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Essays

Inside Algerian Top Military Magazine's Anti-Morocco Propaganda

A new study sheds light on, and deconstructs, the reasons behind the longstanding anti-Morocco propaganda of the Algerian military and political establishments.

[Safaa Kasraoui](#) Feb. 05, 2022 1:27 p.m.



Presenting Morocco as an "existential threat" and "an outer enemy" has long been the Algerian establishment's strategy to galvanize patriotic support and distract from Algeria's internal issue

Rabat - Earlier this month, Dr. Mliless Mohamed, a Moroccan researcher, and Dr. Handoko Handoko from University Andalas, Indonesia published a [new study](#) under the title *Editorials of Conspiracy Hate and Insecurity: The Algerian Military Magazine 'El-Djeich' as a Case*. The paper critically analyzes 10 editorials written by the Algerian army magazine *El-Djeich* from January 2021 to October 2021.

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It mainly explores how the editorials employ a [conspiracy narrative](#) to represent Morocco as a

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the country's borders instead of interfering in social, political, and economic affairs.



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The study is conducted within the framework of Critical discourse analysis (CDA) to account for the narratives of the Algerian army that violently accuse Morocco of instrumentalizing conspiracies and waging cyber-attacks against Algeria. Devoid of any tangible justification, the editorials of the magazine El-Djeich launch unfounded accusations against Morocco.



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Mohamed and Handoko mention that the Algerian magazine does this for two main reasons. First, to create an "external enemy" to divert the attention of the people towards the social, economic, and political problems that the Algerian government has failed to solve. Second, to demonize the 'Hirak' which is obstructed by recurrent waves of COVID-19, widespread oppression by the security forces, as well as the arbitrary and unjustifiably harsh sentencing of Hirak leaders.



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The Algerian establishment fears that another Hirak-inspired social movement will emerge because the reasons for the generalized social unrest are deep-seated and still a marked feature of daily life for most Algerians. The political context, the severe economic and social situation, the deteriorating situation in hospitals, and the inability of the Algerian health system to manage the COVID crisis are what might push the Hirak to regenerate and break in Algerian cities.



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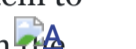
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The many linguistic constructions identified in El-Djeich's editorials reflect that the army and the political leadership towards Morocco are unfounded and fallacious. For instance, the study identifies a pattern of argumentation based on erroneous allegations that the magazine of the army attributed to Morocco.



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Devoid of any proof, the editorials have portrayed Morocco as an existential "threat to the country," meaning Algeria. As a matter of fact, the study by Mohamed and Handoko assumes that the magazine of the Algerian army uses editorials to rally the population against external enemy and to divert the attention of the Algerian population from their country problems.



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Indeed, the challenge for the Algerian military leadership is to convince Hirak supporters many of whom strongly denounce the interference of the army in Algerians' life, that the national army is the only institution that can stop an external enemy (Morocco) from threatening both their well-being and the economic, political, and security interests of their country.

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The study deals with a complex situation of discourse whereby dissimulated hate in the language is a strategy of argumentation that the Algerian army adopts to make Morocco an enemy of the Algerian people. The performativity of the discourse is accomplished by intense and vehement discursive figures, mental frames, and metaphors to arouse national feelings and incite racial tensions. The study confirms that the editorials of the Algerian army magazine El-Djeich are full of hate and incite violence and racism.

The many metaphors and mental frames in the editorials serve the political agenda of the Algerian politico-military establishment by portraying Morocco as an enemy. The study confirms that hate speech is not only growing in quantity, but it is also getting greater in terms of quality as the Algerian army magazine names Morocco as the "classical enemy," the "western enemy," and the "bad neighbor." The study warns that the discourse of the magazine creates and maintains an atmosphere of hate towards Morocco. In this sense, the study brings to the front the nexus between media and hate speech dissemination to target a whole nation instead of an individual.

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The introductions of the editorials stick to a distinct pattern which keeps mentioning the legitimacy of the Algerian army, presented as descending from the army of liberation which chased the French colonizer and sacrificed more than five million martyrs. Similarly, it is recurrent in introductions that the new Algeria is the result of a “battle of the chouhada” but fails to mention the role of the Hirak in deposing Bouteflika and his government.

Today, the Hirak movement, faithful to its founding slogan -- “a civil and not a military state” - - still strongly holds on to the building of a democratic and civil country without the interference of the military that took the country hostage since independence in 1962. In this sense, El-Djeich recalls that internal issues should be solved by Algerians themselves.

The magazine claims that the president and the army are leading many battles to reduce underdevelopment, to contain the pandemic, and to organize the referendum of the constitution. All these battles are lost. Algeria is witnessing the most difficult moments since its independence, as evidenced in skyrocketing cost of living, the lack of liquidity, the scarcity of food, the lowest internet penetration in the region, a recurrent lack of drinking water, and repeated electricity interruption in different parts of the country including the capital.

El-Djeich's editorials as a conspiracy hive

The study indicates that El-Djeich's editorials negatively portrayed Morocco as “an enemy state” that is organizing “malign plots” against Algeria. To develop this point of view, the researchers point out that the editorials rely on false and unjustified allegations to push Algerians to believe in conspiracies and cyber-attacks waged against their country by Morocco. As such, El-Djeich incredibly gives the impression that the two countries are at war and confront each other on a real battlefield.

Either explicitly or implicitly, the magazine accuses Morocco, without naming it, of being an “agitator” and a “revanchist” country that attacks the achievements of the “new Algeria.” In a paragraph of 365 words, one of the editorials interchangeably uses “Morocco” and “Makhzen” seven times, to make the point that Morocco is an enemy and a “rogue state” responsible for many conspiracies and acts of aggression or terrorism targeting Algerian interests and Algerian lives.

The study reveals that the rhetoric of the magazine falsely and arbitrarily accuses Morocco of “manipulating” and “supporting terrorist organizations of MAK and RACHAD.”

Unsurprisingly, the texts never mention that Algeria flagrantly interferes in Morocco's internal affairs. For more than forty five years, Algeria has constantly threatened Morocco with wars and conspired to undermine the kingdom's territorial integrity. As the main sponsor of the Polisario Front, the separatist group asking for independence in Western Sahara, Algeria has long been the mastermind of a plot aimed at separating the Moroccan Sahara from mainland Morocco.

The study argues that Algeria' perpetual interference in the Moroccan Sahara has been done over the improvement of the Algerians' social, economic, and political daily life. Today, the Algerian government is criticized for its failures to contain the COVID crisis, to solve the country's worsening economic situation, and to improve Algerian citizens' wellbeing. On the list of failures of the Algerian government is its inability to put out fires that burnt the Kabilya region for more than a month in which 69 died including 28 soldiers.

Human and biodiversity losses were due to disorganization, the delay that the authorities made to intervene at the right time, and the lack of means to fight fires that require air intervention. Morocco, which Algeria considers as an enemy, offered to help put out the fire by deploying two “Canadair” airplanes. But Algeria turned down Morocco's help offer. Moreover,

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This is a new phenomenon that tells us a lot about the degree of desperation that the Algerian people suffer from. Shocking videos circulate on social media depicting the suffering of entire families, babies, pregnant women, old people, and even cancer patients fleeing Algeria. These were some of the internal failures that the magazine of the Algerian army dropped from the editorials. As for the future of the country, no one can tell.

These failures, says the study, are masked by a blind propaganda that the military narratives reproduce around the conception of "victimization" to satisfy the population and to get recognition and legitimacy from other countries. The conspiracy theory conducted by the editorials is meant to make Algeria a victim of Moroccan plots. As far as this victim mindset is concerned, Mohamed and Handoko detect a pattern in the Algerian army's discourse that masks internal problems, including strategies of manipulation and conspiracy attributed to Noam Chomsky.

The study mentions that the Algerian army's narratives employ techniques like "Distraction," "Create Problems and Offer Solutions," and the "Gradual Strategy," to maintain the public opinion around the idea that Morocco is an "enemy" and a "hostile neighbor" who "supports terrorist groups of MAK and RACHAD," seeks to "harm Algeria," and "complots with foreign powers to 'destabilize'" its territorial integrity.

The strategy of distraction, which is done via the constant airing or foregrounding of entertaining but insignificant news, is the primary element of social control the Algerian establishment uses to divert public attention from important issues and the failure of the political and military elite to meet the people's needs. The ideology of the army reported in the editorials is not only diversionary, but it keeps the public busy with trivial news.

If Algeria often speaks of a professional army that is highly trained and dependable, the death of 28 soldiers in the fire of Kabylia testifies to the Algerian state's incompetence to send dozens of young soldiers to fight against fires without appropriate material. It seems that the military sacrificed dozens of young soldiers to build the image of an army at the service of the people of Kabylia.

Recommendations of editorials

The final step in the present study is the recommendations for internal and external audiences. Internally, the editorials overtly talk to the Hirak, which is skeptic and easily influenced by actors who disagree with the army's philosophy and claim its departure from the political scene. For the magazine, they are traitors manipulated by external parties to disrupt the stability of the country.

In particular, more reminders are sent to the post-independence generation that has lost faith in the army after it canceled the elections of the 90s and launched the country into a deadly carnage. The decision left hundreds of thousands dead and disappeared not to mention the psychological, social, and cultural trauma of millions of Algerians.

Finally, the study concludes that the Algerian system is not only becoming outdated but also

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