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North Korea Discovers the Maghreb: Propaganda Narratives in the Formative Phase of Pyongyang's Northwest African Diplomacy

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The paper examines the formative phase of Pyongyang's diplomacy toward Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, and Mauritania through the lenses of North Korean propaganda. It points out that the DPRK leaders' initial views of this distant and little-known region were heavily shaped by the information transmitted by their Soviet bloc allies, and they showed less interest in the Maghreb than East Germany and North Vietnam. When they did develop a more distinctive attitude, the peculiar features of their propaganda narratives often indicated a narrower and less empathetic perspective than East Germany's. Subsequent North Korean claims stressing the DPRK's historically rooted solidarity with other colonial and post-colonial countries were partially contradicted by Pyongyang's own propaganda, whose wide swings between vocal solidarity and deafening silence revealed the conditional and selective nature of North Korean solidarity. The prolonged news blackouts imposed upon Tunisia, Morocco, and Mauritania implied that the DPRK leaders attributed no intrinsic news value to the events in the Maghreb, and even to the very existence of these nations, unless they could be presented in such a way that buttressed Pyongyang's narratives of militant anti-imperialist struggle. That is, the main thrust of North Korea's

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solidarity was directed toward certain specific actions of the Maghreb countries, rather than toward the countries as such. The contrast between Pyongyang's strong preference for armed struggle and its limited ability to provide economic assistance played a major role in that the DPRK managed to overtake East Germany in Algeria, but lagged behind it in Morocco and Tunisia.

Keywords: North Korea, Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Mauritania, propaganda narratives

Introduction

The hitherto published academic studies on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's (DPRK, commonly known as North Korea) diplomatic and military activities in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) have paid far more attention to its relations with Iran and the Mashriq (the eastern part of the Arab world, such as Egypt, Syria, Iraq, and the Arabian Peninsula) than to its interactions with the Maghreb (Northwest Africa, composed of Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Western Sahara, and, in a broader sense, Mauritania and Libya). To date, no scholarly article or book chapter has been devoted specifically to North Korea's attitude toward the political and military conflicts that rocked the Maghreb during or after the Cold War, though several authors who provided a comprehensive overview of North Korean foreign policy correctly pointed out that Pyongyang's involvement in Third World revolutions started with its recognition of the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic (Gouvernement provisoire de la République algérienne, GPRA) in the midst of the Algerian War – a gesture which Algeria would later reciprocate by playing a crucial role in the DPRK's admission to the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), and which North Korean propaganda still highlights as the genesis of the DPRK's "eternal friendship" with Algeria. Still, even the aforesaid monographs made only a few brief references to North Korea's interactions with Tunisia and Morocco.1

Seeking to fill these gaps in the literature, this article approaches the formative phase of North Korea's Maghreb policy (1951–1962) – that is, the period when Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria achieved independence from France, and joined the United Nations (UN) as sovereign states – from the following angles.

Joseph S. Bermudez, Terrorism: The North Korean Connection (New York: Crane Russak, 1990), 70–71, 79; Barry K. Gills, Korea versus Korea: A Case of Contested Legitimacy (London: Routledge, 1996), 62, 67–70, 88, 103–05, 134–40, 164, 170, 180–96, 217–18; Byung Chul Koh, The Foreign Policy of North Korea (New York: F. A. Praeger, 1969), 170–84; Chung-in Moon, "Between Ideology and Interest: North Korea in the Middle East," in The Foreign Relations of North Korea: New Perspectives, eds. Jae-kyu Park, Byung Chul Koh, and Tae-Hwan Kwak (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1987): 382–86, 396–405. For recent North Korean references to the recognition of the GPRA, see "Trace of Eternal Friendship Left in Algeria and Mauritania," DPRK Ministry of Foreign Affairs, May 30, 2020, https://kcnawatch.org/newstream/1693560784-973671832/trace-of-eternal-friendship-left-infaraway-algeria-and-mauritania/.

First, it investigates which episodes of Algerian, Moroccan, and Tunisian politics attracted Pyongyang's attention in a positive or negative way, which distinctions North Korean observers made between the three Maghreb states, and which factors facilitated or hindered the DPRK's efforts to make inroads in this geographically and culturally distant region with which Korean policy-makers lacked any prior contacts. It describes how Pyongyang's Communist allies functioned as indispensable conduits during this process of political exploration.

Second, the article examines how the North Korean media (especially Rodong sinmun 로동신문, the daily newspaper of the ruling Korean Workers' Party, KWP) described, distorted, or deliberately ignored the various political and military events that took place in the three Maghreb states, how they sought to familiarize North Korean readers with this terra incognita, and how these patterns of media coverage reflected the leadership's favorable or unfavorable views of the aforesaid events. Placing these observations into a theoretical framework, the conclusion explores whether the distortions that appeared in North Korea's images of the Maghreb were similar to the biases which the theorists of Orientalism identified in Western representations of Arab-Islamic societies, and whether the concept of the gaze may illuminate the motives behind these distortions.

Third, the article seeks to identify the distinctive elements of North Korea's Maghreb policy by comparing it with the position of other Communist regimes, instead of placing it solely into the context of inter-Korean rivalry. In particular, it uses the Maghreb-related articles of *Neues Deutschland*, the party newspaper of the German Democratic Republic (GDR, commonly known as East Germany), as a control group to pinpoint the unique aspects of *Rodong sinmun*'s position, since the GDR's diplomatic activities were as strongly motivated by its perennial competition with West Germany as Pyongyang's policies were driven by its rivalry with Seoul.

Instead of merely exploring a yet-untapped research niche, the article also aspires to provide a deeper insight into the core questions of North Korean history and foreign policy. Through the example of Maghreb-DPRK relations, it investigates how long the North Korean leaders' views remained under a strong Soviet influence, when they started to form a distinctive attitude, and how this attitude differed from that of the other Communist states; seeks to ascertain whether the DPRK's attitudes toward the Third World reflected an unusually strong, historically rooted anti-colonial and post-colonial solidarity (as Pyongyang's later narratives suggested), or not; and examines which broader diplomatic considerations influenced the position that the various Third World states adopted towards the seemingly irreconcilable conflict which divided the faraway Korean Peninsula.

The primary sources cited in this article were obtained and examined as follows:

Thematically relevant North Korean articles were identified by using the pre-1965 North Korean names of the Maghreb countries — Alcheria (알제리아), Maurit'ania (마우리타니아), Morok'o (모로코), T'yunisň (튜니스), and T'yunisya (튜니샤) — to search a digitized list of Rodong sinmun articles (1945–2000). This chronological title list and a collection of scanned Rodong sinmun issues, both stored at Kookmin University, were obtained with the assistance of Fyodor

Tertitskiy and Peter Ward in the framework of the Laboratory Program for Korean Studies (AKS-2019-LAB-1250001). Since the first six years of the list were only partially complete, a published list (Rodong sinmun kisa mongnok 1 로동신문 기사 목록 1, 1945–1950) was also examined to fill the occasional gaps. The list of titles from 1951–1962 was nearly complete, with a few minor exceptions (such as March 6-10, 1954, and December 1-8, 1960). In contrast, the collection of scanned issues contained several major gaps (July-December 1953; March 1961; May-June 1962), which precluded content analysis in these periods. During the next stage of my research, I intend to collect the missing issues so as to examine certain specific articles.

Scanned volumes of North Korea's Central Yearbook, stored at Kookmin University, were obtained with the assistance of Fyodor Tertitskiy in the framework of the Laboratory Program for Korean Studies. Of the period under examination, only Volumes 1958–1959 and 1961–1965 were available.

Articles of Neues Deutschland were downloaded from the fully complete online archives of the newspaper (https://www.nd-archiv.de/). All possible variants of the selected keywords – such as Algerien (Algeria), Algeriens (Algeria's), and algerische/algerischen/algerischer/algerisches (Algerian) – were searched individually so as to identify every thematically relevant article in a given period. Archived articles of Hungarian newspapers (Magyar Nemzet and Szabad Nép/Népszabadság) were downloaded from the Arcanum Digitheca database (https://adt.arcanum.com/en/) through the server of Central European University. Scanned issues of Pravda were obtained from the collection of East China Normal University's Cold War International Studies Center. Due to the non-searchable format of the scanned files, visual inspection was used to ascertain whether the issues published in certain specific periods contained articles about the examined subjects. The incomplete nature of the Center's Pravda collection precluded a comprehensive statistical analysis along the same lines as applied to Rodong sinmun and Neues Deutschland.

Declassified files of the Hungarian Foreign Ministry were accessed during personal visits in the Hungarian National Archives (Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár, MNL). Declassified files of the British Foreign Office, now stored in the National Archives (TNA), were obtained in electronic format through Taylor and Francis' Cold War Eastern Europe (CWEE) database, with the assistance of Georgina Asfaw and Joseph Gilling.

Pyongyang's Oscillating Attitude Toward the Maghreb

In the formative stage of the North Korean regime and during the Korean War, the diplomatically isolated DPRK lacked any sort of direct contact with any of the MENA countries, no matter whether they were sovereign states or not. Under such conditions, the North Korean leadership's views on the political developments in the Maghreb were expressed primarily through the party-controlled media, rather than by concrete actions. Thus, one may start examining the origins of Pyongyang's attitudes toward the Maghreb by subjecting the relevant articles of *Rodong sinmun* to a statistical and thematical analysis.

In light of the central position that Algeria has occupied in North Korea's Maghreb policy since the late 1950s, it may appear peculiar that in the early 1950s, Rodong sinmun paid far less attention to the Algerian scene than Tunisia and Morocco. Having made only a few sporadic references to the Maghreb up to 1950, in 1951-1953 the newspaper carried a total of eighty-seven articles focused on the aforesaid three countries. If one takes into consideration that some articles covered multiple countries, the following observations may be made: Forty-nine articles contained detailed information on Tunisia, thirty-one on Morocco, but only eleven on Algeria (see Table 1). These proportions were not of a static nature: the bulk of Tunisia-related articles appeared in 1952, only to be followed by a drastic slump in 1953, whereas the number of articles on Morocco increased year by year. Still, Rodong sinmun published only a handful of scattered articles about Algeria, of which just a few explored the themes of French colonial rule and nationalist resistance; the others covered the local labor movement and the activities of the Algerian Communist Party (Parti communiste algérien, PCA). In contrast, the newspaper paid sustained attention to Tunisia and Morocco in those periods when the conflicts between the French administration and the local population reached particular intensity (e.g., the forceful replacement of the Tunisian cabinet in March 1952, and the deposition of Moroccan Sultan Mohammed V in August 1953), and when the Arab states managed to place the Tunisian and Moroccan question on the agenda of the United Nations in December 1952 and October 1953.²

To explain why North Korea's initial interest in the Maghreb countries showed such a marked fluctuation, and why Pyongyang paid so much attention to faraway Tunisia and Morocco at a time when the DPRK was engulfed by an immensely destructive war, I compared the patterns observable in Rodong sinmun's articles on Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia with the number and content of Neues Deutschland's contemporaneous Maghrebrelated articles. Notably, both the total number of Neues Deutschland articles (ninety-four) and the proportion of articles (Tunisia: sixty-four, Morocco: thirty-three, Algeria: thirteen) stood fairly close to the analogous data of Rodong sinmun. The peaks and slumps of North Korean and East German interest in Algerian, Moroccan and Tunisian developments largely paralleled each other, but Neues Deutschland was usually quicker to grasp the significance of a local event than Rodong sinmun. For instance, the first episode that drew the focused attention of both newspapers to the Maghreb was the Moroccan political crisis of February-March 1951, when French Resident-General Alphonse Juin pressured Mohammed V to disassociate himself from the nationalist Istiqlal (Independence) Party, and then launched a campaign of repression against Istiqlal. From March 7 to March 30, Neues Deutschland devoted as many as seven articles to the crisis, whereas Rodong sinmun's two analogous articles were published as late as March 19-20.3

² See "Alcheria ŭihoe sŏn'gŏ e kongsandang riphuboja chinch'ul hyŏnjŏ," Rodong sinmun, February 11, 1951, 4; "T'yunisŭ inmindŭl koeroe chŏngbu chojak ŭmmo rŭl ch'iryŏrhi pandae," Rodong sinmun, April 5, 1952, 4; "Morok'o munje t'oŭi kaesi," Rodong sinmun, December 20, 1952, 4; "Ch'oegŭn ŭi Morok'o chŏngbyŏn," Rodong sinmun, August 28, 1953, 4.

³ "Ein Sultan und sieben USA-Stützpunkte," Neues Deutschland, March 7, 1951, 4; "Morok'o ryuhyŏl sakŏn ŭi

	Algeria		Morocco		Tunisia		M. and T.		A. and T.		A., M. and T.	
	RS	ND	RS	ND	RS	ND	RS	ND	RS	ND	RS	ND
1951												
Jan.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Feb.	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mar.	0	0	2	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Apr.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
May	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Jun.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Jul.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Aug.	1	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Sep.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Oct.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nov.	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dec.	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	4	4	2	7	2	1	0	0	0	1	0	0
1952												
Jan.	0	0	0	0	3	14	0	0	0	0	0	0
Feb.	0	3	1	0	1	9	0	2	0	0	0	1
Mar.	1	0	0	0	4	9	0	0	0	0	0	0
Apr.	2	0	0	0	12	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
May	1	0	0	0	4	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
Jun.	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Jul.	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Aug.	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sep.	0	0	2	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Oct.	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nov.	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dec.	0	0	5	2	9	5	1	5	0	0	0	1
Total	5	4	11	2	38	47	1	7	0	0	0	2
1953												
Jan.	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
Feb.	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mar.	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Apr.	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
May	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Jun.	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Jul.	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Aug.	0	0	3	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sep.	0	0	2	3	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Oct.	0	0	4	2	1	2	0	1	0	0	0	0
Nov.	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dec.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	1	1	15	12	5	3	2	2	1	0	0	1

Table 1. Maghreb-related articles in Rodong sinmun and Neues Deutschland, 1951-1953⁴

chinsang," Rodong sinmun, March 19, 1951, 4.

⁴ I am indebted to Lee Junhee for his assistance in identifying those *Rodong sinmun* articles which covered multiple Maghreb countries.

The marked chronological and thematic similarities between the two newspapers' Maghreb-related articles indicated that Pyongyang's initial attitudes toward this faraway and little-known region were strongly influenced by the tendencies prevalent in the Soviet bloc media. Notably, the first articles *Rodong sinmun* and *Neues Deutschland* published on the Moroccan crisis of February-March 1951 and the Tunisian protests starting in December 1951 were closely preceded by comparable articles in *Pravda*, and in January 1952, *Rodong sinmun* emphatically quoted the Soviet newspaper's assessment of the Tunisian situation.⁵

Seen through the lens of Soviet geopolitical considerations, rather than North Korea's own specific priorities, it is easier to comprehend why Pyongyang's interest in Morocco and Tunisia underwent a perceptible increase in 1951–1952. On February 10, 1951, *Pravda* devoted a long article to a recent U.S.-French agreement to create strategic bomber bases in Morocco, and the Soviet bloc diplomats were well aware of the NATO plans aimed at transforming French North Africa into a military staging area beyond the reach of an invading Soviet army. Under such conditions, the Communist states had good reason to welcome any nationalist conflagration in the Maghreb. A Hungarian diplomatic report of February 1951 favorably contrasted Istiqlal's intransigent nationalism with the Tunisian Neo Destour Party's efforts to reach a compromise with France, while a later report on the Tunisian protests of February 1952 noted with satisfaction that "the North African peoples' movement for independence, [which occurred] in an important section of the anti-Soviet staging area, has already upset the plans of the imperialists."

Another peculiar feature of *Rodong sinmun*'s narrative was that its editors went to great lengths to distinguish French colonial rulers from the French population. By asserting that French workers "widely supported" Tunisia's struggle for freedom, they effectively adopted the ideological perspective of the Soviet leaders. *Rodong sinmun*'s analytical concepts – such as its strong interest in the socio-economic dimension of nationalist resistance – likewise showed a distinctive Marxist-Leninist influence.⁷

The features described above – a Soviet-influenced narrative and a slower response to events in the Maghreb than *Neues Deutschland's* – may also be observed in Pyongyang's initial reaction to the start of the Algerian insurgency (November 1, 1954). On November 15, *Rodong sinmun* did express unreserved approval of Algeria's resistance against French colonial rule, but it imposed a selective and manipulative narrative on the Algerian scene when it quoted a statement that the PCA Politburo issued about the events. By presenting the PCA's

⁵ Iu. Zhukov, "Chto proiskhodit v Marokko?" *Pravda*, February 10, 1951, 3; "Protiv frantsuzskogo kolonial'nogo rezhima," *Pravda*, December 21, 1951, 3; "Minjok chŏk chayu wa haebang ŭl wihayŏ T'yunisŭ inmindŭl ŭn kwŏlgihayŏtta (Ppŭraudajironp'yŏng)," *Rodong sinmun*, January 30, 1952, 4.

⁶ Hungarian Legation in France, Report, February 16, 1951. "A politikai helyzet alakulása Afrikában." Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár (MNL), XIX-J-1-k France, 1945–64, 7. doboz, 0106/1951; Hungarian Legation in France, Report, October 16, 1951. "Francia gyarmatok helyzete." MNL, XIX-J-1-k France, 1945–1964, 7. doboz, 014718/1951; Hungarian Legation in France, Report, February 13, 1952. "Tuniszi események." MNL, XIX-J-1-k France, 1945–1964, 7. doboz, 02688/1952.

^{7 &}quot;T'yunisü sat'ae hŏmakhwa," Rodong sinmun, January 30, 1952, 4; "T'yunisü sat'ae kŭktoro kinjang," Rodong sinmun, March 4, 1952, 4 (both articles translated by Lee Junhee).

standpoint as an authoritative assessment, the North Korean editors tacitly followed the example set by a *Pravda* article dated ten days earlier, but effectively tiptoed around the fact that the PCA played no role whatsoever in the eruption of the insurgency.⁸ In fact, the leaders of the National Liberation Front (*Front de libération nationale*, FLN) were, by and large, "hostile to and hardly influenced by communism." Having carried two articles on the Algerian situation in November-December 1954 and a single article during the first eight months of 1955, *Rodong sinmun* started to pay focused attention to Algeria only in September 1955, when the war underwent a dramatic escalation, and the French authorities banned the PCA. Thus, Pyongyang's attitude considerably differed from *Neues Deutschland*'s, for the latter published no less than fifteen articles on the Algerian insurgency within its first month.¹⁰

In October 1955, the DPRK's growing interest in the Algerian crisis found a clear expression in a long *Rodong sinmun* article that provided a detailed overview of Algeria's geographical features, natural resources, population, and historical past, ostensibly in response to the inquiries of readers unfamiliar with this faraway land. Notably, the article's historical narrative started with the 19th-century French invasion of Algeria, while its description of the current situation was heavily focused on the socio-economic misery inflicted by colonial rule, rather than the country's cultural and religious peculiarities. Its author laid disproportionate emphasis on the PCA's fairly limited contribution to Algeria's liberation struggle, and insinuated that due to the growing U.S. economic and military presence in Algeria, the population now suffered under the double yoke of French and American imperialism.¹¹

By 1956–1957, Algeria had greatly overshadowed Tunisia and Morocco in Rodong sinmun's Maghreb-related articles (see Table 2). This reversal of the newspaper's earlier focus on the latter two countries seems to have reflected the growing divergence between the negotiated decolonization of Morocco and Tunisia (March 1956) and the rapidly escalating war in Algeria, thus implying a North Korean preference for violent anti-colonial struggle. For instance, Rodong sinmun carried no article about Mohammed V's triumphant return from exile (November 16, 1955), whereas Neues Deutschland devoted as many as ten articles to this important event.¹²

Due to the presence of FLN guerrillas in Tunisia and Morocco, the escalating Algerian War was bound to affect the neighboring Maghreb countries, too, but their renewed friction with France did not necessarily further the interests of the Communist states in general and North Korea's in particular. Seeking to persuade the U.S. to throw its weight behind his efforts to put a negotiated end to the war, Tunisian President Habib Bourguiba, the leader of the Neo Destour Party, purposefully kept the Soviet bloc states at arm's length lest Washington

⁸ "Obstanovka v Alzhire," *Pravda*, November 5, 1954, 3; "Alcheria sat'ae," *Rodong sinmun*, November 15, 1954, 4 (the latter article translated by Lee Junhee).

⁹ Allison Drew, We Are No Longer in France: Communists in Colonial Algeria (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014), 180–200.

[&]quot;Terror in Algerien," Neues Deutschland, November 4, 1954, 7; "Algeriens Patrioten in harten Gegenwehr," Neues Deutschland, November 5, 1954, 5.

¹¹ Kang Yŏnsu, "Alcheria chŏngse," 4 Rodong sinmun, October 25, 1955, 4 (translated by Lee Junhee).

^{12 &}quot;Marokko erwartet seinen Sultan," Neues Deutschland, November 16, 1955, 5.

be put off by their diplomatic presence in Tunis.¹³ In response to Tunisia's recurring border clashes with France, in the fall of 1957 he again turned to the U.S., beseeching it to provide Tunisia with arms.¹⁴ Rodong sinmun duly presented the resulting French-American dispute as a fissure within the "imperialist camp," but Bourguiba's pro-American stance proved to be directly inimical to Pyongyang's aspirations.¹⁵ In 1957–1959, during the General Assembly's annual debates over the Korean question, Tunisia's UN delegate consistently supported the U.S.-backed draft resolutions which proposed that only a South Korean representative, rather than the representatives of both Koreas, be invited to attend the debate, thus expressing an open preference for the ROK over the DPRK.¹⁶

Compared with the dilemma posed by Bourguiba's reliance on "American imperialism" against the threat from "French imperialism," the FLN's guerrilla war against the French army was far easier to present in a form compatible with Pyongyang's dominant propaganda narratives. Following the Communist-led World Federation of Trade Unions' (WFTU) protest against the French authorities' mistreatment of Algerian trade union activists, in December 1956 the DPRK, for the first time, directly expressed verbal support for Algeria's struggle in the form of a letter that the General Federation of Trade Unions (GFTU) addressed to the Algerian labor unions – a gesture that nevertheless paled in comparison with the concerted messages of solidarity which the mass organisations of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV, commonly known as North Vietnam) had started to issue as early as June 1956. Having achieved their independence from France after a seven-year war, the North Vietnamese leaders naturally felt a strong sympathy for the Algerians who were now fighting the same enemy.¹⁷

The unusually high number of Algeria-related articles that *Rodong simmun* published in April and November 1957 evidently reflected the WFTU's global campaign on behalf of Algeria: a week of solidarity (April 7-14) and a day of struggle (November 15).¹⁸ The first visit of an Algerian delegation in the DPRK (July 1957) likewise took place in a broader international context, since the delegates – a group of students headed by Mohamed Khemisti – visited China and North Vietnam, too. In the latter countries, they were received even by Prime Minister Zhou Enlai and President Ho Chi Minh, respectively, whereas the highest-ranking North Korean leader whom they managed to meet was Deputy Prime Minister Ch'oe

Hungarian Legation to France, Report, February 1, 1958. "Tuniszi helyzetkép." MNL, XIX-J-1-j Small countries (Tunisia), 1945–64, IV-200, 001678/1958.

¹⁴ Stanley Shaloff, ed., Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955–1957, Africa, vol.18 (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1989), Documents 256–300.

^{15 &}quot;Cheguk chuŭi chinyŏnggan ŭi mosun kyŏkhwa," Rodong sinmun, November 19, 1957, 4.

¹⁶ United Nations, Yearbook of the United Nations, 1957, 90.

[&]quot;Sozialisten verurteilen Algerien-Massaker," Neues Deutschland, December 13, 1956, 5; "Chikch'ong chungang wiwŏnhoe esŏ Alcheria rodong choham ryŏnmaeng e kyŏngnyŏ ŭi p'yŏnji," Rodong sinmun, December 24, 1956, 2 (translated by Lee Junhee); Ngoc H. Huynh, "The Time-Honored Friendship: A History of Vietnamese-Algerian Relations (1946–2015)" (BA senior thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 2016), 25.

¹⁸ "Alcheria inmin ŭl chijihanŭn kukche ryŏndaesŏng chugan sŏngdaehi chinhaeng (Segye Chingnyŏn, Chungguk, P'aran, Wŏllam, Togil, Chŏn Arap Nojo Ryŏnmaeng)," Rodong sinmun, April 10, 1957, 4.

Yonggŏn.¹⁹

		1956		1957				
	Algeria	Morocco	Tunisia	Algeria	Morocco	Tunisia		
Jan.	3	0	0	3	0	0		
Feb.	0	0	0	6	0	0		
Mar.	0	3	1	2	1	1		
Apr.	1	3	0	15	0	1		
May	1	0	1	3	0	0		
Jun.	5	2	0	1	0	0		
Jul.	2	1	1	7	0	0		
Aug.	0	0	0	1	0	1		
Sep.	1	0	0	4	0	0		
Oct.	5	1	0	4	1	1		
Nov.	2	1	0	10	0	2		
Dec.	3	0	0	11	1	1		
Total	23	11	3	67	3	7		

Table 2. Maghreb-related articles in Rodong sinmun, 1956–1957

At the 1st Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Conference, held in Cairo from December 26, 1957 to January 1, 1958, the Communist states – including a DPRK delegation – joined forces with Gamal Abdel Nasser's Egypt to champion the cause of Algeria's FLN. On March 30, 1958, designated as Algeria Day by the conference, the North Korean authorities, just like their Soviet, Chinese, Egyptian, and Tunisian counterparts, held mass rallies to express their solidarity with Algeria. Nonetheless, this impressive concord between Pyongyang's various partners began to disintegrate within barely half a year, compelling the KWP leaders to take sides. For the first time since *Rodong sinmun* had started monitoring the North African liberation movements, Maghrebi politics became a diplomatic minefield for North Korea.

Pyongyang Caught Between the FLN's Sponsors

As early as February 1957, Rodong sinmun reported that the Algerian nationalist leaders contemplated establishing a provisional government, but they had not decided yet which Arab country should host it.²¹ By mid-1958, the latter question became a matter of increasing

¹⁹ "Ch'oe Yonggŏn pususang Alcheria haksaeng taep'yodan ŭl chŏpkyŏn," *Rodong sinmun*, July 22, 1957, 1 (translated by Lee Junhee); Clement Henri Moore, *Combat et solidarite estudiantins:* L'UGEMA (1955–1962) (Algiers: Casbah-Editions, 2010), 464.

Hungarian Legation in Egypt, Report, January 26, 1958. "Az ázsiai-afrikai országok szolidaritási konferenciája.". MNL, XIX-J-1-j Egypt, 1945–1964, 13. doboz, 00375/1958; Reem Abou-El-Fadl, "Building Egypt's Afro-Asian Hub: Infrastructures of Solidarity and the 1957 Cairo Conference," *Journal of World History* 30, no. 1/2 (2019): 186; "Alcheria ŭi nal e chehayŏ kakchi esŏ chiphoe chinhaeng," *Rodong sinmun*, March 30, 1958, 1; Cong Pan, "La guerre d'Algérie et les relations franco-chinoises," (PhD diss., Université de Lyon, 2020), 124–25.

²¹ "Chayu Alcheria chongbu surim yejong," Rodong sinmun, February 8, 1957, 4 (translated by Lee Junhee).

urgency for the FLN leaders, anxious as they were to counter Charles de Gaulle's plan to hold a referendum in Algeria, but they were caught between the competing interests and visions of the two potential host countries – Nasser's United Arab Republic (UAR) and Bourguiba's Tunisia. In turn, their dilemma affected North Korea, too, since the DPRK had just expressed its solidarity with each of the three Arab countries involved.

In response to the Sakiet Sidi Youssef incident (February 8, 1958), when the French air force bombed a Tunisian village in retaliation for FLN raids from over the Tunisian border, *Rodong sinmun* highlighted Tunisia's protests against France's "provocative behavior" in no less than nineteen articles from February 12 to June 24.²² In June-August 1958, however, a growing rift appeared in Tunisian-FLN relations, caused by Bourguiba's efforts to reach a modus vivendi with France and his attempts to nudge the FLN toward a negotiated settlement. These disputes ultimately compelled the FLN leaders to proclaim their provisional government in Cairo (September 18, 1958), rather than Tunis. Still, they soon ran afoul of Nasser, too, when the latter unsuccessfully pressured them to side with him against Bourguiba, who broke diplomatic relations with the UAR in October.²³

Facing this inter-Arab dispute, the North Koreans effectively took Nasser's side. In a dramatic reversal of its earlier sympathetic focus on Tunisia, Rodong sinmun abruptly imposed a news blackout, and failed to publish any Tunisian-related article from June 24, 1958 until August 24, 1959, but continued to highlight the UAR's friendly exchanges with the DPRK and other Communist states. In light of Pyongyang's persistent efforts to win Nasser's friendship (which enabled the DPRK to open a trade office in Cairo in July 1958²⁴), this choice was fairly predictable, all the more so because the Soviet bloc countries unambiguously preferred Nasser over Bourguiba. Nevertheless, Rodong sinmun, unlike Neues Deutschland, refrained from directly confronting Tunisia, probably because the DPRK officials reasoned that highlighting an inter-Arab dispute would undercut their efforts to blame "Western imperialism" for all the woes of the Arab world.²⁵

The proclamation of the FLN's provisional government created a rift between North Korea's Communist allies, too. The Chinese leadership recognized the GPRA as early as September 22, preceded only by the UAR, Morocco, and a few other Arab states. In contrast, the USSR and its East European satellites adopted an evasive attitude toward the GPRA's increasingly insistent requests for diplomatic recognition, and preferred to maintain contacts with the FLN through their mass organizations, rather than their governmental

²² See "Pullansŏ manhaeng e taehan T'yunisya chŏngbu ŭi tanhohan choch'i," Rodong sinmun, February 13, 1958, 4.

Hungarian Embassy in the UAR, Report, March 18, 1959. "Ellentétek az algériai kormányban." MNL, XIX-J-1-j Algeria, 1945–1964, 4. doboz, 00128/4/1959; Giampaolo Calchi Novati, "La politique tunisienne face à la guerre d'Algérie," Confluences Méditerranée 29 (Spring 1999): 117–23; Matthew Connelly, A Diplomatic Revolution: Algeria's Fight for Independence and the Origins of the Post-Cold War Era (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 181–90; Alistair Horne, A Savage War of Peace: Algeria, 1954–1962 (New York: The Viking Press, 1977), 315–16.

²⁴ Hungarian Foreign Ministry, Letter to the Hungarian Embassy in the UAR, July 9, 1958. "A Koreai Demokratikus Köztársaság és az EAK kapcsolatai." MNL, XIX-J-1-j Egypt, 1945–1964, 1. doboz, 1/a, 004488/1958.

²⁵ "Bourguiba Agent des Imperialismus," Neues Deutschland, October 18, 1958, 5.

²⁶ Pan, "La guerre d'Algérie et les relations franco-chinoises," 155.

organs.²⁷ In the face of these alternatives, the DPRK opted for the former approach when, on September 25, it granted *de jure* recognition to the GPRA.²⁸ Subsequent North Korean propaganda would falsely claim that "when the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic was set up, the government of the DPRK recognized it ahead of other countries." In reality, Pyongyang's action seems to have been inspired by China's example, since *Rodong sinmun* had mentioned the Chinese recognition of the GPRA a day before the KWP leaders crossed the Rubicon, and Sino-DPRK relations were exceptionally close throughout 1958.³⁰ While the European Communist states feared that Paris might sever diplomatic relations with them if they recognized the GPRA, the diplomatically isolated DPRK could easily afford to side with Algeria against France, but by doing so, it implicitly showed a preference for Beijing over Moscow.³¹

North Korea's quick recognition of the GPRA must have made a favorable impression on the FLN leaders, who chafed at what they regarded as the East European countries' unwarranted fear of French retaliation.³² Nevertheless, Pyongyang continued to lag behind Beijing and Hanoi in establishing contacts with the Algerian leadership. The first GPRA delegations that visited China and North Vietnam (Benyoucef Benkhedda, December 1958; Omar Oussedik, April 1959) failed to add the DPRK to their itinerary; the first GPRA visit in North Korea took place as late as May 1960.³³ North Korea's Red Cross Society seems to have started providing humanitarian aid to Algerian refugees in March 1959, while its East German counterpart had sent the first shipment of this kind as early as November 1957.³⁴ In

²⁷ Hungarian Foreign Ministry, Memorandum, October 21, 1960. "Az Algériai Ideiglenes Kormány de facto elismerése." MNL, MNL, XIX-J-1-j Algeria, 1945–1964, 2. doboz, 007002/1960; Hungarian Foreign Ministry, Memorandum, October 29, 1962. "Algériának nyújtott segélyek." MNL, XIX-J-1-k Algeria, 1945–1964, 1. doboz, 1/49/2-1/1962.

²⁸ "1959 List of Recognitions of the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic," Wilson Center Digital Archive, http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/121604.

²⁹ "Immortal Contributions to the African Countries' Struggle for National Liberation and Building a New Society," *Naenara*, April 17, 2017, https://kcnawatch.org/newstream/1546674892-802640663/immortal-contributions-to-the-african-countries%e2%80%99-struggle-for-national-liberation-and-building-a-new-society/.

^{30 &}quot;Chunghwa Inmin Konghwaguk Alcheria Konghwaguk rimsi chŏngbu rŭl sŭngin," Rodong sinmun, September 24, 1958, 4.

³¹ Hungarian Foreign Ministry to the Hungarian Embassy in the UAR, Letter, November 18, 1958. "Az Algériai Köztársaság ideiglenes kormánya elnökének levele." MNL, XIX-J-1-j Algeria, 1945–1964, 2. doboz, 005582/2/1958.

³² Hungarian Embassy in the UAR, Memorandum, November 5, 1958. "Az Algériai Ideiglenes Kormány kérése." MNL, XIX-J-1-j Algeria, 1945–1964, 2. doboz, 005582/3/1958.

³³ Kyle Haddad-Fonda, "Revolutionary Allies: Sino-Egyptian and Sino-Algerian Relations in the Bandung Decade," (PhD diss., Magdalen College, University of Oxford, 2013), 156–61; Hungarian Embassy in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV), Report, January 9, 1959. "Az algíri kormánydelegáció vietnami látogatása." MNL, XIX-J-1-j Vietnam, 1945–1964, 5. doboz, 5/i, 001503/1959; Hungarian Embassy in the DRV, Report, July 28, 1959. "Algíri katonai delegáció Vietnamban." MNL, XIX-J-1-j Vietnam, 1945–1964, 5. doboz, 5/i, 005426/1959.

³⁴ "Chosŏn chŏksipchahoe esŏ Alcheria p'inanmindŭl ege paengmi 333 sŏk ŭl ponae chugiro kyŏlchŏng," Rodong sinmun, March 8, 1959, 1; "DDR-Hilfe für Algerien," Neues Deutschland, November 25, 1957, 5.

November 1960, when a GPRA memorandum enumerated the states which the FLN leaders deemed "worthy of being consulted prior to making major decisions," the list included "all the Arab countries" as well as "China, USSR, Vietnam," but North Korea was conspicuous by its absence. In light of these limitations of Algerian-DPRK cooperation, it is doubtful that the FLN leaders were so "extremely grateful" for Pyongyang's initial diplomatic support as Barry K. Gills suggested.

In the fall of 1959, the North Korean leaders once again found themselves on a diplomatic minefield, as they were caught between the conflicting Chinese and Soviet approaches toward the Algerian crisis. On September 16, de Gaulle recognized, for the first time, Algeria's right to self-determination, but he still expressed a strong preference for "association" over "secession," and stressed that the promised referendum would be held "at the latest four years after the actual restoration of peace." While the FLN's responses to de Gaulle's proposal were of a reserved and ambiguous nature, on October 16 Beijing's New China News Agency (NCNA) published a commentary that bluntly dismissed it as a mere "change of tactics" and a "plot to strangle the Algerian people's struggle for freedom." In contrast, on October 31 Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev welcomed de Gaulle's initiative, which, he said, could potentially play an important role in resolving the Algerian conflict in a peaceful way. Being the Algerian conflict in a peaceful way.

Much in the same way as they had acted in September 1958, the North Korean leaders implicitly sided with Beijing against Moscow. On November 3, *Rodong sinmun* carried a long signed article that condemned de Gaulle's proposal as a deceitful attempt to conceal his commitment to the old colonial policy of "integration." In October-December 1959, the DPRK daily published no less than nine articles (i.e., three times as many as *Neues Deutschland*) on the FLN's military achievements, but it did not explore the growing rift between de Gaulle and the French *ultras* – a theme to which *Neues Deutschland* drew attention as early as November 1959 – until the *ultras*' open revolt in Algiers (January 24, 1960).⁴⁰

The first and only visit of a GPRA delegation in the DPRK (Krim Belkacem; May 10-13, 1960) likewise involved the KWP leaders in the multilateral controversies of the Algerian War. It took place right between Khrushchev's two visits in France (March 23 – April 3 and May 14-18), that is, at a time when the Kremlin still tried to avoid confronting Paris over Algeria, and when the GPRA demonstratively engaged the Communist states to make

³⁵ General Secretary of Algeria, "Our Diplomatic Action," report, November 8, 1960, Wilson Center Digital Archive, http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/121599.

³⁶ Gills, Korea versus Korea, 67.

³⁷ Horne, A Savage War of Peace, 344–48; "De Gaulle's New Algerian Plot," Peking Review, October 27, 1959, 25.

^{38 &}quot;Für eine Welt ohne Krieg," Neues Deutschland, November 3, 1959, 4.

³⁹ Kim Tŏkhyŏn, "Alcheria inmin ŭi chŏngŭi ŭi t'ujaeng ŭl karomagŭl him ŭn ŏpta," Rodong sinmun, November 3, 1959, 6 (translated by Lee Junhee).

^{40 &}quot;Alcheria minjok haebanggun ŭi sae chŏn'gwa," Rodong sinmun, November 9, 1959, 4; "Alcheria esŏ Pullansŏ singminjuŭi chadŭl hosanggan e mujang ch'ungdol," Rodong sinmun, January 26, 1960, 4; "Krawall in Algier," Neues Deutschland, November 12, 1959, 7.

France's allies aware of the risks of supporting de Gaulle's Algeria policy. The extensive publicity that the North Korean authorities gave to the visit (e.g., the mobilization of 250.000 Pyongyangites to welcome the arriving delegation, a dinner hosted by Kim Il Sung, a joint communiqué, and a slew of articles in *Rodong sinmun*) had much in common with the hero's welcome Krim received in China and North Vietnam in April-May 1960, but stood in a striking contrast with the single laconic article that *Neues Deutschland* devoted to the visit of another GPRA delegation in East Germany (Mabrouk Belhocine; June 21-28, 1960). 42

Actually, the fact that Pyongyang proved more able to reach a consensus with the GPRA than East Berlin reflected not only North Korea's increasing divergence from the Soviet policy of "peaceful co-existence" but also the GPRA's own priorities. During the discussions over the DPRK-GPRA communiqué, the North Koreans successfully persuaded Krim's delegation to express solidarity with the recent South Korean revolution against Syngman Rhee and demand the withdrawal of U.S. troops from the ROK, but neither Krim nor Belhocine was willing to take a stand on the inter-German dispute (i.e., to criticize the West German government) – evidently because West Germany constituted an indispensable sanctuary for FLN operations, whereas the GPRA had less reason to take South Korean sensitivities into consideration.⁴³

This is not to say that the KWP leaders' views were fully in harmony with that of their Algerian partners. The North Koreans seem to have been markedly less enthusiastic about the first round of French-FLN negotiations, held in Melun on June 25-29, 1960, than the East Germans. While *Neues Deutschland* welcomed the prospect of a negotiated peace and carried as many as five articles on the Melun talks from June 22 to 30, *Rodong sinmun* refrained from covering the negotiations until they broke down, then predictably blamed France for the fiasco.⁴⁴

In March-April 1961, when the preparations for the next round of talks in Évian were underway, both the DPRK and the Soviet bloc countries found it justified that the GPRA refused to send a delegation to Évian unless Paris renounced its plan to involve a rival

⁴¹ Jeffrey James Byrne, Mecca of Revolution: Algeria, Decolonization, and the Third World Order (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 87–88; Connelly, A Diplomatic Revolution, 224–25.

⁴² N. E. Torbenkov, "Dnevnik vremennogo poverennogo v delakh SSSR v KNDR Torbenkova N.E. za period s 4 maya po 14 maya 1960 goda," PRK, May 10, 1960, in *P'yŏngyang soryŏn taesagwan pimil sŏch'ol*, ed. T'ongil Munhwa Yŏn'guso, (Sŏul: K'oria K'ont'ench'u Raep, 2002), 8; "Kim Ilsŏng susang Alcheria Konghwaguk rimsi chŏngbu taep'yodan ŭl wihayŏ manch'anhoe paesŏl," *Rodong sinmun*, May 11, 1960, 1; "Sino-Algerian Joint Communique," *Peking Review*, May 24, 1960, 16; "Regierungsdelegation der Republik Algerien besuchte die DDR," *Neues Deutschland*, June 29, 1960, 1.

⁴³ N. E. Torbenkov, "Dnevnik vremennogo poverennogo v delakh SSSR v KNDR Torbenkova N.E. za period s 4 maya po 14 maya 1960 goda," May 13, 1960 in *P'yŏngyang soryŏn taesagwan pimil sŏch'ol*, ed. T'ongil Munhwa Yŏn'guso (Sŏul: K'oria K'ont'ench'u Raep, 2002), 10–11; "Chosŏn Minjujuŭi Inmin Konghwaguk chŏngbu taep'yodan kwa Alcheria Konghwaguk rimsi chŏngbu taep'yodan kan ŭi kongdong k'ommyunik'e choin," Rodong sinmun, May 13, 1960, 1 (translated by Lee Junhee); Mathilde von Bülow, West Germany, Cold War Europe and the Algerian War (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 187.

⁴⁴ Pierre Durand, "Hoffnung und dunkle Wolken," *Neues Deutschland*, June 22, 1960, 7; "Alcheria Konghwaguk rimsi chŏngbu ka Pullansŏe taep'yodan ŭl p'agyŏnch'i an'giro kyŏlchŏng," (translated by Lee Junhee) *Rodong sinmun*, July 6, 1960, 4.

Algerian organization (Messali Hadj's *Mouvement national algérien*, MNA) in the negotiations.⁴⁵ But when the U.S. government attempted to mediate between the two sides by instructing its ambassador in Tunis (Walter Walmsley) to hold a first-ever meeting with two GPRA ministers, the North Koreans seem to have been far more irritated by this unexpected turn of events than their East European comrades.⁴⁶ *Neues Deutschland* as well as various Hungarian, Czechoslovak, and Romanian dailies accurately reported the meeting, and noted its potentially advantageous implications (such as the implicit recognition the U.S. thus granted to the GPRA, and the friction that this initiative might generate between Paris and Washington).⁴⁷ In contrast, *Rodong sinmun* sharply condemned America's "meddling" in the French-Algerian negotiations, and presented the events in a grossly distorted form. Citing a NCNA news report as its source, the DPRK daily mentioned only that the U.S. ambassador in Paris discussed the stalling of the talks with the French government (i.e., it failed to make any reference to the Walmsley-GPRA meeting), and concluded that Washington continued to support France's Algeria policy.⁴⁸

During the last fifteen months of the Algerian War (January 1961 – March 1962), Rodong sinmun continued to lay a strong emphasis on the theme of armed struggle, as it carried eighteen articles (that is, two and a half times as many as Neues Deutschland) on the operations of the FLN-led National Liberation Army (Armée de libération nationale, ALN). This narrative seems to have reflected Pyongyang's ideological preferences, rather than Algerian realities, since "once President de Gaulle had conceded the principle of self-determination to the people of Algeria, the FLN and the ALN more or less stopped fighting the French Army seriously, and instead began to rely mainly upon political and diplomatic methods and pressures to gain their objective." In March 1962, when the Évian talks reached their final stage, Neues Deutschland covered the progress of the negotiations almost on a daily basis. In contrast, Rodong sinmun's announcement of the Évian Accords (March 18, 1962) was closely preceded by five articles on front-line events, thus seeking to create the impression that Algeria had won its independence on the battlefields, rather than at the negotiation table.⁵⁰ The DPRK daily enthusiastically presented the Accords as "a historic victory of the Algerian people's heroic armed struggle," but the North Korean leaders privately regarded them as a "neo-colonialist agreement," presumably because of the military and economic concessions

⁴⁵ "Mak twi eső kanakhan ŭmmo rŭl kkumigo innŭn Pullanső waŭi hoedam ŭl Alcheria Konghwaguk rimsi chŏngbu ka kŏbu," *Rodong sinmun*, April 2, 1961, 4; István Kovács, "Megcsalt remények," *Népszabadság*, April 7, 1961, 1.

⁴⁶ "U.S. Acts to Insure Talks on Algeria: Meeting in Tunis Designed to Get French and Rebels to Discuss Rift 'Calmly," New York Times, April 5, 1961, 13.

⁴⁷ "Differenzen Paris-Washington," Neues Deutschland, April 6, 1961, 7; "Elhalasztódnak az eviani tárgyalások," Magyar Nemzet, April 6, 1961, 3.

⁴⁸ "Alcheria munje kaeiphanŭn Miguk ŭi kido rŭl p'ongno kyut'an (Alcheria Konhwaguk ŭi Sori Pangsong ronp'yŏng)," Rodong sinmun, April 9, 1961, 4 (translated by Kim Eui-Gyeong).

⁴⁹ Edgar O'Ballance, The Algerian Insurrection, 1954-62 (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1967), 154.

⁵⁰ Pierre Durand, "Die Verhandlungen in Evian," *Neues Deutschland*, March 8, 1962, 5; "Alcheria minjok haebanggun i 900 yŏmyŏng ŭi chŏkkun ŭl salsang," *Rodong sinmun*, March 15, 1962, 4.

the GPRA was compelled to make to France.⁵¹

Pyongyang's Preference for Morocco over Tunisia

Despite the aforesaid elements of discord, North Korea's preoccupation with violent anti-colonial struggle largely paid off as far as Algeria was concerned. Badly in need of international support, the GPRA was willing to reciprocate Pyongyang's militant solidarity by adopting a critical stance vis-à-vis Seoul and Washington, and the assistance it wanted to obtain from the DPRK was of a political, rather than economic, nature. Judging from what Deputy Foreign Ministers Yu Ch'angsik and Pak Kwangsŏng told Hungarian Ambassador Károly Práth and Soviet Chargé d'Affaires N.E. Torbenkov, respectively, Krim Belkacem's delegation eagerly inquired about North Korea's wartime military experiences, but showed little interest in discussing economic issues.⁵² In contrast, the post-colonial Tunisian and Moroccan governments, understandably enough, were strongly concerned to obtain external development assistance – a factor that helps to explain why East Germany, having been overtaken by Pyongyang in Algeria, was more able to gain a foothold in these two countries than the DPRK.

For instance, in August 1959 the Tunisian authorities told an East German emissary that "neither diplomatic nor consular relations were acceptable but that a trade mission would be considered," then informed the West German embassy that "if they wanted even a trade mission refused, it was up to them to increase West Germany's trade with Tunisia so as to make an East German trade mission unnecessary."⁵³ In May 1960, the Tunisian government did sign a trade agreement with the GDR, whereas Pyongyang's first trade agreement with Tunis was concluded as late as 1981.⁵⁴ Thus, Tunisia's focus on drawing concrete economic benefits from its contacts with other states gave the GDR a double advantage over the DPRK. North Korea's commercial potential could not match East Germany's, and in the early 1960s South Korea had not yet become a sufficiently attractive economic partner whose assistance Tunisia might have wanted to ensure by stimulating competition between Seoul and Pyongyang.

When Morocco signed trade agreements with East Germany in June 1959 and August

⁵¹ "Yŏngungjŏk mujang t'ujaeng esŏ talsŏnghan Alcheria inmin ŭi ryŏksajŏk sŭngni," Rodong sinmun, March 22, 1962, 4; Hungarian Embassy in Algeria, Report, December 22, 1965. "A KNDK kapcsolata Algériával." MNL, XIX-J-1-j Korea, 1965, 74. doboz, 83, 002506/3/1965.

Hungarian Embassy in the DPRK, Report, May 19, 1960. "Beszélgetés Ju Csan Szik külügyminiszterhelyettessel a KNDK néhány kül- és belpolitikai kérdéséről." MNL, XIX-J-1-j Korea, 1945–1964, 4. doboz, 5/b, 004817/1960; N. E., Torbenkov, "Dnevnik vremennogo poverennogo v delakh SSSR v KNDR Torbenkova N.E. za period s 4 maya po 14 maya 1960 goda," May 13, 1960, in P'yŏngyang soryŏn taesagwan pimil sŏch'ol, 11.

⁵³ The British Embassy to Tunis to the Foreign Office, Letter, August 11, 1959, UK National Archives (TNA), Public Record Office (PRO) Foreign Office (FO) 371 145534 001.

⁵⁴ The British Embassy to Tunis (A.C.E. Malcolm) to the Foreign Office (Selwyn Lloyd), Letter, May 13, 1960, TNA, PRO, FO 371 153811 001; Moon, "Between Ideology and Interest," 385.

1960, the West German ambassador in Rabat likewise attributed these steps to the government's desire to "spur on the West Germans," since, as he told his British counterpart, Sir Charles Duke, the Moroccan-GDR agreements were "mainly in the nature of propaganda" and expected to remain underfulfilled. As far as practical assistance was concerned, Morocco could expect even less from North Korea than from East Germany. Both the GDR and the DPRK promptly sent condolence messages to Morocco in the wake of the devastating Agadir earthquake (February 29, 1960), but while the East German Red Cross Society sent two truckloads of humanitarian aid as early as March 7, its North Korean counterpart followed suit as late as mid-April. In any case, Rodong sinmun's coverage of the earthquake was limited to these instances of official communication, whereas Neues Deutschland devoted a dozen articles to the catastrophe, giving a vivid picture of the human toll and the relief efforts. 6

In the political sphere, the North Koreans found it more difficult to see eye to eye with the post-colonial Tunisian and Moroccan administrations than with the Algerian guerrilla leaders. Bourguiba in particular was prone to take diplomatic steps that were hardly compatible with their aspirations and preferences, first in 1957 (when he turned to the U.S. for protection against France), then in 1958-1959 (when he put pressure on the FLN and confronted Nasser). Adopting Soviet terminology, North Korea's Central Yearbook labeled both Tunisia's Neo Destour Party and Morocco's Istiqlal as "parties of the national bourgeoisie," but as early as March 1958, the KWP leaders implicitly expressed a less favorable assessment of Tunisia than of the Moroccan kingdom.⁵⁷ For the first time, they included Morocco in the list of those countries whose heads of state and prime ministers received ceremonial greetings from their North Korean counterparts on their national holidays, whereas Tunisia was greeted only by the DPRK's mass organizations.⁵⁸ Pyongyang's reserved attitude was not a mere reflection of the views the Soviet bloc states held about Bourguiba's regime, because in March 1958, both Mao Zedong and Soviet leader Kliment Voroshilov sent greetings to Bourguiba.⁵⁹ Instead, the distinction the DPRK made between the two Maghreb states may have been inspired by the recent divergence of their positions on the Korean question. In January 1957, both countries had voted for the U.S.-backed UN draft resolutions on Korea, but in November 1957, Morocco switched to abstention, whereas Tunisia clung to its pro-

⁵⁵ The British Embassy in Rabat to the Foreign Office, Letter, August 15, 1960, TNA, PRO FO 371 153805 001.

[&]quot;Morok'o Akkadirŭsi kuyŏk ŭi chumindŭl i taejijin ŭi p'ihae rŭl tanghan kŏt kwa kwallyŏnhayŏ Chosŏn chŏksipchahoe chungang wiwŏnhoe Kim Ünggi wiwŏnjang Morok'o chŏkpan wŏrhoe wiwŏnjang ege chŏnmun," Rodong sinmun, March 6, 1960, 3; "Chosŏn chŏksipchahoe chungang wiwŏnhoe esŏ Morok'o Akkadirŭhiu chigu ŭi chijin p'ihaejadŭl ŭl wihayŏ wŏnhogŭm ŭl ponaegi ro kyŏlchŏng," Rodong sinmun, April 16, 1960, 3; "In 20 Sekunden versank eine Stadt," Neues Deutschland, March 3, 1960, 7; "DDR-Hilfssendung für Agadir," Neues Deutschland, March 8, 1960, 5.

⁵⁷ Chosŏn Chungang T'ongsinsa, *Chosŏn chungang nyŏn'gam 1959* (P'yŏngyang: Chosŏn Chungang T'ongsinsa, 1959), 185, 188.

⁵⁸ "Morok'o Wangguk susang Simŭbarek'ŭ pen Mosŭt'ap'a el Pekk'ai kakha (Chosŏn Minjujuŭi Inmin Konghwaguk naegak susang Kim Ilsŏng)," Rodong sinmun, March 18, 1958, 1; "T'yunisya tongnip 2-chunyŏn e chehayŏ uri nara sahoe tanch'edŭl esŏ T'yunisya sahoe tanch'edŭl e ch'ukchŏn," Rodong sinmun, March 21, 1958, 1.

⁵⁹ "Glückwunsch telegramm Woroschilows an Bourgiba," Neues Deutschland, March 21, 1958, 5; "China and the World: In Brief," Peking Review, March 25, 1958, 19.

ROK stance. By doing so, Tunisia adopted a more pro-American standpoint on Korea than on the Chinese question, since during the General Assembly's September 1957 debate over China's representation in the UN, the Tunisian delegate abstained from voting instead of siding with the U.S. Possibly this is why Mao sent a greeting to Bourguiba, but Kim Il Sung did not.⁶⁰

North Korea's subtle preference for Morocco over Tunisia soon turned out to be justified, because the July 1958 U.S. military intervention in Lebanon (which the DPRK government promptly condemned⁶¹) elicited sharply different reactions from the two Maghreb states. In July-August 1958, both Morocco's Consultative Assembly and the country's UN delegate protested against the intervention, and Prime Minister Ahmed Balafrej started talks with France and the U.S. about the withdrawal of foreign troops from the country's air bases – an initiative that soon caught *Rodong sinmun*'s attention. In contrast, Bourguiba readily endorsed Washington's action. ⁶² This new manifestation of Tunisia's pro-American stance, combined as it was with Bourguiba's clashes with Nasser and the FLN, probably influenced the North Korean authorities' decision to impose a fourteen-month blackout on news about Tunisia.

Notably, the first article that broke *Rodong sinmun*'s long silence covered Bourguiba's decision to abolish Tunisia's customs union with France (August 20, 1959), that is, a sign of renewed conflict with Paris.⁶³ In practice, however, this step meant a switch to the dollar market, i.e., a development hardly in accordance with Pyongyang's traditionally anti-American Middle East policy.⁶⁴ Worse still, Tunisian-Egyptian relations remained tense throughout 1960, as Bourguiba rebuffed Nasser's tentative attempts at reconciliation.⁶⁵ Probably this is why *Rodong sinmun* soon re-imposed its news blackout on Tunisia, publishing only a single article about the country between September 11, 1959 and July 23, 1961.

The event that finally enabled the North Korean leaders to engage Tunisia on their own terms was the French-Tunisian military clash over the Bizerte naval base (July 19-23, 1961). Rodong sinmun reacted to the Bizerte crisis five days later than Neues Deutschland, but when it did so, it expressed the leadership's standpoint in the form of a signed three-column article calling for solidarity with beleaguered Tunisia. From July 23 to August 1, the newspaper

⁶⁰ United Nations, Yearbook of the United Nations, 1956, 130; United Nations, Yearbook of the United Nations, 1957, 90, 97.

⁶¹ Gills, Korea versus Korea, 68.

⁶² Hungarian Legation to France, Report, December 9, 1958. "Tunisz és Marokkó állásfoglalása az iraki fordulat kapcsán." MNL, XIX-J-1-k Morocco, 1945–1964, 2. doboz, IV-14, 006688/1958; Central Intelligence Agency, "Moroccan Premier Asks US to Recognize 'Principle of Evacuation',", in Central Intelligence Bulletin, Daily Brief, August 19, 1958. Section II: Asia-Africa, 1, CIA Electronic Reading Room (CERR), https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CENTRAL%20INTELLIGENCE%20BULL%5B15777378%5D.pdf; "Morok'o chongbu Morok'oro put'o ŭi oeguk kundae ch'olgo rul yogu," *Rodong sinmun*, August 8, 1958, 4 (translated by Hanna Kim).

^{63 &}quot;T'yunisya ka Pullansŏ wa ŭi kwanse tongmaeng hyŏpchŏng ŭl p'egi," Rodong sinmun, August 24, 1959, 4.

⁶⁴ Henry Giniger, "Tunisia Abandons French Trade Tie: Quits Customs Union in Bid to Enter Dollar Market," New York Times, August 21, 1959, 1.

⁶⁵ Hungarian Embassy in the UAR, Report, August 16, 1961. "Az EAK és Tunisz kibékülése." MNL, XIX-J-1-k Egypt, 1945–1964, 6. doboz, 006705/1961.

carried nine articles on the crisis, including Kim Il Sung's first-ever message to Bourguiba. Thereafter Pyongyang added Tunisia to the list of those countries whose heads of state received ceremonial greetings from their North Korean counterparts on their national holidays (in contrast, East Germany's President Wilhelm Pieck had sent a message of greetings to Bourguiba as early as March 1959). That is, the DPRK once again sought to exploit Tunisia's conflict with France, but the Bizerte crisis turned out to be more advantageous than the Sakiet Sidi Youssef incident and the abrogation of the French-Tunisian customs union, because Nasser's vocal solidarity with Tunisia vis-à-vis France brought about a Tunisian-UAR reconciliation (a fact readily noted by the DPRK Yearbook of the Prench-file of the Sakiet Sidi Youssef incident and the abrogation of the French-Tunisian customs union, because Nasser's vocal solidarity with Tunisia vis-à-vis France brought about a Tunisian-UAR reconciliation (a fact readily noted by the DPRK Yearbook of Alienating Nasser.

In turn, the Bizerte crisis seems to have led to a shift in Tunisia's attitude toward the Korean question. Washington's opposition to Bourguiba's forceful measures against Bizerte and to his decision to take the dispute to the UN Security Council (UNSC) generated strong resentment among the Tunisian leaders (an issue *Rodong sinmun* observed as early as July 24, 1961⁶⁹), and probably lessened their willingness to adapt to the U.S. standpoint on Korea.⁷⁰ At the December 1961 UN dispute over Korea, the Tunisian delegate no longer supported the pro-ROK draft resolution (as he had done as late as April 12, 1961). Instead, he abstained from voting – a fact duly reported by the DPRK Yearbook.⁷¹

Nonetheless, the Tunisian government continued to give North Korea the cold shoulder as far as practical cooperation was concerned. Charged with the task of establishing ambassadorial relations with Tunisia, in June 1962 the DPRK ambassador in Czechoslovakia visited the country, where he managed to meet Bourguiba and Foreign Minister Sadok Mokaddem. The host authorities treated him as befitted his rank, but showed little if any readiness to discuss the Korean situation in depth, and turned down his initiative on the grounds that Tunisia did not intend to enter into diplomatic relations with states divided by the Cold War. The ambassador attempted to counter this argument by pointing out that Tunisia did maintain ambassadorial relations with West Germany, but to no avail. The Tunisians

⁶⁶ Ri Hyŏngsu, "T'yunisya e taehan singminjuŭijadŭl ŭi muryŏk ch'imgong ŭl chŏjisik'ira," Rodong sinmun, July 23, 1961, 4; "T'yunisya Konghwaguk taet'ongnyŏng Habibŭ Purŭgiba kakha" (Chosŏn Minjujuŭi Inmin Konghwaguk naegak susang Kim Ilsŏng)," Rodong sinmun, July 25, 1961, 1; "Glückwünsche für Tunesien," Neues Deutschland, March 21, 1959, 5.

⁶⁷ Chosŏn Chungang T'ongsinsa, *Chosŏn chungang nyŏn'gam 1962* (P'yŏngyang: Chosŏn Chungang T'ongsinsa, 1962), 474.

⁶⁸ Hungarian Embassy in the UAR, Report, August 16, 1961. "Az EAK és Tunisz kibékülése." MNL, XIX-J-1-k Egypt, 1945–1964, 6. doboz, 006705/1961.

[&]quot;T'yunisya sat'ae (Purŭgibaga Mi–Yŏng ŭi ripchang ŭl pinan, Pullansŏ kundae ka Migukche mugi rŭl sayong)," Rodong sinmun, July 24, 1961, 4.

⁷⁰ Nina Davis Howland, ed., Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961–1963, Africa, vol. 21 (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1995), Documents 165–76.

United Nations General Assembly 15th Session, First Committee, 1146th Meeting, April 12, 1961, United Nations Digital Library System, 39, https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/862058?ln=en&v=pdf; United Nations, Yearbook of the United Nations, 1961 (New York: United Nations Office of Public Information, 1963), 137; Choson Chungang Tongsinsa, Choson Chungang nyön'gam 1962, 474.

were less dismissive toward his proposal to initiate commercial exchanges, but instead of discussing North Korea's specific offers, they advised him to contact the Tunisian chargé d'affaires in Prague. Pollowing the departure of the ambassador, Rodong sinmun pointedly ignored Tunisia for an entire year – an attitude probably influenced not only by the fiasco of his mission but also by the resumption of Franco-Tunisian relations in July 1962 (an event duly noted by the DPRK Yearbook) and the growing friction between Tunisia and newly independent Algeria. The sum of the property of the

Pyongyang Between Morocco and Mauritania

As noted earlier, the DPRK leaders had more reason to be pleased by Morocco's attitude toward the U.S. intervention in Lebanon than by Tunisia's. In 1957–1960, Rodong sinmun did present the newly independent Moroccan state as a nation whose legitimate aspirations clashed with the policies of America (over the U.S. air bases in Morocco), France (over the Algerian War and French military presence in Morocco), and Spain (over Ifni and Western Sahara). Actually, North Korea's ideologically inspired focus on these disputes was fairly justified from a pragmatic perspective, too. In 1956 and early 1957, when the Moroccan government was still reluctant to endorse the irredentist demands voiced by Istiqlal's radical fringe, it adopted a pro-Western stance on the Korean question. In contrast, its first formal territorial claim to Ifni, Western Sahara, and French-ruled Mauritania, submitted as it was to the UN on October 14, 1957, was closely followed by a neutralist shift in its attitude toward Korea at the UN General Assembly meeting of November 29, 1957.

In light of Pyongyang's overall sympathy for Morocco's nationalist aspirations, it was fairly paradoxical that the KWP leaders made no public effort to exploit the favorable opportunity that Morocco's territorial claim to Mauritania (i.e., its refusal to recognize this neighboring country as a sovereign state) provided to the Soviet bloc in general and to the DPRK in particular. When the newly independent Mauritania applied to join the UN, Morocco attempted to block its admission, and its efforts were initially supported by Moscow. At two successive UN meetings (Political Committee, November 15–26,

Hungarian Embassy in Czechoslovakia, Report, June 18, 1962. "Kapcsolatok a Koreai Népi Demokratikus Köztársaság és Tunisz között." MNL, XIX-J-1-j Korea, 1945–1964, 5. doboz, 5/bf, 005881/1962.

⁷³ Chosŏn Chunang T'ongsinsa, Chosŏn chungang nyŏn'gam 1963, (P'yŏngyang: Chosŏn Chungang T'ongsinsa, 1963), 466; Hungarian Embassy in Algeria, Report, February 19, 1963. "Algériai-tunéziai kapcsolatok és a rabati konferencia." MNL, XIX-J-1-j Algeria, 1945–1964, 3. doboz, 5/bf, 001661/1/1963.

⁷⁴ See "Morok'o minjok kun Sŏbana kun chinji rŭl t'arhwan," *Rodong sinmun*, December 4, 1957, 4; "Morok'o wang i Alcheria inmindŭl e taehan ryŏndaesŏng ŭl p'yosi," *Rodong sinmun*, April 5, 1958, 4; "Morok'o sinmun i sŏbu Sahara e taehan chugwŏn ŭl yogu," *Rodong sinmun*, December 23, 1959, 4.

⁷⁵ Douglas E. Ashford, "The Irredentist Appeal in Morocco and Mauritania," *The Western Political Quarterly* 15, no. 4 (1962): 643–46; Lyakat Ali, "The Western Sahara Issue: Decolonisation or Greater Morocco" (PhD Diss. Jawaharlal Nehru University, 1997), 31; United Nations, *Yearbook of the United Nations*, 1957, 90.

1960; Security Council, December 3-4, 1960), the Soviet Union voted against Mauritania's admission. 76 In contrast, Washington readily recognized Mauritania's statehood, much to the chagrin of Rabat.⁷⁷ Under these conditions, Morocco's Korea policy moved further away from the American position and closer to the Soviet one. In late 1960, a Moroccan diplomat informed the U.S. chargé d'affaires in Rabat that his government "will soon recognize both North Vietnam and North Korea as a further demonstration of 'positive neutrality'." The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) concluded that the Moroccan government "might see this recognition as a means of increasing [Soviet] bloc ties or as an appropriate response to the Soviet veto of Mauritania's UN admission." On April 10, 1961 (i.e., a few days before the General Assembly's vote on Mauritania), the Moroccan delegate, for the first time, expressed the view that the representatives of both Koreas be invited to take part in the debate over the Korean question, and explained his stance by recalling "the problems created for his country by territorial separation." Thus, the Moroccan-Mauritanian dispute was at least temporarily advantageous to North Korea's interests, but Pyongyang made no attempt to woo Morocco by expressing public support for its territorial claims. On the contrary, Rodong sinmun - unlike Neues Deutschland, which started to cover the issue as early as February 1957 - pointedly ignored the dispute throughout its entire duration, nor did it publish any article on Mauritania until November 15, 1964, when the DPRK government abruptly announced that it reached agreement with Nouakchott on the establishment of diplomatic relations.⁸⁰ In October 1961, when Mauritania was finally admitted to the UN, Rodong sinmun made no reference to this breakthrough, though it triumphantly reported Mongolia's simultaneous admission.81 (Actually, the two events were directly interrelated, because at the UNSC session of October 25, 1961, the USSR tacitly consented to Mauritania's UN membership in exchange for Mongolia's entry. 82) Thus, Rodong sinmun adopted a peculiar hedging position, because it did not acknowledge Morocco's territorial claims, but by ignoring the very existence of Mauritania, it implicitly questioned its statehood.

Unlike Rodong sinmun, the 1961–1964 volumes of the DPRK Yearbook duly listed

⁷⁶ Konrad Banaś, "An Independent Country or a Part of Morocco? The Issue of the Independence of Mauritania," *Cahiers d'études africaines* 237 (2020): 100–03.

[&]quot;Memorandum from the Department of State Executive Secretary (Stoessel) to the President's Special Assistant (Dungan), 27 February 1961," in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961–1963, Africa*, Vol. 21, ed., Nina Davis Howland (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1995), Document 111.

⁷⁸ Central Intelligence Agency, "Morocco May Recognize North Vietnam and North Korea," Central Intelligence Bulletin, December 23, 1960, 4, CERR, https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CENTRAL%20 INTELLIGENCE%20BULL%5B15798941%5D.pdf.

⁷⁹ United Nations General Assembly 15th Session, First Committee, 1143rd Meeting, United Nations Digital Library System, 23, https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/862046?ln=en&v=pdf.

^{**}Marokko fordert Mauretanien," Neues Deutschland, February 28, 1957, 5; "Kim Ilsöng susang kkesö Maurit'ania Hoegyo Konghwaguk taet'ongnyöng ege chönmun (Tu nara kan e taesagup ui oegyo kwan'gye ka sölchöngdoen kötkwa kwallyönhayö)," Rodong sinmun, November 15, 1964, 1.

⁸¹ "Yuen anjŏn pojang risahoe ka Monggo rŭl Yuen e kaipsik'il kŏt ŭl ch'onghoe e kwŏn'gohanŭn kyŏlchŏng ŭl ch'aet'aek," Rodong sinmun, October 28, 1961, 6 (translated by Lee Junhee).

⁸² Banaś, "An Independent Country or a Part of Morocco?" 103.

Mauritania among the newly independent African countries, that is, they did not question its statehood. Still, the Yearbook likewise refrained from covering the Moroccan-Mauritanian dispute, though its editors were undoubtedly aware of the problem, since Volume 1962 made a brief reference to the diplomatic row that the Tunisian recognition of Mauritania's independence triggered between Tunis and Rabat.⁸³

It appears likely that the KWP leaders dodged this thorny issue because it would have been diplomatically disadvantageous to take sides in a dispute that pitted the Arab states (all of which save Tunisia backed Morocco's standpoint until 1963) against the Sub-Saharan African countries (most of which readily recognized Mauritania's statehood). Furthermore, they probably reasoned that depicting an embittered conflict between two Third World states, let alone two groups of developing countries, would weaken their stridently "anti-imperialist" narrative. Their attitude toward the Moroccan-Mauritanian dispute had so much in common with China's similarly evasive approach that they must have gained some inspiration from it, in the same way as their position on the Algerian War had been influenced by Beijing's. 85

Notably, Pyongyang forged diplomatic ties with Nouakchott only after Algeria, Egypt, and the USSR had recognized Mauritania. These precedents seem to have influenced North Korea's decision, since the DPRK Yearbook duly mentioned the establishment of Soviet-Mauritanian relations. Providing an introductory overview for a readership hitherto blissfully unaware of the existence of this troublesome country, in November 1964 Rodong simmun briefly outlined Mauritania's earlier colonization by France and its present domestic policies, but failed to make any reference to its still-unresolved conflict with Morocco. 88

Determined as the North Koreans were to steer clear of the dispute, the Mauritanian problem may have ultimately affected their efforts to gain a foothold in Morocco. As noted before, the conflict induced the Moroccan leaders to consider recognizing both the DPRK and the DRV. In March 1961, when a North Vietnamese delegation headed by Foreign Minister Ung Van Khiem visited Morocco, the Moroccan government did establish ambassadorial relations with Hanoi – a fact the North Koreans were clearly aware of.⁸⁹ In

⁸³ Chosŏn Chungang T'ongsinsa, Chosŏn Chungang nyŏn'gam 1962, 477.

⁸⁴ K. P. Misra, "Recognition of Mauritania: A Case Study with Particular Reference to India's State Practice," *India Quarterly* 20, no. 3 (1964): 241–42.

⁸⁵ The database of the U.S. Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS) contains ten Chinese news reports dated 1957–62 which briefly mention Mauritania. They scrupulously refrained from expressing China's views on the Morocco-Mauritania dispute, although New China News Agency did report Mauritania's admission to the UN: New China News Agency, "Security Council Votes to Admit MPR," October 26, 1961, in FBIS, Daily Report, Foreign Radio Broadcasts, October 27, 1961. I am greatly indebted to Joshua Kueh for providing me with this information, which he obtained from the online FBIS database of the U.S. Library of Congress.

⁸⁶ Hungarian Foreign Ministry, Memorandum, November 16, 1964. "Mauritánia elismerése és diplomáciai kapcsolat felvétele." MNL, XIX-J-1-k Small countries (Mauritania), 1945–1964, 3. doboz, IV-113.

⁸⁷ Chosŏn Chungang T'ongsinsa, Chosŏn chungang nyŏn'gam 1965, (P'yongyang: Chosŏn Chungang T'ongsinsa, 1965), 337.

^{88 &}quot;Maurit'ania," Rodong sinmun, November 28, 1964, 5 (translated by Lee Junhee).

⁸⁹ Hungarian Embassy in the UAR, Report, April 22, 1961. "Vietnami Demokratikus Köztársaság 'Jóakarat és Gazdasági' delegáció EAK-beli látogatása." MNL, XIX-J-1-j Egypt, 1945–1964, 6. doboz, 5/b, 004263/1961; Chosŏn Chungang T'ongsinsa, *Chosŏn chungang nyŏn'gam 1962*, 477.

contrast, the subsequent visit of DPRK Minister of Education Yi Ilkyŏng (July 6-17, 1961) yielded little if any tangible result. Rodong sinmun laconically reported that the two sides agreed to "seek economic and trade exchanges" – an outcome that fell short not only of the DRV's diplomatic breakthrough but also of the GDR's itemized trade agreements with Morocco. Hassan II, the successor of Mohammed V, warmly welcomed Yi's proposal to forge diplomatic relations, but when the North Koreans attempted to translate his promise into concrete action, the officials of the Moroccan Foreign Ministry adopted a most evasive attitude. First they replied that they lacked enough trained diplomats to send an envoy to Pyongyang, then rebuffed Yi's suggestion to open a DPRK embassy on a unilateral basis, and finally refused even to mention the theme of diplomatic relations in the joint communiqué. The frustrated North Koreans concluded that "the king skillfully maneuvers between the socialist and imperialist camps, and voices pleasant, nice phrases for popular consumption, but one can sense a strong Western influence over his policy."

Morocco's marked preference for Hanoi over Pyongyang was all the more conspicuous because the UAR leaders treated Khiem and Yi in an even-handed manner, offering consulargeneral relations to both Communist states. The fact that South Vietnam had opened an embassy in Rabat as early as 1960 created a precedent for granting identical status to Hanoi, whereas South Korean-Moroccan talks on diplomatic relations were still in progress at the time of Yi's visit, thus preventing the DPRK from invoking the principle of even-handedness. Nevertheless, Morocco's preferential treatment of the DRV turned out to be an ephemeral phenomenon. The Moroccan leaders, having agreed to forge ties with Hanoi, soon started to drag their feet. In 1962, a North Vietnamese diplomat arrived in Rabat to set up an embassy, but the host authorities kept him waiting for over a year, only to abruptly expel him in the end. Hanoi,

The apparent inconsistencies in Morocco's attitude towards Pyongyang and Hanoi may be better understood if one takes into consideration that the reversal of Moscow's Mauritania policy must have disappointed the Moroccan leaders, and probably dissuaded them from engaging the DPRK and the DRV any further. At the General Assembly meeting of April 19, 1961, the Soviet bloc delegates no longer opposed the admission of Mauritania but abstained from voting, lest they hinder the admission of Mongolia. Since this episode occurred after Khiem's visit but before Yi's, it may explain why the Moroccan authorities treated the latter

⁹⁰ "Uri nara chŏngbu ch'insŏn taep'yodan ŭi Morok'o pangmun kwa kwallyŏnhan Chosŏn-Morok'o kongdong k'ommyunik'e," Rodong sinmun, July 18, 1961, 1 (translated by Lee Junhee).

⁹¹ Hungarian Embassy to the DPRK, Report, September 4, 1961. "Kim The Hi külügyminiszterhelyettes tájékoztatója az afrikai országokban járt koreai delegáció útjáról." MNL, XIX-J-1-j Korea, 1945-1964, 5. doboz, 5/bf, 007486/1961.

⁹² Hungarian Embassy in the UAR, Report, August 15, 1961. "Észak-koreai és dél-koreai delegációk kairói látogatása." MNL, XIX-J-1-j Egypt, 1945-1964, 10. doboz, 5/i, 006708/1961.

⁹³ Central Intelligence Agency, "Morocco May Recognize North Vietnam and North Korea," Central Intelligence Bulletin, December 23, 1960.

⁹⁴ Hungarian Embassy in Morocco, Report, August 23, 1963. "A Vietnami Demokratikus Köztársaság diplomatájának kiutasítása." MNL, XIX-J-1-j Morocco, 1945–1964, 2. doboz, 5/f, 006251/1963.

delegation colder than the former.⁹⁵ At the UN meetings held in December 1961, Morocco no longer supported the Soviet position on Korea but reverted to its customary abstention.⁹⁶

In May-July 1962, the end of the Algerian War led to a further shift in Morocco's foreign policy, which would ultimately work to Pyongyang's disadvantage. "Algerian independence," the CIA observed, "removed the principal deterrent – Morocco's forthright aid to the rebellion – to the development of closer ties with France," stimulated competition between the two Maghreb states for French aid, and brought their latent territorial disputes to the fore. 97 Following Hassan II's May 1962 meeting with De Gaulle, Rabat concluded a number of economic agreements with Paris.98 By the end of the year, pro-French politicians had achieved a dominant position in the Moroccan leadership, whereupon the sidelined Istiqlal sought to forge ties with the U.S. embassy. In July 1962, Morocco's territorial claims to Algeria's Tindouf province triggered a border clash between the two Maghreb states, foreshadowing the Sand War of September-October 1963.99 But from North Korea's perspective, the most adverse aspect of Hassan II's new foreign policy was that on July 6, 1962, Morocco established ambassadorial relations with South Korea. 100 The KWP leaders had every reason to be displeased by these developments. Having reported a French-Moroccan border incident of May 1962 (which turned out to be a catalyst for Hassan II's meeting with De Gaulle¹⁰¹), Rodong sinmun failed to publish any article on Morocco until March 3, 1963. 102

Conclusion

In several important respects, Pyongyang's early encounters with the three Maghreb countries foreshadowed the patterns of its post-1962 relations with the region. The North Korean media showed a manifest preference for Algeria over Morocco and Tunisia as early as 1956–1957, and especially in the second half of the Algerian War – a preference mirrored by the divergent attitudes the Maghreb countries displayed toward the two Koreas. Pyongyang's vocal solidarity with the Algerian guerrillas and the spectacular features of Krim Belkacem's

⁹⁵ United Nations, Yearbook of the United Nations, 1960 (New York: United Nations Office of Public Information, 1961), 203.

⁹⁶ United Nations, Yearbook of the United Nations, 1960, 168; United Nationbs, Yearbook of the United Nations, 1961, 137.

Oentral Intelligence Agency, "Morocco under King Hassan," Office of Current Intelligence, Special Report, March 22, 1963, 1, CERR, https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP79-00927A00400010004-5. pdf, 2.

⁹⁸ The British Embassy to Rabat to the Foreign Office, Review of the Press, 10 July 1962, TNA, PRO FO 371 171604 001.

⁹⁹ Hungarian Embassy in Morocco, Report, August 1963. "Marokkó belpolitikai helyzete." MNL, XIX-J-1-j Morocco, 1945-1964, 1. doboz, 5/c, 006252/1963; Hungarian Embassy in Morocco, Report, October 28, 1963. "Algériai-marokkói határkonfliktus." MNL, XIX-J-1-j Morocco, 1945-1964, 2. doboz, 006658/3/1963.

¹⁰⁰Moon, "Between Ideology and Interest," 383.

^{101 &}quot;King of Morocco to See De Gaulle," New York Times, May 10, 1962, 3.

^{102 &}quot;Pullansŏ kundae ka Morok'o kukkyŏng ŭl to ch'imbŏm," Rodong sinmun, May 13, 1962, 3.

visit in North Korea stood in a sharp contrast with *Rodong sinmun*'s deafening silence on Tunisia (1958–1960), Morocco (1962–1963), and Mauritania (1960–1964), and the diplomatic rebuffs the DPRK's envoys suffered in Rabat and Tunis. In turn, post-colonial Algeria became the very first Arab state to host a resident North Korean ambassador, whereas Tunisia and Morocco would not enter into diplomatic relations with the DPRK until 1975 and 1989, respectively. Both Morocco and Tunisia established ambassadorial relations with Seoul long before they forged such ties with Pyongyang, whereas Algeria would keep its distance from the ROK until 1990.¹⁰³

The fact that the DPRK forged a closer partnership with Algeria than with Morocco and Tunisia had much in common with the Maghreb policy of the Soviet bloc states (whose views strongly influenced Pyongyang's initial attitudes toward the region), but it also had special features. Notably, East Germany's trade representatives faced restrictive measures in post-colonial Algeria in the same period when their North Korean comrades were allowed to open a full-fledged embassy – a contrast further accentuated by the fact that in Morocco and Tunisia, the GDR made inroads faster than the DPRK.¹⁰⁴ Algeria's peculiar preference for Pyongyang over East Berlin was evidently rooted in the FLN's wartime experiences, such as North Korea's early recognition of the GPRA. At the same time, Algeria's post-colonial partnership with Pyongyang was overshadowed by its even closer ties with Hanoi, a situation whose origins could also be traced back to the events of 1956–1959.

In the initial phase of their Maghreb policy, the North Korean leaders showed perceptibly less interest in this region than East Germany and North Vietnam. For instance, Rodong sinmun reacted later and less extensively (or not at all) to such events as the Moroccan crisis of 1951, the start of the Algerian insurgency, the return of Mohammed V, and the Agadir earthquake than Neues Deutschland, and the DPRK was considerably slower in forging ties with the FLN than the DRV. Actually, it was fairly understandable that North Korea – a country ravaged by an immensely destructive war, devoid of any traditional connection either to France or the MENA region, lacking experience in Arab-Islamic studies, and highly dependent on the factual information and analytical concepts supplied by its Soviet and Chinese allies – happened to be a latecomer as far as the Maghreb was concerned. Still, these facts revealed the distortions of Pyongyang's subsequent narratives, which presented the DPRK as a state traditionally motivated by an especially strong solidarity with other colonial and post-colonial nations.¹⁰⁵

The North Korean media inspected this *terra incognita* through multiple distortion lenses that were constructed partly by their Soviet/Chinese sources and partly by the specific political considerations of the militant KWP leaders who were increasingly reluctant to endorse the Soviet idea of peaceful co-existence. From the beginning, their attention

¹⁰³ "Alcheria chujae uri nara Hŏ Sŏksin ch'odae taesa Alchie e toch'ak," Rodong sinmun, April 20, 1963, 3; Moon, "Between Ideology and Interest," 383.

Hungarian Embassy in Algeria, Report, 19 November 1963. "Az NDK nehézségei Algériában." MNL, XIX-J-1-j Algeria 1945–1964, 3. doboz, 003314/1/1963.

¹⁰⁵See "Immortal Contributions to the African Countries' Struggle."

was disproportionately focused on those episodes of Maghrebi politics when the local political actors were on a collision course with France and/or the other Western powers – a preoccupation that helps to explain why *Rodong sinmun* neglected Algeria until the start of armed resistance, why it underreported the French-GPRA talks and highlighted Algerian military operations even in those periods when political negotiations came to the fore, why its strong initial interest in Tunisia underwent a steep decline after its negotiated decolonization but revived whenever some strain occurred in French-Tunisian relations, and why it went to extreme lengths to conceal those disputes that pitted the North African states against each other, rather than against the Western powers.

In essence, Pyongyang's dominant narratives presented the Maghreb as yet another battlefield of the global anti-imperialist struggle, displaying little interest in its distinctive sociocultural features. Notably, the North Korean delegation attending the AAPSO conference in Cairo effectively used the Algerian War as a stick to beat Pyongyang's own enemy when it insinuated that "the colonial war by the French imperialists in Algeria is but part of the aggressive provocations of international reaction led by the U.S. imperialists," and likened French atrocities in Algeria to America's alleged atrocities in Korea. 106 While the DPRK Yearbooks meticulously described the geographical, climatic, and economic conditions of the various Third World states, the brief historical overviews they provided were near-exclusively focused on the colonial and post-colonial periods. Volume 1959 constituted a partial exception, as it paid due attention to the pre-colonial civilization of Egypt, India, and Indonesia, but its chapter on Algeria began with a brief reference to the period of Ottoman rule, and continued with a detailed description of French colonization and Algerian resistance.¹⁰⁷ In a similar vein, a DPRK encyclopedia dated 1983 started its section on Morocco's history with the French and Spanish intrusions of the 19th century, showing cavalier disregard for the long-standing existence of the pre-colonial Moroccan state. 108 Ironically, the North Koreans subjected the Maghreb countries to the same treatment that they themselves had experienced from the Soviet bloc media. In 1947–1950, the Hungarian newspapers seeking to inform their readers about little-known, faraway Korea routinely started their narrative with a reference to Japanese colonial rule and the wartime Soviet liberation, disregarding the fact that the existence of Korean statehood long predated the Japanese conquest. 109

Thus, the Maghreb image constructed by North Korea's propaganda narratives was definitely a distorted one, yet the nature of these distortions proved different from the biases that the theorists of Orientalism identified in Western and South Korean representations of Arab-Islamic societies. The latter portrayals were prone to highlight the exotic otherness of Arab-Islamic traditions, juxtaposing them with Western/Korean values and customs, and

¹⁰⁶ Central Intelligence Agency, "The Afro-Asian Solidarity Conference: An Analysis of Communist Strategy and Tactics," Central Intelligence Bulletin, October 1958, 8, CIA Electronic Reading Room (CERR), https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CENTRAL%20INTELLIGENCE%20BULL%5B15798941%5D.pdf.

¹⁰⁷Chosŏn Chungang T'ongsinsa, Chosŏn chungang nyŏn'gam 1959, 57, 180, 186.

¹⁰⁸ Paekkwa chŏnsŏ, vol. 2 (P'yŏngyang: Kwahak Paekkwa Sajŏn Ch'ulp'ansa, 1983), 612 (translated by Lee Junhee).

¹⁰⁹ See "Korea," *Szabad Nép*, June 27, 1950, 2.

presenting these contrasts as evidence of cultural incompatibility and/or inequality. Through the creation of such binary models, Orientalist narratives simultaneously outlined the peculiarities of the Oriental Other and the distinctiveness of the Self.¹¹⁰ Notably, E. Taylor Atkins, a scholar who had serious reservations about the Saidian theory of Orientalism, made compatible observations in his study on Japanese perceptions of colonial Korea:

The Japanese gaze on Koreana articulated anti-modern ambivalence, offering concrete images of pre-modern "others" with whom the modern "self" could be readily contrasted. ... Cognizant of ancient ethnological and cultural ties between themselves and those upon whom they gazed, [Japanese observers] could not help but ponder who they really were, if they indeed were encountering their own primitive selves.¹¹¹

In contrast, North Korean propaganda presented Western imperialism, rather than the Arab-Islamic societies, as the hostile Other, and selectively focused on those aspects of Maghrebi politics that were most compatible with Pyongyang's own ideological theses (like the episodes of violent anti-colonial struggle), rather than those that were markedly different. That is, the DPRK leaders consciously tried to control and manipulate the process of gazing. As Atkins put it, "the acts of gazing and being gazed at fundamentally transformed both the observer and the observed," 112 yet the gaze of the North Korean media selectively transformed the realities of the Maghreb to prevent any transformation of the state's entrenched dominant narratives. In this context, the power dynamics commonly associated with the concept of gaze existed more between the regime-controlled media and its domestic audience than between the observer (North Korea) and the observed (the Maghreb). As such, North Korea's gaze at the Maghreb may be defined as a self-affirmative or self-justifying gaze, rather than a form of imperial gaze.

Still, Pyongyang's gaze at the Maghreb did share some features with the imperial gaze. The latter, David Spurr noted, places the imperial observer

above or at the center of things, ... so that the organization and classification of things takes place according to the writer's own system of value. Interpretation of the scene reflects the circumspective force of the gaze, while suppressing the answering gaze of the other.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 3–5, 38–40, 58–60, 72; Daye Jeon, "The Consumption of the Diabolic Arab Image in 'Oriental' Korea: 'The Other' Enjoying the Image of 'the Other'?" *Situations* 5 (2011): 99–101; Maria M. Jamass, "Images and Perceptions of Muslims and Arabs in Korean Popular Culture and Society" (MA diss., Florida International University, 2014), 1–6.

¹¹¹E. Taylor Atkins, *Primitive Selves: Koreana in the Japanese Colonial Gaze, 1910–1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 3–4.

¹¹²Taylor Atkins, *Primitive Selves* 3.

¹¹³David Spurr, The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing, and Imperial Administration (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993), 16–17.

North Korean media practices – especially the prolonged, all-encompassing news blackouts imposed upon Tunisia, Mauritania, and Morocco – implied that the DPRK leaders attributed no intrinsic news value to the events occurring in the Maghreb, and even to the very existence of these countries, unless they could be presented in such a way that buttressed Pyongyang's narratives of militant anti-imperialist struggle. North Korea's inclination to assess Arab-Islamic realities in terms of its own value-preferences was succinctly expressed by Kim Man'gum, the head of the KWP Central Committee's Agriculture Department. Informing a Hungarian diplomat about his recent visit in Algeria, he critically remarked that the FLN leaders pursued a vague, protean policy, as they professed their commitment to socialism, but wanted to build a distinctive brand of socialism that would be compatible with Islam. As he put it, "One can build socialism only on the basis of the principles of Marxism-Leninism and proletarian internationalism, and this theoretical basis has little if anything in common with Islam." ¹¹⁴

All in all, it seems that the narratives stressing North Korea's historically rooted solidarity with other colonial and post-colonial countries, and its identification with Third World nationalism, were partially contradicted by Pyongyang's own propaganda, i.e., the very sphere in which Communist party-states traditionally expressed their transnational solidarity. 115 During the first decade of the DPRK's existence, the KWP leaders' views of the Middle East and North Africa were heavily shaped by the factual information and analytical concepts transmitted by their Soviet bloc allies, and when they did start to form a more distinctive attitude toward the Maghreb, this attitude initially showed a perceptible Chinese influence. Moreover, the distinctive features of North Korea's propaganda narratives often indicated a narrower perspective (and hence, by implication, a less empathetic approach) than, say, East Germany's. The wide swings between vocal solidarity and deafening silence - a phenomenon particularly conspicuous in Rodong sinmun's articles on Tunisia, but also observable in Pyongyang's contrasting attitudes toward the FLN's armed struggle and its negotiating efforts – revealed the conditional and selective nature of North Korean solidarity. One may say that the main thrust of Pyongyang's solidarity was directed toward certain specific actions of the Maghreb countries, rather than toward the countries as such.

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¹¹⁴ Hungarian Embassy in the DPRK, Report, December 20, 1968. "Vacsora Kim Man Güm elvtárs tiszteletére." MNL, XIX-J-1-k Korea 1969, 32. doboz, 1730-1/1968.

¹¹⁵ For such academic narratives, see Moe Taylor, North Korea, Tricontinentalism, and the Latin American Revolution, 1959–1970 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023), 28–30; and Benjamin R. Young, Guns, Guerrillas, and the Great Leader: North Korea and the Third World (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2021), 3–5.

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