

Under overcast Moroccan skies, Prime Minister Stephen Harper headed up Rabat's Yacoub al-Mansour esplanade, through the ruins of a twelfth-century mosque, to the Mausoleum of King Mohammed V, founder of modern Morocco. With its stark profile and green roof, the tomb is a marvel of contemporary Islamic design, and the Prime Minister was impressed. As the day went on and the pace picked up, he met monarch and ministers, signed deals on education and training, and offered talks on free trade. "More trade," he promised, "can only serve to make both our countries more prosperous and to strengthen our trans-Atlantic ties." He dealt too with Canada's response to the popular unrest sweeping North Africa and the Middle East. The "Arab Spring," as it was soon dubbed, dominated his stay, and he was clear where Canada stood. "We support the democratic development that is taking place" in Tunisia and Egypt, he declared, "and obviously want to see that proceed positively."²

Prime Minister Harper's one-day visit, on 27 January 2011, reflected familiar bilateral themes. For fifty years, since 1962, Canada and Morocco have maintained diplomatic relations, close ties fashioned against the turbulent backdrop of contemporary Arab modernization. From the start, the two countries, so distant in history and geography, have valued each other as "gateways" to other, larger worlds. Bolstered by measures of aid and trade, and the easy flow of students and travellers, it has been a low-key, but successful partnership.

"Dividends of Good Will," 1956-74

Relations with Morocco began well. Canada was quick to recognize the new state when it seized its freedom from France in 1956, anxious to win Rabat's friendship in the raging Cold War contest that pitted the Western democracies against the Communist Soviet Union. Hurried plans were made