

Maghreb Power Struggle: An Offensive Realist Analysis of Moroccan-Algerian Rivalry

Walid Blila

Master Degree Graduate – Diplomacy and International Relations from Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuania

E-mail: walidblila5@gmail.com

<http://dx.doi.org/10.47814/ijssrr.v8i6.2793>

Abstract

This paper analyzes the long-standing conflict between Morocco and Algeria in the Maghreb region using John Mearsheimer's offensive realism theory. Through the evaluation of historical enmities, the conflict over Western Sahara, and rivaling geopolitical blocs, this study illustrates the self-help nature of the international order that rewards the adoption of aggressive policies such as militarization, hybrid conflict, and alignment with global powers. The methodology integrates discourse analysis of elite narratives and escalation pathways with comparative case studies, such as Morocco's normalization with Israel in the 2020 Abraham Accords and Algeria's military agreement with Russia in 2023, alongside the analysis of the narratives accompanying the escalation. Both states seek to justify hegemonic behaviors by application of offensive realism arguments, such as survival in an anarchical system, a lack of trust regarding the intentions of adversaries, and the need to gain power more than what is required. Morocco acquiring asymmetric Israeli military drones and USA defense partnerships, along with Algeria's Russian Su-57 jets and cyberwarfare investment arms race is a spiral of security dilemma proliferation through external sponsor enablement. With Algeria utilizing the Polisario Front to limit Moroccan influence, Morocco strategically frames the Western Sahara conflict as essential for maintaining national integrity leading to Morocco-Algeria territorial conflict polarization in the region. These phenomena led to Morocco-Algeria stunted integration through the immobilized energy politics of the Arab Maghreb Union, bifid energy diplomacy of green hydrogen partnerships led by Morocco versus gas siphoning geopolitics of Algeria, and proxy wars in the Sahel region. This transforms the Maghreb region into a bipolar security complex with increased chances of open conflict, driven by NATO encroachment through Morocco and Russian encroachment via Algeria, this study identifies as an outcome of NATO and Russian intrusion in North Africa. Using the lens of regional security complex theory in conjunction with offensive realism, this research sought to analyze how rivalries between middle powers impact outer peripheries of the geostrategic world in the context of multipolar competition. Proposals focused on the EU-mediated energy collaboration, African Union cyber stability initiatives, and other measures aimed at escalation reduction are provided alongside the findings.

Keywords: *Regional Rivalry; Offensive Realism; Maghreb; Western Sahara*

Introduction

1.Introduction: Moroccan-Algerian Rivalry and the Maghreb Security Complex

The increasing diplomatic tensions between Rabat and Algiers following the recent development in the Western Sahara issue and border conflict, and the historical ideological and political dispute led by the two states' elites clearly indicate that their rivalry over regional hegemony may severely affect the regional security of the Maghreb¹.

The Moroccan-Algerian Rivalry illustrates a parlous mix of historical regional hostility and competition among countries operating within the Maghreb security complex. They fought each other for regional supremacy for decades, incurring massive military expenditures and forming military alliances with foreign countries. Even if both states share some aspects of history and culture, their antagonistic relations go back many decades and have evolved at a much faster pace than the cooperative attempts across the region. This rivalry presents an alarming puzzle of how such contests are explained by International Relations Theory, especially by Offensive Realism. This research attempts to resolve a major riddle: What is it about the Moroccan-Algerian rivalry that makes it quintessential of a regional security complex from an offensive realism perspective, and in what ways do hybrid warfare, energy contests, and NATO/Russian bypassing integration challenge the classical notions of power accumulation? In a bid to answer the question stated, the article focuses on the following sub-question:

1. What are the strategic interests underlying Morocco and Algeria's quest for regional dominance?
2. What is the role of the outside world in altering the distribution of power within the Maghreb?
3. How does this rivalry affect security and integration in the region?

Answering these questions will allow putting together the two sides of the jigsaw, thus, reconciling the dichotomy associated with the pessimistic approach that theorizes Offensive Realism combines the struggles within International Politics and coexists with pragmatism that deals with the relationship towards the dynamics of Security Politics across North Africa.

Theoretical Framework

Analyzing a state's strategic behavior in an anarchic system that lacks a higher authority is a hallmark of offensive realism - which explains the importance of power maximization for ensuring one's survival. In the case of Morocco, the use of asymmetric assets, such as Israeli drones, reflects its efforts to counterbalance Algeria's dominant conventional force. In response, Algeria engages in Russian weapons deals and cyber manipulations.

This motive for power is based on three fundamental premises:

Anarchy: In the absence of central authority, states are forced to resort to self-help for their survival.

Uncertainty of Intentions: States do not entirely trust the intents of other actors, resulting in a security dilemma where competitors perceive all defensive actions as aggression from the other side.

¹ Akrimi, Yasmine .(2021). Algeria-Morocco Tensions: A Costly Conflict. Brussels International Center.

Power Maximization: States aspire to amass military, economic, and even diplomatic resources to neutralize potential adversaries and guarantee their status as regional or supra-national hegemons.

Upon applying these concepts to the Moroccan-Algerian rivalry, a number of patterns become clear.

Both states rationally seek to increase their power in relation to each other. For instance, it is possible to interpret Morocco's military advancement Israel drones as attempts to diminish Algeria's superior conventional military strength. Their competition for Western Saharan territory illustrates how power rivalries erupt over borders in an anarchic system.

Alliances with external powers (e.g., Morocco-Israel and Algeria-Russia) reinforce how marginal states seek the assistance of superpowers to advance their regional objectives.

This study seeks to explain the mechanisms which underlie Moroccan-Algerian relations, and how can the offensive realism analyze the relations affect security in the region.

Stephen Walt's Balance of Threat Theory goes hand in hand with Mearsheimer's offensive realism because both strikingly show state behavior in relation to power in context of threats. Understanding the hostile relationships Algeria has with Morocco, and Algeria's relations with Russia and Moroccan's rapprochement with Israel, is best under threat perception. Walt's four components that shape threat perception are aggregate power, distance, offensive capacity, and intentions. For example, Rabat views Algiers's intensive armament and it's deep backing of the Polisario Front as an explicit threat to its sovereignty. On the other side, Algeria considers Moroccan recent alliance with Israel to be a shift of balance of power and existential challenge to its regional hegemony plans.

One of the most known theories, Posen's, speaks of how one state's defense action can be perceived as aggression from another state which causes a vicious cycle of animosity. Morocco has acquired Israeli-built drones, which then prompted Algeria to procure Russian Su-57 fighter jets. These actions are militarily provocative, not only to them, but to each other.

Mearsheimer focuses on obtaining hegemony through military subjugation, while noting Morocco's diplomacy towards offensive hegemony, exemplified by the deeply shocking US Western Sahara recognition, and Algeria's gas coercion, emphasizes the significance of economics and diplomacy in achieving hegemony.

Methodology

This study applies a qualitative approach based on comparative case studies and process tracing. These methods are specifically useful in seeking explanations in troubled geopolitical rivalries such as Morocco and Algeria, where history, strategy, and external influences intersect.

1. **Comparative Case Studies:** In this method, key events in Moroccan-Algerian relations demonstrating the Offensive Realism have been selected. These selected cases include:

- Morocco's normalization with Israel under the Abraham Accords (2020) symbolizes the increasing Israel-Morocco relations and a building of an alliance for power maximization.
- Algeria's military cooperation with Russia (2023) relates to Auster's case as a supporting counterbalancing action.
- The Western Sahara territorial dispute also serves for competition for territory.

2. **Process Tracing:** This technique helps demonstrate the links between state actions (for example arms purchases or formation of alliances) and consequences (such as changing patterns of regional power distribution). For example, process tracing will show how the purchase of Israeli drones by Morocco had an Algerian-dominated region where the concentration of military spending was placed.
3. **Discourse Analysis:** The discourse of the leaders from Morocco and Algeria assists in presenting strategic reasons for the relations between them with a specific focus on the threats posed by Offensive Realism. For instance, when Algeria speaks on Morocco-Israel relations, Algeria portrays the relations as an existential threat which shows a security dilemma logically aligned with Offensive Realism.

A careful combination of these methods helps analyze the interactions of the two countries and illustrates a tension of security competition within an anarchistic structure.

2. Regional Security Dynamics in the Maghreb

The matter of Western Sahara is perhaps the most sensitive issue that has aggravated the antagonism between the two rivals. Each side tries to obtain concrete gains from this long-lasting dispute.

To the Moroccan regime, Western Sahara is an issue of national integrity. Its loss would not only undermine Morocco's power as a regional leader, but also strengthen Algeria's position. Moreover, it is a province rich in natural resources, containing the world's largest phosphate reserves. There are also vast fishery resources that support tens of thousands of Moroccans. For this reason alone, Morocco perceives the region as an economic asset that is non-negotiable. This explains why Morocco has militarily, economically, and politically suffocated the region. Should their aspirations, expectations and hopes be actualized, undoubtedly, the Kingdom's regional standing will be strengthened vis-a-vis its rival and this means a fundamental alteration of power relations in the Maghreb region.

Regarding Algeria, the official narrative justifies the endorsement of the Polisario Front and its independence bid for reasons linked primarily to self-determination and national liberation from colonial rule. However, the Algerian regime aims to besiege its adversary and curb its sub-regional dominance, achieving regional control. Thus, Algiers, which still claims dominance and leadership in the Maghreb region, intends to use the Polisario militias to cut off Morocco from the other parts of the west Africa. For this reason, the establishment of a "pawn" state in the Sahara would ensure the success of this strategy².

The arms race competition between Algeria and Morocco has been frantic, and not only earned them the title of the most significant arms dealers within the African Continent. Further supporting my claim, Algeria and Morocco's competition for military advancement has had dire consequences for the regional security in Maghreb.

The rise of militarization in this geopolitical competition is becoming increasingly clear with the evidence of their military spending. According to SIPRI's 2025 estimates, Algeria is expected to spend \$18.3 billion on defense in 2024, which makes up roughly 7.2% of its GDP. This spending will cover the purchase of two Su-57 fighter jets, along with S-550 air defense missiles and submarines which are anticipated to adopt modern naval warfare³.

² Lounnas, D., & Messari, N. (2018). *Algeria–Morocco Relations and Their Impact on the Maghrebi Regional System*. MENARA Working Papers No. 20.

³ "Global Military Spending Surges amid War, Rising Tensions and Insecurity," SIPRI, April 22, 2024, <https://www.sipri.org/media/press-release/2024/global-military-spending-surges-amid-war-rising-tensions-and-insecurity>.

On the other hand, Morocco increased its defense expenditure to 13.4 billion dollars, which is 4.2% of GDP. Morocco's purchased asymmetric assets included advanced Israeli drones, missiles and Apache helicopters. Together, these two nations are forecasted to make up 87% of total military spending north Africa in 2024⁴. This increase was aimed at acquiring asymmetric assets, such as advanced Israeli drones, missiles, and Apache helicopters. Combined, these two countries account for 87 percent of the total military expenditure in North Africa in 2024.

An illustration of the Mearsheimer offensive realism framework, this arms race captures the tension in which countries compete for a larger share of power and wealth relative to each other. Morocco's collaboration with Israeli partners under the 'Abraham Accords' demonstrates the technological asymmetry warfare, which collides with Algeria's allocation of resources on traditional military combat.

In this vein, this rivalry over regional hegemony has dramatically raised the military spending budget, which has exacerbated the two countries' economic situation, as the two rivals are already suffering from weak economic growth and low gross domestic product. Moreover,

poverty and unemployment, illegal immigration, crime, and drug smuggling rates remain significantly high, explaining the continued protests and demonstrations against government policies. Therefore, the policy of marginalizing investment in vital sectors contributing to economic growth and improving the social status of citizens, such as education, health, and industry sector, in return for the focus on maximizing military capabilities as a top priority of the government agenda, has resulted mainly in an increase in security threats and the creation of a state of instability in the Maghreb.

Consequently, all these factors that fuel antagonism between the two parties over regional leadership have prompted a lack of security cooperation. Therefore, it has hindered the possibility of achieving regional integration and building a joint security policy and failed to shape a stable regional security system. In addition, this mistrust between the two leading powers in the region has hindered cooperation in collective security. It is still an obstacle to establishing the Maghreb Union as a regional organization like the European Union. Moreover, the two central states have disrupted the coherence of the sub-regional system and hindered any intention to realize a regional integration through the AMU project.

Analyzing the dynamics of the Maghreb security system through studying the relations and interactions among the region's units confirms that the Moroccan-Algerian rivalry has turned the Maghreb regional security into a bipolar system⁵.

Furthermore, the bipolar system in the Maghreb has produced fragile states revolving in the orbit of the region's two rivals. Morocco and Algeria behave as rational actors in the Maghreb who seek to preserve their national security, ensure their survival, and become regional hegemons. Therefore, their security policies are based on an offensive approach that seeks to maximize their security and military capabilities to achieve the status of the hegemon. However, survival is a prerequisite for the security policies of Morocco and Algeria, where the invasion of the other and the expansion by occupying its territory constitute the main threat they must counter.

The study of the Maghreb region through an offensive realism view necessitates dismantling the region's dynamics. To begin with, the pattern of enmity, for example, has a significant impact on the

⁴ Neil Halligan, "Morocco Plans to Increase Its Military Spending in Budget," AGBI, October 23, 2024, <https://www.agbi.com/industry/2024/10/morocco-plans-to-increase-its-military-spending/>.

⁵ Lounnas, D., & Messari, N. (2018).

relations and interactions among the units of the Maghreb states. These variables are based mainly on historical backgrounds that produce enmity between the RSC's units. In more precise terms, these patterns are influenced by factors of history, culture, religion, ethnicity, and geography, as indicated by Barry Buzan⁶. Therefore, it can either unite states through cooperation in the case of amity; otherwise, it can lead to conflict and hostility among states in the case of enmity.

As was previously stated, the Algerian-Moroccan rivalry over regional hegemony based on the historical dispute over borders and the issue of Western Sahara has produced lack of trust and cooperation between themselves. Thus, this lack of security cooperation to counter the multiple security threats, as the enmity factors hamper regional integration and push each party to maximize its power and make alliances with external actors in the race for the balance of power and distribution of power in the region. In short, it makes the Maghreb central states each other's security dilemma and potential threats.⁷

Morocco and Algeria build their security policies based on the maximization of their powers as much as they can; as J. Mearsheimer (1994-1995) said: "*the reason is straightforward: the greater the military advantage they hold over the other state, the more secure it is.*"⁸

Both sides regard the increase in Machiavellian power as their primary strategic goal, they operate under the principles of what realists like Glaser categorizes as "greedy" states. This means that they function as governments whose comforting expansion is not pursued for the sake of security, but rather for increasing the state's power. In Morocco's case, achieving what is the highest geopolitical objective encapsulated in the term "grand Maghreb" would permit it to dominate most of the Maghreb region as the de facto leading power of the region, given its historical claim as an old empire. Besides, Morocco would act as a suspensive power and challenge the existing situation, including the granting of sovereignty to Algeria over certain provinces like Bechar and Tindouf, which Morocco claims.

The consequences of antagonism between the Maghreb rivals stem from geographical contiguity which has resulted in a lack of trust in the relations between the countries and the fragility of their regional order, intensified by competition for resources and rapid militarization to achieve regional dominance.

In addition, the principle of Adjacency refers to the impact of a unity's security situation on the wider regional security of the rest of the regional units. In that case, the Libyan crisis is a real example of one where the civil War and chaos caused serious security repercussions on the security of the rest of the countries in the regional system.

Thus, addressing the issue of the Maghreb regional system and identifying its components and the most critical roles they can play in contrast to other sub-regional systems will contribute to identifying the primary entrances to the penetration of foreign powers in the Maghreb. The interests of imperial powers, be it political or economic, are claimed to be concomitant with the regions or relations of one of the allied fabrics. This accounts for the unceasing attempts at intervention in the region that has come to be associated either with the protection of foreign interests through the security of energy supplies or maximizing economic returns as with Libya, where superpowers, France, Russia, Turkey the US alongside NATO, sought to intervene and gain control of the oil and gas resources of Libya by toppling Gaddafi's regime.

⁶ Buzan, B., & Waever, O. (2003). *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security*. Cambridge University press.

⁷ Zaoui, Rabah. (2018). *The Establishment of Maghreb Regional System as a Security Complex: Reading through Copenhagen School Basics*. University of Tizi Ouzou.

⁸ MEARSHEIMER, J. (1994-95). *The False Promise of International Institutions*, International Security, Vol, 19, 3, 11–12. Massachusetts, MIT Press, pp.11–12.

Also, penetration policies in the Maghreb have accelerated since the Cold War period, due to the involvement of the US and France in support of Morocco. In contrast, the Soviet Union and its allies supported Algeria and the Polisario in the conflict over the Sahara. Penetration in the Maghreb may be through an invitation from one of the regional system's countries to intervene to balance the power of another country in the region. In that case, Israel penetrated the Maghreb regional security complex last year by normalizing diplomatic relations with Morocco. This Move resulted from several bilateral security and military agreements aimed primarily at strengthening the Israeli presence in this region and bolstering Morocco's military capabilities to ensure the balance of power with Algeria. The latter considered this penetration a threat to its national security and carried out a sharp diplomatic escalation against its rival, including economic sanctions, severing diplomatic relations, and a threat to declare war which would destabilize regional security.

It is noticeable that the units of the regional security system under analysis failed to achieve regional integration due to the exacerbation of the bilateral rivalry between Morocco and Algeria. This stands in stark contrast with the European regional security complex, whose countries succeeded in ensuring pure regional integration, specifically Germany and France, the two great powers of the EU, transcended the historical conflict between them. As a result, their democratic governments established a common security policy to counter regional security threats in the European sphere.

This explanation argues that the absence of democracy accompanied with the dominance of authoritarian elites in power, is the main reason why these states have failed in the security regional system. These policies foster civil discord and strife while foresting true security cooperation and solving interrelated political and economic challenges through anti-corruption and democratic governance policies, and the rule of law, are severely lacking.

NATO's partnership with Morocco has allowed for the expansion of its strategic interest within North Africa. The anticipation for the African Lion 2024 exercises was set at \$52 million, which already included the estimated spending of \$4 million from 7,800 tripped NATO member nations on counterterrorism, maritime security, and air exercises. Air exercises south of NATO's base in Spain further heightened Algeria's apprehension about NATO's movements in North Africa. NATO's partnership with Morocco represents a greater willingness for NATO to exert dominance in the southern region of the Mediterranean while Russia's influence over Algeria grows stronger. Furthermore, it poses a military challenge for Algeria's national aspirations. Algerian policymakers believe that NATO's counterterrorism activities serve as an anchor towards peace as they indiscriminately endorse Moroccan claims over Western Sahara.

In order to enhance consortium on renewable energy regarding the construction of green hydrogen facilities, Portugal and Spain formed a Green Partnership with Morocco in 2024. In an attempt to ease Russia's chokehold on gas following the Ukraine war, Algeria is angry because it sees this as an attempt to undermine Algeria's status as the principal energy supplier to Europe.

Algeria declared Spain and Italy as dependable gas suppliers, while tightening its bilateral contracts with them. The 2023 Sonatrach-ENI contract seeks to increase pipeline capacity for Algerian gas exports to Europe to further neutralize Moroccan diplomacy with renewable energy, while also trying to limit Energy stan diplomacy on renewable energy.

These Gulf countries have intensified their financial and diplomatic meddling in the Algeria conflict within the Maghreb region. The Saudi Emirati coalition has financially sponsored Morocco's military modernization and infrastructure development and has also politically supported Morocco's position towards the Western Sahara issue at the UN and other international organizations. To counter Saudi and UAE expansionist policies, Algeria has sought to improve relations with Qatar. This Qatari

funding of Algerian infrastructure projects not only acts as a substitute funding source, but also helps Algeria achieve its goal of reducing dependence on traditional partners such as Russia.

3.Strategic Alliances: Morocco-Israel Relations and Their Regional Implications.

It is possible to rely on the offensive realist perception in analyzing the dimensions of the newly formed alliance between Morocco and Israel. Although this alliance has sparked a great deal of controversy in Morocco, Algeria, and the rest of the Arab world, given the warm celebration that was received by the Israelis, this step was not easy for Moroccan decision-makers due to several considerations, the most important of which is the sensitivity of normalization with Israel for Arab and Islamic countries, and then the influence of the Palestinian issue, which is a central issue for Moroccan, Maghreb, and Arab-Islamic public opinion⁹.

Offensive realism stems from the hypothesis of the anarchy of the international system, and since the states as regional and global powers are the main actors in this anarchic system; this means that this international system is not subject to a supreme or high authority that protects states

from each other. For this reason, states seek to maximize their offensive capabilities and strength to achieve hegemony and supremacy. In this case, Morocco and Israel seek to use this alliance to implement an offensive strategy against their opponents in order to ensure their superiority in their spheres. In its effort to consolidate its oil exports, Israel has pursued an aggressive policy followed by an alliance with several Arab countries with the aim of developing a military-security coalition or a Middle-Eastern NATO to counter and contain Iran and its anti-expansionist proxies. Hence, this alliance with the Arab countries will afford Israel important strategic objectives which include enhancing the acceptance of the Hebrew state by the Arabs and the resolution of the conflict in relations to Israel's favor, and will also guarantee the enjoyment of regional actors and powers to help Tel Aviv in any offensive actions against Iran - the mutual enemy.

At the same time, Morocco strives to achieve security, military superiority, and regional hegemony over the Maghreb by maximizing military capabilities and sophisticated weapon technologies through Israel. This not only helps Morocco maintain a semblance of power balance with Algeria as its adversary, but also ensures robust defense. The Abrahams Accords were a catalyst that Morocco's military spending and in the process doubling its defense budget from \$8.32 billion dollars in 2016 to \$16.74 billion dollars in 2020. This was part of a strategy to achieve regional hegemony which stayed in stride until mid 2021 when it saw a slight decrease of \$330,000 dollars. However, in the 2022 Finance Act, Parliament approved the inclusion of \$12.74 billion for "acquisition and repair of equipment for the Royal Armed Forces" which suggests Morocco still has a desire to fully cement itself as a magnate in the region.

The offensive realist assumption indicates that states possess offensive capabilities and always aspire to maximize their power fully applies to the bilateral alliance. Increasing the offensive capabilities of Israel and Morocco mainly serves their strategic ambitions in regional hegemony and attacking their opponents to end long-term regional conflicts that threaten national security and the survival of the two allies, whether the Israeli-Palestinian conflict for Israel or the Western Sahara conflict with Algeria for Morocco.

As argued by Mearsheimer it is difficult for countries to know the true intentions of hostile states, and Iran and Algeria are no exception to this, as they continue to threaten their opponents and adopt

⁹ (n.d.). *Arab Barometer Wave VI part III (March-April 2021)*. Arab Barometer. <https://www.arabbarometer.org/surveys/covid-19-survey/>

hostile policies and strategies that pose a real threat to national security and the existence of Morocco and Israel. Due to the lack of diplomatic communication or channels of dialogue between the conflicting parties, their opponents' actions are deemed unpredictable. This is seen as one of the most decisive motives and reasons why they decided to form this alliance to strengthen their offensive and deterrent strategies. Countries always try to get stronger to ensure their survival and protect their national security by using all the tools they must attack and fend off any potential aggressors.

By virtue of the fact that states are rational actors according to the offensive realistic perception, which means that they search for opportunities to pursue their own interests and can formulate strategies to increase their power, Moroccan and Israeli leaders take a realistic and practical approach based on strengthening their fronts by forming security alliances with advanced offensive capabilities that can assert their hard power in their respective regions.

Offensive realism differs from its opposite, defensive realism, in the level of power that states seek to achieve. While defensive realists argue that it is unwise for states to seek to maximize their power, given that the anarchic system will punish powers that seek to maximize their strength, particularly those countries that recklessly seek to achieve hegemony, the other great powers will seek to form alliances in order to counter and contain this growing power, making the latter less secure and possibly destroying it. As happened with Napoleonic France (1792–1815), Imperial Germany (1900–1918), and Nazi Germany (1933–1945)¹⁰. On the other hand, the offensive realists take a different position, as they consider that states are constantly seeking to increase the level of their power whenever they can do so, and that they must, if circumstances allow them, seek hegemony. Aggression or hegemony are not good things in and of themselves but possessing the potential to be very powerful is the best way to ensure their survival. This is why states form alliances and invest in human, economic, and military capabilities that can serve their ambitions to dominate and achieve superiority over their rivals.

From this realistic offensive standpoint, Morocco and Israel, through their alliance, do not seek to ensure a balance of power with their opponents, but rather to achieve hegemony over the region by advancing and developing their military capabilities, focusing on military technological superiority, and building an army with strong offensive capabilities capable of imposing control over their sphere of influence.

Rabat's decision makers believe that the alliance with Israel will offer them great gains on several levels, the most important of which is that the Abraham Agreement, signed tripartitely with the United States as a Mediator, stipulates Washington's recognition of Rabat's full sovereignty over the Western Sahara regions, which is a crushing diplomatic victory over Algeria and its existing foreign policy, which has been based since the seventies on preventing its neighbor from winning the conflict over the Sahara region¹¹. In addition to this, this alliance with Tel Aviv provided Rabat with influence in the corridors of the White House and decision-making in Washington, which became evident in the important military support that America provides to Morocco and in support of its plans and security strategies in the aspiration of geopolitical supremacy in North Africa.

Economically, Washington and Tel Aviv pledge economic support to Rabat worth three billion dollars in the form of investments in vital economic sectors, establishing airlines between Israel and Morocco to boost Moroccan tourism, where tens of thousands of Israelis of Moroccan origin are expected to visit the North African country yearly, this bilateral cooperation led to an unprecedented development

¹⁰ Waltz, Kenneth N. *Theory of International Politics*, 1979. <https://doi.org/10.1604/9780075548522>.

¹¹ Abouzzohour, Yasmina, and Order from Chaos. "Morocco's Partial Normalization with Israel Comes with Risks and Gains." *Brookings*, December 14, 2020. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2020/12/14/moroccos-partial-normalization-with-israel-comes-with-risks-and-gains/>.

in sectors of mutual interest such as tourism, health, agriculture, water, industry, education, and technology, while seeking to increase trade exchange to about \$500 million.¹²

The most important thing in the Abraham accord is related to the security and military aspect, Since Morocco aspires to achieve regional supremacy, it was keen to obtain strong military support from Tel Aviv and Washington, which includes the delivery of advanced weapons and the signing of advanced military agreements, including the intensive training of the Moroccan army and its enabling of military technology such as the manufacture and development of drones and the modernization of its air force¹³. Morocco has adopted a military strategy called the Five- Year Plan (2017–2022) with an estimated budget of about \$20 billion, aiming to make the Moroccan army the most powerful in the Maghreb region by significantly increasing the defense and armament budget and purchasing highly advanced weapons that its rival neighbor, Algeria, does not have¹⁴.

This was achieved by Morocco acquiring many drones and modern defense systems from the United States and Israel and also signing a military agreement to manufacture Israeli kamikaze drones in Morocco¹⁵. Currently, the Moroccan army has American F-16 Block 50/52 fighter jets, then the advanced F-16 Viper model, as well as Apache combat helicopters and M1A1 Abrams battle tanks, then advanced anti-tank weapons, warplanes, and electronic intelligence weapons. On the Israeli advanced BARACK 8 air defense system¹⁶.

The agreement to create the nucleus of a Moroccan military industry in cooperation with Israel raised security concerns in Algeria. Algeria accuses Morocco of having an aggressive offensive policy by forming an alliance with Israel and bringing it into the region. Algiers accuses Rabat of spying on Algerian leaders and supporting attacks by separatist groups, which the Moroccan government denies. As a result, Algeria broke off diplomatic ties with Morocco and put economic and political sanctions in place against it¹⁷.

4. Geopolitical Implications of Moroccan-Algerian Rivalry in the Maghreb

The Moroccan-Israeli alliance agreement has led to important geostrategic dynamics in the Maghreb region, as the American recognition of the Moroccan Western Sahara in accordance with the agreement signed between Rabat, Tel Aviv and Washington on December 20, 2020, brought the conflict back to the fore, as the Polisario Front, supported by Algeria, responded by withdrawing from the UN cease-fire and declaring war against Morocco¹⁸. The latter succeeded in imposing control over the Sahara territories and the Guerguarat crossing with Mauritania, as well as transforming the area behind

¹² The Economic Ties Between Israel and Morocco Are Growing Stronger. www.gov.il/en/departments/news/morocco240322. Accessed 23 Oct. 2022.

¹³ Le point Afrique, (2022, July 21). *Maroc-Israël : au-delà de l'alliance militaire, des projets industriels*. Le Point. Retrieved December 4, 2022, from https://www.lepoint.fr/afrique/maroc-israel-au-dela-de-l-alliance-militaire-des-projets-industriels-21-07-2022-2483929_3826.php

¹⁴ "Morocco-Algeria Conflict: Spain's Role and Medium-term Scenarios Deadline. Global Affairs. University of Navarra- Global Affairs and Strategic Studies." *Global Affairs and Strategic Studies*, 4 May 2022, en.unav.edu/web/global-affairs/conflictomarruecos-argelia-papel-de-espana-y-escenarios-a-medio-plazo.

¹⁵ Al Chamekh, A. S. (2022, August 10). America is betting on strengthening the Moroccan-Israeli alliance to confront Iran and Russia. *Hespress*.

¹⁶ "Morocco: The Maghreb's New Military Powerhouse | Atalayar - Las Claves Del Mundo En Tus Manos." *Atalayar*, 1 July 2022, atalayar.com/en/content/morocco-maghrebs-new-military-powerhouse.

¹⁷ Ahmed, Hamid Ould. "Algeria Cuts Diplomatic Relations With Morocco | Reuters." *Reuters*, 25 Aug. 2021, www.reuters.com/world/algeria-says-cutting-diplomatic-ties-with-morocco-2021-08-24.

¹⁸ What Morocco's Agreement With Israel Means for the Wider Middle East | Council on Foreign Relations. "What Morocco's Agreement With Israel Means for the Wider Middle East | Council on Foreign Relations," November 17, 2021. <https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/what-moroccos-agreement-israel-means-wider-middle-east>.

the security barrier into a forbidden area and a red line in which its air forces periodically target any military move by the Polisario and Algeria. Morocco has taken advantage of the support of the U.S. and Israel, as well as the backing of the Gulf States, when it comes to the Sahara issue. It has used offensive diplomacy against its opponents and even some of its traditional partners. This is similar to the diplomatic crisis with Germany and Spain, which was caused by their opposition to the U.S. decision and geostrategic changes that were meant to end the balance of power in Morocco's favor.

John Mearsheimer bases his offensive realist theory on the concept of hegemony. As he emphasized, "*a hegemon is a state that is so powerful that it dominates all the other states in the system.*" He also made a distinction between *global hegemons*, which control the whole world, and *regional hegemons*, which dominate distinct geographical areas¹⁹.

Through Maersheimer's concept of hegemony, it can be said that both Algeria and Morocco are seeking to impose their regional centrality with the aim of becoming a hegemon in the region, and this can only be achieved by harvesting many gains, most notably the recognition of international powers that any regional arrangements in the Maghreb must pass through taking the interests of the "regional power or hegemon" into account. Thus, the major countries are competing to placate this regional power in order to utilize its position in its wider international conflict, urging it to strengthen it on the one hand, and to ensure its stability and continuity on the other hand.

The balance of power constitutes the basis of competition between Morocco and Algeria, but the presence of leaders who have a tendency towards maximizing power, based on their personalities (Hassan II and Boumedien) or on their political ideologies and agendas in each of the two countries, enhances the permanence and continuity of the conflict²⁰.

John Mearsheimer argues that a state's behavior is based on fear and mistrust of other competing states. This is because states always expect danger because they don't trust the intentions of their rivals. For this reason, the state is always seeking to maximize its power and capabilities in case they are attacked or face aggression. Also, the lack of an international central authority to which the state can turn in the event of threat or aggression makes the state more cautious about the intentions of other powers. As a result, states act for self-help or form temporary or permanent alliances based on common interests to attack and destroy their enemies²¹.

In the case of Morocco and Algeria, since the signing of the Moroccan-Israeli alliance with US support, the relations between the two regional powers in North Africa have been greatly strained, and this has had a serious impact on the Maghreb regional dynamics, as Algeria became fearful and suspicious of the Moroccan-Israeli rapprochement step, considering this controversial alliance as an offensive strategy that threatens Algerian national security and seeks to impose a *fait-accompli* in the region and achieve geostrategic goals at the expense of Algeria's interests and security²².

As a sign of this tension, the first half of 2021 witnessed numerous military exercises on both sides of the border. While Algeria's Chief of Staff and senior official in the Algerian People's National Army, *Saïd Chengriha*, led a large-scale training operation for the Algerian army with live ammunition in the third military region in Tindouf near the Moroccan border in mid- January, Morocco, in turn, hosted the African Lion military exercises in June 2021, which are led by *AFRICOM* forces and participated by NATO North Atlantic and other allies forces. These exercises increased Algeria's apprehension,

¹⁹ Mearsheimer, John J, 2001, p 40

²⁰ Walid Abdel Hay, (2014), Moroccan-Algerian Relations: The Geostrategic Knot, Arab Siyassat Journal, Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies.

²¹ Mearsheimer, John J, 2001, p 32

²² Chaabane, H. (2021, October 27). Morocco-Israel Alliance Sparks Rapprochement Between Algeria and Iran. *The New Khalij*.

especially since a number of air maneuvers took place at the Moroccan *Jarir Lebouhi* base, which is located only kilometers from the Western Sahara and also not far from the Algerian border²³.

However, tensions will deepen following the meeting of the Non-Aligned Countries in Baku, Azerbaijan in 2021, when Morocco's permanent ambassador to the United Nations, Omar Hilal, calls for support for the independence of the Kabylie region in Algeria. Then some international newspapers reported that Moroccan intelligence used the Israeli Pegasus spy program, as Algeria officially accused Morocco of spying on Algerian officials and diplomats. In addition to accusing Morocco of supporting the MAK movement in Kabylia to secede, claiming that these hostilities aim to destabilize Algeria's national security, which led to the announcement of the decision to officially sever diplomatic relations by Algeria and recall its ambassador in Rabat in August 2021.

Moreover, the escalation continued when Algeria announced a new escalation by banning Moroccan civil and military aviation from passing through Algerian airspace and justified its decision by accusing Morocco of carrying out hostile acts and normalization with the Zionist entity—in reference to the Israeli state. In addition, Algerians officially announced the severance of the Maghreb-Europe gas pipeline, which transferred Algerian gas through Morocco to Spain.

These repercussions led to the creation of a new polarization situation and turned the region into a cold regional war similar to the Cold War between the western and eastern camps, where the two sides sought to attract major allied powers to support each side's claim to hegemony over the region. In this way, Mearsheimer stressed that the state's focus on self-help does not prevent it from forming alliances, and these alliances are based on common interests. Morocco concluded a military agreement with Israel, which is considered the first of its kind between the Hebrew state and an Arab Islamic country. The agreement allows Morocco to easily acquire high-tech Israeli security equipment and achieve advanced military security cooperation, which outlines security cooperation between the two countries in its various forms in the face of "threats and challenges in the region." declared the Israeli Defense Minister Benny Gantz²⁴.

A year earlier, Morocco signed a military agreement with the United States that would last from 2020 to 2030. This agreement was meant to modernize Morocco's military and defense industries and give the Moroccan royal military forces more support and training from the US military²⁵.

On the other hand, Algeria has strengthened its rapprochement with Russia and even with Iran, albeit secretly, as a step in response to Moroccan foreign policy. Algeria seeks to confront the offensive policies of Morocco and Israel by rapprochement with Iran, the staunch enemy of Tel Aviv, where it maintains good diplomatic relations despite the lack of strong security and military cooperation. Nevertheless, Algeria is counting on Russia, its traditional strategic ally, in developing its military arsenal and obtaining the latest weapons such as submarines, ballistic missiles, and air defense systems²⁶. In addition, it supports the penetration and increase of Russian influence in the Sahel region, which serves its interests and goals in becoming a regional power. This rapprochement was evident through Algeria's

²³ "African Lion 21 Exercise Begins With 7,800 Troops in Morocco, Tunisia, Senegal." *United States Africa Command*, www.africom.mil/pressrelease/33798/african-lion-21-exercise-begins-with-7800-troops-in-morocco-tunisia-senegal. Accessed 28 Oct. 2022.

²⁴ Kubovich, Yaniv. "In Landmark Morocco Visit, Gantz Inks Defense Pact That Paves the Way for Arms Sales - Israel News - Haaretz.com." *Haaretz.com*, www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2021-11-24/ty-article/in-landmark-morocco-visit-gantz-inks-defense-pact-that-paves-the-way-for-arms-sales/0000017f-db22-d3a5-af7f-fbae3ca80000. Accessed 28 Oct. 2022.

²⁵ "U.S., Morocco Chart Defense Cooperation Through 2030 > U.S. Department of Defense > Defense Department News." *U.S. Department of Defense*, www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/2369742/us-morocco-chart-defense-cooperation-through-2030. Accessed 28 Oct. 2022.

²⁶ "An Overview of Russia-Algeria Military Cooperation &Ndash; New Defence Order. Strategy." *New Defence Order. Strategy*, 21 Apr. 2020, dfnc.ru/en/vtc/an-overview-of-russia-algeria-military-cooperation.

unofficial bias in supporting Moscow in its war against Ukraine, as it refused in all international meetings to condemn Russia and rejected European and American pressure to increase gas exports to compensate for Russian gas by restarting the gas pipeline passing through Morocco. On the other hand, Morocco took a somewhat neutral stance at first. However, in recent weeks, some newspaper reports reported that Morocco provided military support to Ukraine as the first African country at an American request. This illustrates Rabat's recent tendency to strengthen its rapprochement with Washington in its foreign policies²⁷.

If it is true that Algerian-Russian cooperation may amount to the establishment of a Russian military base in Oran, as reported by some newspapers, this means a disruption of the military balances in the region in favor of Russia at the expense of Europe, which results in a change in the engagement rules.

However, the Russian and Israeli moves in the Maghreb may lead to a further explosion of relations between the two neighboring countries and to the creation of international polarization around the region, in connection with the tensions that define Russian relations with NATO.

In order to besiege Morocco regionally and impede its strategy of achieving regional hegemony, Algeria recently made an alliance with the Qais Said regime in Tunisia, providing it with political and economic support to ensure its continuity. On the other hand, Tunisia sided with Algeria and the Polisario in the Sahara issue. Tunisia decided not to vote in favor of Resolution S/843/2021, which was issued by the United Nations Security Council in 2021. Tunisia also invited the leader of the Polisario Front to attend the Japan-Africa Summit (TICAD) in August 2022. This caused a diplomatic crisis between Rabat and Tunisia²⁸.

5. Offensive Realism Analysis and Key Findings

Looking at the Morocco-Algeria rivalry through a framework of offensive realism suggests profound consequences regarding the competition for stability within the regional security structure of the Maghreb. This section analyzes the relative newness of the struggle for regional hegemony and its impacts on the changing geopolitical realities and security relations of North Africa, especially in the wake of emerging events of 2020-2024.

The findings of the study based on offensive realism showed how Morocco's strategy of achieving power is particularly evident in the improvement of her offensive military capacity. Morocco's sophisticated military hardware acquisitions, including advanced Israeli drones in 2023, and the setting up of joint military hardware production plants supports this claim. Morocco's "older" strategy of military expansion has been replaced with one that emphasizes asymmetric warfare, specifically in cyberspace and with drones. This change has greatly increased the existential threat Algeria feels according to Mearsheimer's concepts of security competition in anarchic international systems.

The rivalry now has a military aspect owing to Morocco's increase in air and drone warfare spending as well its more effective surveillance of maritime traffic along its Mediterranean coastline. Algeria's response was greater military cooperation with Russia through new arms contracts in 2023 and joint military exercises, along with further expansion of Algeria's drone program and cyber capabilities.

Morocco succeeding in boosting its influence over the Western Sahara diplomatic tussle in the wake of the Abraham accords and has been strategically ambiguous in several international conflicts to

²⁷ Kirichenko, D. (2022, December 21). *Morocco Breaks Africa's Neutrality with Arms for Ukraine — Reports*. CEPA. <https://cepa.org/article/morocco-breaks-africas-neutrality-with-arms-for-ukraine/>

²⁸ "Morocco and Tunisia Feud After Self-proclaimed Western Sahara Leader Visits Tunis." *Le Monde.fr*, 28 Oct. 2022, www.lemonde.fr/en/le-monde-africa/article/2022/09/01/the-diplomatic-crisis-between-tunis-and-rabat-over-western-sahara-is-showing-no-signs-of-abating_5995479_124.html

gain maximal diplomatic benefits. Algeria has tried to counter this by boosting its cooperation with Russia and China, while trying to portray itself as the go to energy partner for the European countries that are looking for alternatives to Russian gas.

1.The consequences and risks posed by the Arab powers' conflict is persistent in certain key domains:

1. **Regional Integration:** The available opportunities for economic growth, cooperation, and integration at the regional level have remained dormant due to the existing conflict, thereby stalling the AMU's efforts. Recent initiatives to restore bilateral regional cooperation tend to be systematically sabotaged by lingering inter-state antagonisms.
2. **Cooperation on Counter-Terrorism:** The existence of like-minded extremist threats in the Sahel region should logically lead to greater counter-terrorism collaboration, however, it is almost non-existent as most states implement unilateral, often disjointed, counter-terrorism policies, which severely obstruct cooperation.
3. **Maritime Security:** Both states have increased their naval expansion, surveillance, and military activity in the wars, and brought further competition into the aerial and naval areas, which has changed the balance of power in the Mediterranean and has implications for the security of energy infrastructure and regional maritime security.
4. **Cybersecurity:** There has been much competition over the development of cyber attack and defense technologies, which poses a greater challenge to a country's security. Both countries aggressively seek and obtain advanced offensive and defensive cyber attributes, usually through alliance with third parties.

The discourse has significantly shifted over the past months, with Morocco adopting a less aggressive stance while still persisting with holistic economic and security partnerships. Algeria, whilst remaining combatively diplomatic, has taken some constructive reforms in its approach to the European energy partners.

These findings imply that global rivalry has escalated into a new phase, which is characterized by:

- 1.Enhanced advancement in military power and strategic planning.
- 2.Increased focus on warfare technologies and cyber capabilities.
- 3.Intricate patterns of international alignment and partnership.
- 4.Increased influence on regional economic and security deals.

These changes can be understood through the lens of offensive realism, which posits competition to be a fundamental reality of an anarchical system. While both states seem to be engaging in the pursuit of hegemony, it appears that they are doing so in a more complex and multifunctional ways.

These findings are of great significance in neighboring countries' stability. In the region, any form of economic competition, especially investing in renewable energy and digital infrastructure, has intensified, as well as the arms race which is now not only limited to conventional warfare but also includes advanced technologies and cyber warfare. This situation has resulted in increased volatility and complexity of the security environment in the Maghreb region.

Evaluating future scenarios, this rivalry could worsen as both states are likely to pursue deeper military modernization and build further strategic alliances. External state involvement, especially in the provision of sophisticated weaponry and political backing, will continue to be vital in determining the

regional equilibrium of power. There still remain high tensions and clashes in the region due to the lack of any effective means of regional conflict resolution and security collaboration which calls for fresh considerations toward the regional security framework of the Maghreb.

6. Policy Recommendations for Mitigating Moroccan-Algerian Rivalry

With Morocco and Algeria being in a geopolitical rivalry, the two countries will be analyzed through the lens of offensive realism. During the analysis, some attention is given to ineffective policies that must be reformed and that are aimed at tension reduction and prevention of the further decay of the Maghreb region. The proposed solutions aim at addressing disputes while fostering inter-regional cooperation:

1. The EU has strained energy links with Morocco and Algeria, but these can be utilized to promote integration on the region. The EU should purposefully link green hydrogen projects to existing renewable energy cooperation frameworks with Morocco, Algeria, and Mauritania. For instance, the EU could make funding Morocco's Noor IV solar plant and Algeria's Sonatrach hydrogen pipeline contingent on the projects undergoing joint engineering committees for the best possible allocation of the energy and other related infrastructure. These actions would reduce reliance on Russian energy while simultaneously increasing dependence on Morocco and Algeria, thereby providing impetus for economic talk has its merits.

2. The development of cyber warfare capabilities as a major facet of the Moroccan-Algerian conflict creates the need for a proactive approach within the African Union to lessen the chances of escalation. The AU should create a cyber stability task force with the following objectives:

- Establish protocols that facilitate the exchange of information within the Union.
- Create regional cybersecurity norms and measures intended to foster trust.
- Implement measures to enhance the capacity of organizations to undertake defensible cyber capabilities.

Any such framework would assist in providing comprehensive measures against such retaliatory cyberstrikes and conflicts while achieving greater regional cyber resilience.

3. Due to the involvement of outside stakeholders like NATO and Russia in the Maghreb region, it becomes crucial to implement crisis management procedures to prevent unintentional escalation of violence. There should be some degree of bridge building between NATO and Russian counterparts to develop boundaries for military maneuvers and the transfer of armaments within North Africa. These could comprise:

- Between NATO's Southern Command (AFRICOM) and Russian military advisors based in Algeria who supervise the country.
- Norms on airspace limits during joint exercises that include restrictions to only within a specified geographical area.

Such strategies would help maintain control over clash of arms while ensuring a proper balance of power within the region.

4. The deadlock involving Western Sahara has remained the most sensitive dispute between Morocco and Algeria. To a certain extent, some minimum confidence building actions (CBA) could help to deal with this problem over an extended period to assist in conflict resolution. These could be:

- A zone monitored by the UN without military forces on either side.
- Aid programs conducted in the refugee camps located in the vicinity of Tindouf.
- Routine communications between the military authorities of Algeria and Morocco to avert border accidents.

While these measures may fail to resolve the territorial issue entirely, they would succeed in minimizing the suspicion and allowing space for substantial talks to take place.

5. While the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) has encountered a standstill because of the Moroccan-Algerian frictions, changing its institutional structure may enable the AMU to facilitate cooperation among its members. Suggested changes include:

- Implementation of a rotating presidency among state members.
- Concentration of the AMU agenda on core concerns like counter-terrorism, climate, and development.
- Creating an internal body to mediate disputes between member states.
- Reinvigorating the AMU would improve the stability of the region and help North Africa to participate more fully in the initiatives of the African Union.

6. Morocco is economically and politically supported by Qatar, who has close relations with Algeria, as Saudi Arabia and the UAE have a lot of non-controlled influence on Morocco. These states can constructively intervene as mediators by:

- Encouraging informal dialogue between Morocco and Algeria.
- Linking economic aid to reducing tensions and conflict.
- Organizing multilateral meetings on regional Arab security that would be sponsored by the Arab League.

This would serve the Saudi goal of stabilizing North Africa in conjunction with the international agenda of reducing tensions.

References

- Abdel Hay, Walid. "Moroccan-Algerian Relations: The Geostrategic Knot." *Arab Siyassat Journal*. Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, 2014.
- Abouzzohour, Yasmina. "Morocco's Partial Normalization with Israel Comes with Risks and Gains." *Order from Chaos* (blog), Brookings Institution. December 14, 2020. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2020/12/14/moroccos-partial-normalization-with-israel-comes-with-risks-and-gains/>.
- Ahmed, Hamid Ould. "Algeria Cuts Diplomatic Relations With Morocco." Reuters, August 25, 2021. <https://www.reuters.com/world/algeria-says-cutting-diplomatic-ties-with-morocco-2021-08-24>.
- Akrimi, Yasmine. *Algeria-Morocco Tensions: A Costly Conflict*. Brussels: Brussels International Center, 2021.

- Al Chamekh, A. S. "America is Betting on Strengthening the Moroccan-Israeli Alliance to Confront Iran and Russia." *Hespress*, August 10, 2022.
- Arab Barometer. *Wave VI Part III*. March–April 2021. <https://www.arabbarometer.org/surveys/covid-19-survey/>.
- Bakrim, Tilila Sara. *Rivalité Maroc-Algérie : La Guerre Des Récits*. Paris: Foundation pour la Recherche Stratégique, 2022.
- Buzan, Barry, and Ole Waever. *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Chaabane, H. "Morocco-Israel Alliance Sparks Rapprochement Between Algeria and Iran." *The New Khalij*, October 27, 2021.
- Chtatou, Mohamed. "The Middle East NATO: From Fiction to Fact." Washington Institute for Near East Policy. October 12, 2022. <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/middle-east-nato-fiction-fact>.
- EGOZI, ARIE. "Morocco Buys Advanced Weapon Systems from Israel, Including UAVs for Intelligence Gathering." *Defense Procurement International*, 2022. www.defenceprocurementinternational.com/news/air/morocco-buys-advanced-weapon-systems-from-israel.
- Fuente Cobo, Ignacio. "Security Policies in the Maghreb from the Perspective of Offensive Realism." *Journal of the Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies* 14 (2019): 45–67.
- Kasraoui, Safaa. "Morocco Sets Up Budget of Nearly \$11 Billion for Defense in 2023." *Morocco World News*, October 5, 2022. <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2022/10/351973/morocco-sets-up-budget-of-nearly-11-billion-for-defense-in-2023>.
- Kirichenko, Daria. "Morocco Breaks Africa's Neutrality with Arms for Ukraine — Reports." Center for European Policy Analysis (CEPA). December 21, 2022. <https://cepa.org/article/morocco-breaks-africas-neutrality-with-arms-for-ukraine/>.
- Kubovich, Yaniv. "In Landmark Morocco Visit, Gantz Inks Defense Pact That Paves the Way for Arms Sales." *Haaretz*, November 24, 2021. <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2021-11-24/ty-article/in-landmark-morocco-visit-gantz-inks-defense-pact-that-paves-the-way-for-arms-sales/0000017f-db22-d3a5-af7f-fbae3ca80000>.
- Le Point Afrique. "Maroc-Israël : Au-delà de l'Alliance Militaire, des Projets Industriels." July 21, 2022. https://www.lepoint.fr/afrique/maroc-israel-au-dela-de-l-alliance-militaire-des-projets-industriels-21-07-2022-2483929_3826.php.
- Lounnas, Djallil, and Nizar Messari. "Algeria–Morocco Relations and Their Impact on the Maghrebi Regional System." *MENARA Working Papers* No. 20. European University Institute, 2018.
- Mearsheimer, John J. "The False Promise of International Institutions." *International Security* 19, no. 3 (Winter 1994/1995): 5–49.
- "Morocco: The Maghreb's New Military Powerhouse." *Atalayar*, July 1, 2022. <https://atalayar.com/en/content/morocco-maghrebs-new-military-powerhouse>.

- "Morocco-Algeria Conflict: Spain's Role and Medium-term Scenarios." *Global Affairs*. University of Navarra, May 4, 2022. <https://en.unav.edu/web/global-affairs/conflicto-marruecos-argelia-papel-de-espana-y-escenarios-a-medio-plazo>.
- "Morocco and Tunisia Feud After Self-Proclaimed Western Sahara Leader Visits Tunis." *Le Monde*, September 1, 2022. https://www.lemonde.fr/en/le-monde-africa/article/2022/09/01/the-diplomatic-crisis-between-tunis-and-rabat-over-western-sahara-is-showing-no-signs-of-abating_5995479_124.html.
- "Morocco Breaks Africa's Neutrality with Arms for Ukraine — Reports." Center for European Policy Analysis (CEPA). December 21, 2022. <https://cepa.org/article/morocco-breaks-africas-neutrality-with-arms-for-ukraine/>.
- "Morocco-Israel Defense Pact Paves Way for Arms Sales." Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs. March 24, 2022. <https://www.gov.il/en/departments/news/morocco240322>.
- "An Overview of Russia-Algeria Military Cooperation." *New Defence Order. Strategy*, April 21, 2020. <https://dfnc.ru/en/vtc/an-overview-of-russia-algeria-military-cooperation/>.
- Neil Halligan, "Morocco Plans to Increase Its Military Spending in Budget," AGBI, October 23, 2024, <https://www.agbi.com/industry/2024/10/morocco-plans-to-increase-its-military-spending/>.
- United States Africa Command. "African Lion 21 Exercise Begins With 7,800 Troops in Morocco, Tunisia, Senegal." Press release. June 7, 2021. <https://www.aficom.mil/pressrelease/33798/african-lion-21-exercise-begins-with-7800-troops-in-morocco-tunisia-senegal>.
- United States Department of Defense. "U.S., Morocco Chart Defense Cooperation Through 2030." News release. September 14, 2022. <https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/2369742/us-morocco-chart-defense-cooperation-through-2030/>.
- Waltz, Kenneth N. *Theory of International Politics*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979. <https://doi.org/10.1604/9780075548522>.
- "What Morocco's Agreement with Israel Means for the Wider Middle East." Council on Foreign Relations. November 17, 2021. <https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/what-moroccos-agreement-israel-means-wider-middle-east>.
- Zaoui, Rabah. "The Establishment of Maghreb Regional System as a Security Complex: Reading through Copenhagen School Basics." PhD diss., University of Tizi Ouzou, 2018.

Copyrights

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).