

NORTH AFRICAN STANDOFF: HOW THE WESTERN SAHARA CONFLICT IS FUELLING NEW TENSIONS BETWEEN MOROCCO AND ALGERIA

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SUMMARY

- Tensions between Morocco and Algeria have risen lately, and there is now a heightened risk of armed conflict arising.
- The escalation is rooted in the dispute over the status of Western Sahara, where Morocco appears to feel that its claim to sovereignty is gaining international support.
- Morocco and Algeria have significant relationships with Israel and Russia respectively, but they also have important partners in common that could play a role in preventing the standoff from worsening.
- Morocco and Algeria have interests in Europe that the EU and member states can use to minimise tensions, and reduce the risk of instability and increased migration flows across the Mediterranean.
- To achieve this, Europeans should strike a more balanced relationship with Morocco that does not alienate Algeria while also aiming to solidify its engagement with Algeria.

Introduction

Morocco and Algeria, the dominant countries of the Maghreb, are locked in a diplomatic standoff. Their rivalry goes back decades, but it has taken a dramatic turn for the worse in the last year. Since August 2021, Algeria has severed diplomatic relations with Morocco, cut off gas shipments that previously ran through Morocco to Spain, and accused Moroccan forces of killing three Algerian citizens in the disputed territory of Western Sahara. The tensions between these two heavily armed countries have raised concerns within the region and in Europe that Morocco and Algeria could drift into open conflict, risking massive destabilisation in North Africa with all the consequences that would entail for the European Union.^{spa}

The escalation came after the already-poor relations between the two countries were disturbed by a series of developments, particularly a shift in the position of outside powers. A decisive moment was President Donald Trump's decision to recognise Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara in December 2020 in exchange for Morocco normalising relations with Israel. It put the world's most powerful country in Morocco's camp on a question of fundamental importance to the kingdom, at a time when tensions over Western Sahara had already reignited after the breakdown of a longstanding ceasefire between Morocco and the pro-independence Polisario Front movement. The warming ties between Morocco and Israel bring this polarising regional power into the delicate Maghreb power balance for the first time. For its part, Algeria recently conducted joint military exercises in South Ossetia with Russia, which has long supplied a large part of Algeria's weapons.

There are many cases in the recent history of the Middle East and North Africa in which the involvement of external powers has led to the escalation of conflict. However, there are also reasons to think that the standoff between Algeria and Morocco may remain contained. Both countries have incentives to avoid open conflict, including a pressing need to focus on domestic economic concerns. Another significant factor is that many important external partners have ties to both countries and have an interest in dampening rather than fuelling tensions.

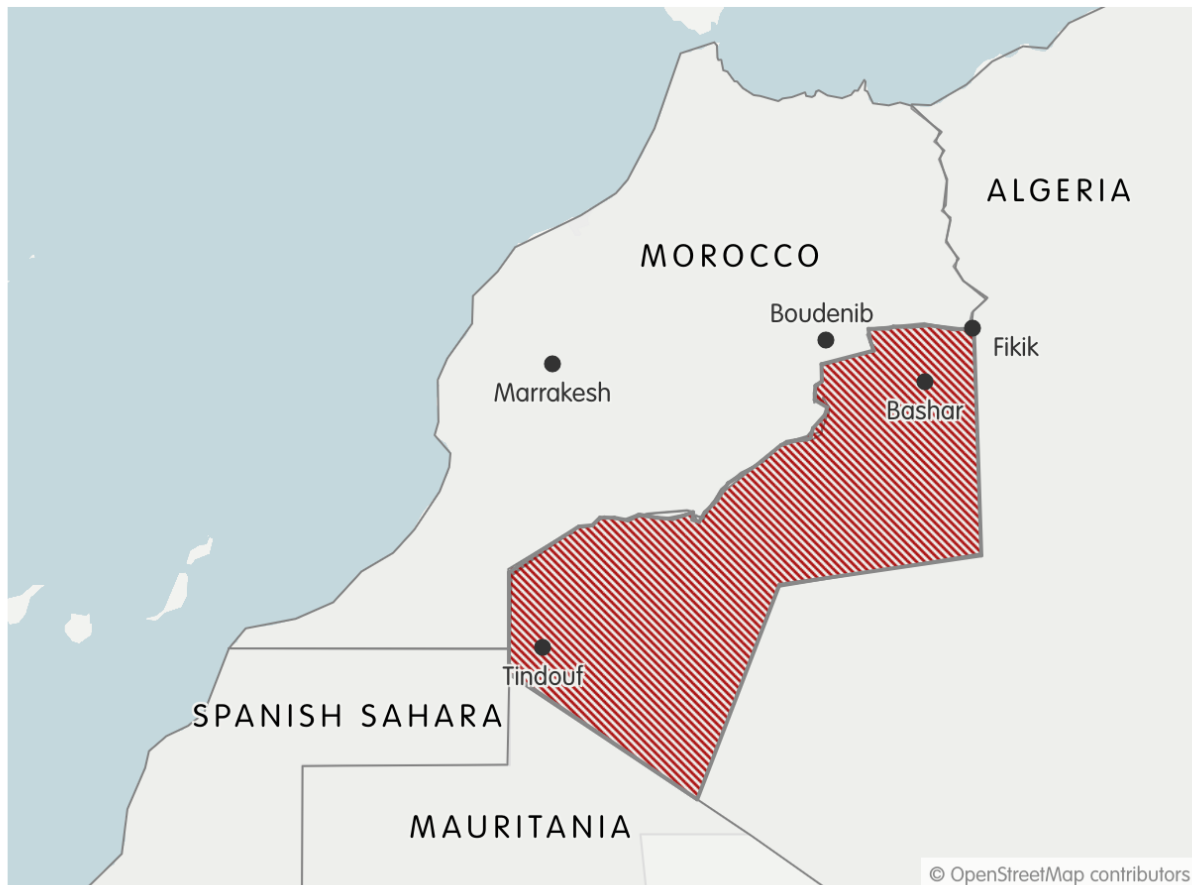
European states and the EU are prominent among these partners. They have a key role in North Africa because of their historical links, proximity, and economic ties to the region. The EU and its member states could help reduce tensions between Morocco and Algeria – but to do this, they need to maintain a balanced position in their relations with both countries. Instead, however, European leaders often seem unwilling to stand up to Moroccan demands, encouraging its maximalist policies and undermining their credibility with Algeria. Most recently, Spain shifted its policy to endorse Morocco's autonomy plan for Western Sahara following a sustained Moroccan pressure campaign that included sending waves of migrants into Spanish territory.

Letting Morocco set the terms of its relations with the EU risks encouraging the country to become even more assertive and projects an image of strategic weakness that is at odds with the EU's goal of becoming a geopolitical power. It also undermines its ability to play a moderating role in North Africa and thus threatens to damage broader European interests in the region. The EU should recalibrate its policies so that it can better achieve its long-term ambitions in its relations with both Morocco and Algeria, including in influencing the dynamics of escalation between the two rivals.

The evolution of Algeria-Morocco relations

The independence movements in Algeria and Morocco had close ties, but when Algeria joined Morocco as an independent state in 1962, relations between the countries quickly deteriorated.^[1] The immediate cause of friction was a border dispute focusing on a piece of desert territory that French colonial administrators had awarded to Algeria, and that Morocco sought to have returned following both countries' independence. Moroccan attempts to seize the territory in 1963 led to a brief outbreak of fighting between the two countries that was dubbed the "sand war". After a few weeks, amid fears that the involvement of outside powers could lead to further escalation, the parties agreed a ceasefire through negotiations led by Ethiopia and Mali. Nevertheless, tensions continued. Some of this was due to the ideological differences between Morocco's conservative monarchy and Algeria's prominent role as a supporter of third-world revolutionary movements, but a more important factor was probably their geopolitical rivalry for the leading role in the region. In the words of the British historian Michael Willis, persistent tensions between Morocco and Algeria are "rooted in differences over more profound issues than ideology".^[2]

Area of dispute in 1963 'sand war' between Morocco and Algeria



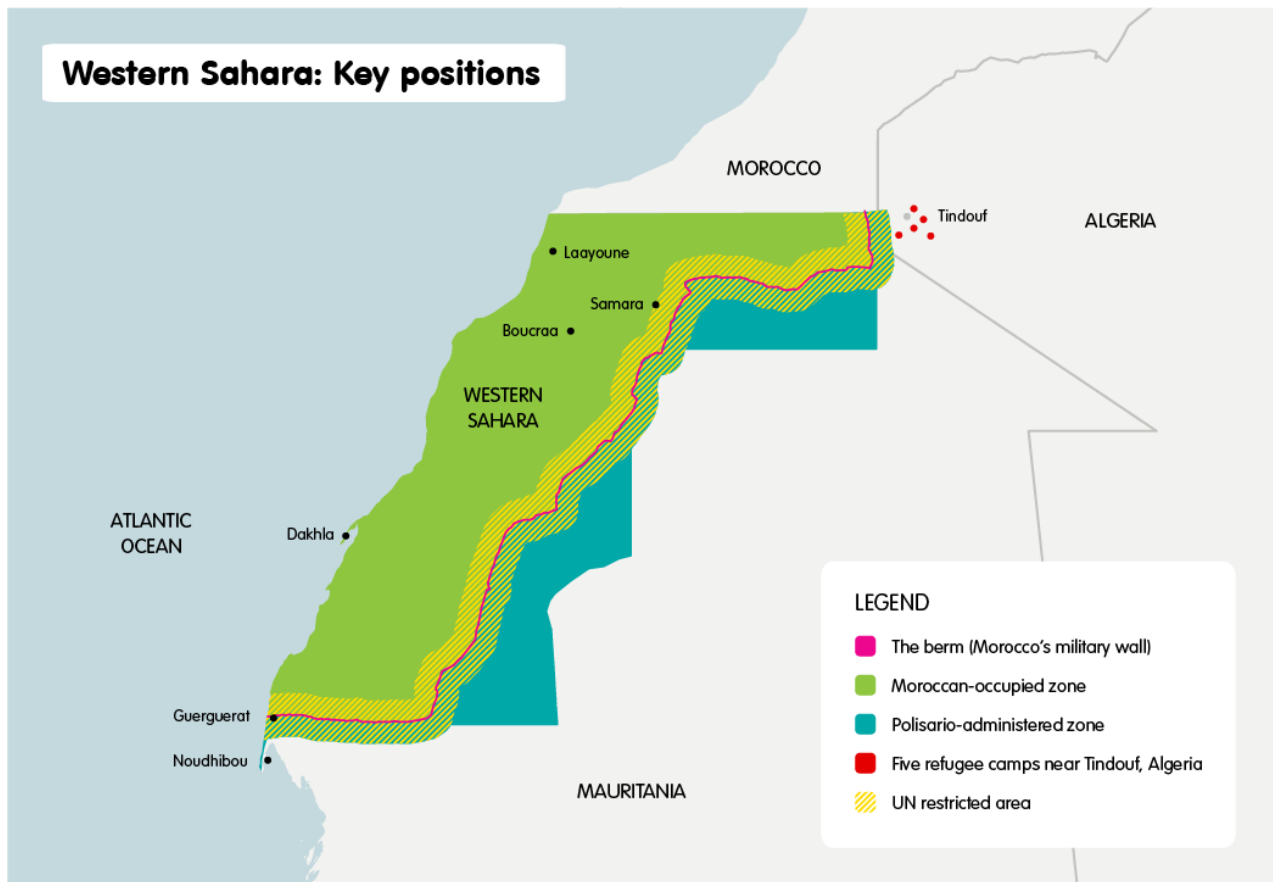
Source: Patricia Berko Wild
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Since 1975, the dominant issue between the two countries has been the conflict in Western Sahara. After the former colonial power Spain withdrew its forces and handed control of the territory to Morocco and Mauritania, Algeria threw its support behind the local Sahrawi people's claims for self-determination and the Polisario movement fighting on their behalf. Algeria had been reluctant to support Polisario's position before Spain's withdrawal and even seemed open to accepting Morocco's claim in return for settlement of its own border dispute with Morocco. However, once Morocco seized the bulk of Western Sahara, Algeria began to provide military support to Polisario and allowed its leaders (as well as many Sahrawi refugees) to establish themselves on Algerian territory; there were even skirmishes in 1976 between Moroccan and Algerian forces in the territory. As Hugh Lovatt and Jacob Mundy wrote for ECFR, Algeria was motivated in large part by "the strategic threat that it increasingly saw from an emboldened and expansionist Morocco". Algeria has also been a leading diplomatic supporter of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR), the state proclaimed by

Polisario in 1976.

With Algerian backing, Polisario was able to cause serious problems for Moroccan forces in Western Sahara, but the conflict stabilised in the mid-1980s following Morocco's construction of an enormous sand wall, or berm, along the boundary of the territory it controlled. In the later part of the decade, tensions between Algeria and Morocco subsided. Diplomatic relations, which Morocco had broken off in 1976, were re-established in 1988. This partial reconciliation in turn made possible the agreement of a new regional organisation bringing together the five Maghreb countries (Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, and Tunisia), the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU), in 1989. In 1991, Morocco and Polisario agreed a settlement plan for Western Sahara under UN auspices, involving a UN-monitored ceasefire and a commitment to hold a referendum on the status of the territory within two years.

However, the promised referendum never took place, due in part to disputes about who would be eligible to vote. The failure to make progress on Western Sahara and a reassertion of domestic control by the Algerian military (traditionally hostile to Morocco) following the cancelled elections of 1992, and the assassination of the Algerian president six months later, led to a progressive deterioration of relations between Algeria and Morocco. After Morocco accused Algeria of involvement in a terrorist attack in Marrakesh in 1994 and imposed a visa requirement on Algerians visiting Morocco, Algeria closed the border between the two countries. It has never reopened, despite periodic Moroccan calls to restore normal relations. Far from providing a forum for deeper engagement, the AMU has been largely paralysed by the rivalry between Algeria and Morocco.



As it became clear that the settlement plan would not provide the basis for resolving the status of Western Sahara, the United Nations renewed its search for a negotiated agreement. Successive UN envoys tried to find a mutually acceptable deal – but had little to show for their efforts. Morocco and Algeria have been at odds over the format for negotiations: Morocco, seeing Polisario as largely an Algerian creation, has sought to include Algeria as well as Mauritania in talks, while Algeria has insisted that bilateral discussions should take place between Morocco and Polisario, as the latter is the legitimate representative of the Sahrawi people. In 2018 and 2019, through an Algerian concession, talks took place in Geneva in a roundtable format, with Algeria and Mauritania participating with the status of observers.

Causes of the breakdown

In 2017, Morocco rejoined the African Union after a gap of 33 years, having left its predecessor, the Organisation of African Unity, in 1984 to protest against the body's admission of the SADR as a member. Morocco's return was one sign of a new diplomatic energy and confidence in its regional policy, at a time when Algerian foreign policy appeared stagnant because of the incapacity of its ailing president, Abdelaziz Bouteflika. Morocco also managed to persuade a wave of more than 20 Arab and African countries

to open consulates in the territory, indicating their acceptance of Morocco's claim to sovereignty.

These diplomatic moves were followed by a reopening of hostilities between Morocco and Polisario in November 2020. Polisario announced an end to the ceasefire after Moroccan forces crossed into the Guerguerat UN-patrolled buffer zone to remove Sahrawi protesters who Morocco claimed were blocking goods traffic from moving along the main road from Morocco through Western Sahara to Mauritania. Despite Polisario's move, Trump's decision the following month to recognise Moroccan sovereignty over the territory seemed to confirm that Morocco's new assertiveness was paying dividends. But, for Algeria, Morocco's rapprochement with Israel appeared a direct threat: Algeria's prime minister, Abdelaziz Djerad, said that Algeria had been "targeted" through the "arrival at its gates of the Zionist entity". When Israeli foreign minister Yair Lapid visited Morocco, he criticised Algeria's role in the region and expressed concern about its ties to Iran.

Against this background, two further Moroccan actions appeared to confirm Algerian claims that it was facing a greater threat from its neighbour. The release of a detailed journalistic investigation into the global use of the Pegasus phone hacking software showed that Morocco had spied extensively on Algerian targets, targeting over 6,000 people – a move that was particularly resented because the software was developed by an Israeli company, NSO Group. At the same time, Morocco began a campaign to turn the tables on Algerian support for Polisario by promoting the cause of the separatist movement in Algeria's Kabylia region. In July 2021, Morocco's UN ambassador, Omar Hilale, distributed a note saying that "the valiant Kabyle people deserve, more than any other, to fully enjoy their right to self-determination."

This was the final straw that led Algeria to recall its ambassador and then cut diplomatic relations. An Algerian diplomat was quoted as saying that Morocco had touched on two of the greatest taboos in Algerian politics: its concern for national unity and its policy towards Israel. Algeria also charged that Morocco and Israel had worked with the Kabyle separatist group MAK to set a series of wildfires that caused extensive damage in summer 2021. Algeria took further steps against Morocco in autumn 2021, closing its airspace to Moroccan planes and ending shipments of gas through the Maghreb-Europe pipeline that links Algeria, Morocco, and Spain – and that provided gas used for around one-tenth of Morocco's electricity supply.

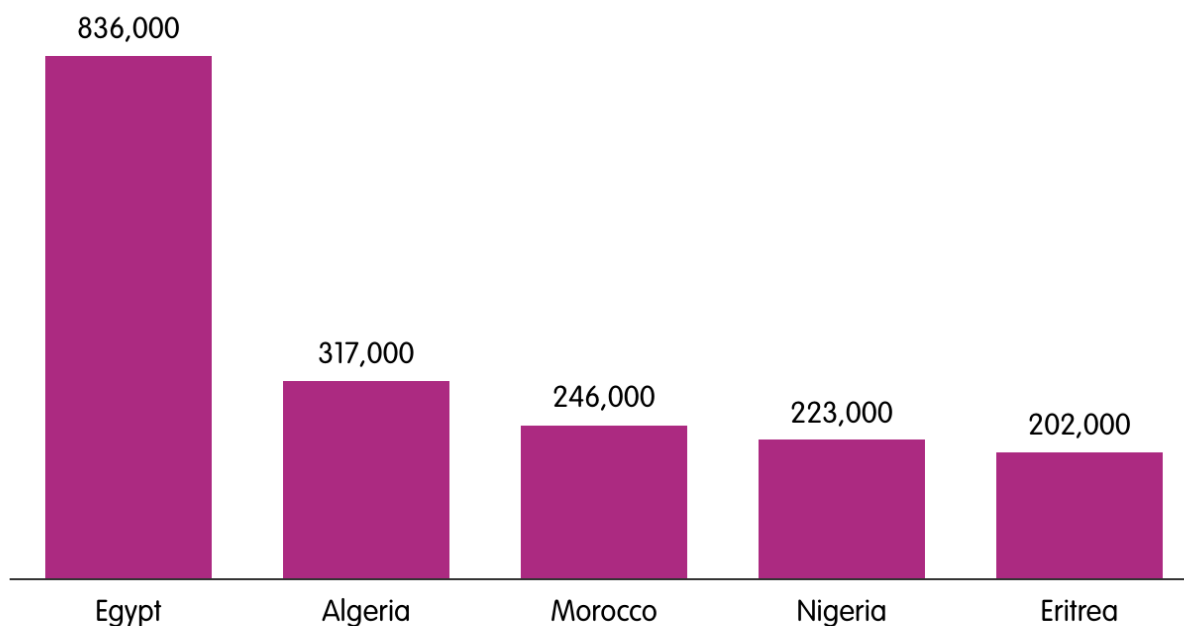
Military manoeuvres

The most alarming element of the standoff is the resumption of fighting in Western Sahara and the possibility that Algeria and Morocco could come into direct conflict. Polisario ended the ceasefire in reaction to Morocco's incursion into the buffer zone, but its move also responded to a longer-term

impatience among younger Polisario fighters who were frustrated by the failure of diplomacy to achieve results. Since then, the conflict has remained at a low level of intensity, according to the UN. Polisario fighters have told reporters that they have repeatedly attacked Moroccan bases along the berm, but there is little sign that their actions have caused any serious problems for Morocco. For its part, Morocco is alleged to have used drones supplied by Turkey and China to attack Polisario fighters in the area they control, including most notably the Polisario gendarmerie chief Addah Al-Bendir who was killed in April 2021.

In November 2021, a commercial convoy of Algerian lorry drivers travelling through the Polisario-controlled part of Western Sahara was hit by an apparent bombing attack, killing three men. In a statement, Algeria charged that the attack had been carried out by Moroccan forces using “sophisticated weaponry”, implying that it was a drone strike. Morocco denied any responsibility. This was a moment of danger in the Algeria-Morocco standoff, and Algeria warned the killings “would not go unpunished”. However, despite its bellicose rhetoric, Algeria never provided any evidence that Morocco had conducted the attack, and it does not appear to have carried out any act of retaliation. There is also no sign that Algeria has significantly stepped up weapons shipments to Polisario since the breakdown of the ceasefire. According to the Polisario, Algerian support is getting stronger, but there is little evidence of any sophisticated weapons being delivered.^[3] Reports on Polisario operations continue to depict a fighting force that relies on decades-old weaponry.

Africa's top five militaries by number of total active-duty military personnel



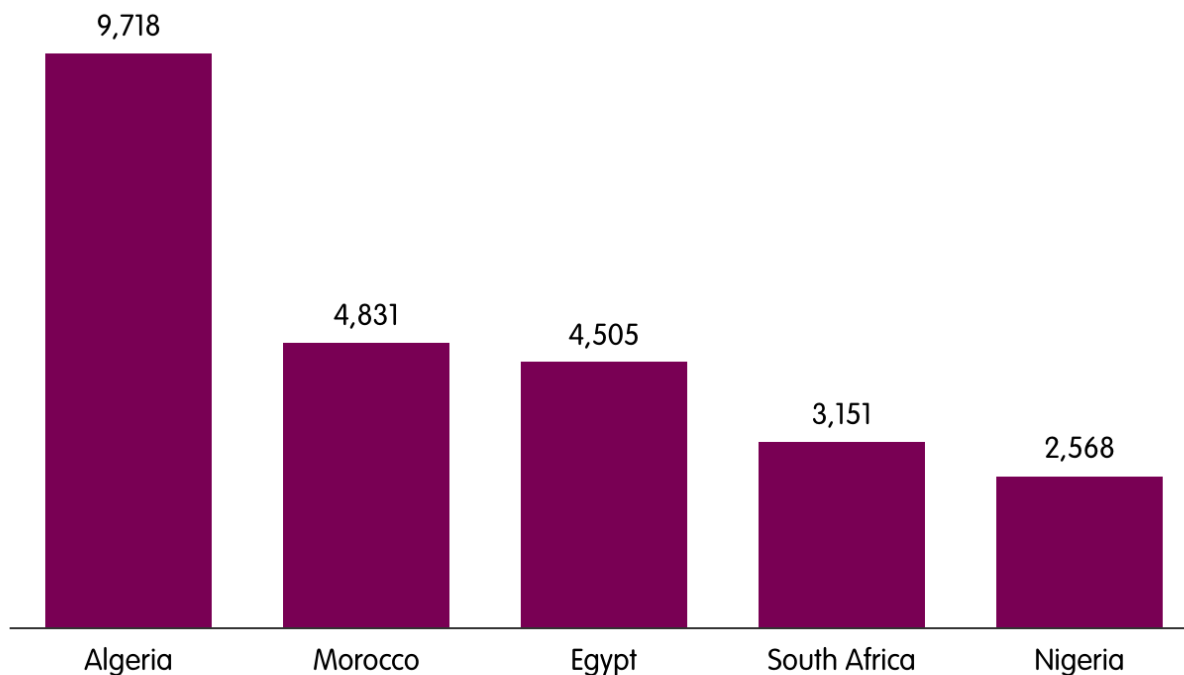
Numbers as of 2019

Source: World Bank

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Any direct military exchanges between Algeria and Morocco would bring two of Africa's largest military forces into conflict. An arms race between the two rivals is already under way, and both have ties to advanced weapons manufacturers. Algeria is a military giant: its defence budget in 2020 was \$9.7 billion, the largest in Africa. Just under 70 per cent of Algeria's military hardware comes from Russia. It was due to receive an order of 14 Su-34 attack jets this year and has reportedly been discussing the purchase of the Su-57 stealth fighter. Morocco's budget is smaller, at \$4.8 billion in 2020, but that already represented a 54 per cent increase since 2011, and defence spending is due to increase to \$5.5 billion in 2022. Moreover, Morocco is in the middle of a major upgrade of its forces, including a reported \$500m air defence deal with Israel. Morocco and Israel signed a defence agreement in November 2021 that committed the two countries to cooperate on the exchange of information, joint projects, and arms sales.

Africa's top five militaries by military expenditure, in \$ million



Numbers as of 2020

Source: SIPRI

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Algeria's balancing act

Despite these trends, it would be wrong to see an inevitable dynamic of increasing tensions between Algeria and Morocco, or that these are mainly fuelled by Russia and Israel. On the Algerian side, the country's longstanding attachment to the principle of sovereignty and tradition of resisting any obligations that could constrain its freedom of action limit the influence it has allowed Russia to achieve. Algeria has refused a series of Russian requests for permission to build a naval base at the Algerian coastal city of Oran. It also has bought weapons from Germany and Italy. In the UN General Assembly vote on a resolution condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Algeria hedged its bets by abstaining rather than supporting Russia. Morocco avoided voting altogether, evidently hoping not to alienate any permanent members of the UN Security Council whose support it might need on Western Sahara. This meant that the positions of the North African rivals were not markedly different.

Algeria's approach to gas exports following Russia's invasion of Ukraine also showed a desire to balance its relationship with Russia and other partners, in addition to serving its own economic

interests. Algeria supplied 11 per cent of Europe's gas before the war, and, as the war began, it offered to increase supplies through the Trans-Mediterranean pipeline from Algeria to Italy to compensate for any shortfall in European deliveries from Russia. The head of Algeria's state gas company Sonatrach, Toufik Hakkar, said in an interview with the Algerian newspaper *Liberté* that Algeria was "a reliable gas supplier for the European market and it is ready to support its partners in the long term in case the situation deteriorates". However, after his comments were widely reported, Sonatrach complained that they had been distorted by the newspaper – an apparent sign that Algeria was not willing to break with Russia too publicly.

Since Abdelmadjid Tebboune took over as Algeria's president in December 2019, the country has tried to revitalise its foreign policy. This has involved a stronger response to Moroccan moves, but it has also included renewing ties with partners that would not support any further escalation. One of Tebboune's priorities has been to return Algeria to a more central place in Arab diplomacy by hosting a successful summit of the Arab League. Postponed from March 2022, the summit has now been confirmed for November 2022. Tebboune has a stake in ensuring that many Arab leaders attend, providing an incentive to avoid any provocative actions against Morocco.

Algeria has also been deepening its ties with Turkey and has longstanding links to China; both these countries maintain good relations with Morocco and would not benefit from increasing tensions between the two North African rivals. Algeria also has a well-developed security relationship with the United States, which has persisted despite Trump's recognition of Morocco's claim to Western Sahara. In March 2022 alone, senior US officials from the Defence Department and State Department visited Algeria for a joint military dialogue and strategic dialogue. Finally, Algeria is heavily dependent on Europe for its foreign trade: the EU is Algeria's largest trading partner and accounts for 46.7 per cent of Algerian exports (primarily hydrocarbons).

In this way, Algerian foreign policy is marked by a "variable geometry", in the words of the French-Algerian analyst Akram Belkaid. The country combines a robust position in relation to Morocco (as well as in its rhetoric towards the former colonial power, France) with a more pragmatic approach with other partners, while always preserving a degree of autonomy. The researcher Adlene Mohammedi wrote recently that "despite occasional controversial speeches, Algeria's foreign policy is primarily characterised by discretion and prudence." This positioning means it is unlikely to push its confrontation with Morocco to a level where it jeopardises other foreign policy relationships. Crucially, it also provides an opening for partners including Europe and the US to promote de-escalation.

Algerian foreign policy cannot be understood in isolation from the country's domestic politics. The

Hirak protest movement that exploded in 2019 has subsided in the face of a targeted crackdown against activists. However, popular support for the regime appears limited: one indication is that turnout for the parliamentary election in June 2021 was only 23 per cent. Traditionally, Algeria's governing elites considered hardline policy towards Morocco as a way of rallying nationalist support for the Algerian regime, but it is not clear how far this remains the case. While the political establishment and the army that stands behind it have always held strongly anti-Moroccan views, the population's distrust of the authorities and concern with socio-economic problems are likely to limit the political benefits that an aggressive stance against Morocco can deliver.

According to the political scientist Zine Labidine Ghebouli, Algerian foreign policy and public views of the country's role are in a state of flux.^[4] While more conservative parts of the population are still attached to a traditional view of Algeria's role focused on support for self-determination, there is also a growing body of opinion that is more sceptical of official narratives and more attuned to the need for economic support and greater investment. While Algerian opposition to Israel remains widespread, it is not clear that the government will see further confrontation with Morocco as an unquestioned political trump card.

Algeria is certain to react to any further Moroccan steps that could be seen as provocation. It has continued to send commercial convoys through Western Sahara in the aftermath of the recent strike, and there is little doubt that a further attack on Algerian citizens would receive a strong response. But in the absence of any further escalation from the Moroccan side, Algeria may well be content to keep its initiatives against Morocco at the level of rhetoric.

Morocco – a strategy of assertiveness

In recent years, and particularly since Trump's recognition of its sovereignty over Western Sahara, Morocco has been acting with increasing assertiveness not only towards Algeria but also towards Europe. In March 2021, Morocco broke off diplomatic cooperation with Germany and later recalled its ambassador in response to what it described as Germany's "destructive attitude" on Western Sahara, which included calling for a closed-door UN Security Council hearing after Trump's decision. In April 2021, Morocco also became engaged in a diplomatic row with Spain over Madrid's decision to allow the Polisario leader Brahim Ghali into Spain to be treated for covid-19. As part of its response, Morocco at times facilitated the crossing of migrants into Spanish territory on the North African coast, particularly the cities of Ceuta and Melilla.

In November 2021, King Mohammed VI gave a speech in which he said emphatically that Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara would never be subject to negotiation, describing it as "a truth as

perennial as it is immutable”. He also warned that Morocco would never agree to any economic or commercial initiative that excluded Western Sahara. This has obvious implications for Morocco’s relations with Europe. Two months earlier, the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) had ruled that two trade and fisheries agreements between the EU and Morocco were invalid because they extended to products originating from Western Sahara without the consent of the Sahrawi people having been sought for these agreements. The Council of the European Union voted to appeal the ruling, but it is likely that the decision will be upheld. It is difficult to see how the agreements could be revised in a way that would satisfy both Morocco’s demands and the court’s conditions.

Nevertheless, Morocco’s forceful policies have achieved some results. Most notably, it was revealed in March 2022 that the Spanish prime minister had written a letter to King Mohammed VI saying that Morocco’s autonomy plan for Western Sahara was “the most serious, realistic and credible basis” for resolving the conflict. This marked a major shift in Spain’s position, since it had previously remained neutral between proposals from Morocco and Polisario and called only for a solution to be negotiated under UN auspices. The Spanish move formed part of a reconciliation with Morocco, opening what Spanish authorities called a “new stage” in relations between the two countries.

It could be argued that Spain’s shift in position has little substantive impact, since an agreement will still need to be reached through negotiations. But the Spanish move risks sending a signal to Morocco that it has growing international backing for its uncompromising approach. Germany had earlier settled its dispute with Morocco on more neutral terms, with a statement describing Morocco’s autonomy plan as “an important contribution”. President Joe Biden also allowed Trump’s recognition of Moroccan sovereignty to stand, though his administration has largely followed a policy of avoiding the subject and supporting the resumption of negotiations under the recently appointed UN envoy, Staffan de Mistura. The US appears to have won Moroccan support for de Mistura’s appointment in part by holding off from reversing Trump’s move.

Towards a more balanced European approach

Any further deterioration in relations between Algeria and Morocco could have significant consequences for Europe. Conflict between the two countries would likely lead to a sharp increase in migration towards the EU, and above all to Spain. It would have a deeply destabilising impact across the Maghreb and Sahel regions, setting back European hopes for economic development in North Africa that could play an important role in Europe’s green transition, among other interests. A conflict could also provide space for extremist groups to gain ground.

The recent rise in tensions between Morocco and Algeria stems from a series of changes that upset the

previous status quo. Europe's best hope of helping stabilise their relationship lies in maintaining a balanced approach to both countries, to avoid any further encouragement of Moroccan assertiveness or Algerian defensiveness. Of course, the EU has more developed ties with Morocco than Algeria – and this is particularly true for France and Spain, which have strong commercial links and rely on Moroccan cooperation on migration and counterterrorism. However, there are reasons to be careful about too close an embrace of Morocco's position. For Europe to make concessions in the face of Morocco's strong-arm tactics risks rewarding an approach that incorporates an element of blackmail through the weaponisation of migration. Moreover, European engagement with Morocco did not succeed in winning Moroccan support for the UN General Assembly resolution on the Russian invasion of Ukraine – an issue of critical importance for Europe.

Morocco may also be in a weaker position than its assertive stance seems to suggest. The war in Ukraine is already having a serious impact on the country's economy. Morocco is a large importer of both grain and hydrocarbons both of which have increased sharply in price because of the conflict. Morocco was already suffering from the worst drought in decades, which has severely impacted on domestic agricultural production. The country's tourist industry is also still recovering from the impact of covid-19.

These factors make European support and the continuation of trade flows from Morocco to Europe particularly important. If the CJEU upholds the recent ruling on the trade and fisheries agreements, it would be costly for Morocco to lose the benefits of its association agreement with the EU, which is the destination of 64 per cent of Moroccan exports. Morocco may ultimately be forced to compromise on its insistence that any trade deal must include Western Sahara; in any case, the court's judgment imposes a limit on what the EU can agree to. This could provide an opportunity to reset Europe's relations with Morocco, moving away from a posture that often seems excessively deferential. If Europe does not push back against Moroccan assertiveness, Morocco will be encouraged to redouble its demands and will have no incentive to respect European concerns.

The EU and its member states should adopt a policy towards Morocco that is based on an assessment of Europe's longer-term interests towards the country and the Maghreb more widely. Europe can acknowledge the benefits of cooperation and Moroccan contributions in areas such as migration and security, but at the same time make clear that it is not prepared to endorse Morocco's position on Western Sahara and that it also expects cooperation on other European concerns. As part of this policy, Europe should encourage Moroccan restraint in the use of force against Polisario forces and stress the importance of avoiding further escalation in Morocco's relations with Algeria. It should try to curtail any Moroccan sense that it can achieve its objectives in Western Sahara through increased assertiveness, a perception that underlies its tensions with its neighbour.

European relations with Algeria are much shallower than those with Morocco. The country is in many ways a more problematic and awkward partner: its government lacks popular support, its business climate discourages European investment, and it has failed to follow through on commitments made in its 2002 association agreement with the EU. Nevertheless, the EU remains an important partner for Algeria, and it could gain further influence if the country embraces the economic and energy transition that will be necessary to secure its future prosperity.

It is in Europe's interest to develop its ties with Algeria and to avoid driving the country to rely further on external powers such as Russia. The EU and its member states will be best placed to do that if they do not further align with Morocco's position on Western Sahara. Spain's recent shift in position provoked Algeria to recall its ambassador for consultations and review the price it charges Spain for gas, though it is not yet clear how much of a rupture in relations will result. European countries should avoid any further moves that appear to be taking sides in the dispute, which would further disrupt the perceived power balance between Morocco and Algeria in a potentially destabilising way. At the same time, the EU should try to persuade Algeria to return to the four-party format for talks on Western Sahara, as part of an effort to support the UN envoy's drive to restart negotiations. European officials should also try to persuade Algeria not to step up its military support to Polisario and to avoid further inflammatory rhetoric towards Morocco.

There are no immediate prospects of bilateral talks aimed at defusing the standoff between Morocco and Algeria, and European countries are unlikely to be accepted by either side as mediators. But the EU and its member states could play a role in reducing tensions if they can help foster a more restrained approach on both sides. To do this, they need to see their relations with both countries in a regional context, and avoid any further actions that could feed Moroccan assertiveness and lead Algeria to feel that Europe has taken sides against it. Such an approach would not only leave Europe best placed to defuse regional tensions but would also provide the most constructive basis for bilateral

relations with Morocco and Algeria in coming years.

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[1] For an account of Algeria-Morocco relations, see Michael Willis, *Politics and Power in the Maghreb: Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco from Independence to the Arab Spring* (Hurst, 2012), pp. 265-292.

[2] Willis, *Politics and Power in the Maghreb*, p. 292.

[3] ECFR interview with senior Polisario official, European capital, October 2021.

[4] ECFR interview with Zine Labidine Ghebouli, 28 February 2022.

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