



OCTOBER 2024

POLICY PAPER

MOROCCO-INDIA PARTNERSHIP:

Field of Strength to be Explored



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The bilateral relationship between Morocco and India has passed through three distinct phases, culminating in the current stage of strategic partnership. Initially marked by diplomatic formalities and limited engagement, the relationship gradually transitioned into a period of economic and cultural exchange, laying the groundwork for more substantial collaboration. This Policy Paper analyzes the historical trajectory of Morocco-India relations, tracing the development from these early interactions to the establishment of a comprehensive strategic partnership. The analysis focuses on the key milestones and turning points that have defined each phase, highlighting the factors that have contributed to the deepening of ties over time.

Furthermore, the paper assesses the present status of the strategic relationship, examining areas of cooperation, mutual interests, and the geopolitical significance of the partnership. By evaluating the strengths and potential challenges in the current framework, this study provides informed recommendations aimed at further enhancing and solidifying the strategic relationship between Morocco and India. These recommendations focus on expanding economic ties, enhancing security cooperation, and fostering greater cultural and educational exchanges, to ensure the long-term sustainability and growth of the partnership.

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INTRODUCTION

India's contemporary foreign policy continues to embrace a multi-alignment approach, reflecting the complexities of the modern global landscape. This strategy allows India to pursue strategic partnerships, such as with Morocco, that align with its vision of engaging with diverse global actors. Unlike the traditional non-alignment stance, India's multi-alignment policy recognizes the fluid dynamics of international relations, fostering cooperation on multiple fronts.¹

The strategic partnership with Morocco thus exemplifies India's adaptable foreign policy, which seeks to navigate and capitalize on the evolving opportunities within a multipolar world. The strategic partnership between India and Morocco aligns with India's broader foreign policy objectives, particularly its ambition to establish a gateway to both Europe and Africa. India's foreign policy has increasingly focused on expanding its influence and fostering deeper connections with key regions, and Morocco's strategic location offers a crucial entry point to achieve this goal.²

Morocco, positioned as a bridge: on the one hand between Europe and Africa, and on the other hand, between the north and the south, shares a similar vision of serving as a conduit for economic, political, and cultural exchanges between the two continents.³

For Morocco, the partnership with India enhances its role as the "Gateway to Africa," reinforcing its strategic importance in facilitating access to African markets and opportunities. This collaboration supports Morocco's ambition to strengthen its ties with African nations while simultaneously deepening its engagement with global powers like India. The alignment of these objectives has fostered a mutually beneficial partnership that leverages Morocco's geographical and strategic significance to advance India's regional aspirations.

In this context, the India-Morocco strategic partnership represents a convergence of interests, with both nations recognizing the value of their collaboration in achieving their respective foreign policy goals. This partnership not only enhances bilateral relations but also contributes to the broader dynamics of international cooperation and the needs of the global south within the context of south-south cooperation.

This paper aims to critically examine the strategic partnership between Morocco and India, assessing its potential and identifying areas for further development. To achieve this, we will first review the historical trajectory of relations between India and Morocco, beginning with Morocco's independence and the formation of the Non-Aligned Movement, up to the present day. Next, we will explore the various strategic areas of cooperation and the bilateral agendas that have emerged from this partnership. Following this, we will conduct a comprehensive analysis of the limitations of the partnership. Finally, we will propose recommendations for fully leveraging the untapped potential of this bilateral relationship.

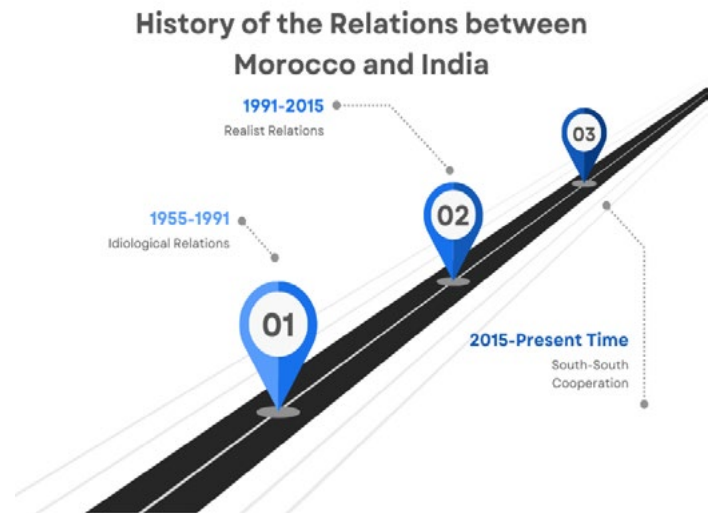
1. Sempijja, N., & Ait Merri, M. (2024). African pursuit of agency in the changing global environment: From non-alignment to multi-alignment. In *Rapport annuel sur la géopolitique de l'Afrique 2024* (Chap. 4). Policy Center for the New South.

2. Gopaldas, R. (2018, June 28). The race to become Africa's preferred gateway is heating up. Observer Research Foundation, Expert Speak Raisina Debates. <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/41964-race-become-africa-preferred-gateway-heating>

3. Idem.

I. FROM IDEOLOGY TO SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION: TRACING THE TRAJECTORY OF MOROCCO-INDIA RELATIONS

The evolution of Morocco-India relations has transitioned through various phases, reflecting shifts in global and regional dynamics. Initially rooted in ideological alignment, these relations evolved towards a more pragmatic, realist approach. Subsequently, the two nations embraced South-South cooperation, leveraging their shared development goals. Currently, Morocco and India are cultivating a strategic partnership, underscoring the growing importance of bilateral cooperation in diverse sectors. This strategic relationship holds significant potential for further development, requiring continued efforts to enhance collaboration and mutual benefits.



1.1 From 1959 to 1991: An Ideological Relations

The historical contact between Morocco and India can be traced back to the 14th century, marked by the voyage of the eminent Moroccan traveler and writer, Ibn Battuta, to the Indian subcontinent.⁴ His early connection set a foundation, albeit informal, for the relationship between the two regions. However, it was not until the mid-20th century that the modern bilateral relations between Morocco and India formally commenced. This significant turning point occurred on June 20, 1956, when India publicly expressed its support for Morocco's quest for independence at the United Nations. This gesture of solidarity was a pivotal moment, reflecting India's commitment to anti-colonial movements and fostering a spirit of camaraderie with Morocco.⁵

Subsequently, in 1957, Morocco and India established official diplomatic relations, marked by the setting up of formal diplomatic missions in each other's capitals. This period was characterized by a series of diplomatic engagements and exchanges that laid the groundwork for a robust bilateral relationship. The initial decades of this diplomatic relationship were heavily influenced by the geopolitical context of the Cold War and were significantly shaped by both nations' active participation in the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

The Non-Aligned Movement, an international organization of states considering themselves not formally aligned with or against any major power bloc, provided a crucial platform for Morocco and India to engage in multilateral discussions. Within the framework of the Group of 77 (G77), a coalition of developing nations designed to promote their collective economic interests and

4. India-Morocco Bilateral Brief. October 23, 2023. Ministry of External Affairs of India.

5. Embassy of the Kingdom of Morocco in the Republic of India. <https://in.diplomatie.ma/en/morocco-india-relations-ibn-battuta-21st-century>

enhance their joint negotiating capacity, both countries found common ground and collaborated extensively.⁶ The G77 and NAM contexts allowed Morocco and India to voice their concerns and aspirations on the global stage, particularly regarding issues related to decolonization, economic development, and international cooperation.

One of the most significant milestones in the Morocco-India relationship during this era was the Conference of Heads of State and Government of Non-Aligned Countries, held in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, in September 1961.⁷ This conference, the first summit of the Non-Aligned Movement, was a historic event that brought together leaders from various non-aligned nations. It provided an opportunity for King Hassan II of Morocco and Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru of India to meet and discuss matters of mutual interest. Their interaction at this summit underscored the shared values and common ideological objectives that both nations upheld within the NAM framework.

During the subsequent years, until the end of the Cold War, the Morocco-India bilateral relationship continued to develop through various multilateral forums and bilateral engagements. The diplomatic discourse during this period was enriched by the frequent interactions at NAM summits and conferences, which facilitated the exchange of ideas and strengthened the diplomatic ties between the two countries. These engagements also highlighted the importance of solidarity among developing nations and the need for a collective approach to address global challenges. In that sense, India was always bringing the concept of South-South Cooperation to its agendas of discussion, especially with North African states.⁸

1.2 From 1991 to 2015: A Realist Relations

Following the initial establishment of diplomatic relations, India's relationship with Morocco did not exhibit any distinct characteristics that set it apart from its interactions with other North African nations. However, the year 1991 marked a turning point in Indian foreign policy. Indeed, the balance of payments crisis at the time, triggered in part by the collapse of the Soviet Union, which was then India's most important trading partner, led to comprehensive economic policy reforms and a departure from the previous model of domestic, market-oriented development.⁹ Since then, all Indian governments have relied on foreign direct investment, technology transfer, export promotion, and stronger integration into the world market.¹⁰

The associated liberalisation also had various effects on foreign policy with regard the rest of the world. As well as India's new interest in expanding economic relations, other factors emerged: issues such as energy security and import diversification have now been given much more weight in India's foreign policy; China's growing engagement in north Africa through the expansive Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has intensified competition for resources and influence; and India reassessed

6. Jaldi, A. S., & Mjehed, H. (2023, April 10). North Africa's invisible partner: Exploring India's political and economic influence in the region (p. 6). Policy Center for the New South. https://www.policycenter.ma/sites/default/files/2023-04/PP_04-23%20%28Jaldi%20%26%20Mjehed%29%20%281%29.pdf

7. First Summit Conference of Heads of State or Government of the NAM, Belgrade. <https://nam.go.ug/1st-summit-conference-heads-state-or-government-namelgrade>

8. Jaldi, A. S., & Mjehed, H. (2023, April 10). North Africa's invisible partner: Exploring India's political and economic influence in the region (p. 6). Policy Center for the New South. https://www.policycenter.ma/sites/default/files/2023-04/PP_04-23%20%28Jaldi%20%26%20Mjehed%29%20%281%29.pdf

9. Christian Wagner. India's Africa Policy. German Institute for International and Security Affairs - Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP). July 2019. Page 10. chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcjpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.swp-berlin.org/publications/products/research_papers/2019RP09_wgn_Web.pdf

10. Ibid.

its diaspora in the 1990s, correspondingly regarding it as a potential foreign policy instrument.¹¹ These factors collectively influenced India to adopt a comprehensive approach towards the entire North African region, seeking to foster equitable relations with all countries within the framework of amicable diplomacy.

India's strategic focus shifted towards the broad expansion of economic relations and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) across the North African region. This strategic orientation was framed as a diplomatic priority, given North Africa's strategic importance as a gateway to both Europe and the wider African continent. Consequently, India's engagement with Morocco, as well as other North African countries, was characterized by an emphasis on economic diplomacy, aimed at enhancing trade, investment, and cooperative ventures.

In this context, India's interactions with Morocco were part of a broader regional strategy that sought to leverage North Africa's geopolitical significance. The emphasis on economic relations underscored India's intention to build a robust presence in the region, facilitating access to new markets and opportunities for economic growth. This approach also aimed to counterbalance China's influence in the region, as exemplified by the BRI, by positioning India as a viable economic partner and investor.

Overall, India's relationship with Morocco during the post-Cold War period can be seen as part of a deliberate strategy to strengthen its economic and diplomatic ties across North Africa. By focusing on economic engagement and FDI, India aimed to secure its strategic interests while promoting mutual growth and development within the region.

1.3 From 2015 until today: South-South Cooperation as the dominant paradigm in Indo-Moroccan relations.

Following the ascension of His Majesty King Mohammed VI to the throne 25 years ago, he embarked on his first official visit to India in 2001. This visit marked a significant moment, demonstrating Morocco's ambitions to strengthen bilateral relations with India. However, it was not until 2015 that these relations were substantially consolidated. This occurred during a pivotal meeting between King Mohammed VI and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. This visit allowed for elevating Indo-Moroccan relations from the stage of cooperation to that of a strategic partnership, capitalizing on South-South cooperation.

The conclusion of the Indo-Moroccan strategic partnership took place one year after the 2014 Indian general elections, which allowed the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to come to power in New Delhi. Furthermore, the strategic partnership was formalized during the same year as the third India-Africa summit in New Delhi, and three years before Indian Prime Minister Modi's speech in Kampala. These two events notably positioned South-South cooperation as the dominant paradigm in India's African policy. Indeed, whereas before the summit of 2015, the main focus had been on issues such as loans and development aid projects, in 2015 the Indian government emphasised above all security policy issues and the desire to work together to increase economic cooperation and combat terrorism.¹² In this context, the speech of Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the Ugandan Parliament in July 2018 represented a crucial moment in this process. During its speech, The Indian PM outlined a vision for not just a bilateral partnership with Africa, but also a partnership

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.

in multilateral forums by espousing the ‘10 guiding principles for India-Africa engagement’,¹³ as principal paradigm of India-Africa relations. It is through this perspective that one must understand the Indo-Moroccan strategic partnership of 2015.

Since that landmark meeting, the partnership between India and Morocco has evolved into a strategic alliance. The spirit of developing together as equals defines this strategic partnership. This transformation has been underscored by the signing of several agreements and Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) across a variety of sectors. Key areas of collaboration include counter-terrorism, cyber security, agriculture, and vocational training, among others. These agreements reflect a deepening of ties and a mutual commitment to addressing shared challenges and leveraging growth opportunities.

The strategic partnership established between India and Morocco signifies a concerted effort to foster closer cooperation and collaboration, reinforcing their bilateral relationship on multiple fronts. This evolving partnership underscores the importance both nations place on their diplomatic and economic engagements, paving the way for sustained and comprehensive collaboration in the future.

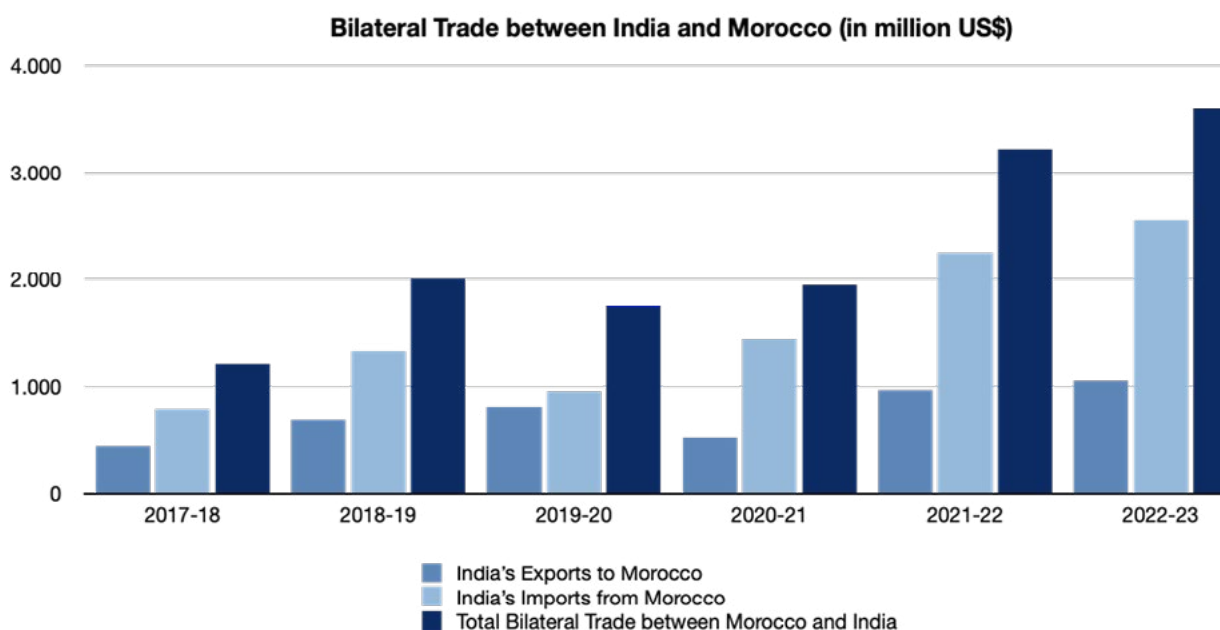
II. THE PILLARS OF THE INDO-MOROCCAN STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

The strategic partnership between Morocco and India is anchored in four key areas: defense and military cooperation, food security, health security, and economic and trade relations. These sectors form the foundation of their bilateral collaboration, highlighting the importance of comprehensive and multi-dimensional engagement between the two nations. By focusing on these critical areas, Morocco and India aim to strengthen their partnership, address mutual challenges, and promote sustainable development.

2.1 Economic and Trade

The data, presented in Chart 1, illustrates the trade dynamics between India and Morocco from 2017-18 to 2022-23. Over this period, bilateral trade has shown a general upward trend, with significant increases in both India's exports to Morocco and India's imports from Morocco, particularly from 2021-22 to 2022-23. In 2018-19, the total bilateral trade was valued at \$2.007 billion, with India importing \$1.327 billion worth of goods from Morocco. This figure slightly decreased in the following years, with a dip in 2020-21 to \$1.944 billion. However, the trade volume surged again in 2021-22, reaching \$3.597 billion by 2022-23. This surge is primarily driven by India's increasing imports from Morocco, which nearly doubled from \$1.437 billion in 2020-21 to \$2.549 billion in 2022-23.

13. Abhishek Mishra. The ten guiding principles for India-Africa engagement: Finding coherence in India's Africa policy. Observer Research Foundation (ORF). June 2015. <https://www.orfonline.org/research/the-ten-guiding-principles-for-india-africa-engagement-finding-coherence-in-india-s-africa-policy>

Table 1**India-Morocco Bilateral Relations****Bilateral Trade between India and Morocco (in million US\$)**

	India's Exports to Morocco	India's Imports from Morocco	Total Bilateral Trade between Morocco and India
2017-18	432	780	1,212
2018-19	680	1,327	2,007
2019-20	799	953	1,752
2020-21	508	1,437	1,944
2021-22	962	2,244	3,206
2022-23	1,047	2,549	3,597

Source: India Embassy in Rabat.¹⁴

India's trade relationship with Morocco is characterized by a significant exchange of goods and services that reflects the growing economic ties between the two nations. India's exports to Morocco encompass a wide array of products, including textiles, vehicles, pharmaceuticals, and machinery. These sectors not only demonstrate India's industrial capacity but also highlight its strategic interest in diversifying its export portfolio to North Africa. Morocco, on the other hand, has been a reliable supplier of crucial raw materials to India, primarily phosphoric acid, phosphate, and metallic ores, which are essential for India's agricultural and manufacturing industries.

The bilateral trade relationship has evolved beyond mere exchange of goods. The establishment of joint ventures and increased investments in sectors such as renewable energy, tourism, and agriculture underscores the deepening economic cooperation between the two countries. For instance, India's investments in Morocco's renewable energy sector align with global sustainability

14. [Chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/Morocco-2023.pdf](https://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/Morocco-2023.pdf)

goals and Morocco's ambition to become a leader in green energy.

Additionally, the tourism and agriculture sectors offer new avenues for collaboration, leveraging Morocco's strategic location as a gateway to both Europe and Africa. These joint ventures not only strengthen economic ties but also contribute to Morocco's socio-economic development, making it a pivotal partner in India's broader strategy to enhance its economic footprint in North Africa.

2.2 Food Security

Both Morocco and India face significant challenges in ensuring food security. Morocco's primary challenge lies in its dependence on cereal imports, which exceeds its domestic production.¹⁵ The country's limited arable land and insufficient water resources exacerbate this issue, making it difficult to achieve agricultural self-sufficiency. Conversely, India is grappling with the demands of a rapidly growing population, projected to reach 1.5 billion by 2030.¹⁶ As the population increases, the strain on the country's limited water and land resources intensifies, with these resources being increasingly subject to degradation and depletion.

To address these challenges, Morocco requires advanced irrigation technologies to maximize the productivity of its arable land and optimize the use of its scarce water resources. India, on the other hand, needs access to fertilizers and agricultural chemicals to enhance the productivity of its available land and support its growing food demands. These complementary needs create a foundation for a strategic partnership between the two nations, where Morocco's need for irrigation solutions and India's need for agricultural inputs can be mutually addressed through collaboration.

The Indo-Moroccan cooperation in food security is notably profound, with Morocco serving as the primary exporter of phosphates and their derivatives to India, particularly fertilizers essential for agricultural production and staple food cultivation. New Delhi imports 1.1 million tons of natural phosphate from Morocco, accounting for 22% of its total phosphate imports, and 1.2 million tons of phosphoric acid, representing 50% of its total imports. India has been a longstanding client of the OCP Group, which has played a significant role in India's Green Revolution, transforming the country's agricultural sector. OCP also has substantial investments in India, including joint ventures in the fertilizer industry.

In this context, Morocco and India signed The Work Plan for 2018-2020 between the Indian Council of Agricultural Research and Morocco's Ministry of Agriculture, Marine Fisheries, Rural Development, and Water and Forests on May 4, 2018.¹⁷ This agreement, established under the Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in Agricultural Research and Education, aims to enhance collaboration in agricultural research and development. Additionally, within the framework of the strategic partnership between the two countries, the OCP Group of Morocco and India have entered a strategic partnership to bolster food security.¹⁸ This collaboration reflects their shared ambition to promote innovative and sustainable agricultural practices, further solidifying the bilateral relationship in the agricultural sector. The agreements demonstrate a mutual commitment to addressing the critical challenges of food security by leveraging each country's strengths in agricultural research, technology, and resource management. This collaboration includes joint R&D

15. Ihssane Guennoun, (2018, August 1). Food security in Morocco and India: Different challenges for joint answers? Policy Center for the New South.

16. Ibid.

17. Bilateral Relations between Morocco and India. (2022, July) Embassy of the Kingdom of Morocco in the Republic of India. <https://in.diplomatie.ma/en/morocco-india>

18. Bilateral Relations between Morocco and India. (2022, July) Embassy of the Kingdom of Morocco in the Republic of India. <https://in.diplomatie.ma/en/morocco-india>

initiatives and the supply of up to 1.7 million metric tons of phosphate fertilizers to India. Therefore, the partnership focuses on innovative, customized fertilization solutions to meet Indian farmers' specific needs.¹⁹

Therefore, Morocco, through OCP, aims to achieve three strategic objectives in food security: combating poverty and malnutrition, ensuring global food security by investing in countries with vast arable land and significant water resources, and increasing fertilizer production to enhance sustainability across the mining value chain. The Morocco-India partnership in food security can serve as a model for similar initiatives globally.

2.3 Health Cooperation

The strategic partnership between Morocco and India extends significantly into the healthcare sector, underscoring the multi-faceted nature of their bilateral relations, as India is considered as the pharmacy of the world. A notable example of this collaboration is the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed on December 14, 2017, between the Marrakech Mohammed VI University Hospital and the Jawaharlal Institute of Postgraduate Medical Education & Research (JIPMER) in Pondicherry, India.²⁰ This agreement, signed during the visit of Dr. Abdelkader Amara, then the Acting Minister for Health in Morocco, marked the beginning of a telemedicine partnership aimed at enhancing healthcare access, particularly in remote areas of Morocco.

The telemedicine program between JIPMER and the Mohammed VI University Hospital was formally launched on January 15, 2018, through a simultaneous video conferencing event at both institutions.²¹ This initiative represents a forward-thinking approach to healthcare delivery, leveraging technology to overcome the geographical barriers that often impede access to quality medical care in isolated regions. The program is designed not only as a tool for remote medical consultations and patient care but also as a platform for professional training and knowledge exchange between Moroccan and Indian medical professionals.²² The collaboration is expected to lead to significant improvements in healthcare outcomes, particularly by enhancing the capacity of Moroccan healthcare providers through exposure to advanced Indian medical expertise and practices.²³

Moreover, the telemedicine partnership is emblematic of the broader goals of Morocco and India to expand their influence and cooperation in Africa. The program is poised to serve as a model that could be replicated in other African countries, thereby extending the benefits of telemedicine across the continent. By sharing this technology, both nations aim to contribute to the development of healthcare infrastructure in Africa, reinforcing their roles as leaders in the Global South and promoting South-South cooperation.

The importance of this strategic partnership in healthcare was further highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic. As the world grappled with the unprecedented challenges posed by the virus, India which manufactures 60% of the world's vaccines, emerged as a crucial partner for Morocco, providing substantial assistance in the form of vaccines. Morocco received 700,000 doses of the COVID-19 vaccine from India, a gesture that underscored the depth of the relationship between

19. Ibid.

20. Embassy of the Kingdom of Morocco in the Republic of India. (July 2022) <https://in.diplomatie.ma/en/morocco-india>

21. Maghreb Arabe Presse (2018) Lancement officiel à Marrakech du programme de partenariat en Télémédecine entre l'Inde et le Maroc.

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid.

the two countries and their commitment to supporting each other in times of the health crisis.²⁴

More recently, Indian pharmaceutical giants are increasingly investing in Morocco. For instance, Sun Pharma, the world's fourth-largest producer of generic medicines, established a production site in Casablanca in 2019.²⁵ Furthermore, KV Kumar, President of the Indian American Chamber of Commerce (IAICC), recently visited Morocco on a discreet reconnaissance mission to explore the potential of making Morocco a key hub for the pharmaceutical industry between India and the United States.²⁶

This healthcare partnership, particularly in the context of telemedicine and pandemic response, is a testament to the evolving nature of Morocco-India relations. It demonstrates how the two countries are not only focused on economic and political collaboration but are also deeply invested in improving the well-being of their populations. By addressing critical healthcare challenges through joint initiatives, Morocco and India are setting a precedent for how strategic partnerships can be leveraged to address global issues, such as health inequities and the need for sustainable development. This comprehensive partnership approach reflects a shared vision for a future where technological innovation and international cooperation play central roles in achieving common goals, particularly in the realm of public health.

2.4 Military and Defense

Defense is a central pillar of the strategic partnership between Morocco and India, reflecting both nations' commitment to enhancing their respective strategic autonomy through concrete bilateral military cooperation. This partnership encompasses three key dimensions.

Firstly, it focuses on the preservation of peace and security. Morocco's participation in the second edition of the joint military exercise between Africa and India (AFINDEX 2023) in Pune exemplifies this commitment. Additionally, since 2021, Morocco has annually organized naval maneuvers with the Indian Navy near Casablanca, aimed at combating drug trafficking and maritime piracy. These initiatives underscore the shared objective of both nations to address common security challenges and ensure regional stability.

Secondly, the partnership is underscored by significant military contracts, which play a structuring role in the bilateral relationship. In early 2023, Morocco's Royal Armed Forces (FAR) announced the acquisition of 90 LPTA 2445 6x6 trucks from the Indian manufacturer Tata Advanced Systems. This acquisition is part of Morocco's broader strategy to modernize its armed forces and diversify its defense partnerships. The Indian defense industry, a key player in this modernization effort, is instrumental in helping Morocco achieve its defense objectives.

Finally, the initiation of a bilateral dialogue with clearly defined ambitions for deepening military cooperation further solidifies the strategic partnership between Morocco and India. The appointment of military attachés by Morocco to its embassy in New Delhi is a significant step in accelerating this process. These attachés will play a crucial role in facilitating communication and collaboration between the two countries' armed forces, thereby enhancing the overall effectiveness of their defense partnership.

24. Mol, R., Singh, B., Chattu, V. K., Kaur, J., & Singh, B. (2022). India's Health Diplomacy as a Soft Power Tool towards Africa: Humanitarian and Geopolitical Analysis. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 57(6), 1109-1125. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00219096211039539>

25. Salimata Koné. En rachetant Chemipharm au Maroc, Sun Pharma consolide son assise africaine. *Jeune Afrique*. August 2024. <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/1596516/economie-entreprises/en-rachetant-chemipharm-au-maroc-sun-pharma-consolide-son-assise-africaine/>

26. Africa Intelligence. Industrie pharmaceutique : la piste marocaine pour un futur hub entre l'Inde et les États-Unis. August 2024. <https://www.africaintelligence.fr/afrique-du-nord/2024/08/20/industrie-pharmaceutique--la-piste-marocaine-pour-un-futur-hub-entre-l-inde-et-les-etats-unis>

In summary, the defense cooperation between Morocco and India is characterized by a shared commitment to peace and security, significant military contracts that bolster bilateral ties, and the establishment of a formal dialogue aimed at deepening military collaboration. This multifaceted partnership not only strengthens the strategic autonomy of both nations but also contributes to regional stability and security. Through continued collaboration, Morocco and India are poised to further enhance their defense capabilities and cement their partnership as a model of South-South cooperation in the defense sector.

III. THE LIMITS OF INDIA'S SOFT POWER IN MOROCCO

Indo-Moroccan relations have experienced significant dynamism since King Mohammed VI's visit to India in 2015, which marked a transition from mere cooperation to a strategic partnership between Rabat and New Delhi. However, it is evident that this partnership has not yet fully realized its potential. In this section, we will explore the limitations of Indian-Moroccan soft power by first examining the Indian development model, which does not align with the needs of the Indian population, and the influence conflicts affecting Morocco.

3.1 An economic development model that does not align with the needs of Indian citizens

Since coming to power in 2014, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has initiated a proactive transformation of the Indian economy, whose successes contributed to his re-election in 2019 and in 2024. These successes, highlighted by a strategic communication campaign celebrating India's economic rise, like the G20 presidency of 2023, are undeniable. They include accelerated development in renewable energies, information services, and a thriving pharmaceutical industry. Furthermore, the rapid ascent of certain conglomerates during the Modi era, reminiscent of the Japanese *sōgō-shōsha* or the Korean *chaebols* of the last century, lies at the heart of India's economic transformation. However, the performance of the Indian economy is still far from matching that of the Asian Tigers in the latter half of the 20th century. Indeed, although India's GDP has surpassed that of most European economies to reach the 5th position globally and is expected to rise to the 3rd position by 2030, double-digit growth has not yet been achieved and is even trending downward, weakened by structural issues that the BJP government has been unable to address.

In this context, if on the one hand, the India's gross domestic product (GDP) grew by 8% in 2023,²⁷ on the other hand, economists have argued that this growth does not accurately reflect India's lack of progress on the Human Development Index (HDI), a UN-developed tool that measures a country's development based on a combination of factors, including average life expectancy, income, and education level.²⁸ The UN index has placed India 134 out of 193 countries and territories in the just released 2023/24 Human Development Report (HDR).²⁹ They note that declining private consumption spending and contracting government consumption spending are worrying trends and say that other issues, notably the unemployment, the poverty or the growing inflation persisting

27. Manjari Chatterjee Miller. India's 2024 General Election: What to Know. Council on Foreign Relations. April 2024. <https://www.cfr.org/expert-brief/indias-2024-general-election-what-know>

28. Murali Krishnan. India election: Will strong economic growth sway voters? DW. July 2024. <https://www.dw.com/en/india-election-will-strong-economic-growth-sway-voters/a-68455438>

29. India shows progress in Human Development Index, ranks 134 out of 193 countries. UNDP : United Nations Development Programme. March 2024. <https://www.undp.org/india/press-releases/india-shows-progress-human-development-index-ranks-134-out-193-countries>

since the Covid-19 health crisis, are cautionary signs behind India's economic growth.³⁰ The issue of unemployment is particularly revealing, underscoring the inability of Indian democratic institutions to manage the demographic transition that defines contemporary India, within the framework of a market that prioritizes highly skilled labor.³¹ At the end of 2023, the unemployment rate among youth ages 20–24 was 44.9%, while the overall unemployment rate stood at 8.7%³².

The impression that emerges is that Indian growth is not keeping pace with the needs of the Indian population. This situation is consequential on the one hand for the limits of the Indian growth model, which focuses on services, and on the other hand, in terms of the structural weaknesses of the Indian economy. On the first point, Indian growth is essentially based on the services sector, which has become the country's largest employer, accounting for 31% of the working population. In 2021, services accounted for 60% of GDP, while manufacturing contributed less than 20%, and employed only 15% of the workforce. As a result, India's industry has not been able to absorb the low-skilled labor released by agriculture, despite efforts. However, without strong industry, there can be no strong economy. Furthermore, the current model falters due to the low quality of initial education, which undermines the Indian growth strategy centered on specialization in services. Indeed, higher education graduates constitute only about 9% of the population, a figure too low to enable the Indian economy to deepen its specialization in high-value-added services. In this context, economists have noted the decreasing elasticity of employment to growth, with a growth rate of 10% resulting in only a 1% increase in employment.³³

Far from embracing a new liberal model, the economic thinking of the Indian government, still heavily influenced by India's statist legacy, is focused on rejecting dependence on foreign entities, expressing distrust of the market, and maintaining the belief that the state should lead and organize the country's development.³⁴ Economic issues are addressed through this perspective, resulting in a strategy that combines smart protectionism, proactive industrialism, and controlled market engagement, as exemplified by public policies such as "Make in India", aiming to create 100 million additional jobs in the industrial sector (up from 50 million in 2011) and to raise the share of manufacturing in value added to 25% by 2022, with the target now extended to 2025. This approach leads to cautious reformism aimed at preserving the country's stability, with the goal of integrating India into global value chains without exposing it to international competition, particularly from China. While India aspires to replace China as the world's workshop, it has not yet achieved this position.

3.2 India in the Face of Morocco's Emerging Status as a Regional and Continental Power

The Morocco-India partnership has been transformed from a tense relationship into one of expanding cooperation across sectors. Although many had hoped for a close partnership for

30. Manjari Chatterjee Miller. India's 2024 General Election: What to Know. Council on Foreign Relations. April 2024. <https://www.cfr.org/expert-brief/indias-2024-general-election-what-know>

31. Forbes India. Unemployment rate in India (2008 to 2024): Current rate, historical trends and more. February 2019. <https://www.forbesindia.com/article/explainers/unemployment-rate-in-india/87441/1>

32. Manjari Chatterjee Miller. India's 2024 General Election: What to Know. Council on Foreign Relations. April 2024. <https://www.cfr.org/expert-brief/indias-2024-general-election-what-know>

33. Ministère de l'Économie, des Finances et de la Souveraineté numérique, France – Direction générale du Trésor. Enjeux structurels de la croissance en Inde. March 2023. https://www.tresor.economie.gouv.fr/Articles/2023/03/16/enjeux-structurels-de-la-croissance-en-inde#_ednref1

34. Benoît Gautier. Le mercantilisme modien à l'épreuve de la réalité. Ambassade de France en Inde : Service économique régional de New Delhi. Janvier 2023. <https://www.tresor.economie.gouv.fr/Articles/85e8d201-f069-4352-8a3d-02a9d690cc54/files/9254184f-542a-4795-a27d-3f80be466913>

years, few would have predicted the extent of the transformation in the relationship. Morocco and India now collaborate within the framework of the strategic partnership on security challenges, defense, intelligence consultations, military exercises, health, energy transition, food security and even education. The adoption of multi-alignment as the guiding principle of both Moroccan and Indian foreign policy has undoubtedly played a crucial role in accelerating this rapprochement. On the one hand, The BJP government has promoted India's global role by balancing a wide variety of seemingly clashing and delicate interests. At the Group of Twenty (G20) summit in 2023 for example, India suggested that it had the ability to champion Global South interests and build bridges with the West. On the other hand, Morocco, while reinventing its relationships with traditional Western partners, has increasingly turned towards the Global South to deepen its foreign policy. Morocco's African economic policy is particularly revealing. Nearly ten years after its return to the African Union, Rabat has become the second-largest investor on the continent, behind South Africa, and the leading investor in West Africa.

However, important challenges to the relationship remain, where the most emblematic is the conflict for influence involving Morocco. Indeed, since 2011, Morocco has been undergoing a threefold transition democratic, economic, and societal that signals a new era of reform. Firstly, the 2011 Constitution, characterized by the division of power between the monarchical institution and democratic representative institutions, established the principles of Morocco's constitutional monarchy. Secondly, The New Development Model, introduced in 2021, aims to accelerate Morocco's progress while addressing the socio-economic needs of its evolving society. Thirdly and finally, the family Code reform, launched in 2022, seeks to address the normative shortcomings of the 2004 text by moving from the formal equality outlined in Article 19 of the 2011 Constitution—proclaiming gender equality—towards substantial equality, while providing greater protection for family interests and children's rights. In the same vein, Morocco's African policy has elevated the country's strategic profile within the international community. This African policy pursues four complementary objectives: 1- Promoting a unique form of peripheral Islam that combines Maliki jurisprudence with vibrant Sufism; 2- Stabilizing a region threatened by identity conflicts in the Middle East and the resurgence of coup d'état practices, while leveraging its own resources to respond; 3- Developing an emerging economic space capable of addressing climate and demographic challenges; 4- Unblocking the economies of Sahelian countries through the launch of the Atlantic initiative.

The triple transition—democratic, economic, and societal—and Morocco's growing role as a regional and continental power have intensified the struggle for influence over the country among global and emerging powers who are competing for the primary partnership status with Morocco. However, it is evident that, compared to the European Union (EU), the United States (US), and China, the Indo-Moroccan strategic partnership, sealed in 2015, is struggling to reach its full potential. Indeed, the EU launched several new programs under the Euro-Moroccan Partnership for Shared Prosperity, adopted in 2020, to support the Kingdom's major reform initiatives. Following the Abraham Accords, the United States has elevated its relationship with Morocco from a strategic partnership to a strategic alliance. Meanwhile, China proposed a multidimensional cooperation framework around the new Silk Roads, which Rabat joined in 2017. In contrast, India is struggling to provide compelling content for the Indo-Moroccan strategic partnership established in 2015. The example of Indian investments in Morocco is quite revealing. Currently, India is the fourth largest investor from East Asia in Morocco, following China, South Korea, and Japan. The stock of Indian investments in the Moroccan economy was valued at 2 billion MAD in 2022, representing just 0.3% of the total foreign direct investment (FDI) flowing into Morocco. This figure is relatively modest compared to the global FDI stock held by Indian nationals, which amounts to 206 billion USD according to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). Notably, India does not even rank among the top 15 investors in Morocco.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS: WHAT MOROCCO AND INDIA CAN DO MORE?

Indo-Moroccan relations have been quite active. However, nearly a decade after the conclusion of the strategic partnership, it is clear that it has not yet reached its full potential. This ambitious roadmap aims to expand the strategic partnership between Morocco and India into new areas of cooperation while deepening existing programs of mutual interest.

4.1 Morocco as a gateway

Morocco's strategic geographical and diplomatic position offers it a unique opportunity to serve as a pivotal gateway between Africa and Europe, as well as between the Global North and South. Located at the crossroads of these regions, Morocco can facilitate economic, political, and cultural exchanges, making it an attractive partner for countries seeking access to these markets. By capitalizing on its established trade routes, investment-friendly policies, and strong diplomatic ties, Morocco can act as a bridge, not only connecting Europe to Africa but also enhancing South-South cooperation. Additionally, Morocco's involvement in global initiatives such as the African Union and its robust partnership with the European Union further solidifies its role as a key player in regional and international diplomacy.

Leveraging these advantages, Morocco can drive economic growth, attract foreign investment, and contribute to regional stability, positioning itself as an indispensable hub in the global economic and geopolitical landscape. In this context, the Moroccan Atlantic Initiative aims to boost the economies of Sahelian countries by providing them with access to the Atlantic Ocean. With the support of Morocco's partners, including France, the EU, the United States, and India, this initiative could, in the medium to long term, create a significant corridor extending from the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean. For New Delhi, the Indian ocean is considered as its strategic depth and could even be seen as its backyard.

4.2 Food security potential

India has the potential to serve as a dependable and alternative source for a steady food supply in the context of the war of Ukraine. This can be attributed to India's status as the world's largest producer of milk and edible oils, as well as the second-largest producer of wheat and rice,³⁵ which has resulted in a substantial buffer stock and vast cereal production capacity. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has even declared that India's farmers can feed the world, but it remains to be seen if India's food production can fulfil both domestic and global needs, as this would require significant time and investment to augment production capacities.

India can significantly bolster its food security strategy, particularly its focus on millets, by forging a strategic partnership that includes Morocco's OCP Group. This collaboration can extend beyond bilateral ties to encompass a tripartite cooperation format involving Morocco, India, and African states. Through this partnership, India can leverage OCP's expertise in fertilizers and sustainable agriculture to enhance millet production domestically and introduce this resilient crop to African countries. Such a framework would not only strengthen India's food security but also contribute to Africa's agricultural development, addressing nutritional needs and promoting food sovereignty. By aligning the agricultural strengths of Morocco and India with the needs of African nations, this tripartite cooperation could serve as a model for South-South collaboration, driving innovation and

35. India at glance. FAO.

sustainability in agriculture across continents. This strategic partnership thus holds the potential to create a robust, interconnected network that supports food security and agricultural resilience in both India and Africa.

4.3 Green energy potential

The Indian government and businesses have shown significant interest in the opportunities presented by Morocco's green energy potential, with solar power and green hydrogen being recognized as significant areas for potential collaboration. As India pursues its own goal of achieving energy independence by 2047 through ambitious clean energy initiatives and seeks to attain net-zero carbon emissions by 2070, it has the potential to establish strategic partnerships with Morocco in their shift away from fossil fuels.

Morocco has already initiated green hydrogen projects. For example, Morocco recently announced the HEVO Ammonia Morocco project, based in Rabat, which will have a production capacity of 1.83 million tons of ammonia and reduce carbon emissions by up to 280,000 tons per year. The domestic production of hydrogen will also reduce the importation of grey ammonia for phosphate production, and several Indian energy companies are increasingly seeking to develop green hydrogen and methanol in Morocco³⁶. Meanwhile, Morocco's announcement that it will earmark 1 million hectares of land specifically for green energy projects is representative of its ambition in term of green energy.³⁷ The scale of the announcement is immense. Initially, the project will set aside 300,000 hectares of land for local and international investors in green energy projects. Given the country's economic and political stability, as well as its business-friendly environment, this proposed project has already attracted significant interest from investors.³⁸

Morocco's geography presents some of the most favorable sites for solar and wind energy generation, owing to vast coastal plains and year-round sunshine. However, there is a discrepancy between potential and actual clean energy utilization, with the latter requiring financial investments and technologies. India can leverage its private companies as well as international initiatives such as the International Solar Alliance, a common platform for cooperation among sun-rich countries that was launched by India at the UN Climate Change Conference, to mobilize private investment, promote technologies, new business models and infrastructure for clean energy.

4.4 Technological innovation potential

Morocco and India are pivotal hubs for business development and innovation within their respective regions. Recognizing the vital role of technology in addressing the challenges of the 21st century, Morocco and India must further deepen their technological cooperation, which is essential for the self-sufficiency of both nations.

In Morocco, Rabat now boasts a robust industrial infrastructure, fueled by the growth of the automotive industry in Tangier, the aerospace sector in Casablanca, and renewable energy projects in Ouarzazate. Major infrastructure initiatives such as the Tanger Med port and integrated industrial parks (Tanger Free Zone, Tanger Automotive City, Midparc, Atlantic Free Zone, etc.) have significantly bolstered Morocco's competitive edge.³⁹ This industrial ecosystem has enabled

36. Zouiten, S. (2023). India's ReNew Energy Global Eyes Morocco's Green Hydrogen Market. Morocco World News.

37. Zaid Belgabi. Morocco making waves with its green energy progress. Arab News. March 2024. <https://www.arabnews.com/node/2480426>

38. Ibid.

39. Mounia Boucetta. Les locomotives des écosystèmes industriels. Policy Center for the New South – Policy Brief. September 2023. https://www.policycenter.ma/sites/default/files/2023-09/PB_35-23_Boucetta.pdf

Morocco, in less than a decade, to emerge as a leading African nation and a key player in global supply chains across these sectors.⁴⁰

About India, New Delhi now boasts a significant industrial ecosystem, sparked by the IT revolution that brought global recognition to Bangalore, the heart of Indian technology. This IT revolution which contributed to the growth of other Indian technological sectors such as robotics, telecommunications, and advanced manufacturing, led to an improvement of Bangalore's infrastructure, which manifested its colloquial name as the "Silicon Valley of India".⁴¹ Since then, the city has consistently been counted amongst the top 25 start-up ecosystems worldwide.⁴² India as a whole is meanwhile ranked one of the top 5 start-up ecosystems alongside the United States, China, the United Kingdom, and Israel.⁴³

Morocco and India should therefore strengthen their strategic partnership in the field of technology. For instance, they can develop a roadmap to implement bilateral technological cooperation. The focus on advanced digital technologies, which are key drivers of the fourth industrial revolution, can be particularly motivating—especially in areas such as high-performance computing, cloud computing, artificial intelligence, and quantum computing. This cooperation could be notably pursued within the framework of the Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI). Rabat and New Delhi must also enhance their cooperation in research and development, innovation, and the industrial applications of critical digital technologies. This collaboration should focus on deploying these technologies to address major challenges related to climate change and health—two key issues in contemporary international cooperation.

4.5 Promoting renewed and effective multilateralism

Morocco and India are not only two countries deeply committed to multilateralism, but they also emphasize the need to reinvent multilateral institutions in order to address contemporary challenges. Over the past decade, multilateralism has veered between the spectrum of successful international cooperation and an emerging fragmentation of such cooperation. Morocco and India have participated actively in contributing to the successes, and in mobilizing support for responding to the challenges confronting multilateralism today.

Beginning with the UN's 75th anniversary meetings in 2020, Rabat and New Delhi have led calls for reformed multilateralism to overcome structural flaws in multilateral institutions that constrain the transformation of Morocco and India. These include the refusal of the International Monetary Fund to implement agreed reforms in its quota-based decision-making system giving greater role to emerging markets; the atrophy that threatens the smooth functioning of the World Trade Organization (WTO), creating space for a revival of unilateral and protectionist policies of major trading nations; and UN reforms including that of the UNSC, where the veto power of the non-elected five permanent members prevents democratically elected members from having an equal role in taking decisions.

With this in mind, Rabat and New Delhi are advocating for a reform of the United Nations Security Council to expand its two categories of membership. They support the arguments of the Group of Four, including India, for the inclusion of new permanent members on the Security Council. They

40. Ibid.

41. Can India increase its technological sovereignty? R&D Today. <https://www.rndtoday.co.uk/entrepreneurial-ecosystems/can-india-increase-its-technological-sovereignty/>

42. Ibid.

43. Ibid.

also endorse improved representation for Africa, including among the permanent members, and agree to continue discussions on regulating the use of the veto in cases of mass atrocities.

Furthermore, in September 2024, the UN will hold its Summit of the Future. Morocco and India's priority is to get widespread support for calls for "reformed multilateralism" as a call to action, responding to the current disarray in which multilateralism finds itself. With the 80th anniversary of the UN in 2025, Rabat and New Delhi within the framework of the Global South must lead the initiative in the UNGA to convene a General Conference to review and update the UN Charter, making it a responsive framework for a reformed and effective UN/multilateral system,⁴⁴ focusing on the UN system and Bretton Woods institutions.

4.6 Promote regular dialogue between Moroccan and Indian cultures

Strengthening cultural relations between Morocco and India could significantly impact both countries. By establishing cultural exchange programs, they can not only share their rich cultural heritage but also stimulate creativity and innovation within their respective creative industries.

Cooperation in the field of museums and heritage is particularly promising, as it would enable both nations to enhance and preserve their cultural assets for future generations. Morocco, with its ambitious projects like the large museum complex in Rabat, could benefit from India's expertise in managing large-scale cultural initiatives. Such collaboration could also foster the creation of new cultural projects, further strengthening ties between the two countries and enabling a mutually enriching exchange of knowledge and experiences.

The cinema industry can play a crucial role in strengthening cultural relations between Rabat and New Delhi. Morocco, representing the fifth-largest film market in Africa, and India, the world's leading film producer through Bollywood, have much to gain from establishing a strategic roadmap. This roadmap should aim to facilitate the export of their cinematic productions, encourage co-productions under their audiovisual co-production agreement, and enhance the attractiveness of their respective territories for film shoots. Such collaboration could not only enrich their film industries but also strengthen the cultural ties between the two nations.

Finally, the strong bilateral relations between the two countries, coupled with the presence of Moroccan representations in India and vice versa, should contribute to deepening ties between Rabat and New Delhi. It is worth noting that only 28,703 Indian visitors travelled to Morocco in 2019, out of the 14.5 million foreigners who visited the Kingdom.⁴⁵ However, this number represents a 122% increase compared to 2022.⁴⁶ Indeed, Indians now travel year-round, and the evolution and maturity of the market are reflected in the diversification of source markets, targets, popular themes, sought-after destinations, and planned itineraries. This is why Morocco and India have a vested interest in intensifying their tourism cooperation, particularly by establishing direct air routes between the two countries. The launch of the e-visa could boost Indian tourism in Morocco.

44. Asoke Mukerji. "Reformed Multilateralism" at the United Nations. American Diplomacy. February 2021. <https://americandiplomacy.web.unc.edu/2021/02/reformed-multilateralism-at-the-united-nations/>

45. Confédération Nationale du Tourisme. Maroc-Inde : l'e-visa dope le tourisme. March 2024. <https://www.cnt.ma/blog/maroc-inde-l-e-visa-dope-le-tourisme>

46. Ibid.

CONCLUSION

Pragmatism best characterizes Morocco's relations with India. Indo-Moroccan relations have a long history. They were formalized in 1957 with the establishment of diplomatic relations between Rabat and New Delhi, followed by the signing of the first commercial treaty between the two countries in 1961. Since then, these relations have strengthened, particularly with the launch of a strategic partnership in 2015, reflecting the friendship and trust between the two nations, ahead of the third India-Africa Summit in New Delhi. This partnership, intended to be mutually beneficial, developed in the context of India's increasing prominence on the international stage and Morocco's desire to diversify its relations with Asia. It covers all aspects of bilateral cooperation, including strategic areas such as energy and food security. In recent years, it has been further expanded to include new dimensions like tourism, and the enhancement of multilateralism.

However, nearly a decade since the establishment of the Indo-Moroccan strategic partnership, it is clear that it has not yet reached its full potential. To achieve this, it is crucial for Rabat and New Delhi to renew their relations by expanding the strategic partnership into new areas of cooperation. In this context, the accelerated development of renewable energy, technological services, and the establishment of an efficient pharmaceutical industry—key features of India's economic rise under the Modi administration—could further energize bilateral relations between the two countries. Furthermore, the dynamism of Indo-Moroccan economic relations is more closely tied to the presence of Indian companies in Morocco than to the volume of bilateral trade. Strengthening the stock of Indian Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Morocco is essential for consolidating economic relations between the two nations. Finally, establishing a strategic dialogue, supported by annual high-level meetings and consultations conducted by senior advisors from both countries on matters of mutual interest, is vital to deepening the Indo-Moroccan strategic partnership. The launch of Joint Working Groups in 2021 and Foreign Office Consultations in 2022 can expedite this process.

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ABOUT THE POLICY CENTER FOR THE NEW SOUTH

The Policy Center for the New South (PCNS) is a Moroccan think tank aiming to contribute to the improvement of economic and social public policies that challenge Morocco and the rest of Africa as integral parts of the global South.

The PCNS pleads for an open, accountable and enterprising "new South" that defines its own narratives and mental maps around the Mediterranean and South Atlantic basins, as part of a forward-looking relationship with the rest of the world. Through its analytical endeavours, the think tank aims to support the development of public policies in Africa and to give the floor to experts from the South. This stance is focused on dialogue and partnership, and aims to cultivate African expertise and excellence needed for the accurate analysis of African and global challenges and the suggestion of appropriate solutions.

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