

Morocco in U.S. Security Calculations: Is It Becoming a New Atlantic Hub?

(Translated)

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The rapid transformation in U.S.-Moroccan military relations can no longer be viewed merely as a partnership vying with Britain for influence. Instead, we are witnessing a serious move to displace Britain's influence entirely, exploiting the strained relations between Morocco and Algeria. In a short span, the relationship has evolved from basic bilateral defense cooperation into a more complex arrangement—a long-term partnership spanning a full decade that links Moroccan geography with U.S. security interests in the Western Mediterranean and Africa.

On April 16, 2026, the United States and Morocco signed a military cooperation roadmap for the 2026–2036 period, concluding the 14th session of the U.S.-Morocco Defense Consultative Committee. This agreement builds upon the 2020 military cooperation pact aimed at countering shared threats, which had previously established a ten-year framework for defense cooperation between the two states.

However, the distinction between the two agreements lies in the nature of the current phase. While the 2020 agreement focused on enhancing cooperation and coordination to address security challenges, the new roadmap reflects a shift toward a broader partnership encompassing military technology, defense industries, cybersecurity, training, and the exchange of expertise. Consequently, the relationship is becoming less tied to situational issues and more aligned with a long-term strategic vision. Approximately three months later, the most significant practical step was taken when the Royal Moroccan Armed Forces and U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) signed a memorandum of understanding on July 13, 2026 to establish the African Multi-Domain Training and Experimentation Center (AMTEC) in the city of Tan-Tan.

The memorandum was signed at AFRICOM headquarters in Stuttgart, Germany, by General Mohammed Berrid, Inspector General of the Royal Moroccan Armed Forces and Commander of the Southern Zone, and General Dagvin R.M. Anderson, Commander of U.S. Africa Command.

The project—which will include a multi-domain training area, a drone academy, and an innovation and experimentation center—demonstrates that the focus has shifted beyond traditional military exercises toward domains that define the nature of modern warfare: artificial intelligence, electronic warfare, unmanned systems, and the ability to test technology in real-world operational environments.

This highlights the importance of the link between the roadmap and the planned center. The center is not an isolated project; rather, it appears to be part of a broader vision aimed at building regional military capabilities aligned with U.S. standards and technology.

To understand this, one must consider the development of U.S. strategy following the Cold War. NATO, originally established to counter the Soviet Union and defend the Atlantic region, saw its role expand after the collapse of its traditional adversary. Its activities are no longer confined to collective defense within the borders of its member states; instead, the alliance has engaged in operations beyond its original scope—as seen in the Balkans and later in Libya in 2011.

This development has not diminished the alliance's importance, but it has altered the nature of its operations. The United States has increasingly come to rely on a network of partners outside the formal membership—nations possessing strategic locations and regional capabilities that enable them to play forward-deployed security roles. Morocco is a prime example of this; while not a NATO member, it is a Major Non-NATO Ally of the United States,

maintaining advanced defense ties with Washington. Through such partnerships, the U.S. seeks to align Morocco with a strategic vision centered on maintaining influence through lower-cost means that rely more heavily on allies.

Morocco's importance lies, above all, in its location. It overlooks the Atlantic Ocean, controls a western gateway to the Mediterranean, and sits near the Sahel—one of the world's most volatile regions. Consequently, its value in U.S. strategic calculations stems not merely from its military strength, but from a geography that bridges three strategic spheres: the Atlantic, the Mediterranean, and West Africa.

This highlights the significance of the Atlantic dimension. International competition no longer revolves solely around land-based military bases; it now encompasses ports, trade routes, energy security, and supply chains. Amidst the growing economic presence of China and the expanding security footprint of Russia in Africa, the United States has become increasingly focused on building a network of partners capable of safeguarding its interests across a vast expanse stretching from West Africa to the Mediterranean. In this context, Morocco gains added significance due to its multifaceted ties: a defense partnership with the US, economic relations with Europe, which some seek to weaken, a growing economic presence in West Africa, and an opening toward new defense-related technologies following normalization agreements with the Jewish entity.

However, this shift cannot occur without regional repercussions, particularly for Algeria. Even if US-Moroccan cooperation is not explicitly directed against it, Morocco's changing position within Western security networks will undoubtedly impact Algeria's surrounding strategic environment.

Algeria finds itself facing a new reality: a Western partner bolstering its military and technological standing to the west; a Sahel region—once a vital sphere of influence for Algeria—undergoing a profound restructuring as French influence wanes in favor of the US; and intensifying international competition over Africa.

Yet, these transformations can also be viewed from a different perspective. Algeria possesses significant strengths: a strategic geographic location, substantial energy resources, and considerable human and military capabilities. The current phase could serve as an opportunity to redefine its international standing by diversifying partnerships and building a domestic industrial and technological base—particularly in heavy industry—while reducing reliance on foreign sources.

International experience demonstrates that nations maintaining independent decision-making are not necessarily those that isolate themselves from everyone; rather, they are the ones capable of engaging with major powers from a position of parity. This lesson may prove significant for Algeria and for any state seeking liberation from the yoke of colonialism.

Ultimately, the US-Moroccan military roadmap and the AMTEC project in Tan-Tan reflect a shift in the nature of how influence is built in the twenty-first century; power is no longer constructed solely through military bases, but through networks of partnership, technology, and centers of influence.

The question remains open: Will Morocco truly evolve into a pillar of the US security architecture in the Atlantic and Africa? Yet, a deeper question persists: Will the Maghreb region remain merely an arena where the agendas of others compete, or is it capable of reclaiming its historic role through an indigenous civilizational project that restores the region's stature?

The promised Khilafah Rashidah (Rightly-Guided Caliphate)—with the values of knowledge, civilization-building, and justice it embodies—provides the framework for a genuine revival. This would transform North Africa into an active participant in shaping the future, rather than merely a theater where maps of international influence are drawn. Allah (swt) said, ﴿وَاللَّهُ غَالِبٌ عَلَىٰ أَمْرِهِ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ﴾ **“And Allah has full power and control over His Affairs, but most of the people know not.”** [TMQ Surah Yusuf: 21].