching of negotiations for a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA), on the basis of the expected benefits for both parties, the gradual move towards regulatory convergence, close bilateral cooperation regarding customs, good fiscal governance, the protection of personal data and a strengthening of the connectivity of physical and digital infrastructures. The two parties will seek to establish gradual economic integration between Morocco and the EU, as well as inclusive, fair and sustainable development capable of reducing social and territorial disparities, including by means of EU-Moroccan interregional cooperation programmes. To this end, use will be made, in particular, of exchanges of good practices regarding social dialogue, in order to create more socio-economic opportunities (including development of the social economy), for young people and women especially. This area will strengthen the integration of value chains, through better industrial integration, the development of reciprocal productive investments (including by means of the European External Investment Plan), the promotion of competitiveness, entrepreneurship and innovation, the green economy, support for the transformation of the Moroccan economy and consultation on financial matters, through actively relaunching regular economic dialogue.
- An area of shared knowledge. This area will promote, in particular, higher education, training (in particular professional training), sustainable employment, scientific research, innovation and technological transfers, and mobility for students and researchers. All existing and future instruments and mechanisms (Erasmus +, PRIMA, Horizon 2020, Horizon Europe, etc.) will be mobilised. These are regarded as the priority cooperation areas for developing an economy that is based on knowledge and innovation. The area will also be dedicated to intercultural promotion and to bringing peoples together. In view of the area's importance for gaining a better mutual understanding, it should focus on strengthening exchanges on cultural policies and industries, cultural entrepreneurship, heritage conservation, training in the artistic sectors, the organisation of cultural and artistic events, as well as cooperation in the fields of copyright, archives, libraries, museums, cinema, animation, and sport.

- An area of political consultation and of enhanced cooperation on security, at bilateral, regional and international levels. This area should make it possible to strengthen strategic dialogue, political consultation and operational cooperation on common internal security challenges. These include combatting organised crime networks, terrorism, and in particular the financing of terrorism, violent radicalisation and the return of foreign fighters, illicit trafficking in drugs and arms, as well as police cooperation, the training of security forces and judicial cooperation, all in compliance with international law, including human rights and the rule of law. In this regard, priority will be given to the sharing of information and experiences. In the same vein, both parties intend to develop common approaches in the area of external security, in particular vis-à-vis the Sahel, West Africa and other regions of interest, including the possibility of Morocco taking part in European Union civilian or military peace-keeping operations.

The two key fields, in which specific operational measures will also be carried out, are:

- Cooperation on protection of the environment and the fight against climate change. Given the urgency, and in compliance with the two parties' international commitments, this cooperation will particularly target renewable energies, energy efficiency, biodiversity and the sustainable use of natural resources, and will take account of rural development. It will also cover ocean governance, the WestMED Initiative, the protection and restoration of marine and coastal ecosystems and, in particular, the conservation of the Mediterranean and the opportunities provided by the blue economy and the circular economy. In accordance with the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the partners will target the ambitious implementation of nationally determined contributions, the establishment of a framework which can promote clean growth and ensure the transition towards a low-carbon and climate-resilient economy and the implementation of the 'Katowice Rulebook'. Likewise, South-South, trilateral cooperation on the environment and sustainable development will be encouraged.
- Enhanced consultation and balanced cooperation on mobility and migration. This consultation will be based on the 2013 Mobility Partnership, in compliance with national powers and the full implementation of Morocco's national strategy on migration and asylum. The management of migration requires joint and sustained efforts by Morocco, the European Union and its Member States in the framework of an approach that is comprehensive, humane and respectful of human rights, and envisages concerted action to deal with the root causes of irregular migration. The prevention of and fight against irregular migration, against trafficking in human beings and in migrants, and their protection, including through communication and by raising

awareness of the risks tied to irregular migration, stepping up the management of the sea and land borders, mobility, in particular improving the mobility of professionals, legal migration, return, readmission and reintegration, visa facilitation and the development of mutually beneficial human exchanges, in particular for students, young workers and young volunteers, will form part of the objectives pursued.

CONCLUSION

Morocco remains an exceptional country in terms of all its multifaceted advances and it is entitled to position itself in the role of being a pilot country and 'privileged partner' and to establish itself as the only Mediterranean country with which the EU could develop a deep relationship. It goes without saying that, to the objective community of interests created by geography and history, must be added a chosen community of values shared by the two neighbours. They are the bearers of a converging vision of the future for the Mediterranean and beyond, aware that their regional and global environment is the subject of increasingly complex challenges, but also of new opportunities which will determine the future of the Euro-African and Euro-Mediterranean area, in particular economic and human development, inclusion and equitability, innovation and knowledge sharing, environmental protection and sustainable development, justice, intercultural dialogue, mobility and migration, human rights and good governance. The EU-Morocco partnership is necessary more than ever in response to such challenges, especially since the political stability and multiple reforms undertaken by Morocco, as we have seen throughout the article, make it one of the key regional partners of the European Union. Moreover, the convergence of views on many subjects increasingly allows the European Union and Morocco to articulate appropriate responses together, consistent with the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

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