



# The African Vision underpinning the Moroccan cultural and spiritual approach

Othman Sqalli Houssaini  
Lecturer Specialist in African Studies  
Kingdom of Morocco

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In most global development strategies and programs, the religious approach is considered as a source of growth, development, and peacebuilding. In the Kingdom of Morocco, freedom of religious practice is provided for the Constitution, which recognizes Islam as the country's official religion. It is His Majesty King Mohammed VI, the Commander of the Faithful, who ensures respect for Islam and the other monotheistic religions, in addition to the proper functioning of the religious domain. Religion, in Muslim societies, is a key vector for development, growth, and peacebuilding.

Morocco's geostrategic location, its vibrant economy and its current development agenda make it a hub for all of Africa – one that is conducive to greater South-South cooperation as well as more efficient integration between the North and the South for the creation of value and wealth.

A key player in the region, Morocco has free trade agreements with Europe, the United States, Africa and the 55 countries of the

Mediterranean. Within the same framework, it provides facilities to nationals of Western countries to settle in Africa and operate throughout the continent alongside Moroccan operators, who have more expertise and knowledge of the specificities of the continent.

As a key continental player, Morocco nurtures great ambitions for the continent. It believes in its potential for sustained growth and bets on the continent's development. The successful efforts of His Majesty the King in the area of economic diplomacy have not only contributed to stronger inter-African ties, but they have also affirmed Morocco's deep roots in the continent.

A great visionary, His Majesty the King has always believed that Morocco's future in terms of shared growth and co-development lies in Africa. Morocco's actions within the African Union, the African Continental Free Trade Area and the Economic Community of West African States are in line with that vision.

Morocco has centuries-old relations with all African nations, based on trade, culture, history, and religious cooperation. Sufi orders and the development of science made it possible for African pilgrims and scholars to connect with prestigious religious centers such as the Zawiya of Sidi Ahmed Tijani and the al-Qarawiyyin University in Fez, which is the oldest university, not just in Africa but the entire world.

These relations have grown at an unprecedented rate during the reign of His Majesty King Mohammed VI in his capacity as the



Commander of the Faithful, building on the same unique bonds that have always existed between the Sultans of Morocco and sub-Saharan Africa.

Throughout history, Morocco and sub-Saharan African nations have had a common destiny as well as a mutual vision shaped by their common heritage. Today, there are new opportunities for improved cooperation strategies between different actors and in various sectors. In fact, we are already witnessing the implementation of strategic policies in many areas; they have been contributing to peacebuilding, economic growth and social well-being.

Today, Morocco is a leading investor in Africa, creating jobs and promoting greater inter-African cooperation. Stability and social peace are key ingredients for economic growth, sustainable development and competitiveness on global markets. Needless to say, proper management of the religious domain contributes to the achievement of these objectives.

Although religion is a fundamental part of the social setup, economists and policymakers have not, to date, paid sufficient attention to its role in economic growth and the preservation of social peace. Religion also plays an important role in stimulating positive thinking, ethical standards and social responsibility.

From a Moroccan perspective, the relationship between religion and economic growth in Africa has demonstrated that cultural and religious values have a strong impact on people's daily life. Economic

behavior and commercial activity are fashioned by the values advocated by the monotheistic religions. It is therefore important for policymakers, and government authorities in general, to have a clear vision and well-thought-out policies in this regard.

Seen from this perspective, Morocco stands out as a model in Africa. In addition to the cultural, socio-economic, political, and environmental actions it advocates on the continent, it is implementing a comprehensive approach based on the role of religion as a lever of the social and solidarity economy.

This soft power is also leveraged for the promotion of inter-faith dialogue that respects religious and ethnic diversity. This dialogue aims to strengthen fraternal solidarity between the followers of the three monotheistic and of other beliefs as well.

Consistent with the vision of the Commander of the Faithful, Morocco has always encouraged initiatives that promote dialogue and openness based on the key tenets of moderate Islam, including tolerance, coexistence and mutual respect.

The Commandership of the Faithful has been a pillar of inter-religious dialogue. Muslims, Christians and Jews have lived together in Morocco for centuries, thanks to an unwavering commitment to moderate Islam, tolerance and peaceful coexistence. This approach is a key element of the country's strategic policy to counter extremist movements and radical ideology.

The historic visit by Pope Francis to the Kingdom of Morocco in 2019 reflected a strong and shared desire to promote peace and inter-faith dialogue, and consecrated the uniqueness of the Kingdom of Morocco as a land of peaceful interaction between Muslims and followers of other religions.

These principles are enshrined in the 2011 Constitution, which underlines Morocco's commitment to preserving the Arab-Islamic, Amazigh, Hebraic, Saharan and Mediterranean components of its identity.

The projects launched by the Kingdom to safeguard the Moroccan Jewish heritage, as part of the rehabilitation of the religious heritage in general, and the restoration of religious sites, cemeteries, sanctuaries and Jewish museums in particular, attest to the country's commitment to fruitful inter-faith dialogue, tolerance and openness.

The preservation of the African memory and the common cultural heritage is just as essential to strengthen the development of our continent building on unity, integration and strong spiritual and cultural ties.

In a nutshell, the Kingdom of Morocco is actively promoting a policy of cooperation with and openness to Africa and the entire world. This strong desire to deepen exchanges and interaction seeks, first and foremost, to ensure the prosperity of Africans and African communities.



Morocco has a unique religious model, and one of its objectives is to contribute to the preservation of common African values, in keeping with the vision of the Guarantor of the nation's unity and stability, His Majesty King Mohammed VI – may God assist Him.

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