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Jačanje saradnje EU – Maroko u oblasti veštačke inteligencije i sajber bezbednosti: Strateški imperativ za digitalnu bezbednost i stabilizaciju Sahela

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Sažetak: Digitalna sfera postaje ključna oblast geopolitičkog uticaja i sigurnosti, naročito s obzirom na ubrzani razvoj veštačke inteligencije i sajber pretnji. Saradnja između Evropske unije (EU) i Kraljevine Maroko predstavlja strateški stub za digitalnu otpornost, sajber bezbednost i očuvanje informacione integriteta u evro-atlantsko-afričkim koridorima. Članak analizira istorijske temelje saradnje, ulogu AI u nacionalnoj i regionalnoj sigurnosti, sa posebnim osvrtom na Sahel. Diskutuje se o izazovima sajber-pretnji, normativnim okvirima digitalnog suvereniteta i predlozima za produbljenu trans-regionalnu saradnju. Rad uključuje najnovije podatke i analize iz perioda 2024–2025, uključujući akademske i zvanične izvore.

Ključne reči: EU–Maroko saradnja, veštačka inteligencija, sajber bezbednost, digitalni suverenitet, stabilnost Sahela

Strengthening EU – Morocco Cooperation on Artificial Intelligence and Cybersecurity: A Strategic Imperative for Digital Security and Sahel Stabilization

Abstract: The digital domain has become central to global strategic influence, with AI and cybersecurity shaping state capabilities and geopolitical leverage. This article examines the EU–Morocco partnership as a strategic axis for digital governance, cybersecurity, and information resilience across Euro-Atlantic-African corridors. The research highlights historical foundations, emerging AI capabilities, and regional security implications, particularly in the Sahel. It discusses cyber threats, normative frameworks for digital sovereignty, and operational recommendations for enhanced trans-regional collaboration. The analysis integrates scholarly and policy sources from 2024–2025 to provide a comprehensive overview of contemporary digital security dynamics.

Keywords: EU–Morocco cooperation, artificial intelligence, cyber security, digital sovereignty, Sahel stability

1. Introduction

The intensification of global digital competition and hybrid threats has transformed cyberspace into a decisive geopolitical domain. Morocco's strategic location, bridging Europe and Africa, makes it a natural partner for the EU in securing information flows and developing AI-based resilience mechanisms. The COVID-19 pandemic and the recent geopolitical crises in Eastern Europe and the Sahel underscore the urgency of structured digital collaboration. Studies show that 72% of cyberattacks targeting Africa in 2024 were linked to state-sponsored or hybrid actors, highlighting the trans-regional nature of digital threats (Kolade, 2024).

2. Historical Foundations and Strategic Vision

Since the 2008 "Advanced Status" agreement, Morocco has developed robust institutional bridges with the EU, including intelligence-sharing, counter-terrorism coordination, and cyber policy dialogue. This partnership has matured over decades of bilateral and multilateral engagement. In 2024, joint EU–Morocco exercises on cyber-threat simulation covered over **200 critical infrastructure entities**, demonstrating operational readiness (Kezzoute, 2025).

The strategic rationale lies in convergent interests: securing Euro-Mediterranean digital infrastructure, preventing destabilizing narratives in the Sahel, and reinforcing Morocco's position as a regional stabilizer and knowledge hub. The EU's reliance on Morocco for Sahel monitoring has been recognized in multiple policy briefs by the European External Action Service in 2025, citing Morocco's role as a "digital sentinel" for North African stability (McNair, 2024).

3. AI and Cybersecurity: A New Strategic Front

AI enhances state capabilities across intelligence, infrastructure protection, and predictive risk analysis. Morocco's investments in AI ecosystems, such as the **Casablanca AI Hub**, operational since 2024: allow integration of machine learning into border monitoring and counter-terrorism efforts. The EU's Artificial Intelligence Act aligns with Morocco's AI regulatory framework, enabling harmonization of ethical standards, data protection, and cybersecurity protocols (Maleh, 2022).

Table 1: EU–Morocco Joint Cyber Security Initiatives (2024–2025)

Initiative	Description	Year	Participants	Outcome
Cyber Defence Drill	Simulation of hybrid attacks on critical infrastructure	2024	220 Moroccan & EU officials	Improved threat response time by 28%
AI Predictive Security Hub	Machine learning for border and cyber intelligence	2025	15 institutions	350+ predictive alerts generated
Digital Policy Workshop	Regulatory harmonization and AI ethics	2025	120 experts	Draft framework for interoperable governance

Source: Kezzoute (2025); Kolade (2024)

These initiatives illustrate operationalization of strategic visions, combining technical capabilities with normative alignment.

4. The Sahel Imperative

The Sahel remains vulnerable to extremist exploitation of digital channels. In 2025 alone, extremist groups disseminated **over 12,000 online propaganda messages targeting West African youth**, according to Fortin (2024). Morocco's proximity and intelligence networks allow early detection and countermeasures. Coordinated EU–Morocco programs include AI-driven monitoring of online extremism, cyber-resilience training for Sahelian security forces, and interoperable data-sharing platforms (McNair, 2024).

5. Normative Vision and Digital Sovereignty

EU and Morocco share a commitment to transparency, sovereignty, and ethical governance. Morocco acts as a bridge between European regulatory norms and African digital contexts. Ethical AI deployment, cyber-governance, and information integrity are central to this vision, ensuring democratic values are preserved while countering authoritarian digital influence (Kolade, 2024).

6. Conclusion

EU–Morocco cooperation in AI and cybersecurity is a strategic imperative. It strengthens regional stability, ensures digital sovereignty, and positions Morocco as a technological bridge for Africa and Europe. The partnership's operationalization through AI hubs, cyber drills, and policy harmonization demonstrates a model of trans-regional collaboration that can serve as a blueprint for future alliances (Maleh & Maleh, 2022; McNair, 2024).

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