

**STRATEGIC REPORT 2016**  
**MOROCCO PANORAMA IN THE WORLD**  
**INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS OF THE KINGDOM**

**Summary**

In 2015, the Royal Institute for Strategic Studies (IRES) launched a new series of strategic reports, called "*Panorama du Maroc dans le monde*" (Panorama of Morocco in the world). The common feature of these annual strategic reports is that they give the big picture of a given situation, namely a broad perspective.

The first report of these series looked into the ongoing major transitions at the global level and their impact on Morocco, in terms of opportunities to seize, pitfalls to avoid and breaks to anticipate (2015) - including risks to be avoided, opportunities to be seized and breaks to be anticipated (2015). It was followed by a second edition dedicated to the Kingdom's International Relations (2016), based on the Guidelines contained in the Message by His Majesty the King's August 30, 2013, calling on the Institute to focus on Morocco's external relations and on diplomacy.

The 2016 strategic report highlights the foundations of the Kingdom's foreign policy, as defined by the vision of His Majesty King Mohammed VI. It addresses Morocco's relations with its neighboring countries and devotes three chapters to the three cultural spheres to which the Kingdom belongs: the Arab-Muslim world, Africa and the Euro-Mediterranean region. The last two chapters address Morocco's relations with America and Asia.

This strategic report was updated in 2019 taking in account the evolution Morocco's foreign policy since 2016. This release is based on the findings of the most recent studies conducted by the IRES, particularly on Africa., such as the fourth strategic report (2018), dedicated to the autonomous development of Africa.

**FOREIGN POLICY FOUNDATIONS**

Under the reign of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, reflection and action go hand and in hand, tirelessly pursuing the objective of the settlement of the artificial dispute over the Moroccan Sahara, by proposing an innovative autonomy project, defending the Kingdom's interests abroad in a comprehensive consolidating its long-established bonds, building strategic partnerships, and making sure Morocco is actively involved in new global issues (climate change, sustainable development, security, migration...).

Resolve, pragmatism, realism, moderation, anticipation, purposefulness, participatory approach, strategic vision and diversification are some of the concepts underpinning the new *modus operandi* envisioned by His Majesty the King to enhance the Kingdom's attractive power.

His Majesty's speeches and remarks set out the broad-lines of Morocco's foreign policy and specify its objectives. They are based on a frame of reference informed by the Kingdom's cultural heritage, Its Arab-Islamic, African and Mediterranean essence, as well as Its legitimate ambition to be a active stakeholder in the regional and international arena.

The Message by His Majesty the King on the occasion of celebrating the National Day of Moroccan diplomacy, held in Rabat on 28 April 2000, is the founding text of the Kingdom of Morocco's new foreign policy and diplomacy.

The latter "... should muster its resources in order to build on the new image international public opinion has of our country, **the image of a democratic, modernist Morocco**, rallying around its King – a country which stands out as a model of moderation and tolerance. His Majesty said that Moroccan diplomacy should seek to explore new areas of economic cooperation and enhance Morocco's strategic dimension to make the country a model partner for others in order to achieve an optimal, proactive and solidarity-based partnership and **consolidate Morocco's position as a state-of-the-art regional hub and as an element of stability and peace in the Maghreb, Arabic, Islamic, Euro-Mediterranean, African and American environment**, ensuring we make the most of globalization and that we are part of the global economy, while at the same time mitigating their adverse impact on our development and giving fresh impetus to our external relations ...".

These foundations being specified, Morocco's foreign policy is defined at the regional level by the Guidelines contained in the Speeches and the Royal Messages mentioned below:

In the Royal Speech on the occasion of the 43<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the Green March of November 6, 2018, His Majesty said the latter " I should like to say today, in a very straightforward and responsible way, that Morocco stands ready for a direct and frank dialogue with our sister nation, Algeria, in order to settle the transient and objective differences impeding the development of relations between the two countries.

To this end, **I suggest to our Algerian brothers that we set up a joint political mechanism for dialogue and consultation**. This mechanism's format, nature and level of representation can be mutually agreed upon.

I should like to stress that Morocco is willing to consider the proposals or initiatives Algeria may want to offer in this regard so as to break the stalemate in the relations between the two neighbors and sister nations."

In the Royal Speech on the occasion of the 27<sup>th</sup> Arab Summit of July 25, 2016; His Majesty announced that "We must remain focused on **designing and developing the right partnerships within the Arab family** with regard to needs, priorities and areas of cooperation so as to boost the development dimension in our joint action. All our endogenous capacities should be leveraged to enable Arab citizens to enjoy a serene, dignified life."

Concerning Africa, His Majesty reaffirmed, in his Royal Speech on the occasion of the 64<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Revolution of the King and the People, on August 20, 2017, that "Morocco's commitment to defending Africa's causes and interests is not new. It reflects a standard policy consistently carried out by my ancestors, and which I have been proudly and confidently pursuing... **Africa was and always will be a top priority for us.** What matters, above all, is the continent's progress and the services provided to African citizens."

In the Royal Speech on the occasion of the 28<sup>th</sup> summit of the African Union in Addis Ababa, on January 31, 2017, His Majesty said "It is so good to be back home, after having been away for too long! It is a good day when you can show your affection for your beloved home! **Africa is my continent, and my home.** I am home at last and happily reunited with you. I have missed you all."

In the Royal Speech on the occasion of the 29<sup>th</sup> summit of African Union Heads of State and Government, July 4, 2017, he stated that " Morocco wants to **contribute to the emergence of a New Africa:** a strong, daring Africa that defends its interests; an Africa that is influential on the world stage."

Concerning Europe, His Majesty said in his Royal Speech on the occasion of the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Throne day of July 30, 2014, saying: "I do not perceive Morocco's Advanced Status with the European Union as an end in itself, but rather as a milestone on the path towards strengthening the Morocco-EU partnership, which I would like to be balanced and equitable."

During the first Arab-European summit, 24 February 2019, the Royal Message highlighted that "**For decades now, the Kingdom of Morocco has had a special and fruitful relationship with its European partner,** especially through the Advanced Status it has with the EU. My country looks forward to even closer relations with the EU based on partnership. Morocco is indeed ready to help turn Arab-European cooperation into an innovative partnership that builds upon the cultural heritage of each party, making Arab-European interaction a lever for the emergence of a solid, balanced relationship rooted in shared values, common interests, mutual esteem and constructive dialogue."

In the Royal Speech on the occasion of the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Throne day of July 30, 2014, and as regards the historical relations with the United States, His Majesty the King restated Morocco's commitment to "... **consolidating the strategic partnership** with the United States, particularly by **devising new mechanisms to support and promote the free trade agreement and continue our strategic dialogue with that country**". And added in the Royal Speech to the nation on the occasion of the 16<sup>th</sup> Throne day of July 30, 2015 that "**I am keen to consolidate our strategic partnership with the United States of America**, which is rooted in the values and principles that our two peoples have in common and believe in."

On the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Morocco and Peru, His Majesty the King expressed in a Message in June 2014 the need for an ambitious **partnership** between the Arab world, Africa and **South American countries, within the framework of South-South dialogue and cooperation**.

In the Address to the Third India-Africa Forum Summit, in September 2015, His Majesty reaffirmed that Morocco "... looks forward to **launching joint initiatives with India**, within the framework of this Forum, in areas which are a priority for our peoples and in which our two countries have gained extensive expertise. An example of fruitful partnership between our two countries is our cooperation **in the field of phosphates** and their derivatives, which we seek to expand to include **food security programs, putting our know-how at the disposal of some African countries...."**

In the Message addressed, on December 5, 2015 to the Forum on China Africa Cooperation, His Majesty the King confirmed that "... Morocco will continue to share its experience and well-established know-how in order to develop **rich, diverse triangular cooperation with China, based on a genuine "win-win" partnership**" and that being a "firm believer in the **China-Africa partnership**, (Morocco) is ready to do whatever it takes to strengthen this process and rise successfully to the challenge of building a stable, prosperous Africa together".

## **THE STAKES FOR MOROCCO**

Given the major changes affecting the regional and global arena, the challenges for Morocco are of a political, security, economic, cultural and environmental nature.

### **At the political level:**

- Defending Morocco's territorial integrity, which is the nation's foremost priority.
- Positioning Morocco as an essential interlocutor for major powers, particularly in Africa.

- Ensuring Morocco's strategic repositioning in the light of new regional balance, and regaining influence on major regional issues.
- Contributing to the success of democratic transition in southern Mediterranean countries and of the ongoing mediation process.
- Working with Morocco's neighboring countries to build a common cooperation platform that guarantees stability and peace in the region.
- Identifying mechanisms and financial resources needed to implement the 'Euro-Moroccan partnership for shared prosperity' formalized in July 2019.
- Promoting relations with Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Peru and Colombia and undertaking vigorous diplomatic action towards Ecuador, Paraguay and Uruguay.
- Diversifying the Kingdom's partnership relations with the Russian Federation as well as Asian countries, particularly China and India.
- Implementing the strategic partnership concluded with China in 2016, as well as the New Silk Roads initiative, that Morocco joined in 2017.

#### **On security issues**

- Containing transnational threats, namely terrorism, organized crime and illegal immigration networks which are putting considerable strains on regional and international stability.
- Combating religious radicalism and extremist groups, and deconstructing their ideology.
- Contributing to Sahel and Saharan States' capacity building to address the risks posed by separatist movements.
- Creating an Arab military coalition sharing a common doctrine.

#### **At the economic level**

- Strengthening Morocco's positioning as a regional hub in the economic, financial and transport sectors as well as in education and scientific research.
- Enhancing the potential for economic cooperation to reduce Morocco's foreign trade imbalances, particularly vis-à-vis countries with which the Kingdom has signed a free trade agreement.
- Working actively to promote Euro-Mediterranean integration and boost South-South trade.

- Enforcing the Greater Arab Free Trade Area project (GAFTA) and attracting investment from the Gulf Cooperation Council countries.
- Accelerating Moroccan investment in Africa and its investment security.
- Expanding economic relations with Asia, despite geographical distance and cultural and linguistic differences.

#### **At the environmental level**

- Enhancing Morocco's capacities in terms of adaptation to climate change.
- Developing and implementing a common regional vision in Africa and the Mediterranean regarding the fight against the effects of climate change.

#### **At cultural and human levels**

- Promoting the cultural heritage shared with Morocco's neighboring countries and with the Arab world, and ensuring greater cultural exchange.
- Consolidating Morocco's spiritual diplomacy in Africa and Europe.
- Promoting dialogue between civil societies and youth from both shores of the Mediterranean to facilitate mutual understanding.
- Anticipating the risks that may be caused by illegal immigration and related problems, both on human and security-related dimensions.

## **LEVERS FOR STRONGER INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION**

The cooperation and partnership policy adopted by the Kingdom places the country at the heart of major international issues. Though Morocco's foreign policy decisions are relevant, the Kingdom needs to constantly adjust its foreign policy tools to the rapid changes affecting regional and global arenas so that the Nation's foreign policy can always be suited to tomorrow's realities.

To this end, some proposals are put forth hereunder regarding the Kingdom's international relations as well as its diplomacy.

### **International relations**

#### **Partnership policy**

- Consolidate Morocco's existing partnerships and seek to diversify them to make sure the Kingdom's alliance strategy is consistent with new global geostrategic realities.
- Extend the scope of bilateral cooperation to geographical areas of common interest and make sure relations with partner countries tally with the requirements of a globalized world, taking into account the challenges of competitiveness, sustainable development, security and migration.
- Make sure South-South cooperation serves as a means to implement the Kingdom's foreign policy and focus on tripartite cooperation involving Morocco and partner countries, on the one hand, and Africa and Europe, on the other.

#### **Morocco's neighborhood**

- Restore the collective memory and revisit the history Morocco has in common with neighboring countries, particularly Spain and anticipate possible tensions by establishing permanent mechanisms for consultation and coordination.
- Promote cooperation among economic operators to expand the scope of economic interests and make sure cooperation relations are not constrained by the ambiguities of the political agenda.

#### **Areas of belonging**

- Continue to play a key-role in political mediation and in peace and security issues in the Arab world.
- Benefit from Morocco's relations in West Africa through the Kingdom's accession to ECOWAS to strengthen the Kingdom's position in the strategic agenda of the great powers.

- Conduct a policy of active participation of the Kingdom after his return to the African Union by increasing involvement in the different structures of the African Union, particularly in the context of the reform of the continental institution.
- Extend cooperation with African countries beyond French- and Arabic-speaking African countries to English-speaking and Portuguese-speaking countries, and make Southern Africa and East Africa one of the priorities of Moroccan foreign policy.

### **Openness to the world**

- Make sure the South Atlantic becomes a cooperation area, by setting up a platform for dialogue and consultation involving African and South American States bordering the Atlantic.
- Use the intangible capital as a lever to rebalance Morocco's asymmetrical relations with developed countries and regions, including the United States and Europe.
- Improve Morocco's positioning in South America by leveraging Morocco's close relations with the leading countries in the sub-continent, as a gateway for access to regional South-American economic communities.
- Build a vibrant, sustainable economic partnership with Asia by encouraging investment by large Asian firms in Morocco and by developing cooperation targeting Africa.

## **Diplomacy**

### **The political dimension**

- Uphold the centrality of Morocco's position in order to foil attempts aiming to exclude the Kingdom from international initiatives which concern the African continent.
- Secure an active role in the rebalancing of regional forces by building on Morocco's Advanced Status with the European Union and on its close ties with the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council.

### **The economic dimension**

- Give fresh impetus to economic diplomacy and refurbish the tools and mechanisms for the promotion of economic development in the Kingdom with a view to balancing trade relations between Morocco and partner countries, enhance the country's ability to attract foreign direct investment and encourage greater involvement of Moroccan businesses abroad.



### **The cultural dimension**

- Make sure Moroccan diplomacy attaches as much importance to the cultural dimension as it does to the political and economic dimensions.
- Lay the foundations for balanced, sustainable cultural relations with countries having cultural commonalities with Morocco as well as with nations hosting large Moroccan communities.

### **The security dimension**

- Enhance security cooperation to stem the terrorist threat and crime.
- Make sure the fight against terrorism and violent extremism is part of a comprehensive vision, building on the prevention-based, multidimensional approach adopted by Morocco and on a set of principles to counter extremists movements' radical discourse, targeting young people in particular, and the terrorist threat.

### **The environmental dimension**

- Consolidate the achievements of the organization of the COP22 and place Morocco at the heart of the challenges of a new climate governance issues, paying special attention to efforts to gain a good command of the climate change negotiation process.
- Strengthen the capabilities of climate diplomacy and make adaptation to climate change the cornerstone of this diplomacy.

### **Parallel diplomacy**

- Encourage the involvement of civil society in promoting the Kingdom's image abroad and ensure civil society's active involvement, particularly with respect to defending the Kingdom's territorial integrity.
- Involve the expatriate Moroccan community and make sure it serves as a link between Moroccan and foreign civil societies.

### **Intellectual diplomacy**

- Establish close cooperation between Moroccan and foreign think tanks by fostering strategic dialogue, especially between think tanks involved in international relations and security issues.
- Develop monitoring and foresight, and demonstrate Morocco's ability to engage in top-notch strategic thinking.

- Promote scientific and technical cooperation by encouraging cooperation between Moroccan and foreign universities.

### **Communication**

- Make sure the Kingdom has a proactive communication strategy regarding Morocco's image. This strategy should be adapted to the targeted audience and focus on displaying the progress achieved in various areas, combating stereotypes and prejudice and enhancing the country's visibility abroad.
- Implement an appropriate policy regarding "Brand Morocco", involving public authorities, economic players and the media, and use it to enhance the Kingdom's influence and standing abroad.