

# Skewed Geopolitics and the Instrumentalization of Disinformation: *Analysis of Misinformation on Algeria's Arms Deal with Russian Federation*

Farida Bouattoura

Founder and Director, Advocating for Democratic Values and Need of Civil Engagement, New York, NY, United States

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## ABSTRACT

The question remains would arms deal of over 7 billion dollars supplied by the Russian Federation for Algeria be an exaggerated purchase? Once more, numbers and data out of context are means of manipulation and spreading false information. It is always necessary to build context, to form a base of accurate and transparent analysis. According to SIPRI Fact Sheet, “Russia was the largest supplier to Africa in 2017–21”, accounting for 44% of arms deals (Sipri, 2021). This sheds light on the relativity of the purchase. Algeria’s choice of supplier is in line with most African arms purchases. The next question is the relativity of military imports in the region? The article also discuss utilization of incomplete data is an off-balance approach, an act of manipulating the public, and relevance of geopolitics. Algeria has enormous land borders in Africa, with instability, conflicts, and hostility from all the bordering countries.

**Keywords:** Geopolitics, Maghreb, Instrumentalization, Disinformation, Algeria, and Military Spending.

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## INTRODUCTION

Algeria is the 11th global arms importer from 2017-2021, with a share of global arms imports (%) of 2.9 from 2017-2021, a decreasing trend from 2012-2016’s 3.9 percent change from 2012–16 to 2017–2021 (Sipri, 2021). Egypt, another Arab north African country, is ranked 3rd global importer with 5.7% of the total global market from 2017-2021. Significantly increasing from 2012-2016 by 3.2, and a sharp incline of 73 percent change (Sipri, 2021). Hence, Algeria is by no means overspending, nor is it showing an increasing trend. The figures illustrate the contrary. Algeria had decreased its purchases when others in the region significantly increased.

## ANALYSIS OF ALGERIAN MILITARY SPENDING

### *Comparison to Morocco*

Furthermore, the Trump Administration approved “up to \$10 billion in new arms sales to Morocco in 2019 alone, including 25 new F-16 jets, 36 Apache attack helicopters, TOW missiles, and missile launchers, and an upgrade of Morocco’s existing 23 F-16.” (Morocco, 2021) Therefore, a focus on Algeria’s military purchases in 2021 is somewhat skewed, when Morocco, a significantly smaller country, made a radical up to 10 billion dollars in 2019 with the Trump Administration alone. This, of course, does not include arms deals and several purchases it made from Israel and other partners. Such documentation raises eyebrows about the transparency of their arms purchases. Selling billions of powerful weaponry to a country that is full of debt and incapable of meeting basic operations; “U.S. bilateral aid, totalling \$41 million in FY2021, seeks to improve Morocco’s education system, local governance, livelihood opportunities, and military capabilities.” (Morocco, 2021) It is also worth noting that Moroccan boundaries total 3,523.5 km, bordering only Mauritania and Algeria (The-world-factbook).

### *Algerian Military Need*

By comparison to Algeria’s 6,734 km, Morocco has but half of the territory and would not need the same supply as Algeria. Algeria is the largest country in Africa, with violence and instability from all its borders. According to the CIA factbook, land boundaries in Algeria total: 6,734 km, with six border countries Libya, 989 km. Mali 1359 km, Mauritania 460 km, Morocco 1941 km, Niger 951 km, and Tunisia 1034 km. The State Department also warns of

the situation at and near the borders “Avoid travel to rural areas within 50 km (31 miles) of the border with Tunisia and 250 km (155 miles) of the borders with Libya, Niger, Mali, and Mauritania due to terrorist and criminal activities, including kidnapping.” It is inevitable and necessary to have a large military with significant supplies. Therefore, there is nothing out of the ordinary nor exaggerated about arms deal with the region’s largest supplier, and with the significant and challenging situation at all the borders of the largest country in Africa. In comparison, Algeria’s military needs far outweighs Morocco’s. And with the logic that 7 billion in 2021 is excessive, then 10 billion in 2019 would be significantly more excessive. Not to mention the fact that Algeria’s 7 billion total is over ten years, and grossly misinterpreted by the spread of disinformation-as Algerian total arms deals in 2021 total of 150 million. (Sipri). Furthermore, Algeria’s national wealth and capacity are far grand than that of Morocco and does not it have the colossal debt Morocco has (Data topics). Furthermore, has never annexed nor attempted to annex any territory, unlike its neighbour.

### ***Regional Historical Tensions***

Greater Morocco is an ideology that rejects the current Moroccan borders and lays claims over four additional countries to include: Algerian, Mali, Mauritania, and Western Sahara (H.L.R.A.J.D.C., 2017). Presently, Morocco is at war with Western Sahara and has hostile tensions with Algeria. The Moroccan media claim that the Greater Morocco concept is a political tool against Morocco’s claims over Western Sahara. They stated that Morocco had no claim nor intention to annex land further to restore Morocco (Lahncen Haddad-Morocco World News, n.d). forgetful both war with Western Sahara and July 1962, where Moroccan troops entered Algeria and launched a campaign shortly after Algerian Independence of claims to Algerian territories. However, this attempt was short-lived. A year later relaunched an aggressive campaign. In efforts to solidify its “shaky throne,” the press alleged that the new nation was launching attacks and flying over Moroccan air space.

The propaganda won popularity when the Moroccan King initiated military action that occupied the Algerian towns of Hassibeida and Tinjoub, halfway marking Tindouf (a strategic location accessing then Spanish Sahara and now Western Sahara) (Farsoun, 1976). In a Memorandum from Robert W. Komer of the National Security Council Staff to President Kennedy on October 28, 1963, further details surfaced, such as the annexation of Tindouf was indeed the Moroccan King’s goal. Oddly enough, after he invaded Algeria, he asked the United States for financial assistance while already receiving aid from France. Furthermore, Mr. Komer proclaimed, “We must get Hassan to compromise before he gets in over his head.” (U.S. Department of State, n.d).

As history repeats, the USA’s goal was to negotiate “before Algerian build-up (with UAR/Cuban/USSR support).” The conversation further discussed the reply to Morocco’s request for aid and discouraging Egypt from aiding Algeria, as well as questioning, “If the French and we are still supplying Moroccans, how can we tell Nasser not to equip Algerians?” (U.S. Department of State, n.d). Highlighting the irresponsible supply of weapons from the previous colonizer of Algeria, France, to Morocco in its annexation of Algerian territory. As history repeats itself, once more, Morocco’s illegitimate claim is wrongfully supported by the west, further alienating Algeria by aiding a repeated offender at their border and annexing Western Sahara. It seems Algeria hardly is or ever was the country that warrants concerns.

### ***Western Sahara***

It is also essential to distinguish that Algeria is not alone in its concern about annexing Western Sahara. Germany was also a vocal critic of the Trump policy, resulting in Morocco's leaked letter to cut off ties (Deutch, 2021). South African President Cyril Ramaphosa proclaimed an exact position on the matter by stating, "We find that other struggles are articulated at a higher decibel ... and that is why as South Africans we are clear, we are firm, and we are unapologetic concerning our support for Sahrawi people." (Rfi., 2021) Moreover, 27 American Senators urged for the revoking of the Trump policy: "The abrupt decision by the previous administration on December 11, 2020, to officially recognize the Kingdom of Morocco's illegitimate claims of sovereignty over Western Sahara was short-sighted, undermined decades of consistent U.S. policy, and alienated a significant number of African nations. We respectfully urge you to reverse this misguided decision and recommit the United States to pursuing a referendum on self-determination for the Sahrawi people of Western Sahara." (U.S. Sens. Inhofe and Patrick, 2022)

The reality of gathering 27 American senators (different house representatives who total 435), 27 % of the Senate, means that the concern is relevant and telling. "U.S. Sens. Jim Inhofe (R-Okla.) and Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) led 25 of their Senate colleagues today in sending a letter urging President Biden to reverse the previous misguided decision to officially recognize the Kingdom of Morocco's illegitimate claims of sovereignty over Western Sahara and recommit the United States to the pursuit of a referendum on self-determination for the Sahrawi people of Western Sahara."(Leahy of Vermont, 2021). American recognition of Morocco's claims over Western Sahara was in exchange for normal relations with Israel (United States Recognizes Morocco’s Sovereignty Over Western Sahara, 2021). The dilemma here is the double standards in Western foreign policy, and not the normalization of relations with Israel. Pro-Israel America recognizes 53 out of 100 senators, and of the 27 Senators who called for reversal, 12 are Pro-Israel—further demonstrating that the issue is not the normalizing relations with Israel that Morocco claims.

It is the condition that placed the unfounded sovereignty of Morocco over an African Union-recognized state. This Moroccan swindled deal undermines Israel and the U.S.'s aim to normalize relations with other countries. Both Bahrain and the Arab Emirates signed the Abraham Accords, and the difference is that neither gained an African Union-recognized state.

### *Sanctions on Algeria*

When the comparative history and context are unveiled, Rubio's only concern over Algeria's military spending begs the question, why is Senator Rubio such a critic of Algeria?

The call of the 27 U.S. Senators to revoke U.S. recognition of Morocco's sovereignty over Western Sahara led to a response from the Moroccan community. The Moroccan American society stated that the claims were false and dangerous to peace. Claiming that the Senators' letter was misleading and promoted separatist views. Moreover, "The call to impose sanctions against Algeria's Russian arms deals was initiated in a letter sent to the U.S. Senate by the Moroccan community in 2021." (Morocco world news, 2022) Furthermore, "The letter, authored by Moroccan Political Analyst, Senior Advisor, and MWN Editor-in-Chief Samir Bennis, drew the attention of the U.S. Senate to Algeria's military interactions with Russia and the necessity for sanctions against it." (Morocco world news, 2021).

The Moroccan community is the source for Rubio's sanctions call on Algeria. Oddly enough, a nearly identical letter was sent by 27 House Representatives. It is also worth noting that there are 100 senators, making Senator Rubio's call 1/100, meaning 1% of the US Senate. The joint letter led by Congresswoman Lisa McClain (R-MI), "a bipartisan group," contained only five democrats and 22 republicans. They represent 27 congress members out of 435 House of Representatives, 6% of representatives. Hence of no significance. However, the 27 US Senators call to revoke US recognition of Morocco's sovereignty over Western Sahara is 27/100 Senators, which is 27% of the Senate. The reality is that Rubio has long been affiliated with Moroccan lobbies, (Foreign lobby watch, n.d) and several documents from Open Secret's Foreign lobby watch archives provide similar findings on congress members.

Morocco's aggressive financial lobbying is not limited to the UN; according to Open Secret's Foreign lobby watch, Morocco's lobbying cost in the United States is \$45,618,003 (Foreign lobby watch, n.d). In efforts to produce accurate inference, a comparative analysis of the region creates a base of comparison on lobbying cost (see appendix O): Spain \$4,561,762, France \$1,060,675, Italy \$11,382, 032, Sweden \$3,399, 652, Finland \$17,669, Portugal \$2,215,165, and Algeria \$2,577, 697 (Foreign lobby news, n.d). Meaning that France's lobbying spending in the US is but is 2.3% of that of Morocco. According to the World Bank, France's GDP of 2.937 trillion USD (2021) dwarfs Morocco's 132.7 billion USD (2021), (Foreign lobby watch, n.d) Yet its lobbying cost in the United States was 2.3% that of Morocco. Furthermore, all the nations mentioned GDPs dwarf that of Morocco yet none of their lobbying remotely resemble the kingdom's choice of financial allocation. Note that lobbying is primarily done through non-government spending by a company OCP that is 95% state-owned.

### *Skewed Geopolitics*

This hypocrisy has led Europeans to lose influence over much of Africa to China. United States, Israel, and any other nation can avoid repeating France and Spain's disastrous mistakes. African access and influence will not be attained through Morocco, where it has failed for Spain and France. Though Spain's government's double standard has significantly impacted their economy, Italy has prospered with an Algerian gas pipeline supplying Europe. The United States is arguably Israel's most profound ally and has stood firm on its stance on Ukraine. The Biden administration has not shown the same hypocritical criticism of Algeria as Spain and France. The trades department transparently states that western aid to Morocco **has** alienated Algeria, and by doing so, Russia found an opportunity (Market-intelligent, n.d). The US State Department has also been transparent about its intention and motives to further relations with Algeria (U-S-relations-with-Algeria, n.d). Secretary Blinken stated during his visit to Algeria, noted that the US understands that different states have concerns with Russia, but argues that the war on Ukraine is a matter of right or wrong.

He was also transparent on the American aim to encourage nations to normalize relations with Israel, **as well as** acknowledging that it is every country's right to choose what is best for its nation and people (US Embassy, n.d).The Biden administration has also ignored the unreasonable, unfounded, foreign-influenced demand for sanctions against Algeria, which would plunge the area into war. A Sovereignty respecting and diplomatic approach while rectifying European and Trump administration's disastrous foreign policy. Undoubtedly, the United States recognizes past inconsistency has set obstacles to attaining global solidarity for Ukraine. The west needs key African players, such as South Africa, Nigeria, and Algeria, who made their position on Western Sahara quite clear, as did the African Union. France and Spain's change of status are meaningless, as African nations are no longer their colonies, an aspect that seem quite challenging to understand.

## CONCLUSION

Furthermore, the utilization of incomplete data is an off-balance approach, an act of manipulating the public, and passive aggression. Algeria has enormous land borders in Africa, with instability, conflicts, and hostility from all the bordering countries. Algeria has not made any single arms deal or combined deal of “over 7 billion dollars” in 2021 with Russia. It purchases arms from the most extensive African supplier, as the majority of Africa does—Russia. Algeria’s purchases from 2017-2021 show a decreasing trend rather than Egypt’s significant increase. Also, note Algeria’s neighbour not only managed to gain recognition over Western Sahara from the Trump Administration but an up to 10-billion-dollar arms deal agreement. An over-ambitious neighbour, who has a history of annexations and using western resources. On all these grounds, the claim that the Algerian military has overspent or that their spending is somehow incomprehensible is false and heavily enshrined in geopolitics.

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