

# The American Foreign Policy Toward Morocco During the Biden Administration

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**Abstract:-** The American foreign policy toward Morocco during the Biden administration has been characterized by a balance between continuity and change, building upon previous diplomatic foundations while addressing contemporary geopolitical dynamics. The Biden administration has reinforced Morocco's role as a strategic ally in North Africa, emphasizing security cooperation, economic partnerships, and support for regional stability. Key areas of focus have included counterterrorism, trade, and the contentious issue of Moroccan Sahara. While upholding the recognition of Moroccan sovereignty over Moroccan Sahara, the administration has also encouraged a negotiated solution through multilateral engagement. This policy reflects broader U.S. interests in promoting stability, countering extremism, and fostering economic growth in the region.

**Keywords:-** The American Foreign Policy, Morocco, Biden Administration.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The relationship between the United States and Morocco is one of the longest-standing in American diplomatic history, dating back to 1786 when Morocco became the first country to recognize the United States' independence. Over the centuries, this bilateral relationship has evolved, shaped by geopolitical dynamics, economic interests, and shared security concerns.

Understanding U.S. policy toward Morocco is crucial due to Morocco's strategic location in North Africa, its role in regional stability, and its potential as a key partner in addressing global issues such as counterterrorism and economic development. The Biden administration has brought a renewed focus on multilateralism, human rights, and democratic values, which influences its approach to foreign policy, including relations with Morocco.

In instant the U.S.-Morocco relations is crucial for several reasons. Firstly, it provides insights into how historical alliances shape contemporary geopolitical strategies. Secondly, the U.S.-Morocco partnership offers a case study in how countries can maintain and adapt their relationships over centuries, addressing both longstanding and emerging global challenges. Lastly, analyzing this relationship sheds light on the broader implications for U.S. foreign policy in North Africa and the Middle East, regions of significant strategic interest.

This paper aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the U.S.-Morocco relationship under President Joe Biden, focusing on diplomatic, economic, security, and cultural dimensions. It will explore the historical context, assess the impact of recent policies, and identify the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead for both nations. The paper tried to explore the historical foundations, current dynamics, and future prospects of U.S.-Morocco relations. By examining key milestones, strategic interests, and cooperative initiatives, we can better understand the factors that sustain this enduring alliance and its implications for regional and global geopolitics.

## II. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The relationship between the United States and Morocco is one of the oldest and most enduring in U.S. history. Morocco was the first country to recognize the United States in 1777, a fact that underscores the long-standing diplomatic ties between the two nations. This recognition was formalized with the signing of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship in 1786, which remains the longest unbroken treaty in U.S. history.

The influence of previous U.S. administrations has significantly shaped current U.S.-Morocco policies:

- **Cold War Era:** During the Cold War, Morocco was a strategic ally for the U.S. in North Africa. The U.S. provided economic and military aid to Morocco to counter Soviet influence in the region.
- **Reagan and Clinton Administrations:** Both administrations worked to strengthen economic ties, which culminated in the 2004 Free Trade Agreement. The Reagan administration also supported Morocco in its territorial conflict over Moroccan Sahara.
- **Bush and Obama Administrations:** These administrations continued to focus on counterterrorism cooperation, recognizing Morocco as a key partner in combating extremism. The Millennium Challenge Corporation compact under Bush and continued support under Obama further solidified economic relations.
- **Trump Administration:** The most notable development was the U.S. recognition of Moroccan sovereignty over Moroccan Sahara in 2020, as part of the broader Abraham Accords which saw Morocco normalize relations with Israel. This move has had lasting implications for regional geopolitics and U.S. policy.

Current U.S. policies towards Morocco continue to be influenced by these historical ties, focusing on strategic cooperation, economic partnership, and regional security.

### III. BIDEN ADMINISTRATION'S FOREIGN POLICY GOALS

The Biden administration's foreign policy is characterized by a focus on rebuilding alliances, promoting democracy and human rights, addressing global challenges such as climate change, and maintaining a strong stance on international security. Key general objectives include:

- **Strengthening Alliances and Partnerships:** Reaffirming commitments to NATO and other key alliances, while rebuilding relationships with traditional allies in Europe and Asia.
- **Promoting Democracy and Human Rights:** Emphasizing the importance of democratic governance, the rule of law, and human rights in international relations.
- **Addressing Climate Change:** Rejoining the Paris Agreement and leading global efforts to combat climate change through sustainable practices and policies.
- **Enhancing Global Health Security:** Tackling the COVID-19 pandemic and preparing for future global health threats through international cooperation.
- **Economic Prosperity:** Promoting fair trade practices, reducing global inequality, and supporting economic development worldwide.
- **Global Security:** Maintaining a strong defense posture while pursuing diplomatic solutions to conflicts and reducing nuclear proliferation.

In North Africa and the Middle East, the Biden administration has set forth several specific foreign policy goals aimed at promoting stability, security, and economic growth in the region:

- **Counterterrorism and Security Cooperation:** Continuing to work with regional partners to combat terrorism and violent extremism, with a focus on intelligence sharing and military cooperation.
- **Support for Democratic Movements:** Encouraging political reforms and supporting democratic institutions and civil society organizations to promote governance and human rights.
- **Economic Development and Trade:** Enhancing economic ties and trade relations with countries in the region to foster economic growth and stability. This includes supporting initiatives that drive sustainable development and address economic disparities.
- **Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response:** Providing humanitarian assistance in response to conflicts and crises, including the ongoing situations in Yemen, Syria, and Libya. The administration aims to address refugee issues and provide support to displaced populations.
- **Diplomatic Engagement and Conflict Resolution:** Engaging in diplomatic efforts to resolve longstanding conflicts, such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the civil

war in Syria, and the conflict in Libya. Promoting dialogue and negotiations to achieve peaceful resolutions.

- **Iran Nuclear Deal:** Seeking to return to and strengthen the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) with Iran to prevent nuclear proliferation while addressing other regional security concerns associated with Iran's activities.
- **Normalization of Relations:** Supporting and building on the Abraham Accords, which have led to the normalization of relations between Israel and several Arab states, to foster regional cooperation and peace.

In summary, the Biden administration's foreign policy goals for North Africa and the Middle East aim to promote stability, economic development, human rights, and security through a combination of diplomatic engagement, support for democratic governance, and strategic partnerships.

### IV. U.S.-MOROCCO DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS UNDER BIDEN ADMINISTRATION

The Biden administration has maintained and strengthened diplomatic relations with Morocco through various engagements and high-level visits, emphasizing the importance of this bilateral relationship. Notable diplomatic engagements include:

- **Visits by U.S. Officials:** Senior officials from the Biden administration, including Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, have visited Morocco to discuss bilateral and regional issues, reinforcing the strategic partnership.
- **Virtual Meetings:** In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, many diplomatic interactions have taken place virtually. These meetings have focused on a range of topics including security cooperation, economic development, and regional stability.
- **Bilateral Dialogues:** Regular dialogues at various levels, including strategic dialogues and working group meetings, have been conducted to address specific areas of cooperation and mutual interest.

Under the Biden administration, several key agreements and treaties have been either reaffirmed or newly established, further solidifying the U.S.-Morocco relationship:

- **U.S.-Morocco Free Trade Agreement (FTA):** Originally signed in 2004, the FTA continues to be a cornerstone of economic relations, facilitating trade and investment between the two countries. The Biden administration has reiterated its commitment to this agreement, seeking to enhance economic cooperation.
- **Defense Cooperation:** The U.S. and Morocco have a long-standing defense partnership. In October 2020, the two countries signed a 10-year Roadmap for Defense Cooperation, which continues to be a key framework under the Biden administration. This roadmap outlines collaboration on military training, counterterrorism, and capacity building.

- **Security Assistance:** The U.S. provides Morocco with significant security assistance, including funding and equipment through programs such as the Foreign Military Financing (FMF) and the International Military Education and Training (IMET).

A Several joint initiatives and collaborations have been launched or continued under the Biden administration, focusing on various sectors including security, education, and economic development:

- **Counterterrorism Efforts:** The U.S. and Morocco have continued to collaborate on counterterrorism initiatives, with Morocco being a key partner in the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS. Joint training exercises and intelligence sharing are crucial components of this collaboration.
- **Economic and Educational Initiatives:** Programs aimed at boosting economic growth and enhancing educational opportunities have been emphasized. This includes support for entrepreneurship, vocational training, and educational exchanges through initiatives like the Fulbright Program.
- **Climate and Environmental Cooperation:** With the Biden administration's focus on climate change, the U.S. and Morocco have engaged in discussions and initiatives to address environmental challenges. This includes cooperation on renewable energy projects and sustainable development practices.
- **Humanitarian and Development Aid:** The U.S. has continued to provide development aid to Morocco, focusing on areas such as healthcare, infrastructure development, and social programs. The Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) compact with Morocco is an example of such collaboration, aimed at reducing poverty through economic growth.

In summary, under the Biden administration, U.S.-Morocco diplomatic relations have been characterized by continued high-level engagements, reaffirmation of key agreements, and the initiation of joint projects and collaborations in various sectors. These efforts underscore the strategic importance of the bilateral relationship and the shared commitment to regional stability and development.

## V. ECONOMIC RELATIONS

The economic relationship between the United States and Morocco is underpinned by several significant trade agreements and cooperative efforts:

- **U.S.-Morocco Free Trade Agreement (FTA):** Signed in 2004 and entering into force in 2006, this FTA is the cornerstone of economic relations between the two countries. It eliminates tariffs on 95% of bilateral trade in consumer and industrial products, and has provisions to increase trade in services, protect intellectual property rights, and ensure fair competition. The agreement has facilitated a significant increase in trade volumes, with U.S. exports to Morocco including machinery, aircraft,

and agricultural products, while Moroccan exports to the U.S. include apparel, electronics, and food products.

- **Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT):** Although not specific to the Biden administration, the BIT between the U.S. and Morocco promotes and protects mutual investments by providing a legal framework that ensures fair treatment and protection against expropriation, further enhancing economic cooperation.
- **Strategic Dialogue on Economic and Financial Cooperation:** Regular high-level meetings focus on deepening economic ties, enhancing trade, and addressing mutual financial challenges. These dialogues help in setting the agenda for economic collaboration and tackling barriers to trade and investment.

Investment and aid programs play a crucial role in strengthening U.S.-Morocco economic relations:

- **Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC):** Morocco is a beneficiary of MCC compacts, aimed at reducing poverty through sustainable economic growth. The second MCC compact with Morocco, worth \$450 million, focuses on education and land productivity. These programs enhance vocational training, secondary education, and governance of rural land to improve economic outcomes.
- **U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID):** USAID programs in Morocco focus on areas such as education, workforce development, and entrepreneurship. Initiatives aim to improve the quality of education, foster economic opportunities for youth and women, and support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).
- **Foreign Direct Investment (FDI):** The U.S. encourages investments in Morocco's strategic sectors such as renewable energy, agriculture, and manufacturing. American companies have invested in Moroccan infrastructure projects, renewable energy initiatives, and technology sectors, contributing to job creation and economic growth.

The U.S. economic policies have both direct and indirect impacts on Morocco:

- **Trade Policy:** The continuation and potential expansion of the FTA under the Biden administration reinforce strong trade ties, allowing for increased market access and economic integration. Policies that promote exports and reduce trade barriers benefit both economies by facilitating smoother trade flows and creating economic opportunities.
- **Climate and Energy Policy:** Biden's focus on climate change and renewable energy aligns with Morocco's ambitious renewable energy goals. U.S. support for renewable energy projects, technology transfer, and investment in green energy infrastructure helps Morocco advance its renewable energy capacity, contributing to global efforts to combat climate change.
- **Economic Sanctions and Geopolitical Stability:** U.S. policies towards other countries in the region, particularly sanctions and geopolitical strategies, can indirectly affect Morocco. Stability in North Africa and the Middle East,

- supported by U.S. diplomatic efforts, helps create a favorable environment for economic growth in Morocco.
- **Development Aid and Humanitarian Assistance:** U.S. aid policies provide financial resources and technical assistance that support Morocco's development goals. Aid programs aimed at improving education, healthcare, and economic infrastructure have long-term benefits for Morocco's socio-economic development.

In summary, the economic relationship between the United States and Morocco is characterized by robust trade agreements, significant investment and aid programs, and a positive impact from U.S. economic policies. These elements collectively contribute to the economic development and prosperity of both nations, fostering a strong bilateral partnership.

## VI. SECURITY AND MILITARY COOPERATION

The U.S. and Morocco have established a strong partnership in counterterrorism, driven by mutual interests in maintaining regional stability and combating extremist threats. Key aspects of their counterterrorism cooperation include:

- **Intelligence Sharing:** The two countries have robust mechanisms for sharing intelligence related to terrorist activities, facilitating timely responses to threats.
- **Law Enforcement Collaboration:** U.S. agencies, such as the FBI and the Department of Homeland Security, work closely with Moroccan law enforcement to strengthen counterterrorism capabilities, including training in investigation techniques and the use of advanced technology.
- **Capacity Building:** The U.S. supports Morocco's counterterrorism efforts through various programs aimed at enhancing the capacity of Moroccan security forces. This includes training in counterterrorism tactics, border security, and cybersecurity.

Military aid and joint exercises form a critical component of U.S.-Morocco security cooperation:

- **Foreign Military Financing (FMF):** The U.S. provides Morocco with financial aid to purchase American military equipment, ensuring that Moroccan armed forces are well-equipped with advanced technology. This aid helps Morocco maintain a modern and capable military.
- **International Military Education and Training (IMET):** This program offers training to Moroccan military personnel in the U.S., fostering professional military education and strengthening military-to-military relationships. IMET programs emphasize leadership development, technical skills, and adherence to democratic principles.
- **Joint Military Exercises:** The U.S. and Morocco regularly conduct joint military exercises to enhance interoperability and readiness. Notable exercises include:

- **African Lion:** This annual exercise is one of the largest on the African continent and involves land, air, and naval components. It aims to improve operational capabilities, foster multinational cooperation, and enhance readiness.
- **Phoenix Express:** Focused on maritime security, this exercise involves navies from the Mediterranean and North African regions, aiming to improve interoperability and maritime domain awareness.

Morocco plays a vital role in regional security, supported by U.S. policy which views Morocco as a key partner in North Africa and the broader Middle East:

- **Strategic Location:** Morocco's geographic position makes it a critical ally in addressing security challenges in the Sahel, North Africa, and the Mediterranean. The U.S. leverages Morocco's location to project stability and counter threats in these regions.
- **Leadership in Counterterrorism:** Morocco's proactive approach to countering extremism, including the dismantling of terrorist cells and deradicalization efforts, aligns with U.S. regional security objectives. Morocco's expertise in counterterrorism is frequently shared with neighboring countries, enhancing collective security efforts.
- **Stabilizing Force in the Sahel:** As the Sahel region faces growing instability from terrorist groups, Morocco's role in providing security assistance, diplomatic support, and development aid is crucial. The U.S. supports Morocco's initiatives to stabilize the Sahel through multilateral platforms such as the G5 Sahel.
- **Peacekeeping Contributions:** Morocco contributes to various UN peacekeeping missions, demonstrating its commitment to global security. The U.S. supports these contributions through training and logistical assistance.
- **Promoting Regional Cooperation:** The U.S. encourages Morocco to engage in regional security forums and initiatives, fostering collaboration with other North African and Middle Eastern countries. This includes participation in the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP) and the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF).

In summary, U.S.-Morocco security and military cooperation is characterized by strong counterterrorism efforts, significant military aid and joint exercises, and Morocco's pivotal role in regional security. These elements contribute to a robust partnership that enhances the stability and security of North Africa and the broader Middle East.

## VII. HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRATIC REFORMS

The United States views human rights as a fundamental aspect of its foreign policy, including its relationship with Morocco. The U.S. consistently emphasizes the importance of respecting human rights and the rule of law in all bilateral engagements. Key points of the U.S. stance include:



- **Advocacy for Civil Liberties:** The U.S. advocates for the protection of civil liberties in Morocco, including freedom of speech, press, assembly, and association. It encourages the Moroccan government to uphold these rights and address any violations.
- **Gender Equality:** The U.S. promotes gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. It supports initiatives aimed at increasing female participation in politics, the economy, and education.
- **Judicial Independence:** The U.S. stresses the importance of an independent judiciary that can fairly and impartially enforce the law. This includes advocating for reforms to reduce political influence over the judicial system.

The U.S. supports Morocco's efforts to implement democratic reforms and build a more inclusive and accountable political system. This support includes:

- **Technical Assistance and Capacity Building:** The U.S. provides technical assistance to Moroccan institutions to enhance their capacity to implement democratic reforms. This includes training for election officials, support for civil society organizations, and programs to strengthen local governance.
- **Promotion of Political Pluralism:** The U.S. encourages political pluralism and supports initiatives that promote the inclusion of diverse political voices in the political process. This includes fostering dialogue between the government, opposition parties, and civil society.
- **Electoral Support:** The U.S. supports free and fair elections in Morocco by providing election monitoring assistance, voter education programs, and technical support for electoral processes.
- **Rule of Law and Anti-Corruption:** Programs aimed at strengthening the rule of law and combating corruption are a key component of U.S. support. This includes training for judges and prosecutors, as well as support for anti-corruption agencies.

Despite the positive aspects of U.S. support, there are criticisms and challenges related to human rights and democratic reforms in Morocco:

- **Human Rights Concerns:** Various human rights organizations have reported concerns about restrictions on freedom of expression, assembly, and the press in Morocco. Instances of harassment, arrests, and prosecutions of journalists, activists, and dissenting voices have been noted.
- **Judicial Independence:** Despite progress, challenges remain in ensuring complete judicial independence. Reports of political interference in the judicial process and concerns about the fairness of trials continue to be issues of concern.
- **Treatment of Protesters and Activists:** The U.S. has expressed concerns over the treatment of protesters and activists, particularly in relation to demonstrations in regions like the Rif and Moroccan Sahara. Allegations of excessive use of force, arbitrary arrests, and detentions have been highlighted.

- **Women's Rights:** While Morocco has made strides in advancing women's rights, challenges persist, including issues related to gender-based violence, legal inequalities, and societal attitudes. The U.S. continues to advocate for comprehensive reforms to address these issues.
- **Moroccan Sahara:** The situation in Moroccan Sahara remains a contentious issue. Human rights organizations have raised concerns about the treatment of Sahrawi activists and restrictions on freedoms in the region. The U.S. supports a political solution to the conflict and emphasizes the importance of human rights in any resolution.

In summary, the U.S. stance on human rights and democratic reforms in Morocco is supportive yet critical. While the U.S. provides significant assistance to promote democracy and protect human rights, it also acknowledges and addresses the ongoing challenges and criticisms related to human rights abuses, judicial independence, and the treatment of activists and dissenting voices.

## VIII. CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL EXCHANGES

Cultural exchange programs between the United States and Morocco play a significant role in fostering mutual understanding and strengthening bilateral relations. Key programs and initiatives include:

- **Fulbright Program:** This flagship international educational exchange program enables Moroccan students and scholars to study, teach, and conduct research in the U.S. and vice versa. It promotes academic and cultural exchange, helping participants gain a deeper understanding of each other's cultures.
- **International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP):** IVLP brings emerging leaders from Morocco to the U.S. for short-term visits to engage with their American counterparts. The program fosters mutual understanding and professional development across various fields, including politics, business, education, and civil society.
- **Cultural Affairs Programs:** The U.S. Embassy in Morocco organizes various cultural programs, including art exhibitions, music and dance performances, and film screenings. These events highlight American culture and encourage cultural dialogue between Americans and Moroccans.

Educational collaborations between the U.S. and Morocco are pivotal in enhancing academic ties and promoting knowledge exchange:

- **American Schools and Universities:** Institutions such as Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane, which follows an American-style liberal arts education model, and other partnerships with U.S. universities foster academic exchange and collaboration.
- **English Language Programs:** The U.S. supports various English language learning programs in Morocco, including English Access Microscholarship Program and

English Language Fellow Program, to improve English proficiency among Moroccan students and professionals.

- Study Abroad Programs: U.S. universities offer study abroad opportunities for American students in Morocco, facilitating cultural exchange and academic collaboration. These programs enable students to experience Moroccan culture firsthand and engage in academic and cultural activities.

Cultural and educational exchanges have a profound impact on U.S.-Morocco bilateral relations:

- Building People-to-People Ties: These programs create lasting personal and professional connections, fostering goodwill and mutual respect between the people of the two countries.
- Enhancing Mutual Understanding: By promoting cultural awareness and academic collaboration, these exchanges help to bridge cultural gaps and dispel misconceptions, strengthening the foundation of bilateral relations.
- Supporting Diplomatic Goals: Cultural and educational exchanges complement diplomatic efforts by promoting shared values and fostering collaboration in areas such as education, culture, and development.

## IX. CHALLENGES AND CRITICISMS

While the Biden administration's policies towards Morocco have been generally positive, there are some controversies and criticisms:

- Moroccan Sahara: The U.S. recognition of Moroccan sovereignty over Moroccan Sahara under the previous administration remains a contentious issue. Critics argue that it undermines international law and the self-determination rights of the Sahrawi people.
- Human Rights Concerns: Despite U.S. advocacy for human rights, there are ongoing criticisms regarding the U.S. response to human rights violations in Morocco, including restrictions on freedom of speech, press, and assembly.

There are many Several challenges affect U.S.-Morocco diplomatic and economic relations:

- Geopolitical Instability: Regional instability in North Africa and the Middle East poses challenges to maintaining consistent diplomatic and economic engagements.
- Economic Disparities: Economic challenges, including unemployment and economic inequality in Morocco, impact the effectiveness of U.S. economic aid and investment programs.
- Balancing Relations with Other Regional Powers: Navigating the complex dynamics with other regional powers, such as Algeria and the broader Arab world, presents diplomatic challenges for U.S. policy in Morocco.

The future of U.S.-Morocco relations looks promising, with several recommendations for strengthening ties:

- Enhanced Economic Cooperation: Continued focus on economic partnerships, including expanding trade agreements and investment in key sectors like renewable energy and technology, will benefit both countries.
- Strengthening Human Rights Initiatives: Increasing support for human rights and democratic reforms in Morocco will address ongoing concerns and promote long-term stability.
- Promoting Regional Stability: Engaging in multilateral efforts to address regional conflicts and promote peace and security in North Africa and the Middle East will support Morocco's role as a stabilizing force.

## X. CONCLUSION

The U.S.-Morocco relationship is characterized by a long history of diplomatic engagement, strong economic ties, and robust security cooperation. Key aspects of the relationship under the Biden administration include:

- Strengthening of trade and economic relations through the Free Trade Agreement and investment programs.
- Ongoing military cooperation and joint counterterrorism efforts.
- Support for human rights and democratic reforms, despite existing challenges.
- Active cultural and educational exchanges that enhance mutual understanding and foster people-to-people ties.

The enduring U.S.-Morocco relationship, rooted in historical ties and reinforced by strategic cooperation, remains a vital component of U.S. foreign policy in North Africa. Under the Biden administration, this relationship has continued to evolve, focusing on shared economic interests, security cooperation, and the promotion of democratic values.

The future of U.S.-Morocco relations holds significant potential for growth and collaboration. By addressing ongoing challenges and building on the strong foundation of mutual interests and shared values, the U.S. and Morocco can continue to strengthen their partnership, contributing to regional stability, economic development, and the promotion of human rights and democracy. This enduring relationship will remain crucial for both nations as they navigate the complexities of a changing global landscape.

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