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Algeria's diplomatic tightrope



Explained: Algeria's complex web of international diplomacy

Alastair Tibbs

Straddling continents and geopolitical fault lines, Algerian diplomacy requires more delicacy than ever before.

Economic partnership with the EU stands in direct juxtaposition to its military ties with Russia and the global south.

Losing ground internationally in the Western Sahara dispute and facing upheavals on its southern border with Mali, Algiers looks increasingly isolated.

Intissar Fakir, a senior fellow at the Middle East Institute, said: "Algeria is feeling very sort of kind of contained and alienated."

"They have diplomatic tension with Mali, they're struggling to deal with the growing recognition of Morocco's autonomy plan for Western Sahara and they're uncertain about where they stand vis-a-vis the US administration, particularly with Senator Rubio as Secretary of State. So they are a little bit worried."

The spigot of Russian weapons flowing into Algeria has also ebbed following the war in Ukraine,

muddying the waters of their most central and historic international relationship.

Fighting in northern Mali last year caused great anxiety for Abdelmadjid Tebboune and his regime in Algiers; skirmishing fought by the Russian Wagner group in co-action with Malian government forces.

Tensions peaked this year when Algeria claimed to shoot down a Malian drone which allegedly crossed the border.

Even as the Russian backed junta in Bamako erodes Algiers' influence via its battling of proxy Tuareg forces in northern Mali, the north African country remains intricately wedded to Moscow.

Fakir said: "Their relationship with Russia is complex, not only because Russia is far away, but also because they have to balance so many different factors in their relationship. They still rely heavily on Russian weapons and Russian arms, so they need to have that relationship be smooth enough to facilitate that kind of access."

"The US does provide and sell some weapons to Algeria. It's not

a lot, but they do buy from them. And so there's also that relationship which was threatened when Algeria turned around and bought the SU fighter jets from Russia, just months after signing a memorandum of understanding with the US."

"Now they're worried about sanctions, potentially under CAATSA [Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act], here in the US. So it's a really difficult thing for them to balance."

At least for now, frosty relations with its former colonial ruler France seem to be on the mend.

Ties fractured after Paris recognised Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara in July 2024, a 50-year-long dispute which still inflames north Africans today.

Diplomats were expelled on both sides in April after France allegedly uncovered a plot to kidnap an Algerian influencer critical of Tebboune's regime.

Still, with tensions boiling over at a diplomatic level, the only trade sanctions applied were that of Algeria banning imports of French wheat.



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"I think we have seen that Algeria is not shy about using all the tools it has in order to make a point diplomatically, and kind of not so diplomatically with the French. I think Algeria is not hesitant about using those tools", said Fakir.

"France, on the other hand, tries to be a little bit more circumspect, because I think they understand that history is not on their side. They also have to play this issue much more carefully, because for them it also has domestic relevance, with the entire decolonisation process still being a fairly relevant concern for some French voters."

The descendants of the Pieds-Noirs, of which there are 1.3 million in France, who were staunch supporters of French colonial rule in Algeria before independence, still have a loud political voice today.

In 2016, they established the Gouvernement provisoire Pied-Noir en exil (Provisional Government of the Pied-Noir People in Exile) and acquired a 285-hectare plot of land north of Montpellier in southern France.

Fakir said: "The descendants of the Pieds-Noirs that are French and that vote in France, tend to vote very conservative. They tend to be more politically organised and try to compel the French political spectrum to be more hawkish, more kind of aggressive, in their position towards Algeria.

"One of the things that I'm not sure about is this generation of French-born Algerians - the extent to which they actually drive the foreign policy or care about the foreign policy.

"They care about being able to travel back to Algeria, if they

have a business and they need to conduct business, or they need to secure visas for their families and so on."

"Their concerns are more pragmatic and practical than ideological, which, if you were to maybe contrast them to the population of Pieds-Noirs descendants, that tends to be more ideological."

As well as having a diverse array of major import partners, with China, Turkey and Brazil complementing EU trade, this gives Algeria an extra degree of manoeuvrability over France.

However, exports tell a different story, with EU countries making up over 2/3rds of Algeria's export trade.

Europe is in dire need of Algiers' crown jewel industry - petroleum and gas - but influence works

both ways. Fakir said: "If Algeria suspends sales of energy to France, then they have to find a buyer or go out and potentially ship the same content to someone farther away for which they would have to pay more in terms of shipping costs and so on."

"So I think they are going to use the tools at their disposal that are not going to shoot them in the foot."

As the international order morphs in dramatic ways, catalysed by a Trump presidency, the jury is out on where Algeria will end up.

However, as the embryo of the multipolar world begins to develop, Algeria may present a model for the future - a state outside of the East-West divide, nurturing paradoxical relationships for its own national interest.

Morocco's deal for advanced fighter jets stirs tensions in the Maghreb

Malaika Remedios

Tensions in the Maghreb are simmering as Morocco allegedly nears a deal to acquire state-of-the-art F-35 fighter jets from the US. If the rumors are to be believed, this could add fresh fuel to the kingdom's rivalry with its larger neighbor, Algeria.



According to the Moroccan-friendly outlet Hespess on June 20, Morocco could soon become the first Arab and African nation to acquire the cutting-edge Lockheed Martin F-35. To date, US policy restricts the sale of the fifth-generation stealth jet in the Middle East to Israel.

Sources at IDEX in February indicated that US President Donald Trump's second term could see through the unfinished F-35 business that he started during his first four years in office. Soon after, Lockheed Martin representatives at IDEX allegedly provided an "in-depth briefing" to a Moroccan military delegation on the fifth-generation jet's capabilities. While no official announcements have been made, Times Aerospace recently reported that the deal was given the green light by Israel, which has a big say on the sale of the fighter in the Arab world.



For Rabat, the deal would signal a huge leap in capability. Estimated to cost the kingdom around \$17 billion over 45 years, the fighter is considered one of the most

advanced aircraft in the world in terms of stealth, strike precision, and electronic warfare capabilities.

Its acquisition would therefore be "historic" for the Royal Moroccan Air Force, which has been beefing up its capabilities for years.



In August 2020, the US sold the Kingdom 24 new F-16C/D Block 72 fighter jets—the most advanced version of the F-16 currently available— with deliveries scheduled to begin this year. At the same time, Morocco is upgrading its existing fleet of 23 F-16s to the more sophisticated F-16V standard.

Two of its Gulfstream 550 aircraft are also being outfitted in Texas with advanced Israeli Elta surveil-

lance technology, which should give Morocco a much sharper eye on the region, particularly on its longtime rival, Algeria.

The combative edge threatens to eclipse Algiers' capabilities, which might explain the latter's push to become the first export customer of Russia's fifth-gen Sukhoi Su-57.



Observers note that if Morocco officially acquires the F-35A, it would place the kingdom on a new level within the global air power hierarchy. According to Aviation Week, Rabat's planned fleet would rival those of several NATO and non-NATO allies, including Spain, Portugal, Greece, Denmark, Romania, and Singapore.



Algerian Dinar plummets as nation trips into EU's blacklist2060 development plan

Zurab Lemondzhava

The Euro continues to soar against the Algerian dinar on the nation's black currency market according to TSA-Algerie. A reaction to EU's imposition of fresh regulative burdens on financial interactions with Algeria, meant to address its concerns about money laundering and funding of terrorism in the nation, as reported by The North Africa Post on June 22nd.



Measures such as a stiffening of customer verification, increase of compliance costs, and other extensions of due diligence that portent potential delays or rejections of cross-border payments, were put into effect earlier this month. Forecasters fear a bleed

of foreign investment, a crippling of access to international capital markets, and a reputational crisis. EU alleges money laundering and terrorism funding to be the key factors in its decision. Analysts propose that Algiers prioritises control, over healthy processes and transparency, and expects such responses from global institutions (2024). Though it is unclear if it expected one of this severity.



Algiers' refusal to modernise the country's banking system, liberalise the exchange rates, and to apprehend the informal currency market that plagues trade, capital retention, and the credibility of its central bank, fans the fire that may burn down more of Algeria's international financial relationships.

It is generally understood that Algiers' domineering approach to the nation's finances has had unintended (or tolerated) side-effects, such as eased access to funds for money launderers, crucially, the criminal and terrorist organisations.



State institutions hold around 85% of the nation's banking asset. But only about 44% of the citizenry the government is responsible to – has access to formal financial services, as estimated by the World Bank. Partly explained by restrictive currency exchange policies such as fixed exchange rates and limits on access to foreign funds, and an overvalued official dinar rate (1 Euro = 150

Algerian Dinar, compared to the 1 Euro = 240–259 Algerian Dinar traded on the street). Due to which, many Algerians turn to the informal market for foreign currency, especially for euros or dollars. This means that great volumes of untraceable cash circulate regularly, providing a fertile ground for illicit transactions.



Historically, Algeria's government was willing to incur the domestic and external ails of its financial policies. But, on the external side, as the EU takes steps to mitigate the hazards of its financial interactions with Algeria, as neighbours such as Morocco and Egypt take greater steps into global financial markets, and as Algeria is ousted from other international frameworks like the UN security council, the largest country in Africa runs a real risk of becoming an economic pariah in its own backyard.



If these trends persist, Algeria may soon face diminished leverage not only in financial circles but also in diplomatic arenas, where economic integration increasingly underpins strategic partnerships.



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NEWS IN BRIEF

Voting to begin in Libyan local elections by mid-August

On June 25th, the head of Libya's High National Elections Commission confirmed that the voting phase of municipal elections will take place before mid-August after multiple delays, according to Libya Review.

With the official list of candidates published after delays due to the commission verifying criminal records of applicants, voter cards will start being distributed across Libya from June 28th.

June 28th also marks the beginning of the official campaigning period, which will be monitored to ensure candidates are acting fairly and transparently.

\$25 billion Nigeria-Morocco gas pipeline nears approval

As a \$25 billion pipeline connecting Nigeria's natural gas reserves to Morocco nears approval, regional fractures persist, threatening the project's stability.

Amina Benkhadra, Director General of Morocco's National Office of Hydrocarbons and Mines (ONHYM), announced the advancement of a 6,900-kilometer infrastructure project during the 17th US-Africa Business Summit in Luanda, which concluded on June 25th, according to Moroccan-friendly outlet, Moroccan World News.

The project's Intergovernmental Agreement has cleared ministerial hurdles and received ECOWAS backing. The final step is now a signature by national leaders, according to Benkhadra who stated: "The official signature by the heads of state will constitute the final institutional milestone before implementation begins."

Spain-Morocco investigation leads to arrest of trafficking suspect

A Moroccan national wanted for human trafficking has been arrested in northern Spain following an international warrant issued by Moroccan authorities, according to Yabiladi via Spanish media site elDiario on June 25th.

Moroccan authorities had alerted their Spanish counterparts about the suspect's alleged role in an organized trafficking ring. After a joint investigation, he was detained by the Spanish National Police on June 9th in Asturias.

Following his arrest, he was transferred to Madrid and placed at the disposal of the Fourth Investigative Chamber of Spain's National Court. The arrest operation was conducted discreetly, with the details made public only on June 25th.



Tunisia's 2030 development plan completed at local level

Tunisia's 2026/2030 national development plan has been completed at the local level and is set to be finalised regionally within a month, Zawya reported on June 25.

In an interview with TAP, Faouzi Ghrab, the Secretary General at the Ministry of Economy and Planning, said the plan's new "bottom-up" approach positions local and regional councils at the core of national policy formation.

Each local council will diagnose its development situation, identify obstacles and compile a list of priorities and proposed projects. These reports are forwarded to regional councils, which must submit their consolidated summaries to the Ministry by July 22.

Greece aims to stem flow of migrants from Libya

Greece is to deploy frigates in the Mediterranean in order to try and stem the flow of migrants from Libya according to Reuters on June 23rd.

Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis told reporters that the move would be made in coordination with both Libyan and European authorities engaged in the area.

The number of migrants attempting to reach Greece from Libya has risen in recent months.

Maghreb countries rank among the lowest in global gender equality

The Maghreb region remains among the lowest in the world in terms of Gender equality, with Morocco and Algeria landing spots on the bottom rung for the least the fifth year in a row, reports Hesperion on June 23.

According to the 2025 edition of the Global Gender Gap Report released by the World Economic Forum, Morocco ranked 137th out of 148 countries, behind Tunisia (123rd) and ahead of Algeria (141st). Mauritania and Libya were not included in the report as they did not meet the data requirements for inclusion.

Morocco maintained its spot from 2024; however, Tunisia fell eight spots, while Algeria fell two.

Trump now allowed to deport immigrants to Libya or South Sudan

The US Supreme Court ruled on June 23rd that the government can now deport immigrants to third countries such as Libya and South Sudan that they are not from, which earlier court orders had blocked, according to Africa News.



This ruling will allow Trump's administration to continue with the controversial and temporary redirected deportation of eight men to South Sudan, only one of whom immigrated from the nation.

Deporting immigrants to nations such as Libya and South Sudan in violent civil wars where they are not from breaks domestic and international legal protections, as it puts immigrants in significant danger.

Morocco and France train together in "Marathon 25" air drills

The Royal Moroccan Air Force and the French Air and Space Force have begun a joint military exercise, Marathon 25, on Moroccan territory, according to Yabiladi.



The French military took to X on June 24th to clarify that the training aims "to enhance interoperability and mastery of aerial procedures and tactics." Marathon 25 is described as an initiative conducted under the banner of cooperation, knowledge sharing, and operational synergy.

The program includes a live-fire campaign by Rafale B jets, in-flight refueling of Moroccan F-16s by the Phénix tanker, and coordinated training exercises centered on tactics, joint operations, and realistic combat scenarios.

US seeks to designate Polisario Front as terrorist organization

US Congressman Joe Wilson has introduced legislation to designate the Algeria-backed Polisario Front as a Foreign Terrorist Organization in support of Morocco, The North Africa Post reported on June 27th.

In a post shared on X, Wilson described the Polisario as "a Marxist militia backed by Iran, Hezbollah, and Russia providing Iran a strategic outpost in Africa and destabilizing the Kingdom of Morocco."

The move follows calls by leading experts and politicians from the US, UK, France, Latin America, European parliaments, and the Arab world for Washington to list the group as a terrorist entity. These appeals cite concerns about the Polisario's alleged destabilizing activities in Morocco.



Gaza ceasefire discussions intensify amid regional mediation

Gaza death toll approaches 56,000 as Israeli attacks continue

In Gaza, 55,998 people have died in Israel's war on the enclave since October 7th 2023, medical sources announced on June 23rd, according to Middle East Eye.

The amount of people who have sustained wounds has climbed to 131,559. According to the sources, scores of people are still trapped beneath rubble in places where rescue units have not managed to operate.

A total of 39 people have died in the last 24 hours. This included a body retrieved from debris, while 317 other people sustained

wounds and were brought to hospitals in Gaza. A total of 5,685 people have been killed since March 18th.

At least 22 killed due to suicide bombing in Syrian church

At least 22 people died after a suicide bombing and shooting took place on June 22nd at a church in the Syrian capital of Damascus, Al-Monitor via AFP reported.



The attack, which has been denounced by the international community, was allegedly carried out by an Islamic State member. The incident presents the security challenge facing the new government of Syria.

According to the State news agency SANA, alongside the deaths, 63 people suffered injuries. An eyewitness of the attack, Lawrence Maamari, told AFP that people had attempted to stop the attacker "before he blew himself up."

Hezbollah site in southern Lebanon attacked by Israel

The Israeli military said on June 21st that its navy attacked an

"infrastructure site" of Hezbollah near the city of Naqoura in Lebanon's south, as tensions grow in the Middle East, according to Arab News via AFP.

In a statement, the military said: "Overnight, an Israeli Navy vessel struck a Hezbollah 'Radwan Force' terrorist infrastructure site."

According to Israel's military, the Lebanese militant group was using the site to carry out attacks on Israel's civilians. As part of a ceasefire deal, the Lebanese army has been working to dismantle the infrastructure of the group.



Iran strikes back attacking US bases in Qatar

Explosions boomed on the eve of June 23 as Iran announced that it has attacked American forces stationed at Qatar's Al Udeid Air Base. Witnesses have reported missiles soaring over the country shortly after Qatar closed its airspace as a precaution amid threats from Iran, reports AP.

The attacks followed Iranian threats of retaliation after the United States bombed three nuclear sites in the Islamic Republic on June 22.

Iran's supreme National Security Council claims in a statement that the IRGC and Army "pulverized" the US base, claiming the number of missiles it launched "matched the number of U.S. bombs used."

As panic of a global war sets in, Qatar has condemned the attack on X, maintaining that it "reserves its right to respond to the Iranian attack."



Gaza ceasefire discussions intensify

Charlotte Čekan

A Hamas representative stated on June 25th that Gaza ceasefire discussions involving Israel and Hamas have "intensified in recent hours" with intermediaries, according to Middle East Eye via AFP.

The representative, Taher al-Nunu, declared: "Our communications with the brother mediators in Egypt and Qatar have not stopped and have intensified in recent hours." Al-Nunu mentioned that Hamas has "not yet received" fresh truce offers concerning the conflict.

The political campaigner, Bishara Bahbah, who is serving as a negotiator for the truce in coordination with Egypt and

Qatar, stated on June 24th that an agreement might be finalised within "days," according to The Times of Israel.

Nevertheless, a high-ranking Arab diplomat told The Times of Israel that he did not share the same optimism, asserting that Israel has remained firm in its rejection to give a clear pledge to permanently halt the war.

Instead, Israel proposed staggering the release of captives throughout the temporary ceasefire, as Hamas has insisted. However, the sequence of the releases does not pose a significant barrier to reaching an agreement.

On June 26th, a Walla poll showed that 62% of Israelis supported the idea of securing a deal

with Hamas to free the hostages held in Gaza and to halt the conflict.

A previous poll showed that only a quarter of Israelis endorse occupying Gaza and widening the conflict, the BBC reported on May 21st.

On June 9th, US President Donald Trump said that Iran is involved in ceasefire talks with Hamas and Israel, The New Arab plus agencies reported.

Trump told the press that "Gaza right now is in the midst of a massive negotiation between us and Hamas and Israel, and Iran actually is involved, and we'll see what's going to happen with Gaza. We want to get the hostages back."

Explosive killed seven Israeli soldiers in Gaza, military says

Israel's military on June 25th said that an explosive device killed seven of its Israeli soldiers in south Gaza on June 24th, according to The New York Times via Reuters.

The military said that the soldiers who died in Khan Younis, were part of a unit that were searching for tunnels and destroying them. The deaths mark the biggest death toll in one incident for Israel's military in Gaza, since the Gaza ceasefire ended in March.

According to the Israeli military's leading spokesman, Brig. Gen. Effie Defrin, the soldiers died after the device was put near them.

MSF urges for US-backed Gaza aid system to be dismantled

Doctors without borders (MSF) has urged for a US-backed Gaza aid system to be dismantled, due to the attacks that have taken place around Gaza aid sites, Middle East Eye via AFP reported on June 27th.

According to MSF, the the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF) has been "slaughter masquerading as humanitarian aid."

MSF warned that the GHF, which started its operations in May has been degrading Palestinians and has left them with with no choice but "to choose between starvation" or putting their life on the line for limited food aid.

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UN: US-Israeli aid hubs fail to meet international standards

Pope Leo raises alarm over intensity of Middle East conflicts



Pope Leo said on June 26th that Middle Eastern conflicts were progressing at a shocking rate and called for more compliance with international law, in remarks to aid organisations and catholic bishops working in the region, Middle East Eye via Reuters reported.

During talks in the Vatican, the pope said Middle Eastern nations were being "devastated by wars, plundered by special interests, and covered by a cloud of hatred that renders the air unbreathable and toxic."

He added that violence is escalating "with a diabolical intensity previously unknown."

Turkish officers who tortured Syrian refugees get life sentences

Four border guards of Turkey were handed life sentences on June 26th for torturing nine migrants from Syria, where two died from their injuries, The New Arab reported.

On March 11th 2023, Turkey's border police arrested the nine Syrians who were trying to cross the Turkish border into Hatay province.

The survivors as well as a number of Turkish police officers have said that the migrants were later attacked by officers with sticks and iron rods. The officers then urinated on the migrants eyes and made them drink diesel. The ordeal lasted for roughly two and a half hours, according to reports in Turkish media.



UN: US-Israeli aid hubs fail to meet international standards

Amir Farhoud

At least 410 Palestinians have died while attempting to reach US-Israeli aid distribution hubs in Gaza due to Israeli attacks, Middle East Eye reported via Reuters on June 24th.

The UN human rights office (OHCHR) stated that this likely amounts to a war crime. OHCHR spokesperson Thameen al-Keetan said Israel's militarised approach to aid distribution violates international standards.

He added that using food as a weapon and blocking civilians' access to essential services is a war crime and may constitute

other violations under international law.

Amid the Gaza aid crisis, the UN agency for Palestinian refugee (UNRWA) chief Philippe Lazzarini condemned the US-backed aid distribution system, calling it "an abomination," Middle East Eye reported on June 24th.

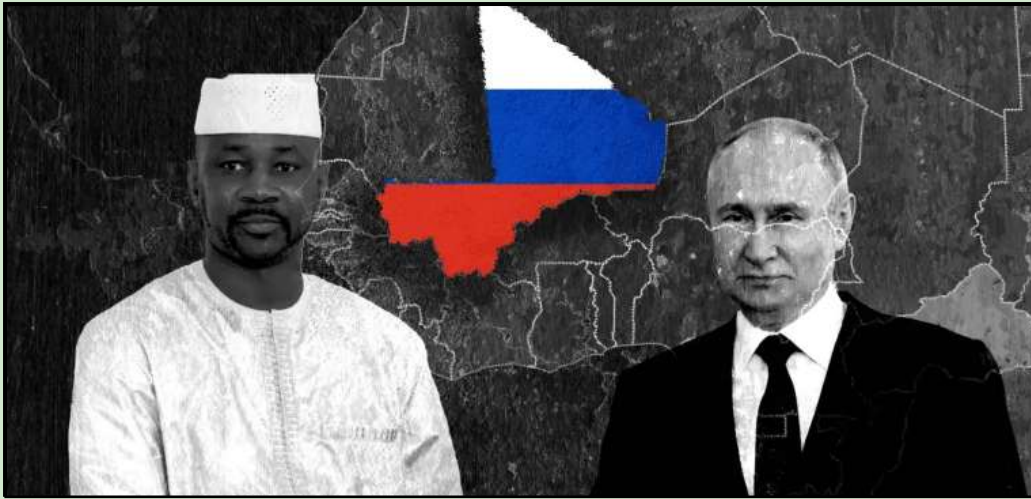
He said the mechanism humiliates desperate civilians and puts their lives at risk. Lazzarini warned that the system causes more deaths than it prevents. On June 24th, Israeli forces killed 71 Palestinians, including 50 people waiting to get aid.

Additionally, according to a report by Middle East Eye on June

16th and as Maghrebi cited, the United Nations Human Rights Chief Volker Turk strongly condemned Israel's military activities in Gaza. He stated that Israeli forces have inflicted "horrific, unconscionable suffering" on Palestinians.

Turk criticised Israel for intentionally blocking humanitarian aid and using starvation as a weapon. He called for impartial investigations into attacks on civilians seeking food. He also criticised key Israeli officials for making dehumanising remarks.

Turk warned that such rhetoric dangerously resembles language used during some of the worst crimes in recent history.



ICC asked to investigate Russian groups war crimes in Africa

\$25 billion Nigeria-Morocco gas pipeline nears approval



As a \$25 billion pipeline connecting Nigeria's natural gas reserves to Morocco nears approval, regional fractures persist, threatening the project's stability.

Amina Benkhadra, who is the Director General of Morocco's National Office of Hydrocarbures

and Mines (ONHYM), announced the advancement of a 6,900-kilometer infrastructure project during the 17th US-Africa Business Summit in Luanda. According to Moroccan-friendly outlet, Moroccan World News, the summit concluded on June 25th

The project's Intergovernmental Agreement has cleared ministerial hurdles and received ECOWAS backing. The final step is now a signature by national leaders, according to Benkhadra who stated: "The official signature by the heads of state will constitute the final institutional milestone before implementation begins."

Trump now allowed to deport immigrants to Libya or South Sudan

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in violent civil wars where they are not from breaks domestic and international legal protections, as it puts immigrants in significant danger.

Russia expands nuclear footprint in Africa through Mali deal



Mali is now joining the list of countries seeking sustainable solutions via international partnerships. On June 23rd, the country's transitional President, Assimi Goita, traveled to Moscow for an extended meeting with President Vladimir Putin, according to La Nouvelle Tribune.

The meeting culminated in the signing of several agreements, including one that outlined the development of a civil nuclear power program in Mali.

The deal aims to lay the groundwork for technical and industrial cooperation, mainly by providing Bamako with training in the realms of science, industry, and infrastructure. While trade relations between the two are still in their nascent stages, the deal could open up new areas of collaboration.

ICC asked to investigate Russian groups war crimes in Africa

Ally Freischmidt

The International Criminal Court (ICC) is asked to review a confidential legal brief which argues that the privately owned Russian mercenary Wagner group has committed war crimes in West African nations, according to the Associated Press on June 22nd.

The Office of the Prosecutor of the ICC has said that their investigations have been focused on alleged war crimes committed since January 2012, when insurgents seized communities in Northern regions of Mali.

Wagner has been active in several African nations, but most predominantly in Mali. In 2023,

the Malian Army and Wagner partners took large chunks of land back from the pro-independence Tuareg movement, which Malian President Assimi Goita has struggled to control.

Evidence of war crimes committed by the Wagner group are in the form of videos shared on social media. The videos show men in military uniforms desecrating the bodies of civilians. The videos are extremely violent and gruesome, with some alluding to cannibalism.

The aim of these videos is to threaten enemies of Wagner and the civilian population, as they face pressure to join up with rising jihadist groups. According to the Associated Press, analysts

believe that the channel 'White Uncles in Africa' which shares this content is run by current or former Wagner members, although none have been identified.

The violation of personal dignity through humiliation and degrading treatment is a war crime under the Rome Statute that created the ICC. Legal experts are arguing that Wagner's alleged abuse of social media to share degrading videos would therefore qualify as war crimes.

The legal brief asks the ICC to investigate both individual members of Wagner and Mali and Russia's governments for abuses between December 2021 and July 2024.

Kenya accused of channelling arms to RSF by Sudan army

Kenya was accused of channeling weaponry to the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces from the United Arab Emirates by the Sudanese army-backed government, according to The New Arab on June 24th.

In May 2025, the army "uncovered Kenyan-labelled arms and ammunition in the terrorist RSF militia's weapon caches in Khartoum," the foreign ministry revealed.

The foreign ministry alleged that "Kenya has been one of the main conduits of the Emirati military supplies to the terrorist RSF militia."



Iman Zayat

Reading the memoirs of those who lived alongside figures such as Hosni Mubarak, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, Saddam Hussein or Muammar Gadhafi offers a quiet intimacy, a glimpse into how power, in their hands, resembled not a shared burden but a private inheritance. These regimes functioned less as governments than as sprawling family enterprises, sustained by webs of loyalty and favour rather than institutions designed to serve the public. Even the occasional hospital or highway project, celebrated in state propaganda, rarely stemmed from a vision of collective welfare; they were fleeting gestures, strategically deployed to pacify dissent or reward obedience.

Yet time, as ever, blurs the edges. Today, these leaders live on not only in textbooks but also in a mosaic of memories. Documentaries, films, biographies and social media fragments all seek to frame their legacies. Some strive to expose, others to redeem; few capture the full weight of their rule. And in the end, the stories we tell about them reveal as much about our present as they do about our past.

Since the Arab uprisings, a quiet cultural ecosystem has emerged, one that seeks to rehabilitate, re-examine, and at times romanticise the region's fallen strongmen. This nostalgia industry spans a wide range of mediums, from prestige television to the ever-evolving lore of social media, where complex histories are repackaged into more accessible narratives, offering audiences a sense of catharsis, comfort or simply continuity.

In Egypt, the process of rehabilitation has been particularly striking. Prime-time dramas such as *"The End"* (2020) and *"The Choice"* (2021) cast the Mubarak era in a softened light: traffic police stand dutifully at near-empty intersections, and civil servants appear punctually in spotless offices. The message is understated yet insistent, what was once viewed as stagnation is reframed as

Arab historic leaders still leave their imprint on nations today

Official propaganda, personal memory and the disillusionment of the post-revolutionary era bleed into one another.

stability, authoritarianism recast as benevolent paternalism.

The trend, however, extends well beyond Egypt's borders. In Iraq, a viral TikTok trend in 2022 saw users overlay Saddam Hussein-era pop songs, such as Kadim al-Safer's *"Ladghat El-Hayya"* (The Snake's Bite), once a staple of state television, onto montages of everyday life from the 1990s: children queuing for ice cream, traffic officers in neat uniforms, and the vibrant book markets of Baghdad. These clips made no mention of mass graves or the hunger brought on by international sanctions. Instead, they offered a glimpse into the unsettling normalcy of daily life under Saddam's rule. One particularly jarring edit cut from a joyful wedding video from 1998, complete with champagne flutes and sequined gowns, to a 2003 image of the same hotel reduced to rubble. The dissonance itself carried an emotional charge, echoing a kind of collective trauma.

These works often linger on striking details and these contradictions do not resolve historical truth; rather, they render it tragically compelling.

Western portrayals add another layer of ambiguity, often filtered through their own cultural lenses. HBO's *"House of Saddam"* (2008) borrowed narrative tropes from *"The Sopranos"*, turning despotism into family melodrama, while Netflix's *"The Devil Next Door"* (2019) reduced Hafez al-Assad to a near-caricature, more a villain than statesman. These simplifications are not unexpected; the intricacies of regional history are often flattened into binary tales of tyranny and madness. And yet, even these stylised depictions reveal something essential: that autocrats often serve as Rorschach tests, reflecting the political fears and fantasies of the viewer as much as the realities of their reigns.

At its heart, the nostalgia industry is driven by three enduring human impulses: the exile's yearning for lost places, the trauma survivor's instinct to reframe painful memories, and the artist's quest to reconcile historical brutality with private, often tender, recollections. Tunisian film-maker Nadia El Fani put it succinctly: "We don't miss the dictators. We miss the parts of ourselves that existed in those times."

What results is a kind of cultural palimpsest, a layered text in which official propaganda, personal memory and the disillusionment of the post-revolutionary era bleed into one another. The lines blur. What emerges is not history in the strict sense, but something perhaps more emotionally resonant: a form of collective memory that transmutes the heavy burden of the past into whatever alloy helps us move forward.

In a 2023 BBC Arabic poll, 42 percent of Iraqis over the age of fifty said they viewed Saddam's era positively, citing a sense of "order." Younger respondents, by contrast, associated his rule almost entirely with mass graves and repression. The divergence speaks less to a disagreement over facts than to the differing emotional registers through which history is experienced, each generation haunted by a different set of losses.

The generational divide is stark. Those who lived under these regimes retain memories shaped by fear, complicity or reluctant admiration. For younger generations, these leaders are not flesh-and-blood figures but symbols, their legacies mediated through family anecdotes, pop culture or political revisionism.

"What was once viewed as stagnation is reframed as stability, authoritarianism recast as benevolent paternalism"

This gap shapes historical understanding. Older Libyans may recall Gadhafi's early pledges to distribute wealth; younger ones know only the caricature, the capricious autocrat in sunglasses and flowing robes. In Iraq, some remember Saddam's rule as brutal but orderly, while those born after 2003 know only the instability that followed. These rifts are not merely generational, they signal fundamentally different relationships to authority, loss, and national identity.

Memoirs add another layer to this quiet tug-of-war over memory. There is something quietly profound about the way they offer history not as grand narrative, but as personal recollection, whispered across time. Unlike official archives

or even documentaries, these accounts give us the sense of peering through a keyhole, watching history unfold through the eyes of those who stood in its inner circles. They become spaces where different truths coexist, each carrying the weight of lived experience. What makes them so moving, and at times unsettling, is their deeply personal nature.

Take “The Colonel and I: My Life with Gaddafi” by Daad Sharab, who was close to the Libyan leader. Her recollections are filled with small, almost ordinary moments that do more than humanise him; they make him familiar, reshaping the distant figure of a man accused of tyranny into something closer to a flawed patriarch. When she blames Libya’s unravelling on the “vipers” surrounding him, she draws on an age-old narrative, one used to soften the legacies of rulers from Nero to Louis XVI. There is something deeply human in this impulse: the need to reconcile loyalty with loss, to mourn a man without excusing his rule.

Then there is “The End of Gaddafi” by Abdel Rahman Shalgham, the former foreign minister who broke with the regime. His memoir strips away sentimentality, revealing a leader consumed by paranoia, ranting about conspiracies, lashing out in fits of rage, incapable of trust even toward his own family. Where Sharab sees simplicity, Shalgham sees cruelty; where she remembers generosity, he documents plunder. The contrast is stark, not because one account is true and the other false, but because both are true in their own ways, shaped by the roles their authors played in Gadhafi’s orbit.

This is the paradox of memoirs: the nearer we draw to power, the more fragmented our understanding grows. These are not mere differences in perspective, they reveal how power warps relationships, distorting reality until the man and the myth become nearly indistinguishable.



Libya’s leader Muammar Gaddafi and Egypt’s Hosni Mubarak

Memoirs from authoritarian regimes are more than personal stories; they are acts of preservation, and sometimes, persuasion. When Saddam’s daughter Raghda Hussein, for example, speaks of her father’s love for Iraq, she is not just grieving; she is appealing to something deeper than politics, something familial and intimate.

And this is what makes these accounts so powerful. They are not just records of events but of emotions, of loyalty and betrayal, of admiration and disillusionment. In a world where history is increasingly told in fragments, a viral anecdote here, a TikTok clip there, these personal narratives take on new weight. A single story, tenderly told, can soften the edges of a brutality; a confession, painfully shared, can sharpen them again.

“These leaders may be gone, but the shadows of their rule continue to shape national consciousness. They echo in the elders’ nostalgia, the youth’s disillusionment and in the political myths that rise anew from the embers.”

In an era of digital speed, even memoirs must compete with faster, more visceral storytelling. A viral clip of Saddam’s trial, a TikTok summary of “Mubarak’s Egypt,” or a dramatised documentary on Gadhafi’s final days now reach broader audiences than any dense biography. The danger is not just oversimplification; it is the gradual erosion of history into fragments. Nuance fades, replaced by algorithms that reward spectacle over substance. The intricate realities that sustained these regimes, the quiet fears, the tacit deals, the uneasy loyalties, flatten into binary choices: hero or villain, order or chaos.

This compression of history carries real consequences. When complex pasts are reduced to slogans, societies struggle to reckon with them, or with the present. Today’s Arab world contends with immense challenges: the war in Gaza, the spectre of confrontation with Iran, the shifting dynamics of regional alliances. In such a climate, the lessons of past regimes, how they emerged, endured and unravelled, should serve as guides. Yet they slip from our grasp, drowned out by crisis and the seductive pull of simpler narratives.

Ultimately, what endures is not a battle over facts, but a question of why we keep returning to these stories. For some, they are tools to navigate the uncertainties of today; for others, a quiet act of reckoning. In countries where archives remain sealed and official histories tightly controlled, personal narratives, even whispered ones, become subtle forms of defiance.

The past never entirely vanishes. These leaders may be gone, but the shadows of their rule continue to shape national consciousness. They echo in the elders’ nostalgia, the youth’s disillusionment and in the political myths that rise anew from the embers.

For today’s Arab leaders, the fading memory of past rulers offers both warning and opportunity. The old model, personal rule dressed up as governance, repression masquerading as stability, is obsolete. The Arab uprisings demolished the illusion of indefinite autocracy, even if their aftermath exposed the dangers of the void: botched transitions, foreign meddling, resurgent militarism.

Today’s rulers confront a different landscape. Information flows faster than censors can contain, narratives shaped by podcasts and posts as much as by press briefings. Power no longer rests neatly in one seat; it splinters across militias, factions and foreign agendas. Years of institutional erosion have left many states brittle, acutely vulnerable to fracture.

The crises of today demand more than old scripts. They call for diplomacy, durable institutions and a leadership vision rooted not in survivalism but in reform. The longing for order that draws some back to the era of Mubarak or Gadhafi reflects not a desire for tyranny, but for predictability. Yet the answer to contemporary discontent cannot lie in yesterday’s toolkit.

Arab youth, raised amid upheaval, will not mistake paralysis for peace. The leaders who endure will be those who grasp that legitimacy now grows not from fear or patronage, but from attentiveness: to economic pain, political yearning, and the rising threats of climate and conflict.

The views expressed in this article belong to the author and do not necessarily reflect the editorial policy of Maghrebi.org. Iman Zayat is the Managing Editor of The Arab Weekly.

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Tafi Mhaka

On June 2 while addressing an audience in the Nelson Mandela Hall at the African Union headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, Bill Gates – the world's second richest person and co-chairman of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation – announced that a significant portion of his nearly \$200bn fortune would be directed towards improving primary healthcare and education across Africa over the next two decades. This extraordinary philanthropic pledge is expected to fulfil a commitment he made on May 8 to donate “virtually all” of his wealth before the Gates Foundation permanently closes on December 31, 2045.

Former Mozambique first lady Graca Machel, a renowned humanitarian and global advocate for women's and children's rights, attended the event and welcomed the announcement. Describing the continent's current situation as at a “moment of crisis”, she declared: “We are counting on Mr Gates's

Bill Gates Africa initiative won't solve bad governance

Only Africans, through transparent, courageous and locally driven leadership, can heal their wounds.

steadfast commitment to continue walking this path of transformation alongside us.”

The Gates Foundation has operated in Africa for more than two decades, primarily in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal and South Africa. Over the years, it has funded a range of programmes in areas such as nutrition, healthcare, agriculture, water and sanitation, gender equality and financial inclusion. In agriculture alone, it has spent about \$6bn on development initiatives. Despite this substantial investment, the foundation's efforts have been the subject of widespread criticism both in Africa and internationally.

In particular, serious concerns have been raised about the effectiveness and long-term sustainability of the foundation's agricultural interventions – especially the Green Revolution model it has promoted through AGRA, the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa. Co-founded in 2006 by the Rockefeller and Gates foundations, AGRA aimed to improve food security and reduce poverty for 30 million smallholder households in 11 sub-Saharan African countries by 2021. Nineteen years on, the agricultural transformation Gates envisioned – driven by American capital and

know-how – has failed to materialise.

Experts argue that the Green Revolution model has not only fallen short on alleviating hunger and poverty but may in fact also be exacerbating both. Problems commonly cited include rising farmer debt, increased pesticide use, environmental degradation, declining crop diversity and a growing corporate stranglehold over Africa's food systems.

The limitations of Gates's agricultural ambitions are, arguably, unsurprising. The model is rooted in the American Green Revolution of the 1940s and 1950s – a technological shift linked to settler-colonial agricultural systems and racialised power structures. Gates's philanthropic ideology, shaped by this legacy, risks reproducing systems of dependency and ownership in the Global South.

At the core of the Green Revolution, past and present, is a belief in the supremacy of Western science and innovation. This worldview justifies the transfer of proprietary technologies to developing countries while simultaneously devaluing local knowledge systems and Indigenous expertise.

Despite its rhetorical commitment to equity, the Gates Foundation often prioritises and financially benefits researchers, pharmaceutical

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Morocco's rail infrastructure to get 10bn dollar face lift

Abdelhak Taha, editor

EUROPEANISATION has been a long and arduous process for Morocco, and the country's infrastructure is in need of a major overhaul. The Moroccan government has announced a plan to invest 10 billion dollars in upgrading the country's rail infrastructure. This is a significant commitment, especially given the country's economic challenges. The plan includes modernising existing lines and building new ones. It also involves improving the efficiency of the rail system. The Moroccan government hopes that this investment will boost the country's economy and improve the lives of its citizens. However, some critics argue that the government should focus on other areas, such as education and healthcare, before committing so much money to infrastructure. They also worry that the project will be delayed or over budget. Despite these concerns, the Moroccan government remains committed to the plan. It believes that a modern rail system is essential for the country's future. The project is expected to be completed by 2030. It will create thousands of jobs and improve the country's infrastructure. The Moroccan government hopes that this investment will be a turning point for the country. It will show that Morocco is serious about improving its infrastructure and economy. The project is a testament to the country's commitment to progress and development. It is a step towards a brighter future for Morocco and its people.

Torture victims bring actions against Tunisia over regime's inaction

Abdelhak Taha, editor

THE TORTURE VICTIMS OF the Tunisian regime have brought legal actions against the government. They claim that the government has failed to investigate and prosecute those responsible for the torture. The victims say that they were subjected to physical and psychological abuse. They also claim that the government has covered up the truth. The victims want the government to acknowledge the truth and bring those responsible to justice. They also want compensation for the damage they have suffered. The government has denied the allegations. It says that the torture was the result of the conflict and that it has taken steps to investigate and prosecute those responsible. However, the victims say that the government's actions are insufficient. They want a full and independent investigation. They also want the government to pay compensation. The victims' actions are a challenge to the government's inaction. They are a call for accountability and justice. The government must respond to the victims' demands. It must acknowledge the truth and bring those responsible to justice. It must also pay compensation for the damage they have suffered. Only then can the victims find closure and the country move forward.



Bill Gates at Nigerian hospital, 2009.

On June 1, Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed awarded Gates the Grand Order

Abiy's nationalist rhetoric and disastrous internal policies helped trigger a 2020–2022 civil war, which claimed the lives of up to 600,000 people. Although the conflict formally ended in November 2022, Amnesty International has reported that millions still await justice. Human rights violations remain widespread with little accountability for atrocities committed in Tigray and Oromia.

Despite overwhelming evidence, Abiy continues to deny any wrongdoing by his military, insisting in parliament that his forces have not committed war crimes. Such claims only underscore the deep crisis of leadership Ethiopia faces.

“Yes, Gates’s decision to donate most of his fortune to Africa is, of course, admirable. But as an outsider immersed in the logic of “white saviourism” and “philanthrocapitalism”, he cannot fix a continent’s self-inflicted wounds.”

What Ethiopia – and many other African states – urgently need is not another influx of Western money but a radical overhaul of governance. Indeed, Gates's contributions may paradoxically help prop up the very systems of impunity and dysfunction that block meaningful progress.



Bill Gates being awarded the Grand Order of Merit in Ethiopia, June 1st, 2025.

This is why Machel's response to Gates's announcement was so disappointing. Rather than celebrating the promise of more Western aid, she could have used the moment to speak frankly about Africa's deeper crisis: corrupt, extractive and unaccountable leadership. Her suggestion that Africans should rely indefinitely on foreign benevolence is not only misguided – it also reinforces the very power dynamics that philanthropy claims to disrupt.

Yes, Gates's decision to donate most of his fortune to Africa is, of course, admirable. But as an outsider immersed in the logic of "white saviourism" and "philanthrocapitalism", he cannot fix a continent's self-inflicted wounds. No foreign billionaire can. Only Africans – through transparent, courageous and locally driven leadership – can.

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