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MaghrebiWeek

A snap shot PDF magazine of the news from North Africa and the MENA region



**THE MAN
THE
WEST
FEARS**



Who is Africa's new visionary leader Ibrahim Traoré?

Eddie Monkman

Russia's VE day was a fearsome spectacle viewed in awe by millions around the world. Leaders of the global south assembled in impressive numbers behind the figureheads of Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping, but one man caught the curiosity of the world. His charming red bonnet and radiant face stood out from the elderly suits and ties, cutting something of the romantic freedom fighter amongst the powers that be.

A young, charismatic leader from Burkina Faso is starting to cause a sensation across the wider world. Ibrahim Traoré is only 37 years old but he has now led Burkina Faso's junta since a coup took him to power in 2022. He has built his reputation on being anti-western and anti-imperialist, urging African countries to throw off the chains of their former colonisers. His rhetoric is distinctly Pan-African and has roused nationalist fervour in his home country. To commemorate rallies in support of a "new Africa", he took to X on

April 30th to write: "In solidarity, we will defeat imperialism and neo-colonialism for a free, dignified and sovereign Africa."

Since the beginning of his rule, comparisons have been drawn against historical Pan-African figures such as Kwame Nkrumah and Thomas Sankara. It is with Sankara, the old, domestically popular leader of Burkina Faso who was assassinated in 1987 that comparisons are most closely drawn. Such comparisons are very much in Traoré's interest. Sankara enjoys near-legendary status in Burkina Faso, a status that Traore is currently trying to cultivate. Speaking in an interview with Maghrebi, Beverly Ochieng, a Senior Analyst at Francophone Africa at Control Risks and a senior associate of the Africa Program at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies said that "I think he has fashioned himself on Sankara which is not unusual in Burkina Faso or as a Pan-Africanist. He is media savvy and he has not played down comparisons between himself and Sankara."

Sankara is a perennial presence in the nation's political and cultural consciousness and social media has only intensified this state of affairs. Traoré has effectively used social media to spread Pan-African ideals, particularly among younger audiences in Burkina Faso and beyond. Traoré uses social media to elevate his image, sometimes blurring the line between reality and myth, as Ms Ochieng noted "his online sensationalism can make his reputation seem quite inflated and so there is a larger than life presence to Traoré because of this." Opposition to Traoré on social media is often met with a large backlash from passionate supporters of him who are intent on propagating their image of him.

AI generated images of western celebrities such as Justin Bieber, Rihanna and Beyonce singing his praises have been spread online, increasing the myth but at the cost of the truth. But Traoré has gained legitimate credibility from African leaders as well as with citizens due to his Pan-African

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Press freedom crumbles in North Africa

Jack Dennison-Thomson

Tunisia, once the beacon of Arab Spring democracy, has plummeted 30 places in global press freedom rankings as North African journalists face imprisonment, censorship, and digital surveillance at rates unseen since before the 2011 revolutions.

“Civil society is suffocating once again. There are few independent media outlets left.” In an exclusive interview with Maghrebi, Karim Emile Bitar, Professor of International Relations and Former Dean of USJ, gave this damning statement.

“There are very few reasons to be optimistic about the media and civil liberties in the Arab world.”

The recent RSF press freedom report for 2025 confirms these damning assessments, categorising every North African country as having a “difficult” press freedom situation.

Tunisia has dropped 30 places in the index to 129th as President Kais Saied continues to crack down on journalists and political opposition. Algeria (126th), Morocco (129th) and Libya (137th) did see position increases, but none sit higher than Morocco, which is in the 120th position.

One of the key areas where these freedoms have been compromised is independent outlets, which analysts view as crucial to undermining journalistic integrity and press freedoms in the region.

Such independent figures as Ihsane El Kadi are key instances of this. El Kadi is the founder of Radio M and the Maghreb Emergent Media while being a vocal critic of the government.

For this, El Kadi received a sentence of seven years in jail over foreign funding charges in June 2023. The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) has openly called for the freedom of El Kadi, as the case against him is seen as a way to silence independent voices such as his across the region.

Whilst Algeria and other countries in the region have tightened their grip on press freedoms, none has cracked down harder than the face of the Arab Spring, Tunisia.

Having dropped 30 places in the global rankings, Tunisia truly is heading into the decline of North African press freedoms.

The conspiracy trials, which started in April, have seen a wide array of government opposition given prison sentences for what has been deemed “conspiring against the state.”

This crackdown has become a consistent pattern under Saied’s government, with journalists facing relentless pressure. On May 22, 2024, authorities detained Mourad Zghidi and Borhan Bsais, both IFM radio journalists, for political commentary aired on their station.

When radio journalists are imprisoned for basic political commentary, it signals how severely press freedoms have deteriorated across the region.

This pattern is widespread across North Africa, as each country is finding its method to silence independent voices. By far, Tunisia has been the most destructive, but its neighbouring countries have followed suit.

Morocco employs a method of issuing legal charges seemingly unrelated to journalism, as in the case of Omar Radi, who was sentenced to six years in prison for espionage charges.

In Libya’s fractured landscape, journalists like Ismail Bouzreeba Al-Zway face military trials and excessive sentences, caught between competing factions that tolerate no criticism.

What is uniting these countries is the increasing sophistication of their censorship. Countries have moved beyond traditional crackdowns, digital repression has closed what was once the most open space for independent journalism.

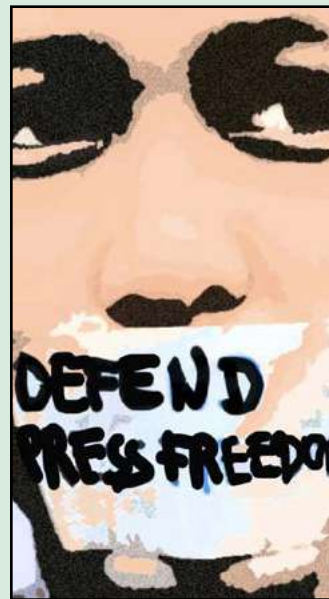
Authorities have blocked websites, deployed surveillance

software, and criminalised online speech. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, this coordinated approach has led to at least 43 journalists currently imprisoned across the region – a 30% increase in just three years.

Amid this widespread crackdown, experts see Tunisia’s regression as particularly significant.

“The Tunisian situation is particularly heartbreaking,” Professor Bitar explained. “The tendencies of Saied are reminiscent of Gaddafi in Libya.”

Such strong statements echo a drastic future for press freedoms in North Africa.



Bitar’s strongest statement came when he called Tunisia’s demise the “last nail in the coffin of the Arab Spring” – indeed, this may just be a worrying truth.

Tunisia once stood as a vibrant society whose voices grew from the blogosphere and social media and saw the Arab world gain a voice which was not shut down by oppressive governance.

Over a decade on and 2025 marks a steep decline for press freedoms in North Africa. With the growth of authoritarian powers such as Tunisia’s Saied, it seems there truly are “very few reasons to be optimistic about the media and civil liberties in the Arab world.”

Ibrahim Traore - Continued from page 1

ideals. Ms Ochieng said that such ideals “have worked both ways for him - he did come into politics with some Pan-African ideals but he has also used them as a sentiment that gives him credibility.”

His Pan-African ambitions are entwined with his anti-western views and his political actions reflect this fact. Traoré has expelled French military forces from Burkina Faso and has set about nationalising key resource industries including two gold-mines formerly owned by London-based companies.

The economic forecast has been positive for Burkina Faso in the wake of Traoré’s actions. But Ms Ochieng warned that whilst “IMF projections are quite positive but economic improvements may be a way off. Without the technological capacity to use mines it will be difficult to use them as a means for economic growth.

As a result the Burkina Faso economy will remain in a fragile state.” Whilst Traoré has expelled the French military, he has also tightened the country’s relationship with Russia whom he will hope can provide him with the technological means to develop the economy. In a highly symbolic performance, Traoré was welcomed on an official visit to Moscow for the country’s 80th anniversary of victory over the Nazis in the Second World War.

A closing of ties with Russia has been met with concern in the west. According to Ms Ochieng, “Russia entering the region has led to a heightened sense of insurgency. Russia may not have good will for the Sahel. The Sahel has become a geopolitical playground.” But, despite the risks Traoré is intent on improving relations with Russia.

His strategy is two-fold. On the one hand Russia can supply Traoré with economic and military resources that will be crucial to developing Burkina Faso in the way that he aims to in the years ahead. But Russia also has an emotional resonance for the Burkinabe people and this is something that Traoré is well aware of. Sankara held healthy relations with the USSR and so once again Traoré is seeking to mould himself - and his country - in Sankara’s image.

Tightening relations with Russia does not come without its risks but so far it has certainly proved more popular than allowing the



Global oil slump increases the need for Algerian economy to diversify

Eddie Monkman

After the price of crude oil dropped below \$60 a barrel in the first week of May 2025, the Algerian government has had to brace themselves for an economic hit but it is one that they have been slowly working to preparing for. Such a slump in the price of crude oil leaves Algeria - a nation overly reliant on the export of hydrocarbons - at particular risk of suffering economic consequences and this fact has started to - slowly - be addressed by Algerian president Abdelmadjid Tebboune and his government in Algiers. As such, there remains reason to be confident in the Algerian economy, as represented by the fact that outward economic investment continues despite an economic downturn in the country's dominant industry.

In November of last year, Tebboune signed off on the country's budget for 2025, 2026 and 2027, a budget that was deemed to be "optimistic" by media outlets at the time with the total \$126 billion figure being set on account of a barrel of oil costing \$70. Meriem Ait Ali Slimane, a Senior Economist at the World Bank has celebrated initiatives within the Algerian economy as examples of how plans to diversify can yield a positive economic outlook saying that "It demonstrates how targeted reforms can drive transforma-

tive economic impact." Despite Algeria being home to Africa's second largest reserves of natural gas after Nigeria, the resource has not always been beneficial to the economy due to the fact that it has somewhat homogenised the export market leaving the country vulnerable to global shocks such as the one currently being experienced. Therefore, the slump in global oil prices to a low of \$56.94 on May 5th will have been of great concern to the government in Algiers as they still rely on this resource in order to try to and fund new projects which will diversify their economic model.

The budget set in November 2024 was the largest in the country's history and one of the most forward thinking since gaining independence from France in 1962. Conflict in Ukraine and investment in state-of-the-art Liquefied Natural Gas export facilities mean that, as Forbes contributor Saleem Ali commented in September 2024, "Europeans are invested in keeping the country politically stable as a reliable source of gas which remains essential as a source of baseload power for the continent." Internal and external optimism has been based on the hope that Algeria will be able to diversify their economic model by growing their non-oil based economic activity by 5% between 2025 and 2027. However, this economic model

was based on the assumption that oil would cost \$70 a barrel and could therefore subsidise economic investment into new sectors.

But the price of a barrel of oil has not cost \$70 since April 2nd and whilst the price has risen slightly over the past few days, climbing from a two year low of \$55.57 on May 5th to \$59.05 on May 7th, there are few signs that the price will stabilise around the figure budgeted in the near future. A journalist from the Saudi-owned, London-based outlet Al Majalla noted that "Algeria wants to revitalise its oil sector, with intensified exploration efforts and improved recovery rates" however, such actions are reliant on the country's oil sector subsidising such technological developments.

A 3.9% increase in economic growth in the first half of 2024 compared to the same in 2023 testified to such optimism, especially given the growth came despite a slight fall in the exports of hydrocarbons. As Kamel Braham, the World Bank's Resident Representative in Algeria noted, "Algeria holds significant potential to diversify its exports and integrate into global value chains". The Algerian government will be hoping that the exports of hydrocarbons steadily fall making way for other industries to emerge and provide a more dynamic economy.

French to maintain a military presence in the country. According to Ms Ochieng "the break with France was ideological but there was also a feeling that France's military support was inadequate; however that is not to say that things have improved with Russia." What Traoré's actions do prove is that he is bold, ambitious and willing to put his country first. His rejection of France and his country's imperialist past has had a rallying effect on a younger generation of Burkinabe who are ready to get behind a dynamic and forward thinking young president.



In just under three years, Traoré has demonstrated his boldness and ambition and his willingness to put Burkina Faso first. His rejection of imperialist ties has struck a chord with a younger generation eager to rally behind a dynamic, defiant leader and his alliance with Russia has evoked a nostalgic sentiment amongst an older generation. Whether he delivers on his promises or merely perpetuates the myth that he is trying to cultivate remains to be seen - but for now, his star is rising and his role on the world stage is growing.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Algeria urges Libya to seek dialogue for conflict resolution

Algeria has expressed “deep concern and alarm” over the surge in conflict among rival factions in Libya, urging dialogue as the only path to resolution, reports Algerian government-friendly outlet, AL24 News on May 13.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs condemned the conflict, saying it resulted in loss of life and a waste of resources without yielding any progress.

Algeria called for unity among Libyans, stressing the need for national responsibility and reconciliation under UN-led efforts to advance the political process.



Morocco and Oman share unified vision says UN ambassador

Omar Hillale, the UN ambassador to Morocco has reiterated the commitment of King Mohammed VI and King Abdullah II to peace in the region according to Moroccan government-backed agency HESPRESS on May 12th.

The fact that Morocco is to chair the 6th Conference on a Middle East free of weapons of mass destruction has been described as a “fortunate coincidence” by the ambassador.

Global conflicts and geopolitical tensions mean that it is viewed as urgent matter in order to establish a WMD-free zone in the Middle East.

France to invest \$168 million in Morocco-held Western Sahara

France’s state-run development agency, the French Development Agency (AFD), has announced on May 11th a \$168 million investment in Morocco-controlled Western Sahara, marking a significant shift in Paris’s approach to the disputed territory.

Reported by The New Arab plus

agencies, the move follows President Macron’s 2023 declaration backing Morocco’s autonomy plan as the sole solution to the long-running conflict.

The decision is likely to deepen tensions with Algeria, which supports the pro-independence Polisario Front and severed ties with Morocco in 2021.

Moroccan researchers urge UN to back Sahara autonomy plan

According to the Moroccan government friendly Hespess on May 11th, two Moroccan researchers have urged the United Nations (UN) to adopt a pragmatic, autonomy-based approach to resolving the Western Sahara conflict.

In a policy paper, they cite renewed US support for Morocco’s sovereignty plan as a catalyst for growing international consensus.

The scholars argue the UN must abandon its passive stance and support a realistic solution to break the current diplomatic deadlock.



Libya: Clashes erupt in western capital of Tripoli

Local residents have claimed that gunfire could be heard through the city of Tripoli after an armed group leader was reportedly killed in Libya according to Saudi news agency Asharq Al-Awsat citing Reuters on May 13th.

The leader reported to have been killed is Abdulghani Kikli, also known as Ghaniwa, the commander of Support Force Apparatus SSA, one of the city’s most powerful armed groups.

The SSA is under the protection of the Presidential Council that came to power following the election of the Government of National Unity (GNU) in 2021.

Algeria turns to Mauritania in attempt to boost regional ties

Algeria has embarked on a diplomatic mission to Mauritania as the country looks to mend

fractured relations in the region according to Moroccan-government-friendly agency Hespess on May 10th.

The meeting between took place between the Algerian ambassador and the Mauritanian foreign minister.

The meeting represents a small step forward for relations between the two countries after Algeria’s former ambassador left his post earlier this year.



Algeria’s floods kill five and injures over 100

Algeria’s floods have left five dead and over 100 injured after heavy rainfall caused severe flooding across multiple regions, according to the nation’s civil defence service on May 15th, The New Arab reported.

In Djelfa, three people died after a bus was submerged. A 13-year-old was killed by hail, and another person was swept away by floodwaters. One individual remains missing as rain continues across the country.

Heavy rains continued to impact both the northern and southern regions of Algeria, the largest country on the African continent.

Spanish police bust Morocco-linked cannabis trafficking network

Spanish police have busted a Morocco-linked drug ring smuggling hashish and laundering millions of dollars through a network of shell operations, according to Yabiladi on May 13.

Eight suspects were arrested in raids across Malaga and Melilla, with €350,000 in cash, 1,500 kg of hashish, and high-end vehicles seized.

Authorities in Spain have said that the takedown has dealt a heavy blow to one of the region’s most active drug smuggling networks.

Gunfire continues across the capital of Libya

Gunfire has continued to be heard across districts of Tripoli despite the fact that the authorities in Libya had declared fighting was to cease, according to France 24 on May 15th.

The bulk of the fighting reportedly occurred between Libya’s counter-terrorist Radaa force and the 444 Brigade.

On Monday 12th May, the commander of Stability Support Apparatus SSA was killed at the headquarters of the 444 brigade leading to an initial breakout of conflict in the city.

Egypt signs \$221 million in oil and gas deals

On May 14th, Egypt’s oil ministry signed five new agreements with unnamed foreign companies for oil and gas exploration in the Western Desert, Gulf of Suez, and the Mediterranean’s North Dami-etta area, the cabinet announced, according to The Arab Weekly plus agencies

The deals are valued at a minimum of \$221.23 million.

Meanwhile, Russia and Egypt are in talks to build liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminals in Egypt, according to Russian Industry and Trade Minister Anton Alikhanov. “The work is under way,” he said following a Russian-Egyptian intergovernmental meeting.

Jewish pilgrimage in Tunisia has low attendance over safety concerns

The 2025 Jewish pilgrimage in Djerba, which is an island of Tunisia had roughly only 30 attendees on May 15th, due to worries over safety after a lethal attack two years ago, Al-Monitor via AFP reported.

The pilgrimage to Ghriba synagogue has previously attracted thousands of pilgrims from Europe, Israel and elsewhere as well as tourists.

However, following a lethal 2023 attack on the synagogue which caused the deaths of two worshippers and three members of the police force, less pilgrims have been doing the pilgrimage. The organiser of the event, Rene Trabelsi, said: “It has been difficult for people to come, given what’s happening in the world.”



Trump offers Syria olive branch that could end economic isolation

Trump meets President of Syria as US removes sanctions

President Trump met with Syria's Ahmed al-Sharaa in Saudi Arabia, marking the first US-Syrian presidential meeting since 2000. Following the 30-minute discussion, Trump announced the lifting of all US sanctions against Syria, per The Guardian.

"It gives them a chance for greatness," Trump said of the former militant who had a \$10 million US bounty until December 2024.



Trump described al-Sharaa as a "young, attractive guy. Tough guy. Strong past," adding that Syria agreed to join the Abraham Accords normalising relations with Israel eventually.

US approves \$1.4 Billion weapons sale to UAE



The US State Department has authorised a \$1.4 billion weapons sale to the United Arab Emirates.

According to Le Monde, the package includes six CH-47F Chinook helicopters (\$1.32

billion) and F-16 fighter jet components (\$130 million).



Officials stated the equipment would support "search and rescue, disaster relief, humanitarian support and counter-terrorism operations," calling the UAE "a vital US partner for political stability and economic progress" in the region.

The news comes ahead of President Trump's Middle East visit this week. The tour includes Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the UAE, focusing on Gaza, Iran, and

business deals. Congress has 30 days to block the sale.

Gaza operations ongoing despite captive's release



A security official told Channel 12 that Israeli forces have not received orders to halt Gaza operations, according to Middle East Eye on May 12th.

This comes after a Hamas source claimed that Israel would temporarily pause its military actions to allow for the release of Edan Alexander, a US-Israeli dual national held captive.

According to the network, a source stated that "Adjustments have been made for the release, but the army continues with normal operations."

Arab ministers meet in Baghdad ahead of league summit

Arab foreign ministers met in Baghdad on May 15th to prepare for the 34th Arab League Summit set on May 18th, The New Arab reported.



Attendees included ministers from Jordan, Egypt, Yemen, Bahrain, Somalia, Palestine, Sudan, and Comoros, as well as Qatar's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and delegates from various other Arab nations.

A private working session took place afterwards, where ministers reviewed draft resolutions and key policy documents. Iraqi Foreign Ministry officials indicated that Israel's ongoing conflict in Gaza and the situation in post-Assad Syria will be major topics in the summit's final statement.

Trump offers Syria olive branch that could end economic isolation

Jack Dennison-Thompson

Syria has praised Trump's openness to sanction relief. This could be the olive branch that the Syrian economy needs to progress toward stability.

According to The National, Donald Trump shared his perspective on sanctions relief to the new Syrian government during a press briefing on May 13.

"We are going to have to make a decision on the sanctions, which we may very well relieve. We may take them off of Syria because we want to give them a fresh start," Trump stated.

The US does not currently recognise Syria's government, maintaining restrictions and sanctions which were placed on the previous Assad regime.

The comments made by Trump appear to suggest that sanctions, which currently are crippling the Syrian economy, may be lifted soon as the new Syrian government looks to build relationships with the West, as al-Sharaa met Macron in Paris and has been invited to the UK by Starmer.

The Syrian government still has a lot to prove to the West, and the new president knows the importance of sanction relief to his government's stability and country's economy.

In an interview with the New York Times in April, al-Sharaa called on the USA and the West to remove sanctions which were placed on the Assad regime in order for his new government to advance the country.

To analysts, it appears clear that the Western leaders are warming

to the new Syrian leader and government, but reservations are still held.

Al-Sharaa, previously known as Abu Mohammed al-Jolani, was the longtime commander of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), a group designated as a terrorist organisation by the United States, United Nations, and European Union.

Al-Sharaa's history as leader of a designated terrorist organisation continues to generate wariness in diplomatic circles.

Western nations are cautiously monitoring the new government's actions before fully committing to engagement, seeking evidence that this administration marks a genuine departure from both the Assad regime and al-Sharaa's militant past.



Sudanese refugees gather for assistance at West Darfur, Sudan, at Adre Hospital in Chad

Burkina Faso strengthens ties with the Taliban

Burkina Faso's leader Ibrahim Traoré's pivot from the West continues, now deepening relations with Afghanistan's Taliban regime, reports AP.



Afghanistan's ambassador to Iran, Maulvi Fazl Mohammad Haqqani, met with his Burkinabe counterpart, Mohammad Kabura, on May 12 in Tehran, in what might be an attempt to address Burkina Faso's ballooning militant insurgencies, many of which informally align with the Taliban.

In a statement, the Afghan embassy in Tehran said that both parties pledged to expand "cooperation in the fields of trade, agriculture, mining, and the exchange of professional and vocational skills."

Sudan extends Adré border opening for aid to Darfur

The Sudanese government has extended the opening of the Adré border crossing for another three



months, allowing critical aid to reach Darfur amid mass starvation.

A statement from the Foreign Ministry on May 14th said the

crossing would stay open starting from May 16th until August 15th, reports the Middle East Monitor.

The decision follows a United Nations report on April 29th, which detailed the horrific atrocities enacted not only by the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) but also by the governing Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), including blocking aid to famine-afflicted areas.

Climate change threatens Nigeria's future food security

Nigeria is undergoing a rapid shift in climate, with prolonged periods of extreme heat depleting water resources and placing the country's food security at increased risk.

According to the Associated Press, more than 31 million people in

Nigeria are already facing food insecurity, with no clear solution sought to counteract the worsening agricultural conditions.

The growing concern over food security is especially alarming as Nigeria is projected to become the world's third most populous country, alongside the United States, in 2025.



Mauritania's ex-president jailed for corruption

Mauritania's former president, Mohamed, has been jailed for 15 years and fined three million dollars on charges of corruption, marking a pivotal shift in the country's political and judicial history.



The ex-president had previously received a five-year sentence in 2023 on similar charges and has since remained in custody, according to AP on May 14.

Aziz has once again been charged with money laundering and "illicit self-enrichment," with investigators testifying that he amassed over 70 million dollars in assets during his decade in office. He has dismissed the trial as politically motivated citing tensions with his successor.

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Drone strikes mark new phase in Sudan War as conflict escalates

Hanah Shokeir

Port Sudan, once seen as a safe haven, has come under a wave of drone strikes aimed at critical infrastructure. Paramilitary forces launched a new stage of Sudan's civil conflict following their retreat from the capital, as some analysts are calling a "shock and awe" offensive, the BBC reported on May 15th.

This comes only weeks after the army marked its success in retaking Khartoum, as the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) responded with a wave of unexpected drone attacks targeting Port Sudan in the east.

The strikes have intensified power outages and left city residents dealing with water shortages.

"It's a level of power projection within this region that we haven't seen yet," said Alan Boswell, a Horn of Africa specialist at the International Crisis Group.

The wave of strikes on the wartime capital and key humanitarian centre highlights the RSF's continued resolve and capability to wage war, despite losing ground. It also reflects the rising use of sophisticated drone technology in African conflicts.

Now in its third year, the war has seen drones take on an increasingly prominent role.

The conflict started as a battle for control between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the RSF, eventually involving other

local militias and international supporters. The UN has labelled it the world's most severe humanitarian crisis.

Earlier this year, the army used unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) to gain ground, while the RSF ramped up its own drone operations after being forced out of central areas like Khartoum and retreating toward its western base.

In recent months, the paramilitary forces have intensified drone attacks on key civilian infrastructure in areas held by the army. On the evening of May 14th, strikes targeted three power stations in Omdurman, across the Nile from Khartoum, resulting in major power outages across the capital region.





Martin Jay

Previous disparaging comments about the past of European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen and her grandparents' role in the second world war might have seemed truculent by Russian commentators. And yet, as each month passes, we seem to be witnessing VDL's political identity – and her vision of the role of the EU – more and more in line with Nazi Germany. The total annihilation of the free press in Brussels was not her doing, as she inherited the draconian system when she took office. But her efforts to broaden the silencing of journalists right across Europe is telling as it becomes even more an act of desperation to stamp out any free and feral reporting while her own team are pumping out these entirely fake narratives every day. The Russians are planning on invading Baltic states. Russia is the new threat to a democratic Europe. And the latest blag, EU is a bastion of peace and democracy “which doesn't invade other countries”.

The lies and hypocrisy are at an all-time high and so it seems fitting that the draconian measures of arresting or detaining journalists, like Chay Bowes attempting to cover the Romanian elections, is understandable.

And yet there is no evidence at all to back up the preposterous claim that Moscow has eyes set on invading Baltic countries; there is also no evidence to back up the claim that Russia is the real threat to European democracy, which, in fact is being destroyed each day by the EU and its elites themselves. And as for the EU being this example of a peaceful trading bloc which doesn't have any intention of attacking its own members, that might have been true. Until now.



Ursula von der Leyen

Ursula von der Leyen will prove the demise of the EU

Things are getting a bit out of hand in Brussels as the elite panic like never before. Now they're talking about shooting down the Slovakian PM's own plane. Just can't make this stuff up.

These days the EU elite in Brussels are panicking about losing their relevance. It is looking at though the anti-EU candidate in Romania might well win the presidential elections there. If that happens, this means an alliance of three rebels in the pack – Hungary, Romania and Slovakia – are going to give the EU, let alone NATO a real headache. It might be overzealous to say it could be the end of the EU, but it may well certainly be the end of the EU as we know it. The extraordinary elitist dictatorship which has no accountability to its own mercurial ambitions and acts, might have to learnt a thing or two about democracy and start respecting a few of its principles. NATO, arguably, might be hit even harder as three members holding back the EU's dream of organizing an EU army in Ukraine will have longer-term ramifications to the prestige and relevance of both those Brussels based institutions.

Have the cracks already started? Are these elitists like VDL losing their grip with reality? The threat by Estonia to “shoot down” any planes flying from Slovakia to Moscow is a good sign of the lunatics running the asylum as this WTF moment naturally is not reported by mainstream media and so the Slovakian PM himself had to stream a piece to camera for X just to confirm the madness.

“Yet Ursula is really losing her mind. She's out of control and this obsession with fighting Russia at any cost may well provide the defining moment where she and the EU project falls on its own sword.”

Yet Ursula is really losing her mind. She's out of control and this obsession with fighting Russia at any cost may well provide the defining moment where she and the EU project falls on its own sword. The election meddling, arrests of journalists and sheer scale of the fake news coming from the EU is starting to get noticed and seen for what it is – not only in these three

recalcitrant EU member states but right across Europe. This is evident in the rise of far-right movements in France, Britain and Germany. It's plain to see. More and more people are simply no longer buying the BS that comes to their TV screens by these leaders in Brussels on immigration, COVID, LGBT and of course boosting EU defence budgets to new giddy heights. In the UK for example, the government is looking at how to cut disability benefits to its own citizens as the national coffers are empty due to 7.5 illegal migrants receiving state benefits, free housing and health care.

The hypocrisy is staggering. Just recently we read that the EU accuses Hungarian populist leader of pouring cash into a number of media outlets to boost his popularity. And yet HUNDREDS of journalists in Brussels each day working for all of Europe's main broadcasters, even the BBC when the UK was a member, receive free productions services saving them possibly hundreds of millions of euros each year. We don't know the figure because it's all shrouded in secrecy, naturally, but the laughable accusation made by the EU must be noted for the pot calling the kettle black.

Hungary, Slovakia and soon Romania will all be targets for smear campaigns by Brussels-based so-called journalists as part of the new objective of VDL and her cronies. This is coming on a grand scale and the more this is intensified, you can literally watch the popularity of the far-right parties in ‘Old Europe’ rise each day. The model has an autodestruct facility built into it which fools like VDL can't even see as they are too fixated with power grabbing and the dirty tricks which are needed therein. But the whole machinery is fed on lies which still too many gullible Europeans believe whether it be about Russia's “threat” or electric cars, alternative energy and of course vaccines. All these areas represent hundreds of billions of euros being transferred from the public coffers to the private ones and there are still, sadly, a good number of ignorant Europeans who can't join up the dots.

The views expressed in this article belong to the author and do not necessarily reflect the editorial policy of Maghrebi.org. Martin Jay is an award winning journalist based in Morocco, working for a number of international titles while also the editor in chief of both Maghrebi.org and Levantis.me. He can be followed on twitter at @MartinRJay. This article was originally published by Strategic Culture Foundation.

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Dr Mustafa Fetouri

The violence which involved heavy artillery and armed confrontations between rival factions, has highlighted, once again, concerns over the stability of Libya's capital and the broader implications for the rest of western region under the control of the Government of National Unity (GNU). It also comes at the time when the United Nations mission was gearing up to launch a new round of consultations among the warring factions to, hopefully, have them agree to elections sometime this year.

Notably, the violence was limited to a few neighbourhoods west of the capital and in the Abu Salim area south of the capital. On the following day, life appeared normal, as if nothing had happened and the ministry of interior declared Tripoli safe. Late on Tuesday night the elusive calm was shattered by heavy gun fire across the city forcing Tripoli's municipal council to declare the city a "war zone", suspending schools and urging people to stay indoors while calling for peace.

The death of chairman of the Stability Support Apparatus (SSA), Abdel Ghani al-Kikli, appeared to help usher in the calm that prevailed between Monday morning and Tuesday night. Better known as Gheniwa, Mr Al-Kikli has been at the top of SSA since he was first appointed by former Prime Minister Fyez Sarraj in January 2021. Despite his criminal record and notorious reputation, Gheniwa endured and at times appeared untouchable, let alone being shot dead.

Everything could have ended with his death and calm could have returned to the stricken city but instead the euphoric Prime Minister Abdulhamid al-Dbeibah announced what amounted to be an open war against all militias in the capital, including the Special Deterrence Force known as (Radaa) which is more organised, disciplined and reputable than the SSA. Tripoli is now at a turning point with the potential for even greater misery and destruction than it has ever witnessed, including during the previous wars of 2011, 2014 and 2020.

By Wednesday afternoon, Al-Dbeibah, who is also the minister of defence, ordered a ceasefire across Tripoli. In a statement the ministry of defence said that the government had reacted to the latest "developments [latest fighting]"

Tripoli riots compromise Libya's stability

Clashes erupted rather suddenly in Libya's capital, Tripoli, underscoring the fragile security situation in the country.

from a sense of "national duty." However, it emphasised that illegitimate groups will still be targeted without saying when. This means what happened is more likely than not to be repeated at some point in the future. With this statement, the GNU seem to have realised, belatedly, that it made an untimely error when it opened up another front against its enemies after wide spread horror, fear and destruction. No official figure from the latest violent episode has been published so far.

What triggered the latest clashes? The foremost cause of the latest fighting is the usual power struggle between armed groups that enjoy legitimacy from the government that not only recognise them as legal entities but also finance them. The wider situation in Libya is also a factor as the country remains divided. In the eastern and southern regions General Khalifa Haftar dominates and another parallel government, under his protection and backed by the Tobruk based parliament, is operating out of Benghazi. In Tripoli itself, the GNU is not on good terms with the presidential council or the high council of state, both located in the capital.

"It is very unlikely [the UN] will make significant progress while chaos prevails in Tripoli and distrust becomes more entrenched across Libya."

Amidst this turmoil the UN has been trying to re-launch a new round of political negotiations among the different factions with the aim of organising elections as soon as possible. In a statement issued on Wednesday it condemned the "quick escalation" of violence and called for an immediate ceasefire and "protection" of civilians in the capital. Thus far, this call by the UN mission has gone unheeded.

As it stands, no major change is expected to the status quo in wider Libya.

The country will continue to be under two different administrations and both are carefully watching each other in light of what is unfolding in Tripoli. The GNU and Al-Dbeibah are now weaker than they used to be a few days ago but they are not finished yet. Pulling back for the brink was more than a face -saving decision by GNU.

Still in the capital, the situation will remain tense and could easily escalate at any time particularly if the armed groups from Misrata, Al-Dbeibah's home town, stayed in Tripoli—something most city dwellers do not like. Likewise, Haftar has allies in western Libya in cities like Zintan, in the mountain region and in Zawia, closer to Tripoli. Should things escalate again and those groups see an opportunity to oust GNU from Tripoli they are not likely to hesitate. Now that they have been alerted to what is planned for them, Raada forces can relax for some time and continue their business as usual in Tripoli maintaining control over sensitive locations including Tripoli's only functioning airport. However, as part of the ceasefire, details of which are yet to be published, they are likely to leave the districts west and south of Tripoli.

A man walks past a car that was destroyed during clashes in the southern district of Abu Salim in the Libyan capital Tripoli, May 13, 2025.

As for the SSA, it is likely to be maintained in some form. After all, it takes its orders from the presidential council not from the GNU. It is unlikely though that it will resume functioning any time soon. The huge posters praising its work that used to hang on roadside billboards have gone already and its top leaders are being chased. While the SSA's fate is being contemplated, most people, including in presidential council, are happy to see Gheniwa gone for good. After all, the man became too powerful influencing not only the security scene in Tripoli but also decision making in the Central Bank of Libya and beyond.



A car burns in the street during clashes in Tripoli.



A man walks past a car that was destroyed during clashes in the southern district of Abu Salim in the Libyan capital Tripoli, May 13, 2025.

That is not something the authorities in both the east and west of the country are likely to tolerate again.

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of Libya and beyond. That is not something the authorities in both the east and west of the country are likely to tolerate again. The political process led by the UN is likely to remain frozen until each party sorts out its new positions and alliances which are likely to shift as the situation on the ground evolves. On its part, the UN will try to ensure that the reconciliation process does not stall for long. It is very unlikely they will make significant progress while chaos prevails in Tripoli and distrust becomes more entrenched across Libya. Hannah Tetteh, the UN envoy to Libya, who only took over the job last January is eager to make progress on the ground to report to the UN Security Council the next time it meets to discuss Libya, probably in July 2025.

As for the external parties supporting different sides in the Libyan conflict, they are watching carefully how the situation develops in the capital and what likely repercussions might emerge

in the wider region. With countries like Turkey supporting GNU and Russia supporting General Haftar, what happened in Tripoli has now become part of the norm that does not require any re-setting of policies.

The views expressed in this article belong to the author and do not necessarily reflect the editorial policy of Maghrebi.org. Mustafa Fetouri is a Libyan academic and freelance journalist. He is a recipient of the EU's Freedom of the Press prize. If you wish to pitch an opinion piece please send your article to alisa.butterwick@maghrebi.org

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