

Why Is Algeria Considering Changing its Military Doctrine?

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Introduction

Based on the new constitution released by the Algerian presidency, it will be possible for the Algerian army to act outside the country's borders. Under the new amendments, the Algerian president can consult with parliament before allowing the army to participate in missions outside the country's borders.¹ This would be a major shift in the country's approach to military and diplomatic issues. The oil-rich Maghreb country has always refrained from sending its army on missions outside its borders, in compliance with terms of the constitution.

However, Algeria has been under great pressure in recent years to involve its army in security and military tasks abroad, especially anti-terrorism missions in the region. France and the United States both called on the Algerian army to join the regional war against terrorism and organized crime.² Algeria's position led the country to suffer several diplomatic and strategic setbacks, especially after France's military involvement in the fight against jihadist groups in Mali, with which Algeria shares long

¹ Daniel Abascal, "Constitutional amendments to allow the Algerian Army to intervene abroad," *Atalayar*, 10 May 2020. <https://atalayar.com/en/content/constitutional-amendments-allow-algerian-army-intervene-abroad>

² Ibid.

borders. Consequently, Algeria has been marginalized due to its refusal to let its army deploy outside its territorial borders in conformity with the country's constitution.

The new step envisioned by Algeria raises questions about its motives.³ The draft amendments also suggest a change in Algeria's perception of security, as they would give the army other options than simply waiting to push back against threats from within the country's borders. Algeria is moving towards a radical and noticeable change in the military doctrine of the army, which allows sending army units outside the borders, whether to participate in international peacekeeping operations or in peace restoration operations in neighboring countries within the framework of bilateral agreements with the countries concerned. Why is Algeria considering changing its military doctrine? Is this the end of Algeria's sacrosanct principle of military non-interference?

To answer these questions, this article will discuss the development of Algerian military conduct and the influence of the current regional situation on the necessity of developing a new strategy for military policy. For some observers, constitutional amendments scraping Algeria's military dogma of non-intervention abroad is a question of giving constitutional support to the participation of the Algerian army (though limited in the number of elements and often for the support of military experts) in the UN and other operations. However, for others, it would be a question of buttressing the Algerian doctrine in the face of increasingly exacerbated external threats, such as tensions in the Sahel or Libya, on the borders of Algeria. These proposed changes have raised Algerian activists' fear of dragging the country into military conflicts or getting involved in the ongoing civil war in Libya.

Nevertheless, experts⁴ say that President Tebboune's Algeria is moving towards a new approach to participating in international ventures. It looks forward to reacquiring a position that was lost during the last years of the Bouteflika era. Articles 30 and 95 of the new Algerian Constitution which establish the conditions and the

³ Some have interpreted it as a surrender to external pressures, while others saw it as a shift in the country's military and security strategy to face growing threats on Algeria's borders with developments in Libya and Mali.

⁴ See "L'Algérie envisage-t-elle de faire évoluer sa doctrine militaire?" RFI, 14 May 2020. <https://www.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20200514-alg%C3%A9rie-envisage-elle-faire-%C3%A9voluer-doctrine-militaire-constitution>.

framework allowing the President, after approval of two-thirds of the Parliament, to engage armed forces abroad are a signal. So, why Algeria is moving towards changing its military doctrine is a remarkably interesting matter for analysis to clarify the motives pushing the country into a change of attitude that would certainly influence the conduct of its foreign policy in the future and affect the regional balances of power.

Overseas Military Deployments

The armies of several countries are actively engaged in operational duties across the globe. The work they do ranges from peacekeeping to providing humanitarian aid, from enforcing anti-terrorism measures to helping combat the international drugs trade and human trafficking. Strictly speaking, *deployment* refers to activities required to move military personnel and materials from a home installation to a specified destination abroad. The successful deployment of a military force involves the movement of troops and materiel in response to a regional threat and the ability to sustain this force until the military objective is achieved.

Deploying troops abroad is one of the most significant policy decisions that a state can make because it requires consideration of ethical and legal issues; affects a state's foreign relations, not only with the state to which troops have been deployed but also with other states. This potentially places soldiers at increased physical risk and consumes significant resources.⁵ Africa, Asia, and Latin America provide more than 90 percent of military and police ⁶ personnel to United Nations peace operations and contribute about 15 percent of the budget. China, hardly a legitimate representative of the Global South as the world's second-largest economy and a permanent member of

⁵ "Sending Troops Abroad," *DCAF Backgrounder*, 10/2006. https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/26082/13_bg_troops_abroad.pdf

⁶ "Summary of Contributions to UN Peacekeeping by Country, Mission and Post," *UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPING*, 31/12/2018.

https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/3_country_and_mission_10.pdf

the Security Council, inflates the budget number because its financial contribution is two-thirds of the latter's total - second to the United States.⁷

Generally speaking, the reasons why so many countries supply troops to the UN peacekeeping force are due to a multitude of factors. There are three main explanations why countries from the Global South have contributed to operations abroad for UN peace operations: regional cooperation, recognition and prestige, and financial benefits.

Financial Benefits

Countries with weak economies may respond to requests for troops for the potential financial benefits. The economic gains stem from comparatively attractive compensation for soldiers as well as reimbursements to the country. In addition, as peacekeeping can also be a tool for improving international image, the country may also be in a position to attract more foreign assistance.⁸ With the growth of their economies and a corresponding increase in their military budget, the governments of these countries (e.g., India and Bangladesh) found it a good way to pay for their troops while saving their meager treasuries the extra expense. As well, the UN Peacekeeping missions provided training and actual combat experience without having to bear any big costs individually - the countries themselves get paid for offering troops.⁹

Image Building, Political Influence, and International Prestige

Many countries actively support UN Peacekeeping forces to gain political influence and build a positive image with the people of the world. Participating countries can use this supply of troops to leverage their positions in a political situation.

⁷ Thomas G. Weiss and Giovanna Kuele, "Why Developing Nations Send So Many Troops to UN Peace," *PassBlue*, 12 February 2019. <https://www.passblue.com/2019/02/12/why-developing-nations-send-so-many-troops-to-un-peace-ops/>

⁸ Kabilan Krishnasamy, "Bangladesh and UN Peacekeeping: The Participation of a 'Small' State," *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 41, 1 (2003): pp. 24-47.

⁹ "Countries volunteering uniformed personnel to peacekeeping operations are reimbursed by the UN at a standard rate, approved by the General Assembly, of a little over US\$1,028 per soldier per month". Alex J. Bellamy and Paul D. Williams, "Providing Peacekeepers: The Politics, Challenges, and Future of United Nations Peacekeeping Contributions. *OUP Oxford*, 28 February 2013, p. 10.

The government can convince the UN to stop such an act using the peacekeeping forces as leverage.¹⁰ Although originally it disdained peacekeeping, China sent troops for the first time in 1992 to the UN Transitional Mission in Cambodia (UNTAC) and started to contribute substantially in the 21st century and, currently, ranks as the tenth-largest troops and police-contributing country (T/PCC). Moreover, since 2016 it has become the second-largest source of financing, after the United States.¹¹

China's faster economic growth and military modernization, together with the expansion of its investments abroad, have advanced its role in the international system and at the UN.¹² As China's overseas business grows, its traditional opposition to interference in the domestic affairs of other countries has become more elastic, especially in Africa, as its involvement in the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) - sending peacekeepers and supporting the political process - suggests.¹³

South Asian states, in particular India and Pakistan, have also long sought to advance their respective public images through peacekeeping, perhaps as a reflection of their rivalry and also as beneficiaries of the second oldest UN peacekeeping operation, the UN Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP) in Kashmir since 1949. India ranks fourth as largest in the Troops and Police Contributing Country (T/PCC) of the United Nations and has traditionally contributed to peacekeeping - including a significant role in the creation of the First United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF I) and has sought thereby to enhance its global status as a great power.¹⁴ In contrast, Pakistan, although also motivated to shape its image and currently ranked as the sixth-largest T/PCC, has contributed significantly only since the 1990s and has

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Courtney J. Fung, "China's Troop Contributions to UN Peacekeeping," United States Institute of Peace (July 2016): p. 212.

¹² Arthur Waldron, "The Rise of China: Military and Political Implications," *Review of International Studies* 31, 4 (October 2005): pp. 715-733; Wayne M. Morrison, "China's Economic Rise: History, Trends, Challenges, and Implications for the United States," *Congressional Research Service Report*, 25 June 2019.

¹³ "China's Foreign Policy Experiment in South Sudan," *International Crisis Group*, Report 288/ Africa, 10 July 2017. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/south-sudan/288-china-s-foreign-policy-experiment-south-sudan>

¹⁴ Kabilan Krishnasamy, "'Recognition' for Third World peacekeepers: India and Pakistan," *International Peacekeeping* 8, 4 (2001): pp. 56-76.

attempted to decrease its isolationism while increasing its alignment with international organizations.¹⁵

Obtaining Positions in the International Community

One of the most important reasons countries participate in peacekeeping missions is to gain political clout and positive image building. This would help them in other political/economic negotiations/treaties especially where the will of the public would play a great role. One such example is India's candidacy for a seat in the UN Security Council (UNSC). India is building positive images helping the UN and doing good work - not just for the humanitarian values - but also to strengthen its candidacy and get more countries to support it.

Regional interests are also key to South American participation in the UN stabilization mission in Haiti. As a regional powerhouse, Brazil sought to increase its international visibility through peacekeeping; most important, to fortify its case for a permanent seat on the Security Council. Along with such other regional powers as India and South Africa, emerging countries have long called for a more representative Council. As such, they seek more inclusive UN decision-making, which not incidentally would advance their own foreign policies.¹⁶

Direct Security and Economic Interests

The requirements of maintaining an overseas presence contribute to the ability of military forces to deter adversaries, to respond to aggression, to assure allies regarding a country's commitments, and to engage in security cooperation activities with partners and allies. The regionalization of peace operations presents obvious disadvantages such as the lack of resources and experience, the lack of impartiality, interference of a major regional power or hegemon, fear of external threats, and incomplete and uneven

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Weiss, "Why Developing Nations."

geographic coverage¹⁷ and advantages as well due to proximity. Often, regional troop contributors share a common background and can deploy faster than countries farther afield. However, at the same time, they may prioritize their own agendas over that of the country in which the armed conflict is occurring. Overseas presence contributes to contingency responsiveness, deterrence of adversaries and assurance of allies, and security cooperation with partners. These benefits should be considered when making decisions about posture.¹⁸

Some or all of these motivations can be attributed to Algeria's changing military and defense doctrine concerning sending its troops abroad in active peacekeeping missions, given Algeria's new status and its changing geopolitical neighborhood.

History of the Algerian Army Deployments

Historically, the Algerian army has intervened in many areas, in different forms: to wage war, to help the governments in place or to serve peace. Indeed, all the Algerian Constitutions, from that of 1964 to that of 2016, have consecrated the President of the Republic as "supreme head of the Armed Forces and responsible for National Defense."¹⁹ Nothing in any of these Constitutions prohibited the Head of State from sending troops abroad, whether to participate in battles alongside other armies or in the context of peacekeeping operations under the aegis of the UN.

President Houari Boumediene (1965-1978), the only one with the constitutional prerogatives allowing him to order the displacement or the participation of army units in internal and external operations, had engaged the National People's Army (ANP) in several conflicts abroad such as those of the Arab-Israeli wars of 1967 and 1973 and peacekeeping operations in Africa. Algeria has already participated in many regional

¹⁷ Oldrich Bures, "Regional Peacekeeping Operations: Complementing or Undermining the United Nations Security Council?" *Global Change, Peace & Security* 18, 2 (June 2006).

¹⁸ "U.S. Overseas Military Posture Relative Costs and Strategic Benefits," *Department of Defense, Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense*, Washington D.C., January 2012.

¹⁹ Kamal Louadj, "Dans quelles conditions l'Algérie pourrait engager des troupes militaires à l'étranger? L'armée s'exprime," *Sputnik*, 20 May 2020. <https://fr.sputniknews.com/maghreb/202005201043812909-dans-quelles-conditions-lalgerie-pourrait-engager-des-troupes-militaires-a-letranger-larmee/>

conflicts outside the country's borders; in Angola in 1989; in Cambodia in 1992-1993; in Haiti in 1995 and 1996; and in Congo in 1999.²⁰

Gradually, the NPA became less revolutionary and began to lose its role as a supporter of revolutionary movements considered *just causes* around the world.²¹ The Armed Forces, within the new constitutional framework, began to adapt their missions to strictly military defense. In the early 1889s, they were forced to shift their attention to domestic threats of radical Islamism.²² Previously, their main function was to guarantee the security and defense of Algeria against exterior risks and threats – a role they still retain today. At the time of independence, there were already major security challenges: the bloody Sand Dune War against Morocco in 1963 and the foreign participation of Algerian units in 1967 and 1973 in the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict.²³ In the 1970s, the situation in the Maghreb was once again a determining factor. There were clashes with the Moroccan Royal Armed Forces (FAR) in late 1977, during the Western Sahara conflict, while the lack of a clearly defined border with Libya made it necessary to establish permanent garrisons in Tamanrasset and Djanet.²⁴

In the 1980s, the NPA had to consider a number of events that were important in terms of an evolving sense of threat. These events, still seen through the lens of a Cold War and North-South context, as well as in Arab-Islamic terms, included: the various bombings of Libya by the US 6th Fleet between 1981 and 1983, the Lebanese civil war and its internationalization; Israel's bombing of the General Headquarters of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in Tunisia in 1985, and the assassination by Israeli commandos of PLO leader Abu Jihad near the Tunisian capital in 1988; the bombing of the Libyan cities of Tripoli and Benghazi by the US 6th Fleet in April 1986; and Israel's progressive broadening of its concept of national security to include the entire MENA region.²⁵

²⁰ The two battles of Amgala, which took place inside the Saharawi territory, are proof of this.

²¹ Both the FLN, through its Office for Friendship with the People, and the Armed Forces in its own areas of influence, had made great efforts to support revolutionary causes around the world.

²² For ample analysis of the threat represented by radical Islam see Mohamed Issami, "Le FIS et le terrorisme. Au coeur de l'enfer," *Algiers*, Éditions Le Matin, IX/2001.

²³ K. Nezzar, "Algérie : Echec à une régression programée," *Publisud*, 2 avril 2001, p. 7.

²⁴ "Situation and Intelligence Data," *National Defence University* Washington DC, X/1987, pp. III-10..

²⁵ Abdennour Benantar, "La sécurité nationale algérienne dans les années 90 : Entre la Méditerranée et le Sahara," *The Maghreb Review* 18, 3-4 (1993): p. 159.

Algeria experienced a period of internal unrest during the 1990s, which extended to the Grand Sahara and the Sahel during 2000.²⁶ This mobilized the Algerian army within its borders. The outbreak of Arab revolutions and the downfall of entire regions in the civil war (Libya, Syria, Iraq, Mali), from 2011, largely fueled an idea within the political establishment of the existence of an international plot. The use of proxies by major powers in many wars, particularly in the region, did not help the idea that Algeria sends troops abroad at the risk of involuntarily serving third-party interests and pays the price. However, the fire was at the gates of the country with the lasting installation of a jihadist military insurrection in the Sahel and West Africa and the proliferation of militias in Libya.

Algeria paid the price for its inaction in these two zones on 16 January 2013 with the attack on the gas complex of In-Amenas,²⁷ where 67 died. This economically important site was paralyzed for over a year and had repercussions for its relations with Britain. The attack had been planned in Mali and carried out from Libya. Some attributed the lack of enthusiasm for intervention abroad to the absence of a President-in-Chief of the armed forces who could have given the order and an absence of information on the ground.²⁸

It is worth noting that Algeria participated in previous situations by sending observing officers within the framework of the United Nations or African Union peacekeeping missions in Africa under Chapter VI, but the seriousness of the two constitution draft articles lies in the term restoring peace, both in the regional and

²⁶ Rasmus Alenius Boserup and Luis Martinez, "Europe and the Sahel-Maghreb Crisis," *Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS) Report*, March 2018.

²⁷ "In Amenas Inquest: British Victims of Algeria Attack," *BBC News*, 28 November 2014. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-29127935>

²⁸ Saleh Abdul Rahman, "The Algerian army and the problem of the war outside the borders", 27 July 2017. <https://www.aljazeera.net/blogs/2017/7/27>; Ahmed Aziz, "The Algerian army ... A Military Doctrine that Counteracts Western and Arab pressures (report)," *Anadolu Agency*, 13 April 2018. (Translated from Arabic). <https://www.aa.com.tr/ar>; Weijenberg, Gijs and Méryl Demuynck, "Algeria in Mali: A Departure from the Military Non-Intervention Paradigm?" *International Centre for Counter-Terrorism (ICCT)*, The Hague, 17 December 2020. <https://icct.nl/publication/algeria-in-mali-a-departure-from-the-military-non-intervention-paradigm/>

international framework, which means Algeria interferes powerfully” - armed according to the seventh item of the United Nations.²⁹

The Doctrine of the Algerian Army

The doctrine of the Algerian army since independence in 1962 has been built around the army’s mission to defend the country’s borders and not to send any forces to fight abroad. However, this rule was twice abandoned to support the Egyptian army in the 1967 war and the Sinai liberation war in 1973. In reality, there is no doctrine to prevent the Algerian army from operating outside the Algerian borders. Algerian analysts believe that Algeria’s doctrine of non-interference abroad is rooted in the Algerian Army conduct since the end of the 1970s, for example, after the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty in 1978. This conduct pushed President Boumediene to change the military doctrine and the country’s defense policy, which is currently based on the principle of refusing to send Algerian forces out of the country whatever the circumstances.

Bedded in its colonial past, Algeria does not allow foreign interference in its internal affairs. Likewise, Algiers refrains from military intervention outside its borders. Non-interventionism has even been written into the country’s constitution.³⁰ However, given how serious the region’s situation has become, marked by the rise of different jihadist groups, this principle could be reconsidered. Algeria is one of the few countries in the world that so clearly and so consistently articulates its foreign policy principles. Ever since independence in 1962, Algeria has adhered to a foundational principle of non-interventionism.³¹

Article 26 of Algeria’s 1989 and 1996 constitutions states: “Algeria does not resort to war in order to undermine the legitimate sovereignty and the freedom of other peoples. It puts forth its efforts to settle international disputes through peaceful

²⁹ “Algerian Army’s Operations outside the Border does not Mean that it Will Become the Region’s Gendarme!” *Echoroukonline*, 13 June 2020. <https://www.echoroukonline.com/algerian-armys-operations-outside-the-border-does-not-mean-that-it-will-become-the-regions-gendarme>

³⁰ Geoff D. Porter, “Questioning Algeria’s Non-Interventionism,” *I.F.R.I., Politique étrangère* 3 (Autumn 2015): p. 43.

³¹ *Ibid.*

means.”³² Article 26 is rarely challenged or questioned. Unlike other countries, which may or may not engage in cross-border or extraterritorial conflicts according to specific circumstances and in pursuit of specific interests, Algeria never has. At a certain time, this position had numerous advantages, but it also carried significant disadvantages.

The radical change in the region offers a new mission for Algerian diplomacy and now offers the Algerian army missions of various kinds outside its borders, including high-intensity conflict. Previous constitutions did not grant them this ability, even if history indicates that Algerian soldiers were physically present in certain theatres of war (six-day war in the Middle East, participation in peace missions under the aegis of the UN etc.). Why has it been expressly provided for in the new constitution? Undoubtedly, new geostrategic data requires offensive rather than defensive actions and, subject to verifications, the Libyan danger could well be the impetus for this provision which gives, for reasons of military efficiency, the Algerian army the right to pursue the aggressors.

The presidential election of 12 December 2019 and the death of Ahmed Gaid Salah reshuffled the cards with the promise of amending the constitution. This amendment to the Constitution, if approved, would remove the two-decade-old blur over a supposed non-interventionist doctrine of the Algerian army which was maintained for understandable political purposes.

The Constitutionalization of Military Interventions Abroad

Algeria intends to redraw the operational borders and the geographical strategy of its army through a proposal within the draft of a constitutional amendment that allows sending military units to participate in peaceful and combat missions abroad. Under the amendments proposed by a committee of experts, the geographical area of the tasks of the Algerian army will be presented for public discussion for the first time in decades, with the possibility of adopting a comprehensive review of the current principles that thwart its participation in any operations outside the country’s borders. The version of the preliminary draft revision of the Constitution, unveiled on 7 May

³² *Constitution of the People’s Democratic Republic of Algeria* 1989 (amended by the constitutional revision of 1996). <https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/tehis/vtx/rwmain/opendocpdf.pdf?reldoc=y&docid=577a71f44>

2020 by the President of the Republic, includes a series of proposals, including the constitutionalization of the intervention of the National People's Army (ANP) outside of the country's borders to participate in peacekeeping efforts at regional and international levels.³³

The idea of an amendment to the army's ideology was not the conception of Hirak or the new president's policy. Ahmed Krouche, a former international observer for the United Nations, explained that the discussion about the idea of sending troops abroad was previously traded, during the Algerian army's participation in the framework of African Union and Arab League missions for peacekeepers. In 2018, the chief of staff of the Algerian army and deputy defence minister at the time, Ahmed Gaid Saleh said that the legislation concerning the military doctrine is "reviewed and actualized whenever it so requests to adapt to geopolitical data variables and thus represent the foundations of a national defence policy and for formulating the military strategy."³⁴

On 26 December 2020, a week after he took office, President Tebboune chaired a meeting of the Supreme Security Council, and the Presidency of the Republic issued a statement³⁵ on his behalf affirming that the Council studied the situation in the region and in particular on the Algerian borders with Libya and Mali, and decided in this framework a set of measures that must be taken to protect the national borders and territory, as well as to reactivate and revitalize Algeria's role at the international level, especially concerning these two files, and in general in the Sahel and Sahara region and in Africa.³⁶

Some analysts consider that the convening of the Supreme Security Council after years of inactivity due to the illness of former President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, is a clear indication of the intention of the new leadership to play a greater role in regional issues, especially in Libya and Mali. Legally, no constitutional or legal provision prevents the Algerian army from crossing the border. However, Algeria is part of the Joint Arab Defence Treaty that talks about sending military forces abroad if an Arab country is

³³ Arezki Benali, "Sending Military Troops Abroad: The Army Expresses Its Position," 20 May 2020..

³⁴ Aziz, "The Algerian Army."

³⁵ "President Tebboune Chairs High Security Council Meeting," *APS*, Thursday, 26 December 2019. <http://www.aps.dz/en/algeria/32479-president-tebboune-chairs-high-security-council-meeting>.

³⁶ Ibid.

threatened. Algeria is also linked to Tunisia through a treaty that provides for its military assistance in a situation where it is exposed to an external threat.

However, Algeria has always refused to send troops carrying out military missions outside its borders. Since 2012, it has refused to participate with the French forces in the war on terror in Mali and Niger. On 6 December 2017, French President Emmanuel Macron met with the head of the Algerian Staff, Gaid Saleh, to urge the military to participate in the coalition fighting terrorism in the Sahel and Sub-Saharan, but the meeting resulted only in promises of intelligence without the transfer of any Algerian soldier to fight militant group fighters there.³⁷ A year earlier, Saudi Arabia invited Algeria to participate in the joint Arab force in Yemen, but the latter refused and its former foreign minister, Ramtan Lamamra, said that his country “does not see the point in participating in any Arab military force now, and we must before this solve Arab differences and achieve Consensus.”³⁸ In 2015, Egypt proposed the creation of a joint Arab force, but this idea clashed with the Algerian ideology, which refuses to allow sending soldiers abroad.³⁹

The change of attitude of the Government and the question of the legitimacy of military operations abroad and the restrictions imposed on it previously due to the long-held non-interference policy has drawn the attention of observers. Thus, the constitutionalisation of the participation of Algeria in peacekeeping operations under the auspices of the United Nations, the African Union, and the Arab League and the constitutionalization of the participation of Algeria to restore peace in the region within the framework of bilateral agreements of the countries concerned became a necessity.

The constitutionalisation of the intervention of the National People’s Army (PNA) outside the country’s borders is seen as protection for the PNA; during a debate on Tuesday 19 May 2020 on national television, Lieutenant-Colonel Mustapha Merah, member of the Directorate of Communication, Information and Guidance (DCIO) at the staff of the ANP indicated the position of the military institution.⁴⁰ Thus, following the

³⁷ Francis Ghilès, “Foreign interference sparks heightened concern in Algeria,” *The Arab Weekly*, 19 May 2019. <https://thearabweekly.com/foreign-interference-sparks-heightened-concern-algeria>

³⁸ Ayman Al-Amin, “For these reasons, Algeria is moving away from the combined force,” *Masr Al Arabia*, 1 June 2015. <https://masralarabia.net>

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Algerian State Television, 19 May 2020. <https://www.facebook.com/watch/eptv.dz/>

movement of 22 February 2020, the Hirak, put popular legitimacy at the center of the Algerian Constitution. Lieutenant-Colonel Merah affirmed that articles 30 and 95 of the new Constitution define the conditions of sending the troops of the National People's Army abroad as protection for the army.⁴¹

The new Algerian Constitution, in articles 30 and 95, clearly defines the framework within which the President and the Parliament are to examine the question of the sending of troops of the ANP abroad. "Algeria may, within the framework of the United Nations, the African Union and the League of Arab States, and with full respect for their principles and objectives, participate in peacekeeping and peacekeeping operations", states the article.⁴² Actually, Article 95, paragraph 3, of the new Algerian Constitution sets the conditions and the framework authorizing the President of the Republic, Supreme Head of the Armed Forces, and Minister of National Defence, after approval by two-thirds of the Parliament, to send army units abroad. This gives popular legitimacy and protection to the troops because the decisions will be based on the popular will which is embodied by Parliament's two chambers. This provision closes the door to any action outside the framework of the Constitution. However, the reasons why Algeria heads toward a change of military conduct are deeper and more convoluted.

Why Does Algeria Want to Change its Military Doctrine?

Despite mounting insecurity in its region, Algeria has consistently opposed the principle of foreign military intervention and has refrained from committing its assets in regional conflicts. However, it is now under pressure to revise its position and adapt its constitutional provisions to the new role, since for the first time in its modern history, it finds itself largely surrounded by weak or failed states and susceptible to

⁴¹ Kamal Louadj, "Dans quelles conditions l'Algérie pourrait engager des troupes militaires à l'étranger? L'armée s'exprime," *Sputnik*, 20 May 2020. <https://fr.sputniknews.com/maghreb/202005201043812909-dans-quelles-conditions-lalgerie-pourrait-engager-des-troupes-militaires-a-letranger-larmee/>

⁴² Zachary Elkins, Tom Ginsburg, James Melton. "Algeria 2020". *Constitute: The World's Constitutions to Read, Search, and Compare*. Online at constituteproject.org. Translated by International IDEA *Constitute*. https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Algeria_2020?lang=en

imminent threats. With the new geopolitics in the MENA region and the developments in the Sahel and Sahara, the government is compelled to immerse into the new global vicissitudes.

Modifications are Necessary

Algeria has always been proud of its army's ideology that prohibits military intervention in the affairs of other countries, but it is now moving towards a constitutional change that allows its forces to carry out military missions outside its borders. In light of what is happening in its regional neighbourhood, especially in Libya and Mali, Algeria has been unable to defend its security and interests externally. The consequences of this have resulted in a push towards adopting a new military doctrine and abandoning the doctrine associated with non-foreign military intervention. Algerian foreign policy seemed torn between the country's desire to be recognized as a regional leader and its reluctance or inability to use the significant tools at its disposal to maintain stability in its backyard.⁴³

A number of recurring events have exposed the delicate position of Algeria vis-à-vis the potential challenges in its immediate backyard. When the Algerian diplomats were kidnapped in Mali in 2012, the state exhausted all its peaceful options without being able to save the lives of the diplomats whereas a military commando operation inside Mali might have achieved better results than did the peaceful options. However, since the onset of the hostilities in January 2012, Algeria's role has been unclear to many in the international community.⁴⁴

In April 2012, an armed group affiliated with the Al-Murabitoune faction, a terrorist organization affiliated with *Al-Qaeda* stormed the Algerian consulate located in the city of Gao, northern Mali, during a rebellion that broke out there. Seven Algerian diplomats were but Algeria refused to use military intervention to save them. Rather, it used the option of secret negotiation. Less than a year later, in January 2013, a terrorist

⁴³ Anouar Boukhars, "The Paranoid Neighbor: Algeria and the Conflict in Mali," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace Paper*, 22 October 2012. <https://carnegieendowment.org/2012/10/22/paranoid-neighbor-algeria-and-conflict-in-mali-pub-49756PAPER>

⁴⁴ Peter Tinti, "Algeria's Stance on Northern Mali Remains Ambiguous," *Voice of America*, 17 September 2012. www.voanews.com/content/algerias_stance_on_northern_mali_remains_ambiguous/1509747.html.

group infiltrated from northern Mali into Libya, and from there to south-eastern Algeria, occupied a gas factory in the In Amenas area, and took hundreds of hostages inside it before killing 38 of them. Likewise, the authorities refused to intervene militarily in Mali, and only strengthened protection measures at the borders.

A series of security risks arising in the region, especially from Libya as well as threats from other extremist groups mobilized by international parties with interests in conflict with those of Algeria are still looming in the regional context fostered by the army's ideology rejecting foreign military intervention. These challenges are accompanied by the presence of failed states from which has spread chaos around Algeria. The new security threats, no longer confined within the borders, has made it necessary for the military to deal with the new reality. These threats have prompted the speedy review of the principle of non-military intervention outside the borders. The draft amendment of the Algerian constitution proposes that the president be authorized to send troops abroad. Hence, the drafters of the constitution worked on amending Article 95 (paralleled by Article 91 of the draft amendment) to use all the available capabilities to achieve national security in the vital field and deal with the new reality on the borders.

While analysts considered changing the combat strategy of the Algerian army as a necessity dictated by regional circumstances, the importance of this proposal is based on multiple reasons: protecting Algeria from the dangers of terrorist organizations in bordering countries, enhancing its diplomatic role, and the effectiveness of its foreign policy. The proposed amendment also serves the vital interests of Algeria by building defensive policies based on bilateral agreements with adjacent countries, especially in the area of combating terrorist organizations.

Building up Algeria's Military Assets

Today, Algeria possesses several assets that endow it with the potential to be a regional power and to serve as an anchor of stability. It is the largest country in the Arab world, Africa, and the Mediterranean basin. It has the third-largest oil reserves in Africa and the world's tenth-largest gas reserves. It has a strong, modern military. It is a

demographic power, with a population exceeding 40 million.⁴⁵ Furthermore, Algeria has been spared the widespread civil unrest and violent upheaval that has plagued much of the Middle East and North Africa since the Arab Spring uprisings in 2011.

After Algerian security forces succeeded in crushing the decade-long Islamist insurgency in the territory and, in the context of rising regional instability, American and European officials came to regard Algeria as a potentially valuable security partner in the Maghreb and the Sahel. However, Algeria's military doctrine must be updated for this partnership to truly flourish - and for Algeria itself to thrive. Recently, the People's National Army (PNA), the most organized and influential institution in the country, has reached an impasse. The army cannot intervene abroad, yet it must protect its borders while being surrounded by weak and failed states that are unable to have control over their territory, let alone their borders. As a way out of this impasse, the PNA has been focusing on its professionalization and modernization as well as on cooperation.⁴⁶

The government, intending to upgrade the Algerian arsenal, signed multibillion-dollar purchases with Russia, China, Italy, Germany, and the UK for military equipment.⁴⁷ The country invested in developing its armament industry by building production plants for small arms and ammunition. The military also invested in quality training for the use of sophisticated equipment and counter-terrorism techniques in its several military academies as well as abroad with NATO academies and with NATO country members (France, Belgium, UK).⁴⁸

To compensate for the limits of its non-interventionist policy, Algeria has been strengthening cooperation with its neighbors primarily with Mali, Libya, Niger, and especially Tunisia. With Libya, efforts have been hindered by the enduring political crisis. For Algeria, fostering cooperation with its neighbors is just not enough especially when partners (i.e., Mali, Libya) are not able to protect their territory and their borders.

⁴⁵ U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, "Algeria," *World Factbook*.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/print>

⁴⁶ Aziz, "The Algerian Army."

⁴⁷ Dalia Ghanem, "The Algerian Army: Cooperation, Not Intervention," *Carnegie Middle East Center*, 7 December 2017. <https://carnegie-mec.org/2017/12/07/algerian-army-cooperation-not-intervention-pub-74970>

⁴⁸ Ibid.

Through the modernization and professionalization of its military, Algeria achieved vast military capabilities that remain underused. These military capabilities should be used to maintain regional stability: the protection of Algeria's security interests takes place within Algeria but also on the other side of the national borders.⁴⁹

Changes in regional security and the advent of asymmetrical warfare are forcing the armed forces to modernize, become more professional and cooperate more with foreign countries. Algeria is currently the largest military spender in the African region, with a defence budget of US\$10.3 billion in 2020. The country's increasing military expenditure is driven by the ongoing modernization drive due to security challenges and the arms race witnessed in the North African region. The country is on course to implement a slew of reforms to overhaul its corrupt political-administrative apparatus, and the current administration could yield to public demand and curtail the Army's role in the political process.⁵⁰

As the army embarked on its massive buying spree, another question has come up: it is all very well to get the Germans to build a state-of-the-art maintenance factory for the tanks they are selling to Algeria but how would such a unit fit into the country's broader industrial policy – if it had one? If Algeria wants to play a more active role in the region, it could do better by developing its military industry.⁵¹ With the plummeting oil prices, a boost to the military industry would reduce the oil curse which afflicts an economy unable to offer jobs to the many young unemployed while navigating foreign markets in the region. This would be akin to re-inventing Algeria.

Algeria's sudden rise as a major military force in Africa can be attributed to its burgeoning economy and a desire to establish its military superiority in the region. Algeria's domestic defense manufacturing capabilities are still underdeveloped, and the country relies primarily on imports. However, this trend is gradually changing. Similar reforms in the management of its economy and military industry are essential to

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ "Algerian Defence Market Outlook, 2021-2025," *Businesswire.Com*, 29 April 2020.
<https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20200429005278/en/Algerian-Defense-Market-Outlook-2021-2025-Market-Size>

⁵¹ Francis Ghilès, "Modernising Its Army Allows Algeria to Play a More Active Regional Role," *Opinion, Méditerranée Y Oriente Medio*, February 2015.
https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/188847/304_OPINIO_MEDITERRANEO_ANG.pdf

buttress Algeria's position as an influential regional player. Algeria has tried since 1980 to ensure a degree of autonomy to the National People's Army and to avoid increased dependence vis-à-vis foreign suppliers. A strategy that allowed the National People's Army to ensure the supply of certain equipment at the time when the country's arms purchases were being embargoed by some Western countries was needed to fight terrorism in the 1990s and prevented the takeover by radical Islamists.

Algeria's military industry is a small but slowly emerging industry. Given its status as one of the well-trained Arab militaries, Algeria is heading in the direction of significant development of its military industry. Yet, it remains a buyer of weapons mostly from Russia, China, France, South Africa and, more recently, Germany, Italy, Turkey, and the United States. This strategy allows the military, despite the global financial crisis continues, to avoid bottlenecks.⁵² Despite the lack of production units of the army, navy, and air force, as well as units in charge of maintenance, the National People's Army has also worked in recent years to upgrade the armament and equipment acquired and the construction of vessels.⁵³ Algeria is expected to procure and invest in air defense systems, High Altitude Long Endurance (HALE) UAVs, transport aircraft, multirole fighters, armored vehicles, and patrol craft.⁵⁴ Competitive landscape and strategic insights are leading a new vision for future prospects.

Adapting to the New Concept of National Security

It is expected that Algeria will return to the regional scene, leading to a change in the balance of power in the region. This move towards intervention will change the situation in neighboring countries witnessing internal tensions and conflicts which certainly have direct and indirect repercussions on the security and stability of Algeria. Currently, Algeria appears to be trying, within this new regional landscape characterized by myriad threats at its borders, to reposition itself by deviating from its strict principles of non-interference. The country is trying to increase the protection of its backyard in a troubled region which includes Libya, a source of security concerns.

⁵² S. T. Paru, "Promouvoir l'industrie militaire en Algérie," *Liberté, Algeria-watch*, 03 August 2009.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ "Algerian Defence Market Outlook," *Businesswire.Com*.

However, it seems too late for Algeria to make a real difference in Libya, given that all its earlier attempts to reach a political settlement have been unsuccessful.

The beginning of the Libyan crisis in 2011 was a missed opportunity, as Algeria could have interfered productively through military and diplomatic efforts. Instead, it adhered to the principle of non-interference, paving the way for the wrong NATO military operation. NATO actions to protect civilians were within the UN Security Council Resolution 1973 mandate. But NATO's regime change motive, though little acknowledged, was an illegal use of force.⁵⁵ This position helped facilitate foreign intervention by regional and international parties, and allowed, despite Algeria's assertion that Tripoli is a red line that no one may cross, General Khalifa Haftar⁵⁶ to attempt to take over the city. He failed and the same could be said about the fruitless diplomatic maneuvers of Algeria's opposition to Ankara's intervention in Libya when Turkey eventually sent troops to support the National Accord government at its request.

This repositioning will serve as a deterrent, potentially discouraging both state and non-state actors from taking unwanted actions or engaging in military aggression against Algeria's direct neighbors. It will also make Algeria's actions less predictable, giving it a tactical advantage. More importantly, it will enable Algeria to project its military power and take the lead if a well-prepared, well-resourced African-led action is to see the light of day in the region. The constitutional amendments suggest that Algeria has learned lessons from the mistakes of its policy towards Libya since 2011 and allow it to be more proactive if a new conflict erupts in a neighboring country, and in such a scenario, Algeria can now intervene to deter potential threats or military adventures.

Indicators of danger are indeed present around Algerian borders and in neighboring countries, especially in light of the new dangers related to drugs and weapons. Nevertheless, they are not directed only towards Algeria, but towards all

⁵⁵ Geir Ulfstein and Christiansen, Hege, "The Legality of the NATO Bombing in Libya (2013)," *International and Comparative Law Quarterly* 62, 1 (2013): pp. 159-171, University of Oslo Faculty of Law Research Paper No. 2013-07, MultiRights Research Paper No. 13-01, Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2213179>

⁵⁶ Ahmed Marwane, "Haftar on Algeria: Testing the Waters," *Fikra Forum*, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 16 October 2018. <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/fikraforum/view/haftar-on-algeria-testing-the-waters>.

countries that could be affected by these dangers, according to eastern Algeria. The issue of pre-emptive and preventive measures may lead Algeria to intervene militarily outside its borders to protect its security. Security experts unanimously agreed that the current circumstances do not call for the army to interfere outside the borders. However, this does not prevent the country from protection of its borders and interests by triggering the “active defense” policy before the danger reaches the interior when necessary.⁵⁷

For experts⁵⁸ in the Algerian security issues,⁵⁹ the orientation towards a radical review of the role of the Algerian army outside the borders is considered a *necessary adaptation* to the surrounding regional conditions, especially concerning what is happening in Libya and the African Sahel region. After Algeria rebuilt its armed forces, especially after Lieutenant-General Ahmed Gaid Saleh took over the leadership of the National People’s Army staff, this army assumed internationally advanced ranks with advanced equipment, systems, and high training. Graphic exercises showed superior ability in joint work and control over modern systems. After the army succeeded in curtailing the spread of the terrorist threat in the Algerian geography and was able to eliminate this scourge internally, it has faced a wave of smuggling and human with stronger determination. The army has now become able to face all challenges and defend the interests of the country with the support of diplomacy.⁶⁰

After having achieved these stages of development and professionalism, the People’s National Army is fully prepared to defend national security, protect the

⁵⁷ This adherence to the principles of defense, self-defense and post-emptive strike; and adherence to the stance that “We will not attack unless we are attacked, but we will surely counterattack if attacked.”

⁵⁸ Belkacem Iratni, “Security Challenges and Issues in the Sahelo-Saharan Region: The Algerian Perspective,” Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Peace and Security Centre of Competence Sub-Saharan Africa, 2017.; Laurence Aïda Ammour, “Regional Security Cooperation in the Maghreb and Sahel: Algeria’s Pivotal Ambivalence,” *Africa Security Briefs*, Africa Center for Strategic Studies 18 (February 2012).; Alexis Arieff, “Maghreb Facing New Global Challenges: U.S.-Algerian Security Cooperation and Regional Counterterrorism,” *Institut français des relations internationales* (IFRI), July 2011.; Jalel Harchaoui, “Too Close for Comfort How Algeria Faces the Libyan Conflict,” SANA Briefing Paper, July 2018.

⁵⁹ Although Algerian security forces have largely succeeded in preventing armed Islamist groups from re-emerging, highly-localized and sporadic terrorist activity has continued to challenge Algeria’s security especially on the borders.

⁶⁰ Abdennour Benantar, « Sécurité aux frontières : Portée et limites de la stratégie algérienne », *L’Année du Maghreb* [En ligne], p. 14 | 2016, mis en ligne le 21 juin 2016, consulté le 04 juin 2021. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/anneemaghreb/2712> ; DOI : <https://doi.org/10.4000/anneemaghreb.2712>

strategic stakes, secure the land and sea borders, and defend Algeria's economic interests. Therefore, the conditions for the transition to these strategic tasks, by including a constitutional article, enables it to transfer its experience outside the borders, according to cases imposed by international and strategic data as it did in Cambodia, Angola, and Lebanon. Considering that Algeria is currently experiencing major developments in the shadow of a changing world, the concept of national security has evolved and expanded, and it has become necessary to adapt Algeria to the changes taking place.

Preventing the Risks of Terrorism

The conflagration of Libya and the entire Sahel region following the outbreak of the Arab Spring has increased the terrorist risk to Algeria and all the countries of the region. The defeat of terrorist organizations in Syria and Iraq and their attempts to redeploy in the Sahel region considerably increase this threat.⁶¹ The focus of the Algerian army no longer is the border with Morocco but the country's long desert borders with Tunisia, Libya, Niger, and Mali. This is a complete turnaround from twenty years earlier.

Algeria is fairly satisfied with the security and operational coordination with neighboring countries, including Niger, Mali, and Mauritania, through the Joint Operations Staff Committee, without the threat of military intervention.⁶² However, its neighbors to the south are more concerning because of their deteriorating defensive capabilities. As well, the security situation in Libya is alarming. Thus, changing the Algerian military strategy has become a necessity dictated by regional climate shifts. What was stated in the draft of the constitutional amendment is causally related to what is going on in Libya and the African Sahel states. Algeria cannot endure all the chaos on its borders forever as the complex security threats and intense foreign presence on its borders have created a sense of siege.

⁶¹ Louadj, « Dans quelles conditions l'Algérie. »

⁶² Abbas Mimouni, "Is Algeria reviewing its military options after the deterioration of the regional situation?" 19 May 2020. <https://www.alquds.co.uk/>

Regional and International Role

The international game has changed, and Algeria has to keep pace with this, so it is better to have the ability to intervene externally to protect its security. The resurgence of Algeria as a power in a troubled region has been extensive. In Mali, it played a significant role during the French military operation 'Serval' (2012-2014), even though it did not contribute any ground troops. In addition to opening its air space to the French, the Algerian military sealed its borders with Mali to prevent armed Islamist groups from withdrawing and cut off their sources of funding.

The country also played an important mediation role in the inter-Malian dialogue between the Malian government and the political-military movements of Northern Mali. ⁶³In Libya, Algiers leveraged its diplomatic connections to facilitate dialogue between the disagreeing Libyan parties, while in Tunisia, it pressed for a dialogue between Nidaa Tounes and the Islamists of Ennahda.⁶⁴ However, even though the country has ambitions as a regional power, it will need to capitalize on its assets before such ambitions can become a reality.

The decision to change military rules of engagement, after six decades, did not occur in a vacuum but was forced by regional conditions and developments in the Sahel and North Africa over the last two decades. The strategic interests of Algeria were affected in several countries such as Niger, Libya, and Tunisia as well, both because of the presence of armed groups in the Sahel region or regional and Western military bases, as in Mali and Niger, as well as tensions and civil wars as in Libya.⁶⁵

In addition, Algeria, under agreements concluded with countries such as the joint defense agreement with Tunisia, will be obligated to defend Tunisia in the event of an attack on it.⁶⁶ The same is true concerning the Joint Operational Staff Committee which includes Algeria, Niger, Mali, and Mauritania. As the old constitution did not all

⁶³ Dalia Ghanem-Yazbeck, "Algeria, the Sleeping Giant of North Africa". *The Broker*, 04 November, 2015. <https://www.thebrokeronline.eu/algeria-the-sleeping-giant-of-north-africa-d12/>

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Iratni, "Security Challenges and Issues in the Sahelo-Saharan Region".

⁶⁶ Gaidi Mohamed Faouzi, "L'armée algérienne intervient en Tunisie », *El Watan*, 04/08/2014.

https://www.elwatan.com/une/l-engagement-de-l-armee-algerienne-04-08-2014-266833_108.php

Algeria to send its troops outside its borders, it is necessary to change the constitution so that there is no breach of the nation's sovereignty. It should be noted that the amended Article for the intervention of the army outside the borders requires the approval of two-thirds of the deputies of Parliament, and under the supervision of the United Nations, the Security Council, and the Arab League.

Conclusion

Algeria is emerging as an indispensable broker of stability in North Africa and the Sahel. Where insecurity, foreign meddling, and polarization are on the rise across the region, it has, at key moments, promoted dialogue and state-building as the best means for lifting its neighbors out of crisis, and, thus, to safeguard its long-term security. However, that proved to be unsatisfactory in light of the ongoing threats. Whatever the nature of the circumstances, the armed forces and the country's diplomacy, need a major effort at clarifying Algeria's strategic aims.

Algerian leaders need to engage more with foreign partners and explain to the country's 40 million citizens what the country's regional strategy is. This will ensure greater transparency and overall stability. Constancy requires that Algeria and its borders with neighbors be protected with the aid of foreign countries. It is time to protect the interests of the country after the imputations that some have pushed to undermine Algeria. The army should not remain on the border but must take proactive steps to project its military power and take the lead if a well-prepared, well-resourced African-led action is to see the light of day in the region.

Given the diplomatic history, military strength, and regional aspirations of Algeria, this transformation could allow Algeria to fulfill the role of a strong mediator, but it is still too early to say whether there will be a major change in Algeria's foreign policy. Algeria cannot remain a regional power and remain regionally isolated at the same time. The philosophy of non-interference was redefined without changing the ideology of the army. It distinguished between non-interference and the inability to

defend interests due to constitutional obstacles, and Algeria as part of the world has its responsibility in global and African security.

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