



MaghrebiWeek

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The Race for Lagos: Russia could threaten African gas warns expert



Alastair Tibbs

As investors pursue Africa's dizzying wealth of natural resources, the scramble for the continent's natural gas has hit a new intensity.

At the centre of attention where energy is concerned, weathering the storms of international pressure, is Nigeria and its six trillion

cubic metres of natural gas – the biggest reserves in Africa.

Russia could threaten Europe through a major African gas pipeline if the project were to go ahead, an expert has warned.

The long-mothballed Trans-Saharan gas pipeline (TSGP) which is proposed to connect Algeria to Nigeria's abundant reserves has received new impetus following a

meeting in February. While the nascent project could provide Europe with much-needed gas stimulus, Moscow's newfound influence in the Sahel casts a long shadow.

Intissar Fakir, senior fellow and director of the North Africa and Sahel program at the Middle East Institute said: "We don't know

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Algeria to unveil streamlined military mobilisation bill

Eddie Monkman

A bill streamlining the process of military mobilisation in Algeria is set to be announced by the Minister for Justice next week after gaining the support of government ministers.

The bill, as reported by AP on April 30th, aims "to define the provisions for organising, preparing and carrying out the general mobilisation provided for in Article 99 of the Constitution," and therefore authorising the mobilisation of all of the nations

forces. Algeria has been facing multiple external pressures over recent years and escheating tensions with neighbouring Mali to the south have led to fears of military engagement.

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) stated it's "deep concern" over growing tensions after Algeria downed a military drone from Mali over Tin Zaouatine, a border town that is a stronghold for the Tuareg separatist group in Mali.

In the wake of the strike, ECOWAS appealed for both Algeria and Mali to try to "de-escalate the tension, foster dialogue and use regional and continental mechanisms to settle differences."

However, Algeria's plans to streamline the process of military mobilisation seem to show little sign of intention or action taken to deescalate the situation and the decision has led to some confusion and worry amongst the population.

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France and Algeria agree to 'normalisation' of relations

Israel poised to finish off Hezbollah

NEWS IN BRIEF

Morocco opens Africa's largest shipyard

Morocco has inaugurated the continent's largest shipyard in Casablanca, investing \$300 million in a facility spanning 30 football fields. It has a 244-meter dry dock and specialised equipment capable of handling vessels up to 9,000 tons.

According to Moroccan-friendly Hesperes, the ambitious project aims to produce 100 ships by 2040, leveraging Morocco's extensive coastline and growing maritime infrastructure, including the Tangier-Med port, which processed 10 million containers in 2024.

This development concerns Spanish shipbuilders like Navantia, as Morocco's competitive advantages in labour costs and regulations could attract international clients away from Southern Europe, following a pattern similar to Morocco's successful automotive industry, which now accounts for 25% of the country's exports.

Landslide in Algeria's Oran kills four, leaves 13 injured

Four people have died with 13 others injured in a landslide in Oran, Algeria's western coastal city, authorities confirmed on April 27th.

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exactly what the relationship between Russia and the EU is going to look like in 10 years after the pipeline is built. It might be very different. We don't know what the question of Russian presence in the Sahel would look like in 10 years."

"But if we are thinking all of these factors remain exactly as they are today, then yes, this could potentially become a threat, something that Russia could target to weaken Europe."

First proposed in the 1970s, the seductive prospect of the TSGP carrying 30bn cubic metres of gas per year to Mediterranean shores has long captured the imagination of Algeria.

However, after a feasibility study in 2006 concluded the project to be technically and economically possible, it was shelved due to impassable security issues.

Jihadi and militia groups are rife in the Sahel, with many governments unable to control rural areas.

"This has been the question plugging this plan from day one. This has been one of the biggest hesitations about it," said Fakir.

"There would have to be a very active deployment of military forces and military personnel to actually secure something like this. And I don't know if it's feasible. I don't know of other examples of countries that are able to secure something like this."

The changing sands of the Sahara have been reshaped again since the Ukraine war, with Russia becoming the ascending geo-political backer in the region.

Troops of Moscow's PMC, the Wagner Group, have lent military support to Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger in recent years, aiding the fight against insurgency groups.

Unfortunately for Europe, this re-alignment comes as they look for cheap alternatives to Russian gas stymied by war.

The continent seems almost surrounded by Kremlin's influence, which stretches over the pivotal oil and gas deposits of Libya and Algeria.

Fakir said: "The Russian invasion of Ukraine changed the calculations a little bit, particularly on Europe's side. Because Europe, before the invasion, had access to cheap gas from Russia, it was talking about its own energy transition at that time and it did not necessarily need additional sources of cheap energy."

"So the whole point of building this pipeline from Nigeria to Europe was sort of becoming not necessary...but I think the Russian invasion of Ukraine gave way to a new approach, where we were like, okay, maybe there is a new rationale or maybe there is sort of renewed need for a pipeline."

There is, however, an alternative plan which could circumvent Moscow.

More aligned with Europe is Algeria's bitter rival Morocco, who has launched its own bid for a Nigerian gas pipeline.

Initially announced in 2016, the project has made some major initial steps, such as receiving support from the Chinese steel manufacturer Jingye Group and as a Nigerian minister remarked this week, interest from the US.

Washington may see it a political opportunity to undermine Russia but the reality for the \$25bn pipeline, more than double the cost of the TSGP, is that international investment is more critical.

"Morocco so far has been able to secure some investment from the Chinese, they've been able to secure some investment from Gulf countries, but it's still very small in terms of what they actually need," said Fakir.

"So they need a big player like the EU or the US to invest in this. For the US, maybe politically, the climate right now is such that there is political backing, but I think ultimately it will have to make commercial sense for big US companies to go and invest in it."

While the undersea pipeline is unlikely to face security issues, the indirect route would make it the world's longest offshore pipeline and second longest pipeline overall.

With a total of ten states already involved in the project including Mauritania, Senegal, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Sierra Leone, and Ghana, the plan requires the nurturing of a delicate patchwork of relations which one disagreement could jeopardise.

Morocco may well see the risk as one worth taking, as the project is not only a substantive competition against its arch-rival Algeria, but also part of its green transition ambitions.

Fakir said: "Morocco very much considers gas a clean source of energy. And so gas features prominently in Morocco's energy transition plans. They have a whole plan. Morocco has been trying to figure out if they can manage a way to produce their own gas."

"So far the indication has not been as positive. They are working on producing some, but the indication that they have huge reserves is not there. And so they need alternative sources of gas, hence the pipeline."

While the race for Lagos is important, it is perhaps not at the forefront of regional rivalry as some may frame it.

For both parties the challenge is risky and certainly not inoculated from disaster.

"I think it's oversimplifying it and kind of looking at it through maybe too much of a political or a narrow political lens to say it's only about competition. There are very real domestic and lucrative reasons why they would want to do this each on their own," said Fakir.

"The question is, what does the momentum look like? Can they secure the investment in a climate that is very uncertain when it comes to traditional or fossil fuel energy investment?"



Maghrebi Week

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A gas flare in Nigeria



LA MAMOUNIA
MARRAKECH

Algeria to unveil streamlined military mobilisation bill
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Aziza Sahoui, a retired teacher, took to social media to write that: "I did not understand what's behind this project. I'm really worried, especially as it comes after the incursion of a Malian drone into our territory."

Algeria has suffered a geopolitically tumultuous couple of years after tensions have risen with Morocco and their former colonial ruler France over the issue of Western Saharan sovereignty.

As Maghrebi journalist Alastair Tibbs writes, Algeria looks isolated and vulnerable as Morocco gains greater support for their claims to sovereignty over the Western Saharan region.



The issue has caused relations with France to sour and has left Algeria more vulnerable to international threats, potentially a further reason for the decision to now streamline the process of military mobilisation.

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

Forture victims bring actions against Tunisia over regime's inaction

Forture victims have brought legal actions against the Tunisian government, claiming inaction and negligence during the 2011-2013 period. The actions were filed in various courts across Tunisia, seeking compensation for the victims and their families. The plaintiffs argue that the government failed to provide adequate support and protection during the crisis, leading to significant loss of life and property.



Protests take place against President Kais Saied in Tunisia

NEWS IN BRIEF - continued from page 1

According to Asharaq Al-Awsat, the disaster, which struck the Hai Essanoubert district late April 26th, caused the collapse of five tin houses.

Officials confirmed no one remains missing and the death toll is final.

Narcotics and alcohol seized in Moroccan security force raids

Two operations by the security forces took place on the 22nd of April, which saw the seizure of narcotics and alcohol, as the authorities continue to fight crime.

According to the Moroccan government-friendly Hespess, the two raids took place in the eastern Moroccan city of Al-Aiyoun Sidi Mellouk. Between the two raids, cocaine, ecstasy pills and alcohol were seized.

At this time, no arrests have been made as the two key suspects, who are known to the police for previous drug-related issues, remain at large.

France claims Tunisian trials were "not fair"

France has claimed that the recent trials which saw prison sentences ranging from 13-66 years handed out to leading Tunisian opposition figures were unfair

according to Saudi news agency Asharq Al-Awsat on April 24th.

The criticisms from France are the first to come from a foreign power although there has been internal dissent in Tunisia.

Rights group and political opponents have condemned the trials as being fabrications in order to silence opposing voices.



Opposition to Tunisia's president takes to the streets

Eddie Monkman

Opposition to Tunisia's President Kais Saied has taken to the streets taking place in the country, with strong criticism coming as the protesters believe that the President is using his judiciary and police to suppress critics.

According to MEMO, the protest took place on the 1st of May and saw supporters of the president also take to the streets in a counter rally.

This anti-Saied demonstration is the second one to take place within a week, reflecting the increasing tensions in the country as critics fear the country is

marching towards a one-man rule.

The tensions have a much more complicated situation in Tunis, as whilst the international community, such as France, has condemned the actions of Saied, he still has administrative supporters in the country.

In the capital, chants by protesters were "The people want the fall of the regime" whilst on the same street of Habib Bourguiba Avenue, Saied's supporters chanted in his support "No to foreign interference" and "The people want Saied again".

The key to these protests is the arrests and trials of lawyers, politicians and journalists who had criticised Saied. Critics have interpreted these trials as a direct attack on civic liberty and press freedoms within the country.

The trials currently involve 40 defendants, with some in prison for the last two years for what the government has called "conspiring against the state."

On the 21st of April strong critic of Saied and prominent lawyer Ahmed Souab was arrested for comments he made on the judiciary.





Britain enters discussions on Palestinian state recognition

Jack Dennison-Thompson

The UK has entered discussions with Saudi Arabia and France with regards to the recognition of the Palestinian state at a conference in June. The meeting aims to enable the path to a two-state solution in the region to remain open.

According to the Guardian, whilst the initial discussions are progressing, the UK needs greater clarity about the proposal from France, with the key issue centring on whether recognition of Palestine would create an avenue to a two-state solution, which Israel currently opposes.

Foreign Secretary David Lammy explained to the Lords' international relations select committee that the UK's recognition of Palestine has always been reserved for when it would have an impact on the ground.

Lammy does not want the UK's recognition to be simply a

symbolic gesture but to have an actual effect on the situation. It appears recognition has not had a massive effect in recent months, with 160 states recognising Palestine, with countries such as Spain, Ireland and Norway being some of the most influential, yet the impact has been slight.

Lammy stated this: "We have always said that recognition is not an end in of itself and we will prefer recognition as a part of a process to two states."

The sentiment towards recognition has been heavily sparked by France and Saudi Arabia's international conference set to be held in New York in June.

Macron believes that this conference can "finalise this movement of mutual recognition (of a Palestinian state) by several parties".

Now, with the UK in talks to join the conference and publicly expressing its plans to move towards a two-state solution, many critics will see this as a

turning point in the international community's recognition of Palestine.

On the 28th of April, we saw Keir Starmer and Lammy meet the current Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Mustafa, marking the first time a Palestinian prime minister had visited the UK since 2021.

Such an open dialogue by the UK government with the Palestinian leader appears to many to be a first step in finding a solution to the war in Gaza, and now this has been furthered by the discussions the UK has entered into with Saudi Arabia and France.

Despite this, the UK has made it very clear that it will recognise Palestine at "a time that has the greatest impact".

It appears that this greatest time may be around the corner as the UK begins to pick up its action in regards to recognising the Palestinian state.

Israeli settlers attack Palestinian property in Jordan Valley

A group of Israeli settlers have reportedly stolen the livestock of a Palestinian farming family in the Jordan Valley, according to Middle East Eye citing Palestinian news agency Wafa on April 30th.



Settlers also reportedly damaged solar panels, destroyed tents, and slashed the tires of water tankers.

According to local sources, attacks from Israeli settlers have risen in the Jordan Valley in recent weeks.

Syria claims progress as it seeks US sanctions relief

Syria has responded to a list of US conditions for partial sanctions relief, saying it had met most demands but others required "mutual understandings".

Reported by The New Arab on April 26th, a letter outlines steps taken on chemical weapons, missing Americans, and foreign fighters, while sidestepping issues like US counterterrorism strikes.

Washington is reviewing the response, which Syrian officials hope will lead to deeper talks on sanctions and normalisation.

HIV epidemic "escalating" in Middle East and North Africa

A report has been published warning of an "escalating HIV epidemic" in the Middle East and North Africa, according to Middle East Eye on April 2nd.



Frontline AIDS has analysed HIV prevention and response strategies in its Prevention and Accountability Report for the Middle East and North Africa.

They found that across Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia, cases have risen by 116 percent since 2010, compared to a 39 percent decrease in new infections globally over the same period.



Sudanese refugees at a transit centre for refugees in Renk, South Sudan, February, 2024

Algeria seeking migration agreement with Sahel countries

Algeria's President Abdelmadjid Tebboune said he was in favour of the regularisation of undocumented workers, while Algeria continues to deport thousands of them at its border, says Le Monde on May 1st.



During a visit in Bechar in Southwest Algeria – a hotspot for migrants – Tebboune said he was willing to reach an agreement with neighbouring countries to create a legal framework for migrant

workers – a first for an Algerian president.

More than 31,000 migrants were expelled towards Niger in 2024, according to NGO Alarme Phone Sahara, with as many as 1100 migrants expelled in a single day. Migrants are usually dropped in a spot called "point zero" from which they need to walk 15km to reach the next village in Niger.

UN calls on Mali to investigate Wagner group executions

The UN has demanded that Mali immediately open an investigation into the alleged execution of civilians by the Malian army and members of the Russian-backed Wagner group.

According to AP, the UN's concern arose after several bodies were discovered near Kwala military camp in western Mali on either April 21 or April 22.

The bodies are believed to belong to a group of men previously taken captive by Wagner operatives, leading to suspicions that the group was involved in their deaths.



Sudan's Burhan appoints acting PM after Khartoum gains

Sudan's army chief Abdel Fattah Burhan has named veteran diplomat Dafallah Al-Haj Ali as acting Prime Minister on April 30th, following the army's recent reclaiming of much of Khartoum from the RSF militia.

According to the Middle East Monitor, the transitional Sovereign

Council also approved the appointment of ambassador Omar Seddik as Foreign Minister.

The move follows Burhan's February pledge to revise the interim Constitution, eliminating power-sharing with civilians and placing full authority with the military.

Roadside bomb reportedly kills 26 in Northeast Nigeria



A roadside bomb has killed a reported 26 people in northeastern Nigeria according to local police and reported by Africa News citing AP sources on the 30th April. The attack took place by a road between Rann and Gamboru in Borno state, near the border with Cameroon.

Responsibility for the attack has been claimed by a local Islamic State affiliate group.

Sahel states back Morocco's Atlantic access plan

The military-led governments of Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger have endorsed Morocco's plan to grant them access to Atlantic Ocean trade routes, reports Africa News on April 29th.

During a meeting with King Mohammed VI in Rabat, the countries reaffirmed their commitment to the initiative, first proposed by Morocco in December 2023.

This comes after the three nations withdrew from ECOWAS to form the Alliance of Sahel States, and shifted military alliances toward Russia.

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Morocco and Sahel countries meet amid tensions with Algeria

Romain Ducla

Relations between Sahel countries and Algeria have reached a new low since Algeria shot down a drone which it claimed had entered its territory from Mali, prompting a diplomatic reset in the region.

Envoys from Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso visited Rabat, amid growing tensions between the three Sahel States and Algeria, says Le Monde on April 29th.

During the audience, the three ministers presented "the institutional and operational progress" of the recently created Alliance of Sahel States, restating their total support for Morocco's Atlantic initiative for Sahel.

The initiative, which seeks to link Sahel landlocked countries with Morocco's ports, was launched by Rabat in 2023 after ECOWAS imposed sanctions on the three junta-led countries – thereby isolating them from the ECOWAS maritime facade.

For Rabat, the incentive is twofold; The kingdom plans to become a major player in the region as it is already a privileged trade partner with sub-saharan countries, with Moroccan exports growing from \$300 million to \$3 billion between 2004 and 2024.

It also hopes economic development will curb instability in the Sahel region, which has become a hot spot for arm trades, some of them fueling the Polisario Front's insurgency in Western Sahara.

Additionally, the meeting comes at a crucial time, with relations between the Sahel countries and Algeria reaching their lowest, after Algeria shot a Malian drone near its border, prompting the withdrawal of Sahel countries ambassadors from Algeria.

Algeria is also accused by Bamako of supporting jihadist groups in the region.

However, the project relies on cooperation from Mauritania which stands in between Morocco and Mali. While the country has signed an agreement to connect its electricity grid with Morocco, it is also concerned about the potential loss of influence of its own Atlantic port: its capital Nouakchott.



Algeria and Algeria agree to 'normalisation' of relations

Algeria and Mali have agreed to a diplomatic reset in the region, following a series of tensions between the two countries. The agreement includes a commitment to resolve disputes through dialogue and to support regional stability.

Israel poised to finish off Hezbollah

Israel's military operations in Lebanon have intensified, with reports of significant gains against Hezbollah forces. The Israeli government has stated its goal is to eliminate the group's infrastructure and leadership.

Algeria denies drone was shot down

Algeria has denied reports that it shot down a Malian drone. The country's foreign ministry has stated that the incident is a misunderstanding and that the drone was not a threat to its territory.

ECOWAS condemns 'unilateral' actions

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has condemned the unilateral actions of the Sahel states. The organization has called for a return to dialogue and respect for international law.

Algeria's economic challenges

Algeria is facing significant economic challenges, including a decline in oil revenues and high unemployment. The government is seeking international support to address these issues.

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Shahzadi Irrum

Decolonization in Africa is one of the most pivotal global milestones of the 20th century, representing a determined and, in many cases, successful departure from centuries of Eurocentric colonial domination. From 1945 to 1960, country after country emerged from the shadows of colonial empires, raising their own flags and finding their voices on the world stage. This struggle continued for decades, driven by the dreams of millions who longed for freedom. Yet, the road to independence was rarely smooth. It was often bloody, painful, and fraught with repression, leaving behind wounds that many societies still suffer from today. Even so, Africa achieved what once seemed impossible—full sovereignty across the continent. However, one place remains trapped in the past: Western Sahara. This arid strip of land on the Atlantic coast, home to around half a million people, still waits for its turn at self-determination. For its people, the promise of independence remains just that—a promise unfulfilled.

Western Sahara, a disputed territory in north-western Africa, remains at the center of an intensifying geopolitical standoff between Morocco and Western Sahara. For decades, both nations have been locked in a deadlock over its status, with repeated attempts at resolution proving ineffective. Although Morocco maintains de facto control over much of the region, the indigenous Sahrawi population, under the leadership of the Polisario Front, continues to demand an independent state, the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR). Although the SADR has received limited recognition from several states and holds membership in the African Union, it is not recognized by the United Nations, which still categorizes Western Sahara as a non-self-governing territory.

The Western Sahara dispute traces its origin to 1975, following Spain's withdrawal from the Spanish Sahara, its former colonial possession. In the aftermath of the power vacuum, neighboring Morocco and Mauritania moved to annex and divide the territory among themselves, a move that was met with armed resistance from the Polisario Front against the illegal occupation.

By 1979, after continuing significant military setbacks inflicted by the Polisario, Mauritania abandoned its territorial claims and withdrew

Western Sahara becomes victim to the West's meddling

While Africa struggles to rise, the West is mercilessly kneeling on its neck, denying it the breath of freedom.

from the region. This departure allowed Morocco to expand its sway, consolidating its presence over much of the Western Sahara. In an effort to fortify its position and deter further Polisario offensives, Morocco constructed a massive defensive structure, known as the "Sand Berm," which now delimits the areas under Moroccan control from those held by the Polisario. Currently, Morocco administers over 80 percent of the territory and regards it as an integral part of the kingdom, while the Polisario Front is confined to the sparsely populated interior zones.

"For centuries, the West has sacrificed Africa's dignity and rights in the pursuit of power and profit, and now, with Western Sahara, it repeats the same cruel pattern."

While Algeria, which provides tacit support to Polisario, doesn't claim Western Sahara for itself, its role in the conflict is far from neutral. Deeply wary of Morocco's growing influence in the region, Algeria has long supported the Polisario Front politically, militarily, and financially. For Algeria, it's not just about territorial dynamics but about standing by a movement it sees as fighting for a just cause. The Polisario Front, with Algeria's backing and recognition from some international actors, continues to press for the Sahrawi people's right to decide their own future. To them, the struggle is not over—it's a matter of independence and justice that has yet to be resolved globally.

Over the years, dozens of countries, mostly from Africa, have formally recognized the SADR. But when it comes to the world's major powers, the tilt is clearly in Morocco's favor. Many powerful nations, whether openly or behind the scenes, have backed Morocco's claim to Western Sahara. Even Spain, once the colonial ruler of the territory, has expressed its support for Morocco. A significant turning point came when the US recognized Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara in exchange for Morocco normalizing ties with Israel. The US is organizing a dark chess game, sacrificing Western Sahara like a disposable pawn to crown

Israel as a regional monarch. By bribing Morocco with recognition in exchange for political favor to Israel, it is not only altering borders but also making a mockery of Africa's postcolonial efforts. It is not just about politics—it is a betrayal of African people whose voices are considered noise, not worth hearing.

More recently, France, which holds deep colonial ties with both Morocco and Algeria, has also thrown its weight behind Morocco. Algeria, which strongly opposes Moroccan control over the region, reacted sharply by recalling its ambassador from Paris, highlighting just how deeply this decades-old dispute is still stirring regional tensions and rivalries.

Examined through the lens of realpolitik, France's acceptance of Morocco's sovereignty over the Western Sahara is driven primarily by geopolitical interests and power dynamics. Paris has no interest in justice for the Sahrawi people because they offer nothing to exploit, no strategic alliance to gain, and no geopolitical leverage to offer. In contrast, Rabat provides Paris with a stable ally at a time when its influence in Africa is breaking up. After being booted out of several West African countries and humiliated by the rise of anti-French sentiment in the Sahel, Paris is desperate to gain a foothold on the continent to revive its dying empire at any cost.

In conclusion, the West's dark play in Africa is not a new phenomenon but a continuation of a long history of self-interest and injustice. For centuries, the West has sacrificed Africa's dignity and rights in the pursuit of power and profit, and now, with Western Sahara, it repeats the same cruel pattern. The suffering of the Sahrawi people is just another chapter in the West's ongoing legacy of selling out Western Sahara for its own gain. While Africa struggles to rise, the West is mercilessly kneeling on its neck, denying it the breath of freedom.

The views expressed in this article belong to the author and do not necessarily reflect the editorial policy of Maghrebi.org. Shahzadi Irrum is an Assistant Research Fellow at the Balochistan Think Tank Network, Quetta.





Sara Almarzooqi

Beneath the devastating confrontation between Gen Abdel Fattah Al Burhan's Sudanese Armed Forces and Gen Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo's Rapid Support Forces, extremist networks long thought dormant are re-emerging, threatening to reshape the country's future and further destabilise the broader region.

While the international community views the conflict as a struggle for power between two rival generals, Sudan is rapidly becoming a fertile ground for extremist violence. Groups sidelined after the 2019 uprising that toppled then-president Omar Al Bashir are regaining ground politically and militarily. These actors are no longer operating on the margins; they are positioning themselves to shape the country's post-war political and military order.

The world cannot afford to overlook Sudan's slide into extremism. The country sits at a critical geopolitical crossroads, linking North Africa, the Sahel, the Horn of Africa and the Red Sea corridor – an artery vital to global trade and energy flows. Its total collapse offers fertile ground for extremist organisations such as ISIS and Al Qaeda to regroup, find training grounds and expand their reach at a time when the international counterterrorism focus has shifted elsewhere. Left unchecked, the reactivation of these networks could ignite a new front in the global war on terror, one rooted in a state with little institutional resistance.

The cruel irony is that the very forces millions of Sudanese rejected through peaceful protests are returning, not through the ballot, but through

Sudan is facing an extremism comeback

As global attention remains fixed on the US-induced global trade war, the conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza, and the Red Sea crisis, a dangerous transformation is unfolding in Sudan.

the bullet. That uprising, led by a generation raised under religious authoritarianism, demanded a definitive break from the manipulation of Islam for political gains. The war has undone that progress, reopening the door for extremist influence.

As with a number of civil wars, the lines between regular troops and ideological militias have blurred. Formations such as Al Bara Ibn Malik Battalion and Al Bunyan Al Marsous operate under the SAF's command yet pursue their own radical agendas. Extremist actors, many linked ideologically to the Muslim Brotherhood, have used military alliances and media platforms to re-enter the political scene. By doing this, they have reclaimed a degree of acceptance and visibility after 2019. The SAF's ambiguous stance – neither fully embracing nor disavowing these forces – has allowed extremist elements to expand their footprint without formal accountability.

“The cruel irony is that the very forces millions of Sudanese rejected through peaceful protests are returning, not through the ballot, but through the bullet.”

Others, some previously imprisoned or discredited, are now manoeuvring to recapture power. Former regime loyalists have been released from prison, re-activated within military circles and even seen publicly aligning themselves with the SAF. Their rhetoric is back on state-linked media. Their networks are rebuilding. And their endgame is clear: re-establishing a state that fuses political power with ideological control.

Alongside their growing battlefield presence, Sudanese extremists are waging an ideological campaign that reframes the conflict through a transnational extremist lens. They are crafting a future narrative that casts Sudan not as a country in civil war, but as a frontline in a broader

struggle between political Islam and its perceived enemies – both at home and abroad.

Part of this strategy involves monopolising nationalist legitimacy, presenting themselves as the only actors qualified to speak on behalf of Sudan. To prepare the ground for future political exclusion, extremist factions are actively redefining patriotism in militarised terms. By equating loyalty to the nation with participation in the extremist-aligned war effort, they are pre-emptively delegitimising civilian actors.

This narrative dominance is sustained by a vast propaganda apparatus, including well-funded media outlets, newspapers and digital platforms. With opposing voices weakened, the ideological space is increasingly controlled by those advancing a narrow, exclusionary vision of Sudan's future.

At the same time, extremist messaging is transnational in scope. It seeks to demonise moderate Arab states, fuelling resentment and justifying future hostilities; agitate ethnic tensions, particularly between Arab and African communities; and position Sudan as part of a wider religious war, drawing in sympathisers from across the region. This framework is not just rhetorical – it is strategic.

The return of these forces is not just a Sudanese problem but also a warning to the international community. If extremists consolidate control over state institutions, they will gain the infrastructure and legitimacy to spread radical ideologies across borders, further destabilising an already fragile region.

The views expressed in this article belong to the author and do not necessarily reflect the editorial policy of Maghrebi.org. Sara Almarzooqi is director of the Sawab Centre.

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Sudan's army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, July 2024



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

7th April 2024

France and Algeria agree to 'normalisation' of relations

The issue of sovereignty claims over the Western Sahara has been discussed in the high-level talks between the two countries, as France supports Morocco's claims to autonomy over the Western Sahara region.

Algeria – a former French colony until 1962 – has consistently defended the rights of the native Saharawi people against the Moroccan state control of the Western Sahara.

Despite Algerian military manoeuvres in support of western powers including France and Spain, hundreds of Saharawi and Algerian living in the desert will hope that the normalisation of relations will support the Saharawi people's demands for living in Algeria.

Algeria downplays move near border with Mali

Algeria has denied to have deployed a military division near the country's border with Mali as the first incident of its kind since the 2013-2014 military intervention in Mali.

The army confirmed that a division had indeed deployed in the region. The deployment is a border town in the Western Sahara and is being held by the Saharawi people's struggle for self-determination.

Mali's army did not confirm whether the division was deployed by Algeria.

HIV epidemic 'escalating' in Middle East and North Africa

A report has been published warning of an 'escalating HIV epidemic' in the Middle East and North Africa, according to Middle East Eye on April 2nd.

Israel poised to finish off Hezbollah

Israel hopes to tear Hezbollah out of Lebanese politics, a leading Israeli journalist has warned, a policy which could see further destruction of the war-torn nation.

Israel's AIPTI has unveiled HIV prevention and response strategies

Prevention and response strategies unveiled by Israel's AIPTI in the Middle East and North Africa.