

# Algeria Will Play An Important Role If West Africa Descends Into War?

By [Andrew Korybko](#)

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["West Africa Is Gearing Up For A Regional War"](#) as it bifurcates into two clearly defined blocs over whether to invade or defend Niger, which experienced a potentially game-changing patriotic military coup last week. The preceding hyperlinked analysis explains the rapidly emerging military-strategic dynamics more in detail, but they can be summarized as setting the stage for what might soon become the next proxy battleground in the [New Cold War](#).

NATO supports a Nigerian-led ECOWAS invasion to reinstall Niger's ousted leader while Russia backs Burkina Faso and Mali, which have [de facto merged into a federation](#) and [jointly announced](#) that any attack on that neighboring nation will be regarded as a declaration of war against both of them. Those two are trilaterally cooperating with Guinea, which is also under military rule like they are and just [threw its political weight](#) behind the Nigerien junta, but it's unclear whether it'll militarily defend it too.



The Interim President of regional military powerhouse Chad earlier [traveled to Niamey](#) in an attempt to broker a compromise that could avert war, but he appears to have been unsuccessful, though his country also hasn't yet committed to supporting either side of this potentially coming conflict. This places Chad in a kingmaker position since its decision whether and when to intervene could greatly determine the outcome.

Amidst these fast-moving developments, Russian publicly financed international media flagship [TASS](#) confirmed on Tuesday that the Algerian Chief of Staff arrived in Moscow the day prior to meet with his host's Defense Minister. They also added that the President visited St. Petersburg in June to attend the International Economic Forum there, during which time he met with President Putin to clinch an [enhanced strategic partnership](#) deal, while the Prime Minister was there last week for the Africa Summit.

It deserves mentioning that Russia is Algeria's top military partner and has remained so for decades, with this relationship persisting in spite of Moscow neglecting most of Africa until just a few years ago. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) confirmed in this spring's "[Trends In International Arms Transfers](#)" report that a whopping 73% of Algeria's military imports from 2018-2022 were from Russia, which testifies to the enduring strength of their military ties.

Accordingly, Algeria has one of the largest, best-equipped, and most modern militaries anywhere in Africa, which is why it's rightly regarded as among the continent's most powerful countries. For that reason, its Chief of Staff's latest visit to Russia in the current regional context isn't any small matter since it suggests that Algiers intends to coordinate with Moscow regarding the wider war that might be about to break out upon the expiry of ECOWAS' ultimatum this Sunday to reinstall Niger's ousted leader.

Although [Algeria](#) and [Russia](#) both condemned the Nigerien coup late last week, each of their respective statements were shared prior to ECOWAS making its ultimatum that was subsequently supported by France and the US, both of which have troops in that country. The previously mentioned Burkinabe-Malian joint statement importantly warned that an invasion of Niger risks repeating the Libyan scenario by destabilizing the entire region and thus exacerbating terrorist threats to everyone.

This is an accurate assessment that justifies Russia and Algeria working together to avert that worst-case scenario and jointly coordinating their response to it if this conflict ends up

becoming inevitable, thus explaining why the Algerian Chief of Staff decided to visit Russia right after his Prime Minister just did. The reason for his visit is clearly to discuss the planned NATO-backed Nigerian-led ECOWAS invasion of Niger, which also happens to border Algeria for those readers who aren't aware.

It's likely that Algeria will play an important role if West Africa descends into war by virtue of its geography and military prowess. At the very least, Algiers might refuse to allow French warplanes to transit through its airspace, thus forcing them to risk being fired at if they violate this possible order or find another route to Niger via Libya (which might also be formally closed off to them) or somewhere else. The point is that Algeria can greatly complicate France's military logistics in any upcoming conflict.

Not only that, but this North African nation could allow Russia to transit through its airspace (provided that NATO doesn't impede this through dangerous brinksmanship over the Mediterranean) to reliably supply the de facto Burkinabe-Malian federation with arms, food, and whatever else it might need. In a sense, this would be spiritually similar to the erstwhile Soviet Union's intervention in support of Ethiopia during the [Ogaden War](#) when it was invaded by Somalia, though of course key differences exist.

Moving along, the other role that Algeria could play is a direct one, though it can't be taken for granted that its leadership will feel comfortable with this since it could fear that any significant deployment towards or into Niger could be taken advantage of by its long-time Moroccan nemesis. If it decides to do so, however, then moving its forces - including air defense systems - closer to the frontier could possibly deter France and Nigeria. Should those two still attack Niger, then Algeria might intervene in its support.

The Burkinabe-Malian joint statement warning about a repeat of the Libyan scenario scares Algeria since it struggled against terrorism during what's regarded as its "Black Decade" from 1991-2002, not to mention more recently but to a much lesser extent since the NATO War on Libya in 2011. Its objective national interests are therefore served by at the very least complicating France's military logistics in any upcoming conflict even if it ultimately decides not to get directly involved like Burkina Faso and Mali will.

Additionally, many might not know that Algeria has consistently espoused a revolutionary ideology throughout the decades despite the radical changes in the world order since its independence. This explains why it retained ties with Russia despite the latter's difficult decade after the USSR's dissolution and also [didn't cut off relations](#) with Syria over the past decade either even though the Arab League did. Algeria's leadership thus also has an ideological interest in complicating an imperialist invasion of Niger.

Taken together, these security and ideological interests account for why the Algerian Chief of Staff just flew to Moscow. His country wants to coordinate with its strategic partner in responding to this regional crisis as well as the wider war that might soon break out. While Algeria's role isn't as important as Nigeria's could be in leading the NATO-backed ECOWAS invasion of Niger nor Chad's in possibly being the kingmaker, it's still pretty significant and shouldn't be ignored or downplayed.

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#### About the author:

Andrew Korybko is an American Moscow-based political analyst specializing in the relationship between the US strategy in Afro-Eurasia, China's One Belt One Road global vision of New Silk Road connectivity, and Hybrid Warfare. He is a frequent contributor to Global Research.

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