

The Maghreb Trilateral Coordination: Will It Withstand Colonialist-Style Security Approaches?

(Translated)

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Amidst a regional landscape where escalating threats from the Sahel intersect with the fracturing of NATO and shifting US priorities, trilateral security coordination between Tunisia, Libya, and Algeria has emerged. It represents an attempt to fill a strategic vacuum—one becoming increasingly apparent as reliance on traditional security frameworks diminishes.

Trilateral Coordination: A Maghreb Step Toward Shared Security

On June 16, 2026, the Libyan capital, Tripoli, hosted the second meeting of the Libyan-Algerian-Tunisian task force charged with securing shared borders—a body established in January 2025 through an agreement among the three nations' interior ministers. This gathering was far more than a routine technical meeting; it embodied a shared political will recognizing that cross-border threats—ranging from the smuggling of goods and people and the expansion of organized crime and terrorism networks to Europe's strategy of externalizing its borders to the southern Mediterranean—cannot be confronted without joint, on-the-ground coordination.

Crucially, the choice of Tripoli for this second meeting conveys a clear political message: despite the fragility of the domestic situation, the Libyan capital remains capable of serving as a hub for regional coordination, and security matters can indeed be managed through recognized state institutions.

Amidst NATO's Fracture: A Strategic Vacuum Seeking Alternative

What lends this trilateral coordination a deeper geopolitical dimension is the turbulent international context in which it emerged. Relations between the United States and its European NATO allies are experiencing unprecedented tensions, marked by repeated threats to scale back the U.S. military commitment in Europe and accusations that European allies are failing to shoulder their defense burdens. U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio has articulated this clearly, criticizing NATO allies for their reluctance to adopt a unified stance on Iran—a sign of a widening rift within the Western alliance.

This fracture has not been without repercussions for Africa. As reliance on NATO as an overarching security framework diminishes, Washington has begun seeking alternative regional partnerships—a shift that partly explains the growing U.S. interest in North Africa. Analyses suggest that the current tension between the U.S. and its NATO allies serves as a reminder that African security cannot be entirely outsourced to distant powers; instead, there is a need to strengthen continental institutions to provide a more robust framework for conflict resolution and economic cooperation.

U.S. Interests: Calculations and Contradictions

U.S. interest in the region is not new, but it has gained fresh momentum amidst escalating international competition for influence in North Africa—particularly between the U.S. and Europe—alongside the growing roles of Russia and China. This dynamic is evident in the intensive U.S. diplomatic engagement with Tunisia, a country that has

become a focal point for Washington due to a complex mix of security, political, and strategic considerations.

Tunisia—designated a Major Non-NATO Ally since 2015—seeks to play an increasingly significant regional role, particularly in the maritime domain, and aspires to serve as a hub for regional military cooperation. This was exemplified by the visit of the U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa commander to Tunisia in June 2026, during which discussions focused on maritime cooperation in the Mediterranean.

However, the U.S. stance toward Algeria remains the most complex. While acknowledging Algeria's expertise in counter-terrorism, Washington approaches the country with great caution due to its close ties with Russia and China, as well as its distinct position on sensitive regional issues. Washington seeks to pursue a dual strategy: leveraging Algerian security expertise while keeping the country neutral, rather than pushing it toward a full alliance with the West.

As for Libya, Washington views it as the key to security in North Africa, regarding its political stability as a prerequisite for genuine border security. Washington has launched diplomatic initiatives to bridge the gaps between Libyan factions, aiming to unify institutions and lay the groundwork for effective security coordination.

Towards an Independent Maghreb Vision

Amidst these shifts, the question arises: will the Maghreb states remain mere recipients of foreign strategies, or will they strive to forge an independent security vision? The trilateral coordination between Tunisia, Libya, and Algeria is a step in the right direction, yet it remains incomplete without a broader vision that encompasses the rest of the region's states.

The challenges facing North Africa—ranging from instability in the Sahel to illegal migration and organized crime—respect neither the artificial borders left by colonialism nor do they wait for solutions from distant capitals. The fractures currently affecting transatlantic relations confirm that relying on others to manage regional security—aside from the religious transgression involved—is no longer a viable long-term strategic choice; rather, it has become a perilous gamble.

Therefore, the call for a shared, independent vision is not merely a political slogan, but a Shariah obligation and an existential security and economic necessity. With its pivotal geographical location and its human and natural resources, the Maghreb is capable of building a regional security framework that protects its borders and safeguards its independence. This must be achieved independently of the colonialist schemes that, for decades, have reduced the region to a mere security buffer or an arena for international rivalry.

The challenge, then, is neither American nor European; it is an inherently Maghrebi one. It begins with the region's states—and the people of military power within them—recognizing the significance of this historic moment. It requires turning the page on the colonialism of the past to forge the unity of the future. True security is not built on patrols and surveillance cameras alone, but on a civilizational political project that restores the Ummah's independence and establishes a state capable of seizing the initiative and achieving security independence, free from the tutelage of major powers and the volatility of their agendas.