

Relations between Morocco and West Africa: Paths to Sustainable Development and Regional Integration

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Abstract

This literature review article summarizes the studies that have focused on the relations between Morocco and West African countries, leading to sustainable development and regional integration. But also, the article mentions two (02) points that have not been studied, and which would also lead to sustainable development and regional integration for Morocco and West Africa. To carry out the study presented in this article, non-participant observation, documentary research and analysis, and testimonies made it possible to identify works highlighting the historical context between Morocco and West Africa, economic and trade relations, political and diplomatic relations, security relations and strategic cooperation, as well as cultural and social ties focused on sustainable development and regional integration through relations between Morocco and West Africa. However, this literature review also identified, as missing points in previous research, sustainable development initiatives and prospects for regional integration through relations between Morocco and West Africa. These points, therefore, complement previous studies. Indeed, sustainable development initiatives through relations between Morocco and West Africa have not been studied, which will allow Morocco to achieve its main objectives, namely its autonomy over the Sahara, allowing it to achieve a higher level of sustainable development due to the wealth that the Sahara abounds in and its leadership on the African continent. These initiatives will allow West Africa, in turn, to experience sustainable development differently balanced and win-win with Morocco as a potential and new ideal partner in terms of cooperation, in several sectors such as oil, mining, industry, health, and security. The same applies to the prospects for integration through relations between Morocco and West Africa, which have not been studied, but which could give Morocco the opportunity to integrate West African sub-regional communities.

Keywords: Relations between Morocco and West Africa, sustainable development, regional integration, international cooperation

INTRODUCTION

According to Mostapha Bousmina (2024), relations between West Africa and Morocco are a matter of history and anthropology. Of these two (02) sciences, well before the twentieth century, large caravans left the Moroccan Sahara for Zanzibar, passing through Adrar and Timbuktu, among others. This not only allowed for significant trade, but also for multiple intermingling and diverse multicultural resonances between nomadic and sedentary tribes (Mostapha Bousmina, 2024). And these kinds of relationships promise sustainable development and regional integration.

Furthermore, it must also be understood that state relations have always been initiated for a good cause and are particularly established to play a crucial role for the states concerned. This is how Morocco has long since forged relations with West Africa and vice versa.

Indeed, according to Camille Dubois Morceau (2025), over the centuries, relations between Morocco and African countries have evolved significantly, marked by cultural, commercial, and political exchanges.

In ancient times, Morocco, as a commercial crossroads, forged ties with neighboring African civilizations, promoting the exchange of goods and knowledge. In the Middle Ages, with the emergence of Berber and Arab dynasties, the country intensified its interactions with sub-Saharan Africa, particularly through trans-Saharan trade (Camille Dubois Morceau, 2025). Still, according to Camille Dubois Morceau (2025), during the colonial era, relations were affected by European domination, but Morocco maintained connections, particularly through resistance and independence movements. More recently, since the 2000s, Morocco has strengthened its cooperation with its African neighbors through economic and political initiatives, thus asserting its leading role on the continent and promoting regional integration (Camille Dubois Morceau, 2025).

Thus, it appears that relations between Morocco and West Africa are first and foremost bearers of sustainable development and then of regional integration, through history, economy and trade, political and diplomatic relations, security, strategic and defense relations, but also through cultural and social ties. And this is as much

for Morocco as for West Africa, as for the entire African continent faced with various changes and problems almost insurmountable without state relations.

For Bénédicte Beauchesne (2024, p. 12), relations between states now consider human, cultural, economic, and other factors. Relations between states are not limited solely to power relations or diplomatic relations.

Indeed, if we take the example of relations between Morocco and Senegal, we note that these relations reflect sustainable development for both (02) States. On the one hand, in Senegal, these relations have led to the construction of renowned infrastructure, notably the Hassan II Mosque, thus attracting many tourists to Senegal and making it a sustainable infrastructure benefiting Senegal and the resident populations for the practice of Islamic worship. On the other hand, these relations benefit Senegalese residents in Morocco, as they are considered Moroccans for employment purposes, residence permits, etc. As for Morocco, relations with Senegal benefit it with the presence of a Senegalese community estimated at 200,000 people on its soil (Illyass Rhamir, 2025), with a Senegalese market in the economic capital (Casablanca) which is one of the most frequented places by sub-Saharan Africans residing in Morocco because of the availability of edible products from their country. Traders and buyers find their accounts in this market, despite the sanitary conditions, which do not always favor business (Emmanuel Moadjibibaye, 2021). This community contributes a lot to the Moroccan economy, especially to the Moroccan population, who do not hesitate to frequent it. But it also demonstrates the existence of cultural and social ties through the relations between Morocco and West Africa, which can promote sustainable development and regional integration.

Furthermore, if certain relations between Morocco and West Africa were to emerge as cooperation in the oil, mining, industry, health, or security sectors, this would contribute to sustainable development between Morocco and West Africa and could foster regional integration.

For example, in the health sector, many citizens of West African states choose Morocco as a host country for medical treatment or surgical procedures (Hannatou, 2025).

Consequently, Morocco could initiate the creation of a hospital or university hospital (CHU) in West African States to avoid exorbitant air travel costs for citizens of these States and consider implementing training through the transfer of skills to the health professionals of these West African states. For example, Turkey established the Niger-Turkey Friendship Hospital, located in Niamey, the capital of Niger, which was inaugurated in September 2019 by Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA) on the instructions of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The hospital demonstrates Turkey's commitment to supporting the development of the health sector in Niger and promoting relations between the two (02) countries (TRTFRANCAIS, 2023).

It is in this sense that the importance of relations between Morocco and West Africa to promote sustainable development and regional integration is justified. Furthermore, this will lead to positive results that could potentially benefit Morocco and West Africa, likely bringing progress to the African continent.

Furthermore, according to Bauer, M., & Hanelt, C.-P. (2011), bridges must be built between societies and cultures, as this could be beneficial for development. Building these bridges means having regional partnerships, which can also promote regional integration.

These are, on the one hand, potential questions briefly addressed by previous research, which will be further detailed in the following lines of the analysis presented in this summary article on relations between Morocco and West Africa that are favorable for sustainable development and regional integration.

On the other hand, this analysis will also highlight new points that emerge from the analysis of this summary article with a view to complementing previous work on relations between Morocco and West Africa, leading to sustainable development and regional integration. These are sustainable development initiatives through relations between Morocco and West Africa and prospects for regional integration through relations between Morocco and West Africa, which represent strategic bulwarks for sustainable development and regional integration for Morocco and a means for West Africa to address cooperation challenges related to sustainable development.

METHODOLOGY

Methods and Materials

In terms of methods, these are qualitative research methods, namely non-participant observation based on official videos whose debate revolved around relations between Morocco and West Africa, relations leading to sustainable development and regional integration.

Then there is documentary research and documentary analysis, which made it possible to search for and analyze written documents of a scientific and professional nature, consistent with relations between Morocco and West Africa, leading to sustainable development and regional integration. Finally, the testimonies obtained from a single female adult commenting on the role of Morocco for West Africa in terms of health.

Furthermore, regarding the materials used in the production of this literature review, research work on literature reviews in the humanities and social sciences was used, including that of Mathilde Plard, Aurélien Martineau (2021).

A systematic bibliographical research study related to relations between Morocco and West Africa was also conducted. To this end, the subject was narrowed down to consider only relations between Morocco and West Africa related to sustainable development and regional integration. Certain indicators were also considered when selecting the various textual documents.

Table 1: Inclusion criteria used to compose the content of this literature review

Source type	Articles, books, press articles, official television videos, websites
Research objects	Data must relate to relations between Morocco and West Africa as they relate to sustainable development and regional integration. Research related to relations between Morocco and West Africa, whether focused on development or solely on regional integration, is also considered.
The selective indicator of different documents and data	This includes any document(s) written in English and/or French, from various fields such as politics, economics, governance, history, geography, debates, newspapers, diplomacy, etc.
The source reliability indicator	These are various documents and data disseminated and visible in the scientific (scientific and academic works) and professional (interviews, debates and television news) fields.
The document and data access indicator	These are various documents and bibliographic data available and consulted, others accessible in libraries and others on digital platforms.

Source: Ibrahim Zeidane ZAINOU TANGUI

The search for all bibliographic data was carried out directly on digital platforms such as the Google search engine, Google Scholar, HAL open science, Cairn info, and YouTube using the keywords “Relations”, “Morocco and West Africa”, “sustainable development”, and “regional integration”.

Then, all bibliographic data underwent an evaluation, after selection, based on their scientific interest and indicators for conducting the literature review. A total of 43 references, which only deal with relations between Morocco and Africa related to sustainable development and regional integration, published between 2011 and 2025, were used to develop this literature review summary article.

All bibliographic references were analyzed after undergoing readings, visual observations and listening, regarding the videos of journalistic debates, were also useful in the development of this analysis.

Finally, websites and publications of institutions (Moroccan Agency for International Cooperation, <https://www.amci.ma/maroc-coopération-sud-sud,2021>; MOROCCO-AFRICA RELATIONSHIP ZOOM ON THE SITUATION, <https://www.cmconjoncture.com/conjoncture/actualites/les-relations-maroc-afrique,2021>; prpp.fr; www.youtube.com/@prppc4477; SSA Quebec Support Unit; <https://ssaquebec.ca/>; <https://comprendrelarecherche.github.io>; Research Literacy: What are mixed research methods?; BERNARD

Lugan, Historical Atlas of Africa, [https://www.davidrumse\(Recherchecartehistoriquecolonisation\)](https://www.davidrumse(Recherchecartehistoriquecolonisation)); MAURICE Barbier, The Future of the Spanish Sahara, <https://www.persee.fr>; ÉDOUARD Mérie, The Algerian-Moroccan Conflict, (www.persee.fr); <https://www.un.org/sec>; (UN Resolutions); CHRISTIAN Gataloup, World Historical Atlas, History Geo /@HistGeoOfficiel/www.youtube.com; <https://cucledoctoral.ma/preparer-unprojet-de-thes-solide/MohammedAmine>; SCHEBA Tai; <https://www.youtube.com/@TheQods3>) were useful for the development of this literature review.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The historical context of relations between Morocco and West Africa

Regarding the historical context of relations between Morocco and West Africa, according to Moubarak LO *et al.* (2016), colonization had a role in the relations between Morocco and the rest of Africa. For him, Morocco's efforts to build relations with West Africa are not only economic, diplomatic, or strategic, but are political efforts that work towards the united struggle against colonialism. This had perhaps weakened the sustainable development of most African countries and delayed regional integration.

As for Enrique FERNANDEZ (2024), one of Morocco's first apparent relations with the outside world took place on August 20, 1953, when the late King of Morocco, Mohammed V, took refuge in Corsica and Madagascar in 1954, forced into exile by the French authorities at the time. However, on November 16, 1956, after negotiations with France, he returned to Morocco. This is a good reason for Morocco to build relations with Corsica and Madagascar, even though the latter are not West African countries, due to their decisive role for Morocco, serving as a place of refuge for the main leader of the Moroccan people, and contributing to the development of current Moroccan governance.

According to the Moroccan Agency for International Cooperation (2021) Morocco played a role concerning the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the African Union (AU), it emerges from its report that under the aegis of the late King Mohammed V, Morocco was concerned about a better and united Africa by to the initiative of King Mohammed V the Casablanca Conference was held in 1962 which gave rise to talks between several African heads of state with a view to the creation of the OAU. Thus, through this conference, the African Community was finally born on May 25, 1962, in Addis Ababa. These are concrete efforts made by Morocco to establish a lasting link between the peoples of Africa, with a view to promoting sustainable development and regional integration of African States. Morocco then developed a sense of belonging in West Africa with its strong sense of belonging within the AU, formerly the OAU. Indeed, for EL KHAYAT Sami (2016), Morocco's African policy at the dawn of the 21st century is a topical issue, and Morocco has increasingly strengthened and renewed its relations with West African countries, especially with its return to the AU. This demonstrates its attachment to West Africa, despite its absence caused by the integration of the Polisario Front into the AU.

Regarding EL FAKID Asmaa, *et al.* (2025), Morocco's renewed commitment to the AU after thirty-three (33) years of absence underscores the growing importance of ties between Morocco and the rest of the African continent. By placing the African continent at the center of its strategic orientations, Morocco affirms its vision of co-development based on strengthened intra-African cooperation and increased economic complementarity. This approach is based on fundamental principles such as active solidarity, resource sharing, and coordination of efforts. These elements constitute the essential foundations for promoting inclusive and sustainable economic growth while fostering human development across the continent. This regional integration strategy is part of a global dynamic aimed at maximizing synergies between African countries to collectively address development challenges.

As for Yasmine Hasnaoui (2017), since January 31, 2017, Morocco has become the 55th member of the AU, the pan-African body that replaced the OAU in July 2002. After more than thirty (30) years in the African political wilderness, Morocco's return to the AU was the culmination of a year of in-depth work. The AU was the culmination of a year of intense and fervent diplomatic battles aimed at expanding its circle of African allies to include the region's leading nations. This could be a starting point for shared sustainable development and lasting regional integration.

For AIBOUD BEN CHEKROUN Bouchra and SLAOUI Aya (2018), Morocco's vision is also part of a framework built around the notions of sustainable development, strengthened South-South solidarity, and strong human and social dimensions, and that Morocco's return to the AU strengthens this cooperation. Indeed,

Morocco's return to the AU can foster regional integration in other West African communities, especially with its many relationships with several African States, such as those in the West.

As for Tasnim Abderrahim and Faten Aggad (2018), Morocco's readmission to the AU, described by King Mohammed VI of Morocco as a "homecoming," marked a significant change in African affairs. Morocco left the AU in 1984, when most AU States voted in favor of admitting the Polisario Front as a member. Thus, the readmission ended Morocco's isolation from the AU, which lasted thirty-three (33) years. Thus, the North African country's request for readmission to the African continental body and its subsequent request for membership in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) demonstrate Morocco's interest in consolidating its position within the AU with the rest of the African continent. This conduct by Morocco demonstrates its desire to build relationships with Africa, particularly West Africa, which is likely to promote sustainable development and regional integration.

There are also historical milestones that have influenced current relations between Morocco and West Africa. Indeed, according to Ellinor ZENO-MAHMALAT (2016), Morocco recently (between the 2000s and the 2020s) underwent a strategic reassessment of its diplomatic, commercial, political, and security relations with French-speaking West African States. Morocco has implemented programs to strengthen ties between it and West African States (specifically Mali, Senegal, Ivory Coast and Gabon) with a view to increased bilateral cooperation that could strength the current mobility between Morocco and these West African states (Ellinor ZENO-MAHMALAT, 2016).), which would be an important factor in sustainable development and regional integration for Morocco and these States.

It also emerges from the Speech of His Majesty King Mohammed VI (2000) that: "...[...] Morocco is resolutely determined to take multiple initiatives in favor of its African brothers, [...], the cancellation of all debts of the least developed African countries towards the Kingdom of Morocco and the lifting of all customs barriers imposed on products imported from these countries." These are therefore initiatives taken by Morocco in the economic, financial, and technical fields to strengthen the historical ties between Morocco and the West African region and to restore the image of Morocco in other parts of the continent. These are benevolent initiatives that promote Morocco-West Africa relations that can guarantee sustainable development and regional integration.

Furthermore, on the one hand, Mr. Said DKHISSI *et al.* (2012) highlights, among the historical stages that influence current relations, there is the fact that in the absence of Morocco being a member of ECOWAS, Morocco is a member of the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD) which brings together 28 African countries with the intention of associating and maintaining fruitful relations that bring sustainable development for Morocco and the African countries concerned as well as regional integration. However, Morocco also wants to establish a free trade area for industrial products and a common market for basic agricultural products in Africa. Morocco is investing in terms of relations with West Africa in a consistent manner to achieve sustainable development and regional integration.

But on the other hand, Mr. Said DKHISSI *et al.* (2011) also points out that Morocco participates in meetings and forums between Africa and the rest of the world, it will even host continental and international events such as the Euro-African Conference on Migration and Development in Rabat (July 10-11, 2006). Morocco also hosted the meeting of Foreign Ministers of 23 Atlantic countries held from August 3-5, 2009, and other initiatives have led to visits by King Mohammed VI to several West African countries, as well as the signing of 400 agreements with more than 40 African countries in just ten (10) years. For example, there is the trade and investment agreement with the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), which was signed on November 21, 2008. The agreement in question also provides for reciprocal tariff concessions and the removal of non-tariff barriers hindering bilateral trade. Thus, Morocco's interest in terms of relations with West Africa on this point is not negligible and promotes sustainable economic development (M. Said DKHISSI *et al.*, 2011).

Economic and trade relations

Regarding economic and trade relations between Morocco and West Africa, there is the issue of Moroccan investment in the West African economy, according to Atalayar.ENTRE DOS ORILLAS (2024), Morocco's investments in West Africa are significant, as over the past decade, Morocco has invested nearly \$5 billion in sub-Saharan Africa, positioning itself as the leading investor in West Africa and the second largest intra-African investor. Furthermore, Moroccan investments have primarily targeted West African countries, representing more than 50% of outward investments from North Africa to other African countries. In 2021, Morocco's foreign

direct investment in Africa exceeded \$800 million. This demonstrates that Morocco is a leading investor in West Africa and that this promotes sustainable development and regional integration on both sides. Regarding Morocco's trade agreements and partnerships in West Africa, the Economic, Social, and Environmental Council of Morocco (2020) indicates that Morocco has made West African countries one of its trade priorities. In other words, Morocco is making significant efforts and achieving significant results in its partnerships with West Africa but is not benefiting from them.

Indeed, the level of trade does not exceed 4% of all trade and this does not reflect the true potential for economic cooperation (Economic, Social and Environmental Council of Morocco, 2020).

Furthermore, Rim BERHAB (2017) reiterates that regarding economic and trade relations, a good number of agreements out of the 400 signed in ten (10) years with more than 400 West African countries are not yet in force. Indeed, Rim BERHAB (2017) gives an example of the trade and investment agreement with UEMOA and the agreement providing for the gradual establishment of free trade zones with ECOWAS and the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC). This is why, according to M. Said DKHISSI *et al.* (2011), trade relations between Morocco and West Africa are marred by blockades that can destabilize the desired level of development for Morocco and West Africa. Despite Morocco's significant commitment to dynamic economic cooperation with West Africa, which can significantly increase the level of sustainable development and remarkable regional integration, Morocco suffers a partial loss of earnings in return.

As for Nora MAREĬ (2017), she argues that relations between neighbors in the western part of the African continent are long-standing and have been growing in recent years, further linking the economic and social future of Mediterranean and sub-Saharan Africa. New economic polarities are consolidating along these coastal strips and contributing to coastal metropolitanization and regionalization phenomena based on the rise of maritime and land transformations and trade between countries located in this vast West African region.

These dynamics are driven more by economic actors who generally operate outside the confines of institutional frameworks (Nora MareĬ, 2017). Still according to Nora MAREĬ (2017) ECOWAS, created in 1975, remains the most integrated regional grouping in the western part of the continent, the greater ease of movement there is symbolized by the success of the Sahelian and coastal corridors supported by the African Infrastructure Development Program (PIDA), freedoms of mobility of people and residence were established between the 1980s and 1990s, a common military interposition force, created in 1990, contributes to regional stability, other areas relating to business law or maritime and air security and safety benefit from integrated strategies. However, Nora Marei (2017) points out that the difficulties in establishing customs and monetary unions that bring together all members, particularly the differences between French-speaking and English-speaking States, are presented as obstacles to more advanced economic integration between ECOWAS members, which could create more sustainable development in Africa and the sustainable development of ECOWAS member countries or those that aspire to become members in the future, such as Morocco, which would thus promote regional integration. But for El Hssani, W, and Allall A (2024), Morocco could play a decisive role in Africa's sustainable co-development, especially as it continues to transform bilateral economic partnerships into concrete multilateral successes.

Finally, N'Guessan & Tounsi (2021) point out that ECOWAS creates trade between its members and diverts trade with its partners. Therefore, Morocco's membership in this Community will allow Morocco to double the volume of its exports to the Community, thus fostering sustainable development that will benefit Morocco and the African continent.

Thus, from all the above, relations between Morocco and West Africa do not appear subjective; on the contrary, they appear much more objective in the sense that they can promote sustainable development and regional integration.

Political and diplomatic relations

Regarding Morocco's diplomatic and political relations with West Africa, it should be noted that, according to the Moroccan Economic Center (2021), Morocco-Africa relations are a foreign policy priority enshrined in the preamble to the 2011 Moroccan Constitution. This explains why Morocco's foreign policy is not only based on increasing trade or increasing investment, but also encompasses economic, historical, humanitarian, and environmental considerations.

This makes this initiative a factor in good collaboration between Morocco and countries like The Gambia and enables the development of these countries in sectors that tie them.

According to Atalayar.ENTRE DOS ORILLAS (2024), the Royal Initiative consists of strategically bringing the States of the Sahel closer to the Atlantic. This is an initiative that promotes relations between Morocco and the countries concerned, as it would allow for essential economic and political interaction, potentially enabling sustainable development of the various parties in several sectors and regional integration. On the one hand, this initiative was appreciated and approved by Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, and Chad (Atalayar.ENTRE DOS ORILLAS, 2024). On the other hand, the factor that favored this approval was probably due to the diplomatic conduct adopted by Morocco, which did not make any value judgments in the face of socio-political events, in the face of the force coups that took place respectively in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger.

Indeed, Morocco's diplomatic position differed from that of France, Algeria, and most other ECOWAS member countries, emphasizes Atalayar. ENTRE DOS ORILLAS (2024). The Royal Initiative fosters diplomatic ties, which is an excellent way for Morocco to achieve regional integration and promote sustainable development with the countries concerned. It should be noted that the Royal Initiative has enabled certain countries, such as The Gambia, to develop in several sectors of sustainable development. Indeed, this initiative promotes South-South cooperation based on a win-win partnership (MOROCCO DIPLOMATIQUE, 2024).

According to NACHOUI Imane and NACHOUI Mostafa (2025), since the beginning of the 3rd millennium, Morocco has multiplied political, economic, social, and religious initiatives in favor of sub-Saharan Africa in general and the West African region in particular. Morocco has become the second-largest African investor in Africa. But according to them, there are still obstacles that limit the development of relations between Morocco and sub-Saharan Africa, such as the levels of development of transport, logistics, and connectivity infrastructure (NACHOUI Imane and NACHOUI Mostafa, 2025).

But in any case, it cannot be denied that Morocco is very keen to have relations that can take any form if only these relations succeed in promoting sustainable development and regional integration. As for Mohammed MEZENE and Mhammed ECHKOUNDI (2021), Morocco should extend its partnership strategies to East and Southern African countries to consolidate all its achievements, with a market representing more than half of African consumers by 2030, making Africa the market of the 21st century despite the geographical distance of these countries and their belonging to different cultural and linguistic areas.

This explains the opportunities Morocco can seize through broader relations in Africa to ensure sustainable development and the possibility of regional integration.

For ABDALLAH Laouina (2019), Morocco is increasingly asserting its African dimension, as if rediscovering that Africa has both played a major role in its history and that it represents an immense opportunity for future integration. This African dimension of Morocco results firstly from the family ties of certain groups established for a long time in Atlantic Morocco with southern populations, and other human and religious ties have developed and spread beyond the Sahara, in the countries of sub-Saharan Africa.

Security relations and strategic cooperation

For Pierre Afouda Adimi (2015), cooperation focused on sub-Saharan Africa is vital for both Morocco and its sub-Saharan partners, as it can promote development and even sustainable development.

Furthermore, relations between Morocco and West Africa also generate other very important relations in the areas of security and humanitarian aid. Indeed, M. Said Dkhissi et al. (2012) state that Morocco contributes to peacekeeping operations in Africa and provides various forms of aid to several countries on the African continent. In this regard, the Moroccan government report (2007) indicates that Morocco intervened in Madagascar during the drought and intervened in Burkina Faso, Kenya, and Niger after flood-related disasters. However, Es-Salehy, M and Sabri, A (2025), emphasize that, at least through Morocco's reconfigured African policy, it seeks to become a key player in regional affairs, contributing to the stability of the African region, which can be considered a pillar of sustainable development for the entire African region and a pillar of regional integration.

Indeed, Es-Salehy, M and Sabri, A (2025) explain that Morocco had certainly played a key role in mediation and conflict resolution efforts in Libya and Mali.

Furthermore, for the National Commission responsible for the implementation of sanctions provided for by the United Nations Security Council Resolutions on terrorism, arms proliferation and their financing, or the CNASNU (2021), Morocco appears to be a solution, beyond ensuring relations with West Africa, for the Sahel

countries. Indeed, because of the terrorism that Africa suffers from, cooperation between Morocco and West African countries such as Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Chad remains the only possible way to effectively combat the threat of terrorism. Because it is a threat that can no longer be fought using an exclusively national approach. Thus, relations between Morocco and West Africa are important and not negligible, so that there is stable security for sustainable development and regional integration.

Furthermore, for The World Africa (2024) Morocco is very involved in matters that concern Africa in general, but more particularly West Africa because Morocco intervened for the release of four (4) agents of the General Directorate of External Security (DGSE) of France who were detained by the military authorities in power in Burkina Faso whose head was Ibrahim Traoré, a member country of the Alliance of Sahel States (AES).

Thus, Morocco has been able, on the one hand, to maintain good relations with the ruling military junta to the point where, on the other hand, it has been able to play the role of mediator between France and Burkina Faso (The World Africa, 2024).

This point underlines the good relations that exist between Morocco and West Africa, and which create conditions for sustainable development, understanding and the possibility of regional integration.

Cultural and social ties

Regarding cultural and social ties, we can cite the work of Ellinor ZENO-MAHMALAT (2016), which highlights the training program for African imams implemented by King Mohammed VI since 2014, who were the first to benefit from this training. This program is expected to train hundreds of religious figures each year (Ellinor ZENO-MAHMALAT, 2016). This form of initiative is important for maintaining existing relations between Morocco and West Africa, which can create the conditions for development, even sustainable development and regional integration. Moreover, Morocco, as a kingdom and a country of Islamic faith, establishes relations with countries that resemble it. Indeed, Cheik Abdoulaye Niang (2022) highlights the case of relations between Senegal and Morocco, mainly due to religion, and due to the geographical proximity, that has allowed Moroccan and Senegalese societies to share almost the same social and cultural traditions maintained over several centuries of contact and interaction. Morocco and Senegal are attached to the same religion, Islam, a religion that represents common ground for mutual sustainable development for these countries. Alongside the cultural and social ties between Morocco and West Africa, there is another form of relationship related to the field of university and professional training, which constitutes a more advanced aspect.

Indeed, according to M. Said Dkhissi et al. (2012), more than 72% of foreign students pursue university studies or professional training in Moroccan institutes and universities. Most of them come from sub-Saharan countries, which is an important point of sustainable development for sub-Saharan African countries lacking educational capacity.

Moreover, regarding this aspect, Mr. Said DKHISSI et al. (2012) emphasizes that Morocco partners either with developed countries such as Japan, France, Belgium or with an International Organization (such as the United Nations or UN or the Food and Agriculture Organization or FAO) to carry out projects in several socio-economic areas identified as priorities in partner countries in Africa. For the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs of Morocco (2016), it emphasizes that relations between the Kingdom of Morocco and West African countries are based on common religious and cultural constants, as previously emphasized, and that these are relations of exchange and reciprocal interaction that are deep, revived, and capable of solving many of the current problems. Some of Morocco's relations with West Africa, such as those with Senegal, are strong and long-standing. Indeed, these relations date back to the 8th century, that is, since the Almoravid dynasty. These relations were consolidated thanks to the advent of Islam and, over time, were strengthened through other types of exchanges (Nazarena LANZA, 2011), promoting sustainable development. Bauer, M. and Hanelt, C.-P. (2011) believe that improving mobility should be another element of cooperation. Indeed, for them the introduction of jointly managed circular migration programs for students, businessmen and skilled workers would be a particularly promising initiative because such migration programs would also be a way to address demographic challenges in the north and south of Europe, to address demographic challenges in the north and south of the Mediterranean, and could build bridges between societies and cultures, which could be an advantage for sustainable development and regional integration. The same would apply to Morocco and West Africa if, of course, such reflections are made and shared by the States parties to the relations.

CHOUHAIBI Asmaa (2019), argues that South-South cooperation has always been at the heart of the Kingdom's concerns and strategic priorities, as Morocco is currently positioning itself as a regional hub, having realized the importance that the African continent can bring to its economy. This view suggests that relations between Morocco and West African states will benefit Morocco more than West African states, but at least there will be sustainable development that will also benefit West African States.

Furthermore, JEFFALI Hassan *et al.* (2023) highlight the progress made by Morocco to integrate immigrants, the majority of whom come from the ECOWAS region. Indeed, Morocco, historically a country of emigrants, has managed immigration by adopting a national immigration and asylum strategy. This (the national strategy) offers a range of integration programs for immigrants and refugees in Morocco. In this context, Morocco has adopted a migration integration policy broken down into two 02 strategies intended for the Moroccan diaspora and immigrants. These concern the areas of social incorporation, cultural development, and economic strengthening. These strategies also highlight the governance of migratory flow management of King Mohamed VI, who, in his capacity as leader of the AU on the issue of migration, proposed, during the 31st Summit of January 2018 at the AU, to establish an African Migration Observatory as a new body hosted by Morocco. It is therefore necessary to recognize the strong relationship that binds Morocco to ECOWAS, a very active region within Africa and this African dynamic which favors a migration policy respectful of human rights as well as the exemplary deployment of Morocco through its effective and efficient instruments to better manage the migration issue (JEFFALI Hassan *et al.* 2023).

Sustainable Development Initiatives Through Relations Between Morocco and West Africa

Sustainable development initiatives through relations between Morocco and West Africa are one of the new developments that will enrich previous research on relations between Morocco and West Africa, leading to sustainable development and regional integration. These initiatives concern both Morocco and West Africa.

First, as for Morocco, relations with all West African states can compensate for the unsuccessful relations with North African states. Moreover, even if relations between Morocco and North Africa existed in good and due from today, they would not have the same positive effects that relations with sub-Saharan countries are likely to produce in terms of sustainable development, due to the number of West African States. Furthermore, Morocco's relations with West African states will strengthen its credibility and authority on the African continent, recognizing its leadership role.

Furthermore, Morocco will be able to fully benefit from the support of all these West African States with which it has relations, such as the support for the recognition and inclusion of the autonomy of the Sahara in Morocco, which boasts immense wealth in terms of fisheries, minerals, and energy resources, from which Morocco will benefit to achieve sustainable development.

As for West Africa, establishing relations with Morocco will enable it to enhance its level of sustainable development, leveraging Morocco's significant development potential. Moreover, it is time for West Africa to turn to Morocco because of its situation of broken partnerships like States like Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger or Senegal with France or China and many international organizations like the French International Organization (OIF), which were main partners in several sectors (educational, oil, cultural, health or even security). Relations guaranteeing equitable and sustainable development, win-win relations, represent an opportunity to expand productive partnerships for West African States.

Prospects for Regional Integration Through Relations Between Morocco and West Africa

Regarding the prospects for regional integration through relations between Morocco and West Africa, they are more in the interest of Morocco, which has much more to gain from its membership in ECOWAS as a kingdom, within WAEMU or the Organization for the Harmonization of Business Law in Africa (OHADA). This would be a first in the history of these West African Communities; indeed, the relations that may exist between Morocco and West Africa could be factors that could allow Morocco to join a West African sub-regional community, through a system of voting and approval by its constituent States. These relations could thus influence regional integration in favor of Morocco in the western part of the African continent; this is one of the new ideas presented in this literature review article through this summary analysis.

CONCLUSION

The summary analysis presented in this literature review article presents the state of the art or outlines all previous research on relations between Morocco and West Africa, leading to sustainable development and regional integration.

These studies have focused much more on and been limited to the historical context between Morocco and West Africa, economic and trade relations, political and diplomatic relations, security and strategic cooperation relations, and cultural and social ties promoting sustainable development and regional integration through relations between Morocco and West Africa. Consequently, not all aspects of relations between Morocco and West Africa that could foster sustainable development and regional integration have been identified. Thus, to complement previous research, new points were brought to enrich the review of previous literature on relations between Morocco and West Africa leading to sustainable development and regional integration, including sustainable development initiatives through relations between Morocco and West Africa that concern both Morocco and West Africa, and perspectives through relations between Morocco and West Africa for regional integration that only concerns Morocco.

First, regarding sustainable development initiatives through relations between Morocco and West Africa, as far as Morocco is concerned, relations with West Africa will enable it to achieve its main sustainable development objectives, including regaining its full autonomy over the Sahara and recognizing its leadership on the African continent through relations with West Africa. Then, regarding West Africa, it is a matter of having, through relations with Morocco, a new potential and reliable partner to bridge the partnership gaps that West Africa is currently experiencing in terms of sustainable development for example in the education, oil, cultural, health, and security sectors, and also to be able to benefit from balanced and win-win sustainable development.

This is the case, for example, of the break between West Africa and France, which until 2020 was a leading partner in West Africa in several sectors, and whose states have denounced the cooperation, which they believe is unbalanced.

Then, regarding the prospects for regional integration, these are of greater concern to Morocco, which, due to its relations with all West African states, can allow it to join, with the support of West African states, the West African organizations and institutions of its choice. Furthermore, Morocco and West Africa must forge relationships regardless of their future, for the sustainable development of several sectors, and for the survival and existence of their populations, because only relationships that go beyond any aspirations can help address insecurity, famine, and education. For example, the alliance of Sahel states exemplifies the importance of having allies, or an alliance with other states, collaborators, relationships, and ties that can be economic, cultural, political, diplomatic, and even security-related.

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