



ATLANTIC PERSPECTIVES INTERVIEWS REPORT

06 Perspectives from Morocco

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents Moroccan perspectives and perceptions of the construction of a pan-Atlantic space. Findings are based on 20 interviews covering 4 thematic areas: economy and finance, security, people and institutions, resources and environment. They show the multileveled complexity of the issues at hand and the near absence of a vision of the Atlantic. Nevertheless, emergent initiatives are not counteracting an Atlantic will. Moroccans are not anywhere near an Atlantic project aimed at integrating economies and people; domestic issues and new African perspective seem to take precedence over an immediate pan-Atlantic configuration.

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ATLANTIC FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

06

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1. Introduction

The interviews conducted were based on a questionnaire elaborated by the *Atlantic Future Project*. The interviewees were men and women from the public and private sectors, academia, media and civil society (NGO's). We interviewed a diversified panel of experts and opinion leaders that we considered relevant for Moroccan perspectives on the constitution of a potential pan-Atlantic space. The selection criteria –aside from the interviewees' capacity to give interesting insights regarding their specific areas— were the professional links with interregional actors and connections within the Atlantic space. Another aspect of segmentation of the panel consisted in mixing people in action – building the future of Morocco – and more experienced people involved in reflection and capable of offering a systemic view. Furthermore, we also chose some people situated at the nexus of different theme-based areas, in order to get nuanced answers for our questionnaire.

To that end, we interviewed people drawn from the academic world, from think tanks or private research institutes, gathering the society and professional actors around new development projects linked to the development of Atlantic perspectives. The same logic was applied when we interviewed NGO's leaders with different backgrounds and activities. We also carried out interviews with individuals involved in different intelligence agencies or public agents directly in charge of projects such as the international promotion of Morocco. Finally, we interviewed media people linked to economic affairs, as well as private or state actors in the field of agriculture and energy.

Some interviewees had overlapping capacities and profiles and could have been classified under more than one category. But for practical reasons, we decided to put them under the most prevailing one.

2. The Importance of the Atlantic Region: The Contrasted Emergence of Africa

The Most Important Regions over the Past 20 Years

Undeniably, interviewees pointed to the significance of the North Atlantic as a noteworthy region in terms of economic development and power. Its centrality was overwhelmingly confirmed. At the same time and from the Moroccan perspective, Africa seemed to grow in importance. This continent has been perceived as a major focal point for Morocco over the last 20 years, with a markedly higher interest being seen over the last decade. Indeed, the new opportunities offered by this area in terms of resources and the development of new markets attracting China, Europe, North America and even Morocco, largely account for the shift of new center of gravity towards the African region –which is increasingly considered as a new land of economic opportunities. To illustrate these arguments, we may quote one of the interviewees as saying that “there is a lot to be done in Africa in terms of infrastructure, real estate, energy, health care, education, culture and so on.” Besides, one of the factors which underscore the value of Africa resides in international and Moroccan awareness of the importance of regional stability. In parallel, Africa continues to attract new investment flows.

From the Moroccan interviewees' point of view, and except for Brazil, Latin America was not the major focal point for the Atlantic issues --notwithstanding the region's emerging poles and strategies.

Regions Likely to become More Important and/or Less Important in the Future

While Africa is undeniably the most coveted region, the fact remains that the North, as a power center, and Asia, as an economic one, are the regions that would probably become more important. In fact, these two big entities can rule and influence the future of the Atlantic. The increasing economic growth rates of Africa or the emergence of Latin America cannot hide the fact that the future of the Atlantic will depend on the power and the strategies of the North. In that sense, some interviewees asserted that the “old Europe” would not disappear and that they would certainly play an important role in the same way as North America. Africa will remain the Continent wielding resources and market battles. Nevertheless, it is hard to be affirmative about which regions will become more or less important, given that Atlantic issues are complex and the Atlantic economic dynamics, especially in the South, are not well settled yet.

3. Section about Thematic Areas: the Main Challenges Identified

- ***Economy***

Bearing in mind that Moroccan interviewees identify the Atlantic space mostly in terms of the links with the African continent, they underline the importance of the changes on the African continent during these last 20 years. In fact, because of Morocco’s geographical position and the new Moroccan-African strategy, we found a strong presence of economic and financial interests in this area. More explicitly, Moroccan firms are engaged in such areas as banking, telecom, insurance, mining, NTIC and construction and civil engineering works. In sum, Africa has become the major focal point over the last 20 years, with impressive growth rates being registered over the last decade. Indeed, the South-South cooperation and the role of Morocco as a leader in this sub-Saharan area, highlight the positioning of the Moroccan hub as a platform for other countries seeking to establish “gates” between themselves and the West African countries. Actually, the development of ‘Casa Finance City’¹ (CFC) as a tool of integrated international financial services enhances this idea of a regional hub, according to the interviewees.

Nevertheless, interviewees have finely-nuanced positions about this idea that Africa should be looked upon as the only focal point. First, the analysis of the Moroccan perspectives is more complex than this linear strategy because of the imbrications with other centers of gravity – Europe in particular, and Latin America to a lesser extent. Then, some interviewees diverge on the Moroccan model of internationalization, by criticizing its fundamentals, encouraging instead a less dependent policy on the powerful economies and more determination to tackle domestic challenges.

According to the majority of interviewees, it is hard to establish a sequential ranking of the main changes constituting drivers of transformation because there are many complementary sides. Nonetheless, there are elements of agreement on these two dimensions: increasing investments flows and trade growth, and, in parallel, building new infrastructures and routes. These drivers of change constitute the key to a more

¹ CFC is still in construction and refers more to the idea of the Moroccan regional hub that flourishes in Moroccan minds, but it’s not yet an effective platform.

solid South-South or North-South competition². In this context, the financial challenge, according to an interviewee, can be met only by means of a combination of private capital and incentives coming from the public sector. However, according to an expert of Moroccan economy and Morocco-EU's economic relations, this strategy is not solid enough and needs to be re-thought. In fact, there are important bottlenecks in the Moroccan economy (like infrastructures and energy), but all these factors of change must be integrated in a strong and strategic vision. Empirical reality shows that there are problems in coordinating sector-based strategies and developing business environments at the same time. Furthermore, the expert stated that 'all developed countries begin by assessing reforms before embarking on the internationalization of their economies'³.

In conclusion, the main factor of transformation should be the reform of the economy, justice, administration, agriculture, fishing, industry, etc. Only then can Morocco elaborate a vision and a strategy. As a matter of fact, this country is involved, according to the above mentioned expert, in too many trade agreements⁴ that are equal to 'deficit-producing machines'. This argument is shared by other interviewees. For instance, negotiation of new trade agreements and regulatory frameworks seemed to have less importance in the ranking of change drivers, and a large number of interviewees revealed a glaring inequality in the terms of trade between Morocco and the EU and the USA. Interviewees considered that relations with these two big entities should be reshaped in favor of a more responsible cooperation, including a better balance of power.

This does not mean that the European Union's role is irrelevant in the region. Beyond the historical connections with Europe, let's not forget that the EU is the most important trading partner and the first investor in Morocco. In addition, the free trade zone between the two entities, along with the recently granted advanced status (*statut avancé*), makes the relation unique in the region. Obviously, the bilateral cooperation treaties between France, Spain and Morocco allow for more dynamics of exchange. This serves to further strengthen the relevant role played by Europe in Morocco. Clearly, the EU has got a normative power while Morocco follows several European programs for the sake of national development⁵. Actually, since the mid-seventies, the EU is at the heart of the Moroccan strategy of socio-economic development, even if negotiations on fishery and agriculture were and still are considered as major hindrances. In terms of perceptions, we can say that even if things have evolved, interviewees were very critical about this relationship.

Some agreed that the EU must play a normative role and bolster its relations with the region in order to foster development in Morocco and Africa, at a larger scale. In fact, the EU's role is both pertinent and necessary. For instance, the European Investment Bank gives more than 250 M € to Morocco. Nevertheless, the EU should change the nature of its dialogue and its relations with the other stakeholders, especially with the countries of the South. It should particularly review its cooperation instruments with these countries. Indeed, cooperation is perceived as a hard task due to the "heaviness" of the EU institutions (overloaded procedures) and the complexity of all the applications they have to fill in. Another interviewee pointed that EU has played a more relevant role in Morocco than in West Africa. These unbalanced relations impede the dynamics of

² In that sense, an academic interviewee specialized in international trade recommend to follow the Asian model of internalization.

³ We can put this argument in perspective regarding the aim of the "Statut Avancé" agreement between EU and Morocco, which helps the progress of reforms.

⁴ EU-Morocco and USA-Morocco Free trade Agreements

⁵ We can mention the cases of structural reforms financed by the EU.

the Morocco-West Africa regional interactions. On the same perspective, one of the interviewees said that Africa constitutes one of the biggest opportunities for Europeans who are now faced with fierce Asian and American competition technology. In other words, Europe can find in this continent a new path for economic growth.

In terms of perspectives on the changes and continuities in the region, one of the interviewees emphasized the importance of human resources in terms of networking with regard to all Atlantic issues. According to him, 'Atlantic decision makers and leaders' must intensify networking and strengthen the existing platforms. Other factors, such as security and political stability, were considered as necessary to ensure attractiveness of foreign investments⁶ and foster regional dynamics.

This statement makes it necessary for us to mention the role of the main actors and regional leaders (state or non-state) capable of playing a role of change drivers. In this context, Morocco as a regional power can enhance the potentials for the emergence of an Atlantic space at two levels. First, the age-old relations between the EU and the Kingdom, despite some perceived unbalanced relationship between the two entities and the cyclical trouble with France, serves to shore up stability⁷ and promote development and investments. Secondly, the new 'Morocco-Africa' strategy, which began against all expectations in the early 2000's was intensified and uplifted since 2010 by an integrated strategy in which King Mohammed VI played a leading role. Beyond the economic and financial impacts on Morocco, this country plays the role of regional⁸ stabilizer, and economically, that of a catalyst, by investing in raw materials, industry and services in West Africa. Indirectly, private banks play a leading role, for they have come to occupy a central position in Mali, Senegal, and Guinea. The wave of big Moroccan companies⁹ implementing or reinforcing their positions in this region has paved the way for the internalization of small and middle businesses.

Globally, the interviewees recognized that the Moroccan State played a major role in favor of the Atlantic through political and economic diplomacy and legal frameworks. However, they considered that this move was partially efficient, and that the private sector had to act as a complementary power to create more value added investments and economic dynamics. From this perspective, OCP SA¹⁰ is positioning itself as a main private actor increasingly engaged in the connection of the North and South rims of the Atlantic space. In fact, this company, which is involved in a networking platform called 'Atlantic dialogues', has signed a strategic agreement with one of the biggest logistics operator in Brazil (Paranagua) to ensure exportation in a bonded free duty customs and is playing an active role in ensuring food security in Africa.

Regarding all the elements mentioned above, we could say that Morocco, while having nascent initiatives, has not yet a full-fledged strategy towards the Atlantic. Seen from afar, the country is aware of changes impacting present and future Atlantic issues. Actually, the links with EU (both at the State and non-state levels), the geo-economic and geopolitical involvements of Morocco in Africa, OCP investments and exchanges with Africa and Brazil, enhance Morocco's strategic position and allow it to influence Atlantic issues. The idea of Morocco as a regional hub, even if its shape is not yet

⁶ This shows the multilevel side of the economic analyze for Morocco (witness diplomatic troubles with the main economic partner France which generated an important reduction of French tourists in Morocco).

⁷ Morocco uses the lever of military and intelligent services to have more weight on international negotiations. Illegal immigration issues are under the spotlights this last year and Morocco becomes a buffer zone, useful to EU.

⁸ Let's not forget the training program of Malian, Gabonese and Senegalese *Imāms* and *Ulemas* (religious scholars) by Moroccan ones (moderated Islam).

⁹ Maroc Telecom, Managem, Attijari WafaBank, Groupe ONA among others.

¹⁰ Office Chérifien des Phosphates, first phosphate exporter in the world.

clear, adds a relevant advantage to the country and furnishes the ground for an optimistic future for an Atlantic Morocco. At this stage, we can assume that Morocco can play a crucial role in a would-be Atlantic common space. But analysts diverged clearly on an existing Atlantic strategy from a Moroccan point-of-view. Some of the interviewees were very open to this idea (private sector) and others raised arguments in favor of a Euro-Mediterranean strategy, that looks 'more obvious geo-strategically speaking'.

- **Security**

The majority of the interviewees on all the thematic areas held the view that security lay at the basis of many issues pertaining to development. In fact, the stability afforded by the levers of security reinforces economy and society. 'It's all about security,' asserted one Moroccan governmental decider for whom, without security Morocco can neither stabilize nor attract investments. Furthermore, as far as Morocco is concerned, security seems to be a strategic option to highlight its actions at the international level. According to the interviewees the theme of security is inextricably linked to energy and resources and serves to prop up the economy, directly or indirectly.

In order to corroborate the fact that security is tightly linked with economic challenges, one interviewee, who is also a security expert, mentioned in his analysis that the whole Atlantic space knows three different dynamics. First, the construction of a western common base, which favors the centrality of the North Atlantic space (the ongoing TTIP negotiations and the Atlantic alliance). However, this space has to face the geo-energetic challenges in which many powerful states are involved (Canada, Norway, Russia, USA, Sweden and Finland). Africa is still concerned by continental issues and challenges, in a context marked by a long and hard organizational and institutional transition. One of the future perspectives of Africa turns around the potential of its Atlantic coast (46% of the total population, 55% of the African GDP, 57% of continental trade and indisputably huge natural resources). The Atlantic shore countries should become more conscious about the importance of structuring the region around maritime-interested communities. Latin America will continue to structure its strategic activities around regional poles, within national logics. For instance, Brazil and Argentina make use of their maritime power for strategic projections and diplomacy oriented towards Africa and Europe. But all of this strategy for Africa would remain unproductive without due attention being granted security between the regions bound by the Atlantic.

A common integrated Atlantic space needs security perspectives to ensure the security of people and investments, trade routes and supply. Strong cooperation between integrated regional areas is considered to be a viable option. However, despite the problems that Morocco has had with France this year, it still plays a major role in this context. Given its geographical position, Morocco can put its experience and expertise in containing some conflicts in sub-Saharan areas to profitable. And this is at the advantage for Europe.

According to another interviewee, there are no real conflicts in the Atlantic space, only potential conflicts (due to terrorism). The biggest one is generated in other parts of the world¹¹ and may eventually impact the Atlantic space. Actually, the question is more applicable to the Mediterranean Sea, the Middle East and the Sahel Region—all of which are instable areas or conflict-ridden ones. In the middle term, there are no security problems in the Atlantic space; unless the *Sahel* becomes a "Daech" entity. In

¹¹ Mainly the Israeli-Palestinian and other Middle Eastern conflicts; Russia-Ukraine conflicts also.

that case, there will be a spilling over of these problems on the Atlantic. Interviewees agreed on the role of States as stabilizing forces in the region. In Africa, states are facing common challenges: crisis of human development models, trade and maritime disputes, the growing power of the asymmetric threat (piracy, terrorism, hacking etc.), the appropriation of the maritime space, through structuring maritime policy etc. Among the security challenges that Morocco, and by extension the region, have to face up to we found the crisis of cooperation models¹², smuggling, organized crime and terrorism, territorial disputes, and recurrent diplomatic crises.

What are the perceptions of the EU on security issue? EU has institutional relations with Morocco and Africa. The current economic partnerships should be reinforced further in order to establish more balance (less North-South verticality). In addition to its economic role, the EU must be involved all the more in resolving security crises. However, the study reveals once again the issue of 'more dialogue, less power relations'. As one of the experts has put it, "if there are only interests, there will be no cooperation –only unbalanced relations, and the game is rigged".

Concerning the main actors of change in this region, there have been divergences among interviewees. Some of them said that EU is the biggest actor in security problems, but what is expected is more implication in security issues. Others prescribe another way. In fact, loss of confidence in States and in international cooperation has impelled them to propose NGO's as drivers of change.

Given the elements of Moroccan perspective towards Atlantic issues, we can say that this country is regionally in poised to play a role. Its strategy on behalf of Africa and the idea of a regional hub set in Morocco, advocate in that sense. Security is considered also as an important issue and Morocco can be a lever at a regional level. However, a deeper reflection on actors' expectations, experiences and analyses reveal perception gaps, and differentiated skepticism. This must be put in perspective to identify convergence or divergence in the Atlantic space, and how they influence cooperation and institutions of this area. So, what are the potential risks, obstacles and levers that can slow-down or serve as catalysts in the process of an Atlantic construction?

The next section will give insights in terms of convergences or divergences about a potential and integrating cooperation for an Atlantic construction from the Moroccan perspective. We will also review regional and interregional cooperation initiatives that contribute to the Atlantic processes.

- ***People and institutions***

When we asked the interviewees which challenges they considered to be the main ones: migration, the state of democracy, respect of human rights and diplomatic exchanges, the interviewees mentioned that migration, the state of democracy and respect of human rights are among the most important ones. However, interviewees emphasized the complexity of this question, especially when issues such as the following are taken into account: cultural factors, differentiated conceptions¹³, differentiated economic levels of development, pressure made by foreign countries and international community. The idea that emerged was that Morocco needs to reach a state of democracy that can ensure individual freedom, because this is the first

¹² The crisis cooperation models refer to the reflection about the reconsideration of USA and EU's agreements in the Moroccan context.

¹³ One of the interviewees cited the example of what is happening in Europe with the uncomfortable position of the Arab population living in the continent and the lack of freedom of speech in a context marked by rising extremisms.

condition to the economic development. Despite the progress made by the country, this is still a theoretical proposition. The gist of an interesting comment made by a well-known activist and economist is as follows: Middle-Eastern countries, along with Maghreb and Africa do not have enough intellectual maturity to understand the state of democracy and the development achieved by developed countries. The interviewee argued that Arab claims are a far cry from what is called democracy. Africans and Arabs must find in their roots models apt to guide their actions and dreams. Colonization, to be sure, disrupted the colonized countries' principles, visions of life and happiness, and now all the social transitions that are taking place in this region are but manifestations of that disturbance. This region seeks to find itself, and Europe is linked to that search, because Europeans have a responsibility, the responsibility of being a stakeholder in this historical process. This obviously makes the problem and the social transition all the more complex.

Interviewees converge also on the importance of the immigration issues. A Moroccan figure actively engaged in the Atlantic space said that if the people leave, the value of transforming society and economy leaves with them. For instance, the theme of the brain drain is very dangerous for the future. It should be noted that over the last few years, many private and public initiatives have been launched in Morocco to keep people in their own country: training programs in leadership; reforms in education; specialized private schools etc.

This risks attendant upon brain-drain are closely related to the state of democracy and respect for human rights, as it was noted by one of the interviewees. 'When we see the adverse consequences of the Arab spring, over the short run, Morocco has no time to waste! This is an essential condition, of course. But we have to keep the human resources capital, efficient and performing elites, who assume genuine leadership roles as far as human rights are concerned, along with the protection of people etc., and, of course, the enhancement of economic development.'

Regarding the main changes over the last twenty years, interviewees have mainly concentrated on the Mediterranean basin. Only one highlighted the USA, and in particular South America, as the future human resource focal points. Europe is considered so mature that they need to find out new markets, new ways of deploying their political and economic diplomacy in order to ensure new positioning in terms of political and economic expansion. Their future hinges on Mediterranean area and Maghreb, given the significance of political issues such as immigration and demographic decline. This means that this area is critical for Europe, according to an expert in immigration. In parallel, the Atlantic Basin is important to emerging countries like Mexico and Brazil. All of this goes to say that configuration in terms of the distribution of power can change in the future, but for the time being experts do not see any relevant signals of that change.

In terms of prospective views regarding future changes, collaboration opportunities, and the main actors that can drive change, interviewees noted that the Sahara conflict constitutes a nexus. Morocco, as a regional actor, plays an important role in the development of Africa, but it has yet to convince African countries to recognize this territory as a Moroccan land. For instance, Nigeria and South Africa, despite their social problems, are listed by interviewees as big regional actors in Africa, but these two countries are not aligned with the Moroccan position on the question of Sahara. Let us not forget that the opponents of a Moroccan Sahara use the argument of human rights against Morocco.

Two interviewees put forward the importance of the USA –which is much more pragmatic in driving changes—as a power which can play a role in the country's on-

going democratic transition. According to other interviewees, NGO's are also likely to bring more balance in human rights, to shore up the state of democracy and help solve immigration issues, by proposing new alternatives –and not merely denouncing atrocities. Finally, one interesting comment made by an interviewee underscored the role to be played by big actors (EU and North America) in devising a major integrated push strategy, premised on big economic projects. This option can enhance qualitative development and also fix a lot of social problems.

As a normative power, EU is losing the power to change things. This is due to the evolution of EU itself. The process of enlargement in Europe, along with the Continent's inability to solve some conflicts in the Mediterranean Basin, (notably, Syria and Israel-Palestine) are perceived by Moroccan interviewee as a loss in the EU's influence. This does not mean that Europe should not play a role as normative entity. Many interviewees agree that EU is the only major player that could help to reduce conflicts in the region.

- **Resources and the Environment**

For the majority of interviewees, Africa has increased its importance in the last ten years. Latin America is ranked in second position. Some of the facts which account for this ascendancy are Africa's increasing growth rates that afford many business opportunities to economic actors. The Moroccan choice of Africa has been made also considering the existing lands and non-exploited resources, potential markets and demography. But still, the classical economic powers are big actors in areas where resources are in abundance, if only because they are the main consumers.

Two main themes in particular have been cited and developed by interviewees: agriculture and energy, which are also two key issues for Morocco. Through *OCP SA*, this country can be a lever in ensuring food security in the world. And Africa seems to be a very profitable territory for this big player. In Morocco also the solar energy has increasingly gained importance over the last few years, and brought together many national and international actors¹⁴. Concerning Moroccan resources, phosphate contains lots of uranium, which means it is a strategic commodity, for energy-production and soil-fertilization. For the majority of the interviewees, the energy issues seem to be the critical one, especially in terms of costs. Morocco cannot develop without a cost-reduction energy transformation. Natural resources-depletion was likewise highlighted, due to over-exploitation of soils and diminishing underground water-sheet resources. Interviewees converge on the fact that climate change is not a relevant issue for the moment.

With regard to the resources and environment issues, Morocco has steadily grown aware of these issues over the last twenty years, according to an expert engineer in agriculture. But it's not enough; research in the North countries is very solid whereas it is weak in the South. For example, France alone has almost 8,000 researchers working in agricultural research. This remark made by an interviewee poses the question of dependency on the more technologically-advanced nations. Morocco is no exception in that regard. Interviewees mentioned a double dependency: first on OCP – once again the only actor capable of playing a relevant role in the transformation of the energy sector – and second, on the EU and other powerful economies for knowledge and know-how. Nowadays, Morocco is in a deficit position in terms of energy and

¹⁴ The region of *Ouarzazate* in the south of Morocco is progressively becoming a solar energy powerhouse.

agriculture, importing gas, oil and wheat, for example. And, as one interviewee noted relative to energy, the country will continue to depend on the decisions and strategies devised by big players in the Atlantic space such as the USA, EU or Brazil, which is considered a powerful emergent economy. Another energy and agriculture expert added that Latin America and North America may be more interested in building something strong in the Atlantic space, because they are not so old comparatively to Europe and Africa. They are capable of making new starts, fresh starts. They are in action, whereas Europe is more in the reflection and understanding processes.

Added to this, the interviewees asserted that Africa is bound to be future dynamic region for the export of resources, but stated that this continent would doubtless need a more structured business climate and infrastructures, though Morocco can play this role at a more regional level. Indeed, the strategy of the kingdom towards Africa is premised on the assumption that Moroccan actors can bring their experience in order to promote social and economic development on the Continent.

At an international level, EU is still present in terms of normative power, by bringing knowledge and financing. And this state of affairs has been further clarified by interviewees, when they stated that countries of the South, in general, and Morocco in particular, are powerless in international negotiations. One of the ways to ensure a profitable development, given the constraints facing Morocco and Africa, is to develop more South-South cooperation and competition in order to form a more powerful block. Then, the Southern countries should accept EU initiatives in helping to tackle challenges and issues of this South-South relationship. In that perspective, actors in the South can have a balanced space where they can build something, but it will be a very long process, argued one of the interviewees. The revitalization of the trade exchanges on the basis of free trade agreements can be positive in the establishment of a better balance.

We can say at this stage of our work that Moroccan actors are somewhat concerned about an unbalanced distribution of powers in the process of Atlantic construction. Perceptions tend to a consensual skepticism towards a global integration. In the field of energy for example, 'the most powerful countries¹⁵ will always want to keep their sovereignty'. In terms of resources, fishery and agriculture politics should be redefined. For instance, in the area of fisheries Morocco has been engaged in long negotiation rounds with EU on exploiting marine resources for the last thirty years. That led two interviewees to argue that this country should develop its own endogen model of growth before going international. The paces of development are not equal in the region, and the only way to be less dependent would be to consolidate an endogen growth by encouraging internal demand and trade and, in parallel, to build South-South cooperation.

4. Section about Norms, Values, Cooperation and Regionalism in the Atlantic region:

4.1. Convergence or divergence in norms and values shared in the Atlantic

For the area 'Economy and Finance', interviewees diverge completely, with the exception of two that find proximity with Europe, in terms of language, laws, geography

¹⁵ Meaning USA and EU

and history. But other interviewees feel more proximity with Asia or Latin America, as far as facility of dialogue is concerned.

Another interviewee made an appeal to search for Morocco's African roots: 'Maybe we have forgotten for a moment that Morocco is in Africa! Clearly, we rediscovered Africa. Latin America is just at twelve days by sea and we share with them a sort of Mediterranean culture'. This shows the complexity of Morocco in its cultural dimensions.

Concerning the theme of 'Resources and Environment', we notice the same tendency, from a local to an international level. Some interviewees put forward the idea that there are no common values and principles even in Morocco due to the many influences and types of Moroccan populations (Berbers, Arabs, *Andalusian*, French-speaking and Spanish-speaking). However, it seems that they agree on the European "Western" heritage on one hand, and on the common anthropological systems of tribalism and collectivism known in Africa, even if Moroccans do not share the same cultural codes. Another perception that makes the process of sharing values difficult is that there are no shared values when you negotiate in an international context, because interests tend to prevail over relationships.

Pragmatism in the Atlantic was seen as a shared value in this space. It has been cited two times but interviewees found some difficulty in elaborating further. The idea of progress and an area of freedom qualify as another shared value.

Regarding 'People and institutions,' interviewees diverge once again in terms of opinions. Morocco shares the same values with Europe, but one leadership pundit gave us the results of a study on norms, values and principles in the world¹⁶, and has taken a stance opposite to what has been said before in the interviews. In fact, Moroccans – according to the interviewee – are closer to Asia in terms of principles and values (power distance, collectivism) than to Latin America because of the flexibility of people and the relation to religion. The interviewee added that the Arab Spring showed that North African countries, including Morocco, have a problem with their identity and are positioned in a platform of cross cultural influences (African, European, Arab), so they have to find a path to be in convergence with their partners in the Atlantic to enhance cooperation.

On the security area, the experts converge on the closeness with Africa, geographically and strategically speaking. This is strategic regarding the recent developments of Morocco on this continent. Morocco has strong ties with Africa because it belongs to this continent and shares with it the need to think this common space on the basis of African values and norms. Latin America represents a strong "transmitter of norms and values on alternative strategies and thinking".

According to all interviewees the question of norms and values requires all political and economic actors to have more dialogue among all stakeholders in the Atlantic. As one interviewee, who is working with many Atlantic actors put it, "it's a matter of perception gaps. Actors need to gather more frequently in order to develop proximity."

As far as Morocco is concerned, one interviewee pointed to the fast pace of technical, commercial and financial standards convergence with EU, asserting that the country has great adaptability.

¹⁶ CENTER FOR CREATIVE LEADERSHIP. *Leader Effectiveness and Culture : The GLOBE STUDY*. Center for Creative Leadership, 2014.

4.2. Interest and incentives for cooperation or conflict in region

From the Moroccan perspective, challenges to cooperation in the Atlantic present several economic, technical and capacity obstacles and, at the same time, positive conditions.

Examining impediments to cooperation within the Atlantic space, interviewees mentioned logistics and infrastructure obstacles¹⁷, the problems of language and distance, lack of political voluntarism, as well as high degree heterogeneity in terms of development. Interviewees added competitiveness and technology gaps between continents and countries, capacities and innovation limits from economic actors (especially exporters), the issue of the free circulation of people and capital¹⁸ and finally the technical norms for exports. These processes need to be readjusted regarding the elements mentioned above.

From the Moroccan perspective, it is clear that conflicts in the African and Maghreb regions constitute threats. However, the security issue is perceived as a lever in strategic planning because of the experience acquired by Morocco in intelligence services. This will create incentives and opportunities for Morocco in order to reinforce cooperation with EU, European countries and USA. In that sense, as mentioned in the chapter on security, Morocco can play the role of stabilizer in the region and can use this strength to attract more investments, thereby developing its economy and bolstering integration.

Another incentive for cooperation throughout Morocco was identified. Indeed, the promotion of the networking platform “Atlantic Dialogues” did produce results. Many interviewees are acquainted with this network and agreed that it very relevant for the future of the Atlantic. Interviewees cited the Africa CEO forum in Geneva, which has become a major forum to discuss Atlantic issues, as well as the regional meeting of the World Economic Forum, usually held in South Africa, policy oriented academic publications, and maritime conferences.

4.3. Regional and inter-regional initiatives

In addition to the obstacles mentioned above, it is considered that Morocco is still a small market for big players like USA or Europe, which puts the country in an uncomfortable position. In this configuration, Morocco seems to base its strategy on Africa, which may be considered as its first South-South experience in the modern era. Many interviewees thought that this approach will carry benefits in terms of learning for internalization processes.

The traditional economic partner, Europe, is becoming more and more saturated. But Moroccan companies are not strong enough to penetrate the US market despite the free trade agreement between the two countries: they do not have the capacities in terms of adaptation to the US standards and in terms of production capabilities for such a huge market. With regard to South America, there are lots of opportunities and potentialities in terms of exportations and exchanges of expertise. However, Moroccan actors do not know South America well enough and there is not a central source of

¹⁷ Morocco has got thousands of km of Atlantic coast but doesn't use it for Atlantic strategies, according to an interviewee.

¹⁸ We can notice that Moroccan entrepreneurs and companies had recently (early 2015) more facilities and incentives to solve problems of paying suppliers or selling in Europe. This progress was permitted by the Moroccan Exchange Office, under the recommendations of the IMF.

strategic information regarding this continent. Concerning Africa, the numerous cooperation agreements, religion, the strategic and geographic position of Morocco, its capital of sympathy, the *Jorf-El-Asfra* Atlantic port, the good perception of its products and services in Africa, and the fact that Africans really want to learn from Morocco¹⁹, all that show that Morocco has a good potential with this South Atlantic area. The success of Moroccan telecoms sector, banking and now the construction sector, enhances this positive perception about future relations with the region. This strategy is based on a highly effective economic diplomacy, according to an interviewee. The South-South cooperation with African countries gives an insight into possibilities of international cooperation.

Nevertheless, this position is criticized by security actors who cited the absence of a genuine African Union, conflicts or divergences with Algeria, South Africa and Nigeria, difficulties to conclude trade agreements with the regional economic communities (UEMOA), weakness of economic and logistic relations etc. These obstacles cast doubts about the optimistic approach to cooperation.

Concerning cooperation in the Atlantic, interviewees generally thought that there would be more cooperation than conflicts, thanks to better growth rates in Africa, even if the economy of several African countries is still weak. This will put the whole Atlantic economy more and more on a dynamic path. Also, Europe will need to expand its activity and exports in African and Latin markets.

Main actors

In terms of incentives for cooperation, interviewees put emphasis on the role of States (as traditional actors) by bringing economic and security-military diplomacy and the power of the private sector – entrepreneurs pushing other companies to export and internationalize. The private sector will create emulation and establish the presence of companies. Greater cooperation will come afterwards, and it will need to find interfaces with communities and forums.

TTIP's perceptions

Not all the interviewees had enough information about the signature of the TTIP between USA and EU. Nevertheless, those who made commentaries on it perceived it as reinforcement of the Atlantic North, as opposed to the rise of Asia, and China in particular (if Chinese choose to expand their country in the world in the next 20 years). Beyond the economic mutual benefits between the two big North Atlantic entities, the TTIP was considered by the interviewees as a barrier to Chinese strategic shift to expansionism –which may well be slowed down by the weight of its internal challenges.

To sum up, the Moroccan interviewees perceived the TTIP as a mean to strengthen the position of the North Atlantic. However, the answers we got were not representative. At this stage of our analysis, we cannot be relevant concerning this question.

¹⁹ ASSOCIATION MAROCAINE DU MARKETING ET DE LA COMMUNICATION. *Comment le Maroc est-il perçu par l'Afrique ?* AMMC, 2015

5. Conclusions

Perceptions of the Emergence of a Pan-Atlantic Space

Interviewees were quite skeptical about a possible real pan-Atlantic space taking shape. This may be due to the fact that the Atlantic question is a new one (from a Moroccan perspective) and could be also due to ignorance of the potentials within this space and the opportunities it holds. Let us not forget that the national socio-economic challenges, the historical orientation of the EU, and the new African perspective, are not perceived as constituents of an Atlantic issue. Europe has always been part of the Moroccan dream, and Africa has become, for many actors, a new adventure and a path to economic growth and security.

In this configuration, there is a plurality of Atlantic spaces. Regarding the obstacles and unbalanced relations mentioned, it appears that the North is still in control, and the South should increase its cooperation and competitiveness to bolster its power of negotiation regarding its share of the Atlantic potential. Interviewees generally said 'wait and see' regarding all the challenges and changes in the Atlantic world.

EU's role in the region and what the regional dynamics could mean for the EU's external policies

For sure, the EU has a relevant role to play in the Atlantic, in terms of developing the South and enhancing security. Nevertheless, the Moroccan interviewees pointed out the internal difficulties of the EU (financial and economic crisis, heaviness of procedures, weak political power, enlargement to 27, etc.) and prescribed in this perspective a new start, new strategy, and more dialogues.

In addition to that, interviewees consider that the EU needed to reinforce and consolidate its relation with the USA to build a new block to resist to Russia and China, in order to build a new position of political influence, by developing more soft power by way of its diplomacy.