



COUNTRY IN PERSPECTIVE

ALGERIA



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Great Mosque of Algiers (1899)
Public Domain

Chapter 1 | Algeria in Perspective

Geography

Introduction

Algeria lies on the Mediterranean coast of North Africa between Morocco and Tunisia. With a population of nearly 42 million, it is the largest country in Africa and the 11th-largest country in the world. Algeria's land area is about 3.5 times the size of Texas (2,381,740 sq km or 919,590 sq mi). Algeria shares borders with seven countries: Tunisia and Libya to the east, Niger to the southeast, Mali and Mauritania to the southwest, and Morocco and Western Sahara to the west.^{1, 2}

The Atlas Mountain Range, a series of mountain ranges in northwest Africa, separates the coastline of the Mediterranean from the Sahara Desert, and stretches from Morocco in the west, through Algeria, and Tunisia in the east. The Atlas mountain ranges feature high snowcapped peaks and a complex of plains and plateaus. The northern section consists of the Tell Atlas and the southern section consists of the Saharan Atlas. The western region of this range, home to the High Atlas, the Middle Atlas and the Anti-Atlas ranges, is located in Morocco. The Tell Atlas mountains, which originate in Morocco, run through Algeria and meet the Saharan Atlas range in the eastern part of Algeria. The Aurès Mountain Range, which is an extension of the High Atlas Mountains, is located in eastern Algeria to the east of the Saharan Atlas, and enters Tunisia.³

Over 80% of Algeria's vast expanse is desert and almost completely inhabited.⁴ The Sahara Desert covers most of the country's interior and stretches all the way to the southern border. Most of the country's population lives in the fertile coast area in the north known as the Tell.^{5, 6, 7}

Oil and natural gas, which account for the majority of Algeria's total exports, are extracted from the desert region. These resources are then transported by pipeline to Algeria's port cities and then to foreign markets by ship.^{8, 9}

Geographic Divisions

The Tell

Algeria's most populous and agriculturally productive region is the Tell, an area covered by hills and plains of the narrow coastal region, the Tell Atlas mountain ranges, and intervening valleys and basins. The Tell is home to Algeria's two largest cities, Algiers and Oran, as well as many of its vineyards, citrus groves, and orchards. The Tell Atlas mountain range, which measures 1,500 km (932 mi) in length, runs through Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia, and becomes more rugged east of Algiers.^{10, 11} The Great Kayblie mountains consist of several ranges where towns and farming villages have long been the homeland for much of Algeria's Amazigh (Berber) population.^{12, 13, 14}



The Tell, Algeria
Flickr / Yelles

The High Plateaus and the Saharan Atlas Mountains

Immediately south of the Tell region lies a stretch of arid upland plateaus, which are high-elevation basins that stretch between the Tell Atlas and Saharan Atlas mountains. Elevations in the High Plateaus range from 1,100 to 1,300 m (3,609 to 4,265 ft) in the east. In its western portion, the plateau heights fall below 400 m (1,312 ft) near the Chott el-Hodna lake. The lake is one of several salt basins in the highland plateaus that become lakes or marshes during rainy periods.^{15, 16}



*Guelma, East Algeria
Flickr / The Algerian*

The Saharan Atlas mountain range in the eastern region of the Atlas Mountains parallels the Tell Atlas to the north in a southwest-northeast direction. Its ranges are generally higher and less fragmented than the Tell. Djebel Aissa is the tallest peak in the Saharan Atlas, reaching 2,236 m (7,335 ft). The Saharan Atlas Mountains receive more rainfall on average than the High Plateaus and serve as grazing lands for livestock of the Chaoui tribe of the Imazighen (Berbers), the range's main residents.^{17, 18, 19}

Northeastern Algeria



*The Tell, Algeria
Flickr / Yelles*

To the east of the Great Kabylie Mountains is a region marked by numerous mountain ranges. The tallest of these are the Aurès Mountains, used for centuries as a nearly impenetrable refuge by Amazigh (Berber) tribespeople.²⁰ Djebel Chélia, the highest peak in this range at 2,328 m (7,638 ft), is also the highest point in northern Algeria.²¹ To the north of the Aurès Mountains, the Little Kabylie Mountains drop abruptly to the sea, with the exception of a few coastal plains. Between the Little Kayblie

Mountains and the Aurès Mountains is a stretch of high plains where the region's largest cities, Sétif and Constantine, are located. The farms on these plains produce much of Algeria's grains.^{22, 23}

Topographical Divisions

Sahara Desert

The Sahara Desert is the largest hot desert in the world and covers nearly a third of the African continent. Algeria's portion of the Sahara lies south of the Saharan Atlas Mountain Range. Although this entire region is arid, it has a variety of land features. Great swaths of sand dunes, known as *ergs*, lie in the eastern (Grand Erg Oriental) and western (Grand Erg Occidental) Sahara, constituting about one quarter of Algeria's expanse.²⁴ Central Sahara is home to the *humud* (singular, *hamada*)—flat, rocky, desert terrains with limited vegetation. One such hamada region is the Plateau du Tademaït, a huge, barren stretch of land.^{25, 26}



Sand dunes in Tadrart
Wikimedia / Rainer Voegeli

To the Tademaït's south, the volcanic Ahaggar Mountains (also called Hoggar Mountains) rise from the desert floor, surrounded on their northern and eastern flanks by the vast sandstone plateau of Tassili n'Ajjer.²⁷ This inhospitable plateau was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site thanks to its unique geological formations and the thousands of prehistoric rock drawings and engravings that depict climactic changes, migration, and the evolution of human life on the edge of the Sahara Desert. Most of the Ahaggar mountain region lies in the southeast of Algeria, about 1,450 km (900 mi) south of Algiers.^{28, 29}

Mt. Tahat in the Ahaggar Mountains is Algeria's highest point at 3,003 m (9,952 ft).³⁰ East of the Ahaggar Mountains lies the Tanezrouft region, an arid region of sandstone formations whose name derives from the Tuareg word for waterless desert. Although most of the Ahaggar is arid and bare of vegetation, a variety of animals lives in the mountains along with nomadic groups such as the Tuareg.^{31, 32, 33}

Human-induced climate change, combined with natural climate cycles, are causing the Sahara to grow. Since 1920, the area of the Sahara Desert has increased by nearly 10%.³⁴

Climate

There are three climate zones in Algeria: the Mediterranean coast, temperate with mild, rainy winters and hot, sunny summers; the northern hills and mountains, with hot summers and drier winters that include snow at higher elevations; and the vast Sahara region, with a hot and dry desert climate.³⁵



Hoggar National Park, Assekrem, Tamanrasset, Algeria
Wikimedia / Mohammed Amri

Temperatures during the year are mildest in the coastal region and do not exhibit the kind of large daily fluctuations seen in the mountain/high plateau regions and the Sahara. Temperatures in the Sahara can exceed 50°C (122°F) during summer days and can drop to near freezing at nighttime.^{36, 37} Human-induced climate change has caused an increase in heatwaves and is subsequently responsible for the growth of the Sahara desert.^{38, 39}

Algeria's wettest regions lie along the Mediterranean coast and the higher regions of the Tell Atlas Mountains. The bulk of the rainfall occurs between September and May, with the winter months producing the most reliable precipitation in the Tell



Sand storm in Algeria
Flickr / sartin

Atlas. Snowfall may occur above 900 m (2,950 ft). In the coastal regions and the Tell Atlas Mountains, annual rainfall totals generally increase from west to east.^{40, 41, 42} Precipitation rates drop dramatically on the southern slopes of the Saharan Atlas and Aurès Mountains. In the Sahara region, some areas receive 0-2 cm (0.79 in) of rainfall per year, while others see up to 10 cm (3.9 in) per year. Some locations in the desert do not receive rain for several years at a time.^{43, 44, 45}

Sandstorms can occur at any time in the desert, especially in the vast areas covered by sand dunes (*ergs*). Northward-blowing winds that originate in the desert (commonly known as sirocco winds in Europe and as *chichili* in Algeria) bring heat, dust, and sand to the northern mountain regions, often at gale-force wind speeds. The northeastern

winds dry out the air over the desert and push hot winds toward the equator. Some sandstorms are so large that they are visible from space. Severe dust storms can drop visibility to zero. Dust from the Sahara travels to the other side of the globe on trade winds.^{46, 47, 48}

Bodies of Water

Rivers

Algeria has several rivers, most of which flow from the Tell Atlas Mountains toward the Mediterranean coast.⁴⁹

The Chelif is the longest river in Algeria. Its farthest tributary, the Sebtag, rises in the Saharan Atlas Mountains near the town of Aflou. After meandering northward across the High Plateaus, it cuts through the Tell Atlas Mountains. From there, it flows westward to its mouth near the coastal city of Mostaganem. The 700 km long (435 mi) Chelif is not navigable and is heavily used for irrigation and drinking water in its lower reaches. As a result, the river no longer flows in these areas during the dry summer months.^{50, 51}



*Soummam river
Flickr / fr.zil*

The Djedi is the second-longest river in Algeria, flowing along 480 km (298 mi). The river rises in the Saharan Atlas Mountains at 1,402 m (4,600 ft) and empties into Lake Chott Melrhir, which lies 40 m (130 ft) below sea level, the lowest point in Algeria.⁵²

The Medjerda River's length is 450 km (280 mi). It originates in the Tell Atlas Mountains and empties into the Gulf of Tunis in the Mediterranean Sea.⁵³

The Ziz River rises in the Middle Atlas Mountains of Morocco and flows for 282 km (175 mi). It enters Algeria through the Sahara Desert. The river, subject to occasionally drying up, is used for agricultural production.⁵⁴

The Seybouse River runs inside Algeria and is 225 km (140 mi) long. It rises in the Tell Atlas Mountains and empties into the Mediterranean Sea.⁵⁵

All Algerian rivers south of the Tell Atlas Mountains are *wadis*, streambeds that remain mostly dry except during rainy periods. Runoff from *wadis* into the high plateaus or the desert regions just south of the Saharan Atlas Mountains often fill *chotts*, salt marshes located in inland depressions. The temporary *chotts* are the primary non-riverine bodies of water in Algeria.⁵⁶

Among the few natural freshwater lakes are lakes Oubeïra and Tonga, separated by a few kilometers near the coast and the Tunisian border. Both lakes are shallow (0.7-3 m [2-10 ft]) and provide important habitats for flora and fauna. Lake Oubeïra is located about 4 km (2.4 mi) from the shores of the Mediterranean Sea. Since 1983, the two lakes have been part of El Kala National Park, which was listed as a World Biosphere Reserve by UNESCO in 1990.^{57, 58} The wetlands of the El Kala Park near the coast are identified as an Important Bird Area, serving as rest stops for migratory birds.⁵⁹



Chelif flows through Mostaganem
Flickr / Mosta_Men

Major Cities

Algeria’s most recent census was conducted in 2008. Average population growth and other demographic data were calculated based on the preceding ten years. The estimated population of the five biggest cities are as follows:⁶⁰

City	Population
Algiers	2,713,000
Oran	885,630
Blida	453,840
Constantine	416,150
Annaba	355,418

Algiers



Algiers City, Algeria
Wikimedia / Poudou99

The capital and largest city in Algeria, Algiers boasts a rich heritage derived from Phoenician, Roman, Byzantine, Ottoman, Barbary pirate, and French colonial influences. Founded as a trading port by the Phoenicians, it became the Roman city of Icosium in the second century CE. The present-day city was founded in the 10th century by the Amazigh (Berber) ibn Ziri.^{61, 62, 63}

The name Algiers derives from the Arabic *el djazair* (the islands), a reference to tiny islets—now connected to land in the city’s harbor—that were Spanish forts in 1510. Under nominal Ottoman Empire control for the next three centuries, Algiers became one of the bases for Barbary pirates who regularly raided Mediterranean trading ships.^{64, 65}

The Great Mosque of Algiers dates from the 10th-12th centuries and is one of the few remaining examples of the Almoravid style of architecture.⁶⁶ The city’s old quarter is the famous Casbah (Arabic for fortress). The Casbah is still home to thousands of people, who live in whitewashed stone and brick houses tucked along a maze of narrow alleyways, fountains, and a 15th-century Ottoman palace. Since 1992, the historic heart of Algiers has been designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site.^{67, 68} Many buildings in the Casbah have suffered serious neglect and restoration is slow and insufficient.⁶⁹

Algiers, referred to as Algiers the White (*Alger la Blanche* in French), sits between the Sahel Hills to the west and a busy port on its eastern side.⁷⁰ The city suffered greatly during the Algerian war for independence from France (1954-1962) and the civil war that spanned a decade between the 1990s and the early 2000s.⁷¹ The city also suffered a flash flood in 2001 that killed more than 650 people and an earthquake in 2003 that took the lives of more than 400 residents.^{72, 73}

Houari Boumedienne International Airport is located east of the city. The first subway line, spanning 9.5 km (5.9 miles), was launched in 2011.⁷⁴

Oran

Oran is Algeria's second-most populous city and an important commercial, industrial, educational, and cultural hub. Located in the northwest between Tangier, Morocco and Algiers, it is also an important port city and a trade center. The city was named after the Barbary lions that were native to the area before they became extinct. The French name Oran comes either from the indigenous word *uharu*, which means *lion*, or the Arabic name *Wahrān*. Today, two lion statues stand in front of Oran's city hall.^{75, 76}



COran City
Flickr / zesheng niu

Founded in the 10th century by Moorish Andalusian merchants, the port city developed into a thriving trade center. The city changed hands between the Spanish and the Ottomans for several centuries. In the late 15th century, the city became a haven for Jews and Muslims from Spain who escaped the forced conversion to Christianity.⁷⁷ When the French occupied Algeria in the 19th century, the city became predominately European but the long war drove them back to Europe.^{78, 79, 80} During the War for Independence, Oran was a center of operations for the French nationalist counter-revolutionary group l'Organisation de l'Armée Secrète (Secret Army Organization).^{81, 82}

Culturally, Oran is famous as the birthplace of *rai* (pronounced “rye”), the popular Algerian pop music that is a mix of Western and Bedouin musical traditions.⁸³ Some famous *rai* musicians that emerged in the formative period of the late 1970s and 1980s got their start in the cabarets of Oran.⁸⁴ The city is also a center of education, being home to three major universities.⁸⁵

Blida

Blida lies at the base of the Tell Atlas Mountains about 48 km (30 mi) southwest of Algiers. The town was built on the site of a Roman military camp and was surrounded by a wall. The present-day town was founded in the mid-16th century by Moorish refugees from Spain. The town was destroyed by an earthquake in 1825 and sustained additional damage from another earthquake 42 years later. In 2014, an earthquake struck again, damaging nearby villages.^{86, 87}



Al-kawthar Mosque, Blida.
Wikimedia / Bachir blidi

Blida is situated on the southern edge of the Mitidja plain, surrounded by orchards and farmland where crops such as wheat, barley, citrus fruits, vegetables, tobacco, and olives are grown.⁸⁸

Founded in 1981, Saad Dahlab University of Blida is a coeducation, higher education institution specializing in agriculture, chemistry, health, and life sciences. Courses are taught in Arabic, French, and English.^{89, 90}

Constantine

Constantine is located about 80 km (50 mi) from the coast on a plateau bisected by the dramatically steep Rhumel Gorge. The gorge is 2 km (1.2 mi) long and the tallest cliff is 175 m (572 ft) high. Eight car and pedestrian bridges connect the two sides of the city. The most famous bridge is the Gantaret el Hibal, which was opened in 1912.^{91, 92, 93}

Founded by Carthaginians, the city became known as Cirta in the third century BCE while serving as the capital of the Amazigh (Berber) Kingdom of Numidia. The city fell to Rome in 46 BCE and was renamed in honor of the Roman Emperor Constantine in the fourth century. After the city fell to the Arabs, it was called Qasantina. The city features Roman, Muslim, and French colonial architecture. Just over 100 km (62 mi) from the city lies the Roman ruins of Djémila, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.^{94, 95}



Algeria's largest inland cit, Constantine
Flickr / Amine GHRABI

Today, Constantine is a regional administrative center that handles the local grain trade. It has a small industrial sector that produces textiles, leather goods, wool, flour, and tractors.⁹⁶ The city is home to one of the world's largest mosques, the Emir Abdel Kader Mosque, which was built in 1994 and can be seen from most of the city.

Attached to the mosque is Algeria's first modern Islamic university.^{97, 98, 99} The Arab League voted the city as the capital of Arab culture in 2015.^{100, 101}

Annaba



The city of Annaba
Flickr / Philippe HENCK

Annaba is a coastal city located near the Tunisian border. The city is known for its beautiful beaches, hotels, and nightlife. Annaba was a settlement of the Numidian kings and today occupies the same location as the ancient Roman city of Hippo Regius, of which some ruins are still visible. One of Annaba's modern architectural landmarks is the Basilica of Saint Augustine (who was the bishop of Hippo Regius), constructed during the late 19th century on a small hill above the Roman ruins.^{102, 103, 104}

Modern Annaba is a bustling port city that handles a large percentage of Algeria's mineral exports. A large industrial complex just south of the city at El Hadjar produces most of Algeria's crude steel and manufactured steel products.^{105, 106, 107}

At the city's northern end is a string of coves and beaches with a backdrop of the Tell Atlas Mountains. In the summer, the beaches are popular with locals and tourists.¹⁰⁸ Annaba is served by the Rabah Bitat International Airport.¹⁰⁹

Environmental Concerns

Sand extraction, dredging, overfishing, and urban and domestic discharge have caused coastal degradation in Algeria. Fertilizer runoff, organic waste from livestock, inadequate sewage treatment, and other forms of toxic wastes produced and dumped by large industrial complexes exacerbate the problem.¹¹⁰ Oil spills and other ship accidents also threaten the coast, which attracts millions of people each summer.^{111, 112}

Deforestation of Algeria's once-plentiful forests has adversely affected wildlife and contributed to desertification and soil degradation. Algerian mammals such as the Barbary macaque, Cuvier's gazelle, Northwest African cheetah, and the Mediterranean monk seal are considered critically endangered.¹¹³ In 1971, the Algerian government began planting Aleppo pines and vegetation as a green wall against the Sahara

Desert's encroachment. The program was relaunched in 1977 as part of the North African Greenbelt initiative, and revisited again in 2007.¹¹⁴

Soil degradation caused by water and wind erosion also threatens large swaths of agricultural and semiarid lands. Additionally, Salinization and exploitation of underground water are severe threats to the environment.¹¹⁵



*V*Chemical plant in Skikda
Flickr / Stefano F

Urban air pollution caused by transportation, municipal waste, and heavy industries is evident in the large cities.^{116, 117}

Algeria is a water-scarce country. Climate change, population growth, urbanization, and groundwater pollution are severe threats to the water supply. Most of the surface water is in the north. In the central and southern parts of the country, non-renewable water is utilized from aquifers at double the annual recharge rate. The quality and quantity of the water in aquifers in the north are diminishing as well. Government and private investment are necessary to safeguard and improve the water supply.^{118, 119, 120} Currently, desalination plants are helping the country meet some of its water needs.^{121, 122, 123} The government seeks to raise the number of dams to 139 by 2030.¹²⁴

Natural Hazards



Deforestation in order to build
Flickr / habib kaki

Algeria's diverse topography and weather extremes make parts of the country susceptible to flash floods and landslides during periods of heavy rains. Fires and droughts are the serious threats Algeria faces during dry periods.¹²⁵

The nation's most damaging natural disasters are earthquakes.¹²⁶ The majority of Algeria's seismic activity occurs in the Atlas Mountains, which were formed by the convergence of the African and Eurasian

tectonic plates.¹²⁷ Since 1980, five major earthquakes have struck Algeria, leaving

thousands dead and causing billions of dollars in damage. The most devastating recent quake occurred in 1980, when a magnitude 7.3 earthquake in the northern Algerian town El Asnam left thousands dead and tens of thousands injured. In 1954, an earthquake in the same location killed 1,657 people.¹²⁸ In 2003, an earthquake near the coastal city of Bourmerdès left 2,300 dead and 11,000 injured. The city of Chlef was particularly affected, having already been destroyed by quakes in 1954 and 1980.¹²⁹



*Damages caused by flooding, Algeria
Flickr / Western Sahara*

Floods in Algeria unleash large amounts of water down dry riverbeds, at times triggering mudslides in steeper canyon regions. In October 2008, the Saharan oasis city of Ghardaïa and its surrounding villages were struck by flash floods that killed 89 people and left thousands homeless. Parts of Ghardaïa, a medieval-era town that is also a UNESCO World Heritage Site, were buried in mud up to 8 m (26 ft).^{130, 131} In November 2001, intense rainfall triggered massive mudflows that buried parts of the working-class Bab El Oued district, just north of the Casbah. The final toll of this disaster was 921 deaths, making it Algeria's worst flood disaster since independence in 1962.^{132, 133}

Drought is a major hazard and is growing increasingly more dangerous with climate change. Dried up rivers leave people without water, destroy the agricultural sector, and increase desertification.¹³⁴

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Chapter 1 | Geography

Assessment

1. The Chelif is the tallest mountain in the Tell region.
2. The most populous and agriculturally productive region in Algeria is the Tell.
3. The Tassili n'Ajjer was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site because its rich ecosystem provides shelter and a rest stop for millions of migratory birds.
4. Constantine is home to Algeria's largest seaport.
5. The most destructive natural disasters in Algeria are earthquakes.

Assessment Answers: 1. False; 2. True; 3. False; 4. False; 5. True



*World Heritage Sites at Djemila
Flickr / habib kaki 2*

Chapter 2 | Algeria in Perspective

History

Introduction

Located on the southeastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea in the Maghreb (northwest Africa), Algeria and its indigenous people, the Amazigh (Berbers), have been ruled by a succession of invaders, dynasties, and empires. During the ancient era, the region was under the control of the Phoenicians, Carthaginians, Vandals, Romans, and Byzantines. During the Islamic era, Arab and Amazigh dynasties ruled the Maghreb, including the Umayyads, Abbasids, Aghlabids, Fatimids, Almoravids, Al Mohads, and Merinides. In 1492, Spain captured several ports along the south Mediterranean coast. By 1570, the

Ottomans established themselves in North Africa and Algeria and remained there for nearly three centuries. The colonial chapter of Algeria began in 1830, when the French army invaded and colonized Algeria, declaring it an integral part of France. As nationalism began to emerge and consolidate regional inhabitants into a unified political force, a brutal war of independence broke out between the local Algerian Arabs, the Amazigh and the European settlers.¹



French Foreign Legionnaires raised in the countries conquered.
Public Domain

Since gaining independence from France in 1962, the Algerian government has worked to define a single national identity. This includes attempts to sweep aside cultural and linguistic differences through a “one-party-fits-all” political structure and a divisive Arabization policy. The civil war of the 1990s was a defining national historical moment, leaving long-lasting wounds in Algeria’s cultural and social fabric.^{2, 3}



Early History

Archaeological discoveries in northeastern Algeria reveal the presence of early humans in North Africa as far as 2.4 million years ago and put the region on the map of human evolution. Fossils of elephants, horses, rhinos, hippos, and crocodiles were also identified in that area.^{4, 5} Remnants of Neanderthals from 30,000-43,000 years ago and cave art in the Algerian Sahara from 1,200-6,000 years ago depict humans, giraffes, elephants, and other animals

that later became extinct in the region. The most famous area is the Tassili n’Ajjer (“forest of rocks”) on Algeria’s southeast border with Libya, Mali, and Niger, which was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1982.^{6, 7, 8}

The Amazigh, a diverse group of people from the Nile Valley, the Sahara, and the Mediterranean, arrived in North Africa at an unknown time. Their origin, name, and history are still debated.^{9, 10, 11}

The Phoenicians

In 900 BCE, Phoenician traders arrived in the eastern Mediterranean by sea from present-day Lebanon and established the colony of Carthage (present-day Tunisia). During the centuries of Carthaginian colonization, some of the indigenous people became serfs for the Carthaginians while others were recruited for the Carthaginian military.^{12, 13}



*A berber in sahara desert
Flickr / Rainer Voegeli*

In the third century BCE, Amazigh soldiers in the Carthaginian army rebelled, gained control over some North African territories, and established Amazigh kingdoms that included eastern and central Algeria, as well as western Tunisia. In 146 BCE, the Romans destroyed the city of Carthage. The influence of the Amazigh persisted, however, and some kingdoms survived for nearly 150 years until the Roman Empire annexed the territory in 24 CE.^{14, 15, 16}

The Roman Empire Era (148 BCE – 429 CE)



*Roman theatre at Guelma, Algeria
Flickr / Dan Sloan*

For most of the next 500 years, northern Algeria was under Roman rule. Greek and Roman historians referred to the native population as “Libyans,” “Africans,” Numidians,” and “Moors,” and classified them as “barbarians” (*barbaroi*), a name that was later adopted by the Arab conquerors.¹⁷ Ruins from the Roman period remain scattered throughout the Algerian countryside, including those on the UNESCO World Heritage List at Djemila, Timgad, and Tipasa.¹⁸

Christianity began to spread in the region during the second century CE, and by the end of the fourth century, most settled areas had largely converted.¹⁹ In the mountains and desert regions, Christianity competed with traditional tribal beliefs and Judaism.²⁰

The Vandals (429–533)

Roman rule over North Africa was disrupted in 429, when Germanic tribes known as the Vandals invaded North Africa from Spain, seized Hippo Regius (modern Annaba), and made it their first capital in North Africa. With the Romans no longer around, several independent Amazigh kingdoms were established in the mountains and inland deserts.^{21, 22}



*World Heritage Sites at Djemila
Flickr / habib kaki 2*

Byzantine and Rome (533–700)

In 533, the Byzantine (Eastern Roman Empire) general Belisarius landed in present-day Tunisia with an army that quickly vanquished the Vandal plunderers and brought North Africa once again under nominal Roman imperial control. During much of the next century, the Byzantines were preoccupied with military affairs elsewhere, allowing Amazigh kingdoms to thrive in the hinterlands.^{23, 24}

Arab Conquests and the Spread of Islam (642–1500)



*The Umayyad Caliphate at its greatest extent in 750 AD
Wikimedia / Gabagool*

Beginning in 642 CE, the Arab invasion changed the region's identity. Islam spread on the Arabian Peninsula during the early decades of the seventh century. After Muhammad's death in 632, Arab armies quickly conquered western Asia, but Byzantine and Amazigh forces in the region of modern-day Tunisia and eastern Algeria maintained a prolonged resistance lasting several decades.^{25, 26} By 711, North Africa was under the control of the Umayyad caliphate, an Arab monarchy that carried the mantle of Islam through the first half of the eighth century. A revolt against the Umayyads installed the Abbasid Caliphate in 750. The Abbasids allowed regional dynasties to emerge in the distant corners of the non-Arab Muslim world.^{27, 28}

By the 11th century, Algeria and adjacent parts of North Africa had been part of the Islamic world for several hundred years, but unlike other Islamic regions, the local population was not Arabized. In the mid-11th century, two large tribes of Arab Bedouins invaded modern-day Algeria and Tunisia, resulting in native Amazigh society adopting Arab culture and language.^{29, 30}

The Amazigh Dynasties

From the mid-11th through the mid-13th centuries, the western part of North Africa produced Islamic reform movements that later emerged as powerful Amazigh dynasties. The first were the Almoravids, led by Lamtuna, an Amazigh from the western Sahara.³¹ After establishing the southern Moroccan city of Marrakech as their capital in 1062, the Almoravids conquered a large part of the Western Sahara and the Sahel, central and southern Spain, and western Algeria all the way to Algiers. The Almoravids' empire ended around the middle of the 12th century.³²



Dinar Aghlabide
Wikimedia / DrFO.Jr.Tn

Another religious rebellion arose in Morocco's High Atlas Mountains in the 1120s. Known as the Almohads, these Amazigh warriors swept across North Africa, conquering all of modern-day northern Algeria and Tripolitania (western Libya) by 1160. By 1229, much of the Almohad movement had faded, leading to an abandonment of its conservative teachings in favor of more tolerant interpretations of Islam. Ongoing wars in Spain weakened the Almohads, and by 1271, their last stronghold in Marrakech fell. The Zayanid and Hafsids took over the Algerian part of the Almohad Empire. The Zayanid capital of Tlemcen became known as the "Pearl of the Maghreb" and prospered as a gateway for desert caravan trade.^{33, 34, 35}

Spanish Enclaves (1505–1800)

By the early 16th century, the North African Amazigh dynasties were under assault by Christian Spain, which had expelled or forcefully converted its Muslim and Jewish population. Spanish crusaders established presidios in Oran, Algiers, Tlemcen, Bejaia, and other cities.^{36, 37}

The brothers Aruj and Khair ad Din were privateers, or government-sanctioned pirates, who moved their base of operations to Algiers and staged campaigns against Spanish strongholds during the 1510s and 1520s.^{38, 39} Aruj was killed in 1518, but his brother carried on with assistance from the Ottoman Empire. By 1533, Khair ad Din, now known as Barbarossa (“Redbeard”), had successfully pushed the Spanish out of many North African enclaves. He was appointed *beylerbey* (provincial governor) and admiral of the Ottoman fleet by the Ottoman Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent. Algiers then became the center of the Ottoman administration in North Africa.^{40, 41, 42}



Hayradin Barbaros
Public Domain

Barbary Pirates and the Barbary Wars (1800–1816)



Western Navy and the Barbary Corsairs
Public Domain

Algiers became the homeport of many privateers who made the so-called Barbary Coast (derived from “Berber”) the menace of Mediterranean and Atlantic shipping. For the first time, Algeria emerged as a separate geographical and political entity, as Ottoman rule over the Algerian Regency was relatively hands-off as long as the local governor (*dey*) and his provincial chiefs (*beys*) received their share of the spoils.^{43,}

^{44, 45}

Between 1801 and 1816, the United States and most of Europe’s naval powers fought two wars against Algeria and the other Barbary States of North Africa who supported piracy and ransoming of captives.⁴⁶ An attack on the Algiers harbor by British naval forces in 1816 resulted in the destruction of 33 pirate ships and the liberation of over 1,000 captives but did little to curtail attacks on foreign ships.^{47, 48}

French Colonialism (1830–1962)

In 1827, France’s monarch Charles X was facing growing unpopularity at home. A successful foreign military campaign seemed like one potential way to reverse his declining eminence.^{49, 50} During a meeting with the French consul in Algiers, the Algerian *dey* was insulted by the consul’s response to one of his questions, so he flicked his flywhisk in the consul’s face. The French used the rude gesture as a pretext to blockade Algiers. In 1830, after three years of an unsuccessful blockade, France sent an invading force of over 34,000 French soldiers that captured Algiers within three weeks and exiled the Ottomans officials.^{51, 52} The successful invasion failed to help Charles X, however, who was deposed a few weeks later.⁵³



The French invasion 13 octobre 1837
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As the French military consolidated control over the coastal regions, they continued to face significant revolts in the tribal hinterlands. Two leading figures in the early resistance against the French were Bey Haj Ahmed of Constantine and Abdelkader, a religious and military leader of the western tribes and a member of a family whose origins dated back to the Fatimid dynasty. After Constantine was conquered in a fierce battle, Ahmed fled to the southern plains of the Saharan Atlas. Abdelkader fared better for a while, leading the fight against French domination. In 1837, he signed the Treaty of Tafna with the French, which increased his authority over a large territory. In the next two years, he organized a state, with the capital in Mascara, his hometown. He also established judiciary equality and imposed equal taxes. In 1839, the French plan to expand into the interior once again brought the two sides into conflict and war broke out. Fighting continued until Abdelkader, abandoned by the tribes of the Kabylie, was forced into exile in Morocco, and surrender in 1847. He later moved to Damascus where he died in 1883. Today, Abdelkader is regarded as the founder of Algeria.^{54, 55, 56}

French settlers, called *colons* (colonizers) or *piets-noirs* (black feet), began arriving in Algeria in droves, attracted to the area by free or cheap farmland. The influx of newcomers from France and other European Mediterranean countries uprooted rural families and forced them to relocate farther inland or to cities.^{57, 58, 59}



Attack of Algiers by sea, July 3, 1830
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Unlike elsewhere in colonial North Africa, Algeria became entwined with French administrative and economic matters. In 1848, France annexed Algeria and divided it into three *départments* (French states) that were comparable to those that made up European France.^{60, 61} About 3 million Algerian Muslims were not entitled to French citizenship. Only after 1865 were Muslims allowed to apply for French citizenship, provided they were willing to renounce their religion. Fewer than 3,000

Algerian Muslims took that step during the entire French colonial era.⁶²

Periodic revolts continued outside the cities. In 1871, an Amazigh revolt led by Kalif Mohamed El Mokrani was waged until January 1872. The French imposed heavy fines on Muslims involved in the revolt—fines that were often collected by forcing landowners to sell their land at low prices.^{63, 64}

Rise of Nationalism

In the 1920s and 1930s, a new generation of Algerian Muslims emerged, many of whom had served in the French military or worked in French factories during World War I.⁶⁵ Having been exposed to a higher standard of living and a more democratic political environment, they returned to Algeria less willing to accept the status quo. A smaller but influential group was the *évolués*, French-educated, influential Muslims who had managed to rise within the closed colonial system. The first Algerian political reform movement, the Young Algerians, emerged prior to World War I and consisted primarily of *évolués*. Other groups formed up after the war, including the Federation of Elected Natives (FEI), an offshoot of the Young Algerians; the Star of North Africa (ENA), a communist-backed, Paris-based group that first pushed for Algerian independence, and the Party of the Algerian People (PPA).⁶⁶



General Etienne-Maurice Gérard
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Algerian reform leader Ferhat Abbas
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World War II was a turning point for Algeria. After Germany invaded France in 1940, Algeria was controlled by the collaborationist Vichy regime but was liberated in late 1942 by British and U.S. troops. Nearly 16% of Algeria's Muslim population enlisted in the Allied war effort, even though few were French citizens. This percentage was similar to that of the French Algerian enlistees, the *colons*.⁶⁷ Algerian reform leaders such as Ferhat Abbas tried to negotiate with Free French leader Charles de Gaulle and the new governor-general of Algeria, Georges Catroux, for guarantees on greater legal rights and political freedoms for Algeria's Muslim population. The French leadership countered with what Algerians viewed as half-hearted reform measures.⁶⁸ On May 8, 1945,

while France celebrated the end of the war, Muslim protestors marching for Algerian independence in Sétif killed 100 settlers. The French retaliated by killing thousands of Muslims.⁶⁹

The War of Independence (1954–1962)

Racial and income disparities contributed to growing friction between Algerian Muslims and *colons*. Militancy began to take root in some of the reform organizations. One of these was the Revolutionary Committee of Unity and Action (CRUA), operating out of Cairo. This organization later renamed itself the National Liberation Front (FLN), the political arm for the revolutionary National Liberation Army (ALN).⁷⁰

The Algerian War of Independence broke out on 1 November 1954, when the FLN launched an armed revolt across Algeria, calling for a sovereign Algerian state. In response, the French premier declared the Algerian departments as part of the French Republic. The fighting took a new turn in August 1955, when the FLN began targeting civilians; over 120 civilians were killed in the city in Phillipeville (Skikda). French troops and *pied-noir* killed thousands of Muslims in retaliation. In 1956, the Battle of Algiers began, and the



The first Algerian political reform movement
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city erupted into violence. From 1957-1960, French forces incarcerated more than 2 million people, mainly from mountain villages, in detention camps.^{71, 72, 73}

As the conflict dragged on, opposition in France grew, and world public opinion shifted in favor of the FLN's demand for independence. An angry group of *colons* in Algiers, feeling that the de Gaulle government was abandoning them, staged an unsuccessful insurrection against the government in January 1960. The militant *colons* continued their terrorist activities and even plotted with some French military leaders to seize power in Algeria by overthrowing the de Gaulle government in France. The coup plot came to nothing, as most of the French military stayed loyal to the government.^{74, 75, 76}

Independence

On 18 March 1962, a ceasefire took effect between the ALN and French forces, although the Secret Army Organization (OAS), a *colon* vigilante group, continued its campaign of terrorism for several months. An election on 1 July overwhelmingly expressed Algerian public support for independence; on 5 July 1962, Algeria officially became a sovereign nation.⁷⁷

With the fight against France no longer a unifying force, Algeria's leadership within the FLN fragmented. Ahmed Ben Bella, one of the nine *chefs historiques*, and Colonel Houari Boumédiène, the chief of staff of the ALN, formed an alliance, with Ben Bella serving as Algeria's premier and Boumédiène as defense minister.⁷⁸ Ferhat Abbas was elected president of the National Assembly but resigned in protest less than a year later due to the FLN's increasingly dominant role in the development of the new constitution.⁷⁹ In September 1963, the constitution was passed in a referendum, and a week later, Ben Bella was elected the nation's first president.⁸⁰



The six historical Leaders of the FLN
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Ben Bella pushed for agricultural reform and nationalization of large businesses and industries, as well as consolidating his power base.⁸¹ Workers and government-appointed directors ran state-owned enterprises, a policy known as *autogestion* (workers' self-management).^{82, 83} Boumédiène, who saw his closest allies fall victim to this process, overthrew Ben Bella from power in a bloodless coup in June 1965, marking the first of many instances that the military controlled the transition of power.^{84, 85}

The Boumédiène Era (1965–1978)



President Boumédiène
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Boumédiène was the unchallenged ruler of Algeria for 13 years, surviving several coups and an assassination attempt in 1967. In 1976, he won reelection with more than 99.5% of the vote. That year, his government issued a National Charter and a new constitution, which were adopted by referendum. Under the new constitution, Boumédiène was head of state, commander of the armed forces, head of government, and head of national defense.^{86, 87} During his tenure, the FLN remained the sole political party, and the military remained the most powerful state institution.^{88, 89}

Boumédiène gave top priority to industrialization, development of the petroleum, petrochemical, steel, machinery, electrical, and electronic industries. He died in 1978 while in office, without having named a

successor.^{90, 91}

Chadli Bendjedid (1979–1992)

Colonel Chadli Bendjedid, a protégé of Boumédiène and the minister of defense, was selected as Boumédiène’s successor. In February 1979, Bendjedid won the presidential election with 94% of the vote—a typical margin for a country with one political party. Electoral victories followed for Bendjedid in 1984 and 1988.^{92, 93}

In his first months in office, Bendjedid freed former president Ahmed Ben Bella, who had been under house arrest since the 1965 coup. Bendjedid introduced democratic reforms and created a multi-party system. He also reduced the role of the state in the economy and limited government surveillance of citizens.⁹⁴ In the early 1980s, he helped negotiate the release of the 52 American hostages held in Iran and was the



Colonel Chadli Bendjedid
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first Algerian president to make an official visit to the United States. In January 1992, senior officers, led by the defense minister, ousted President Bendjedid from office and put him under house arrest until his release in 1999. He died in 2012.^{95, 96}

Sliding Toward Crisis (1980s)

During the 1980s, Algeria continued to face issues of national identity, a vestige of the French colonial era.⁹⁷ A government decision to cancel a conference with a known Kabyle poet at the University of Tizi Ouzou sparked protests in March 1980 by Kabyle students who felt that their Tamazigh culture and language were slighted. The protests, known as the Berber Spring or *Tafsut Imazighen*, turned violent and spilled over into the surrounding Kabylia regions.^{98, 99}



University of Tizi Ouzou
Wikimedia / Nuratqasi

In the late 1980s, when oil and gas prices dropped, the government introduced austerity measures. Unemployment, inflation, and a lack of housing and basic services continued to grow. In October 1988, riots known as the “couscous revolt” broke out in Algiers and spread to major cities, propelling the government to call a state of emergency and send in security forces to quell the violence.^{100, 101}



1991 electoral process in Algeria
Wikimedia / Saber68

After the riots, the government implemented various reforms meant to appease the demands of the growing Islamist movement. A new constitution passed in 1989 guaranteed various freedoms of expression and assembly, but dropped “socialist” from the nation’s description and removed references to the rights of women.¹⁰² The latter change, backed by conservative Islamists, reflected restrictions in women’s marital rights instituted in a family code passed in 1984.¹⁰³

Perhaps the most important political change was the removal of many restrictions on

the formation of political organizations. Within months of the constitution’s approval, numerous political parties sprang to life. Foremost was the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), which sought to establish a legal system, based on Islamic Sharia law.¹⁰⁴

In December 1991, FIS overwhelmingly won the first round of the multi-party elections, far ahead of the secular ruling FLN (National Liberation Front). A few days before the second round of voting, the army canceled the elections, forced President Bendjedid to resign, banned the FIS, and sent thousands of FIS supporters to concentration camps in the Sahara.^{105, 106}

The Algerian Civil War (1992–2002)

Mohamed Boudiaf, one of the nine *chefs historiques* of the War of Independence, returned from a 27-year exile in Morocco and became head of the newly created High Council of State (HCE).^{107, 108} Militant Islamic groups—most notably, the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) and the Islamic Salvation Army (AIS)—retaliated with a string of attacks that plunged Algeria into a violent civil war.^{109, 110}



Boudiaf with some Algerian kids
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Boudiaf was assassinated in June 1992 and replaced by Ali Kafi, a leading member of the anti-colonial underground and who had served as an ambassador to several countries after independence.¹¹¹

Retired General Liamine Zeroual was elected president in 1995 after the High Council of State was disbanded, and Algeria carried out its first multiparty presidential election. Zeroual’s tenure (1995-1999) coincided with some of the most extreme violence perpetrated by the GIA and other Islamist groups, as well as civilian vigilante organizations that were armed by the government.^{112, 113} In 1998, Zeroual announced his intention to step down from office after failing to negotiate a peace settlement. It is estimated that over 200,000 Algerian civilians were killed during the decade-long civil war.^{114, 115}

Abdelaziz Bouteflika’s presidency (1999–2019)

Abdelaziz Bouteflika, who served as foreign minister in the Boumédiénne government during the 1960s and 1970s, was the premier candidate for the military and the two main political parties in the coalition government during the 1999 presidential election.¹¹⁶ A



Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika
Wikimedia / Magharebia

few months after the 1999 election, Bouteflika put a proposed Law on Civil Harmony on the ballot, which granted freedom from prosecution to combatants who had not committed violent crimes.^{117, 118, 119} Thereafter, the fighting began to subside, except for activity by Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), which continued to carry out terrorist attacks in Algeria, Mali, and other African states.^{120, 121}

While the fighting with Islamist groups wound down, violent unrest broke out in the Kabylia region, where the death of an Amazigh teenager in police custody sparked protests in the spring of 2001.^{122, 123, 124} In subsequent negotiations with Amazigh leaders, the Tamazight language was recognized as a national language of Algeria and compensation was offered to the families of Amazigh who had died in fighting

with government security forces.^{125, 126, 127}

Bouteflika was reelected president in 2004 and 2009 in elections dogged by charges of biased media coverage and voting irregularities. A constitutional amendment in 2008 eliminated presidential term limits in order for Bouteflika to run in 2009 for the third time.¹²⁸

In 2005, Bouteflika again scheduled an amnesty referendum. The Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation granted amnesty to armed groups involved in the post-1992 killings.¹²⁹ Despite the charter's approval by 97% of voters, critics argued that it would be impossible to come to terms with the violence during the civil war.^{130, 131} A subsequent decree criminalizing any discussion of the disappearances of 10,000 Algerians was criticized by human rights organizations for attempting to curtail public discussion of the Algerian civil war.¹³²



Cristina Fernández de Kirchner and Abdelaziz Bouteflika
during her visit to Algeria in 2008
Wikimedia / Unknown

In February 2011, amid public demonstrations inspired by the revolution in Egypt,

Bouteflika lifted the 19-year-old state of emergency and ended the state monopoly over radio and TV.^{133, 134} In April 2013, the 76-year old president suffered a stroke and went to Paris for treatment. To quell speculations about his condition, he appeared on TV after a three-month absence, meeting with the prime minister and the head of the armed forces in Paris.¹³⁵

In 2014, Bouteflika won a fourth term as president with 81.5% of the vote and without any personal campaigning. The opposition did not recognize the election results and boycotted the inauguration.^{136, 137}



Algerian posters
Flickr / BBC World Service
Wikimedia / White House photo by Paul Morse

In February 2016, the parliament passed constitutional reforms that reinstated a two-term limit on the presidency, guaranteed free elections, expanded legislative power, and recognized Tamazight as one of Algeria's official languages. In 2002, Tamazight had been declared a national language, allowing it to be taught in Tamazight-speaking regions; however, while 25% of Algerians speak variants of Tamazight, less than 3% of students learned it in school.¹³⁸

In March 2019, the reclusive 82-year-old Bouteflika, whose last known public address was in 2014, announced that he would run for a fifth term.¹³⁹ As street protests swept the country for several weeks, he reversed his decision and conceded that he would not seek reelection.¹⁴⁰

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Chapter 2 | History

Assessment

1. The United States participated in two wars against Algeria.
2. *Pieds-noirs* were Muslim Berbers who established an elite order of infantrymen during the Ottoman rule.
3. The 1827 flywhisk incident triggered a chain of events that resulted in the colonization of Algeria by France.
4. Abdelkader was the first president of Algeria.
5. The “couscous revolt” erupted after a long drought led to acute food shortages in central Algeria.

Assessment Answers: 1. True; 2. True; 3. False; 4. False; 5. False



*Building gas pipe
Flickr / iñaki do Campo Gan*

Chapter 3 | Algeria in Perspective

Economy

Introduction

Algeria is one of the top ten largest gas exporters in the world. Despite efforts to diversify the economy, the oil and gas sector accounts for most of the country's income and almost all of its export income. The government of Algeria controls the economy. Efforts to privatize state-owned industries and ease restrictions on imports and foreign involvement in the economy have seen limited results. Corruption, protectionist policies, political uncertainty, regional instability, and poor banking infrastructure impede economic development.^{1, 2, 3, 4} Decreases in hydrocarbon production and worldwide oil prices have led to an increased fiscal deficit, which has depleted the country's currency reserves and savings.^{5, 6, 7}

Agriculture



Algeria fish market
Flickr / p.fabian

Algeria's agriculture sector contributes 12.3% to Algeria's gross domestic product (GDP) and employs 20% of the rural population or 12.8% of the workforce. Only 3.4% of Algeria's total land area is arable land since the Sahara Desert is not available for growing agricultural crops. The agriculture ministry plans to increase the country's total arable land to 9 million hectares (22.2 million acres) by 2020.^{8, 9, 10}

The government owns about one-third of arable land and leases it to private investors and farmers. Partnerships can be between public and private investors or a foreign investor with an Algerian partner. The remaining two-thirds of arable land is privately owned.^{11, 12, 13} About 70% of the farms are less than 10 hectares (25 acres) in size.¹⁴

Most of Algeria's crops are cultivated in the fertile plains around Bejaïa and Annaba, the Mitidja Plain south of Algiers, and beyond Oran. The remaining agricultural land is suitable only for pasture.¹⁵

Since only 12% of arable land is irrigated, the dependence on rainwater for irrigation has often affected agricultural production levels, especially during drought years. The government is developing projects to combat drought by increasing the amount of irrigated land by 2 million hectares (4.9 million acres) by 2019. The government plans to move the agriculture sector toward intensive models, particularly in the cereals sector, and to build modern agricultural facilities.^{16, 17}



Algerian woman checking crops
Flickr / CAFNR

The most important agricultural food crops are wheat and barley. These crops, grown in the dry high plateau around Constantine and the Sersou Plateau to the west, constitute 80% of the total cereal production. Tobacco, olives, grains, legumes, and fruits are other crops grown in the western parts of the country. Potatoes, onions, and

tomatoes are commonly cultivated vegetables. Scattered herds of sheep, goats, and cattle also contribute to the agricultural sector.^{18, 19, 20}



*A shepherd and his sheep
Flickr / Manfred Lentz*

Algeria is the third largest producer of dates in the world, after Egypt and Iran, and fresh dates are the country's second largest export after hydrocarbons. Top buyers of Algerian dates are France, Russia, Senegal, and Belgium. Olive oil is produced using traditional methods involving mills and presses.^{21, 22, 23}

Forests cover only 0.8% of the country, mostly in the north. The best conditions for forest are in the northeast, where cork oak, holm oak, and cedar trees grow. In this region, rainfall is the highest, allowing fast-growing eucalyptus and pine to flourish. The species most commonly exploited for timber is the Aleppo pine. Cork from the cork oak forests in the higher elevations of the Tell Atlas is processed domestically.^{24, 25, 26} The city of Jijel on the northeastern coast is the center of Algeria's cork production and is surrounded by cork oak plantations.²⁷

Despite Algeria's long Mediterranean coastline (1,280 km/595 mi), the fishing industry is underdeveloped and at risk due to overfishing, pollution, and climate change. The government hopes that fish farming in the Sahara will help double the annual fish production by 2022. The government provides training on raising fish and offers cheap loans to farmers who have an interest in the new venture.^{28, 29}

Imports meet close to 75% of Algeria's food needs. Nearly 18% of the country's total imports consist of agricultural commodities and food, mostly cereal products. In 2017, Algeria was one of the world's largest importers of wheat (USD 1.79 billion) and dairy products (USD 1.40 billion). Food imports include beans, lentils, and chickpeas. Algeria joined the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations in 1963.^{30, 31, 32, 33}



*Greenhouses with drip irrigation, Biskra, Algeria
Flickr / Water Alternatives*

Industry



Road construction Sidi Madani
Public Domain

The Algerian economy is based on industry, which accounts for 37.2% of the GDP and employs 46.5% of the workforce.³⁴ Oil and natural gas dominate the industrial sector in terms of revenues and as a source of investment capital. Major production sites are located in the Sahara Desert. Industrial areas consist of huge refineries, petrochemical complexes, and factories that surround Algiers, Annaba, Bejaïa, Skikda, Arzew, and Oran. The energy sector employs a workforce of 120,000, covering exploration, marketing, and sales.³⁵ Sonatrach, the state-owned energy conglomerate, invests and oversees the production of petroleum derivatives, petrochemicals, fertilizers, and ammonium.^{36, 37}

A phosphate fertilizer factory and a steelworks complex at Annaba are part of Algeria's heavy industry. In 2018, Algeria partnered with China to build a phosphate plant worth USD 6 billion in the northeast region. Once production begins in 2022, Algeria is expected to become one of the largest fertilizer exporters in the world.³⁸ Much of the steel produced in the Annaba steel complex is for domestic consumption, such as agricultural equipment, buses, trucks, and machine tools.³⁹

Agro-industry is Algeria's second largest sector after oil and gas, with 17,000 companies employing 140,000 workers. The great majority of Algerian agribusiness companies are privately owned.⁴⁰

Public spending sustains the construction sector. Government programs underwrite the construction of new highways, railroads, and public transportation facilities, as well as schools, public buildings and apartment complexes that address the housing shortage. Foreign companies partnered with Algerian construction companies are responsible for most of the country's construction projects.⁴¹



Train station in bazir elda
Public Domain

Algeria has a modest automobile sector. The French car manufacturer Renault, in partnership with an Algerian company, has an assembly plant in Oran. Renault Algérie subcontracts local companies to manufacture upholstery, wiring, and window grates. More joint ventures with other European car manufacturers are planned.⁴²

Manufacturing industries play a marginal role in the economy, contributing only 5.6% to the GDP.⁴³ Light industry consists of food processing, household appliances, and domestic electronics manufacturing, textile production, and some luxury goods. Most factories are located near large urban centers in the north, the new population centers in the high plateau, and a few oasis towns.^{44, 45} Industrial production consistently decreased throughout 2018.⁴⁶

Energy

Algeria's first discovery of commercial oil reserves was in 1956, in the Edjelleh and Hassi Messaoud oil fields. Production began in 1958.⁴⁷ Oil and gas reserves are located in the southern and southeastern parts of the country.^{48, 49}



*Algeria launches hybrid power plant
Flickr / Magharebia*

The hydrocarbons sector is the backbone of Algeria's economy, accounting for almost 35% of the GDP and up to 95% of total exports.⁵⁰ With the tenth largest reserves of natural gas in the world, Algeria is Africa's leading natural gas producer. Algeria is also the second largest natural gas supplier to Europe (after Russia) and the top supplier of natural gas on the African continent. It is estimated that Algeria has the third largest proven reserves of shale gas and ranks 16th in proven oil reserves globally. Algeria holds the third largest amount of proved crude oil reserves in Africa and is the third largest oil producer in Africa after Nigeria and Angola. All of Algeria's oil fields are located onshore and about two-thirds of its territory—mainly in the south, north, and offshore—is still underexplored.^{51, 52, 53}

The government-owned company Sonatrach oversees the exploration, production, transport, and marketing of Algeria's oil and gas products. Sonatrach also invests in power generation, new and renewable energy, water desalination, and mining exploration and exploitation. Sonatrach, which is the largest company in Africa,

was founded in 1963, with its headquarters in Algiers. The company owns about 80% of Algeria's hydrocarbon production; international oil companies including British Petroleum, Eni, Total, Repsol, Cepsa, Statoil, and Anadarko own the other 20%. Algeria joined OPEC in 1969.^{54, 55, 56}



*Gas station in Algeria
Flickr / sarlin/e*

Algeria has an extensive network of oil and gas pipelines that connects the Saharan oil fields with the northern port cities of Arzew, Algiers, and Skikda in Algeria and La Skhira in Tunisia. Skikda is Africa's largest oil refinery, comprised of eight crude oil refining units.^{57, 58, 59} Sonatrach bought an oil refinery and three oil terminals in Italy with the vision of becoming one of the five largest oil companies in the world.⁶⁰

About 60% of Algeria's total natural gas output is located in Hassi R'Mel gas field, not far from the Saharan oasis town of Ghardaïa. Discovered in 1956, the Hassi R'Mel gas field is the largest natural gas field in Algeria and one of the world's major natural-gas fields^{61, 62} Trans-Mediterranean gas pipelines run from the giant gas fields of Hassi R'Mel to the northern Algeria coastal cities and from there to Italy and Spain via Tunisia and Morocco, respectively. These pipelines carry about two-thirds of Algeria's natural gas exports to market, with the remainder transported as liquefied natural gas in tankers.^{63, 64, 65}

Natural gas and crude oil production have declined over the past decade, due to lower oil and gas prices, delays in new production and infrastructure projects, and a decline in foreign investment.^{66, 67} The energy ministry plans to invest USD 78 billion in upstream oil and gas exploration by 2021, and Sonatrach plans to increase production and oil refining capacity with an investment of over USD 50 billion.^{68, 69}

Natural Resources

The mining sector contributes less than 1% to Algeria's GDP. However, Algeria's mineral resources are substantial, producing about 30 minerals such as barite, gold, phosphate rock, quartz, diamonds, and various gemstones. Only iron and phosphates are produced on a large scale.^{70, 71, 72}

Algeria has the second largest reserves of iron ore in Africa. Most of the iron ore

is mined near the Tunisian border and transported to the steel plant at Annaba. Most of the iron is utilized locally in the metallurgical industry.^{73, 74, 75} The fourth largest reserves of uranium ores in Africa are also located in Algeria.⁷⁶



*Algeria has become one of the most important areas for
Repsol
Flickr / Repsol*

Lead mining ceased in 2007. Plans are in the works for a Chinese-Australian-Algerian joint venture to start mining premium zinc-lead concentrate from a large deposit discovered in northern Algeria. The Tala Hamza project, which has the potential to be one of the world's top ten zinc-lead producers, has completed final feasibility studies with the Algerian government. About half the world's zinc supply is used in various industries, including construction and automotive.^{77, 78, 79}

Algeria ranks among the world's top producers of mercury ores. The country produced approximately 25% of the mercury consumed in the developed world, but mining of mercury ceased in 2003. Mercury reserves are located in the Azzaba region, in the north.^{80, 81}

Gold was discovered before the Roman occupation in northern Algeria near the Atlas Mountains. Sonatrach is one of the leading companies involved in gold extraction. Most of the gold in Algeria remains unexplored.⁸²

Approximately 21% of the world's helium deposits are located in Algeria, which is the second-largest producer of helium after the United States. However, because of the low return on investment in helium production, Algeria has not invested in extracting helium from the natural gas produced in the country.⁸³

Trade

Hydrocarbon products amount to 95% of Algeria's export earnings.⁸⁴ Algeria exports about 90% of its crude oil to Western Europe.⁸⁵

The top destinations for Algerian exports are Italy, France, Spain, the United States, and Brazil.^{86, 87} The European Union (EU) is Algeria's largest trading partner, absorbing most of Algeria's international trade at 50.3%. The majority of Algeria's exports to



Algiers power station at port
Public Domain

the EU consist of fuel and mining products, accounting for 95.7%. Chemicals come far behind, with less than 3% of Algeria's exports to the EU. Algeria's imports from the EU include machinery (22.2%), transportation equipment (13.4%), agricultural products (12.8%), chemicals (12.8%), and iron and steel (10.2%).⁸⁸

The top five countries Algeria imports from are China, France, Italy, Germany, and Spain. Algeria's main imports are refined petroleum products, wheat, cars, raw sugar, dairy products, and pharmaceuticals .^{89, 90}

Since 2015, Algeria has had a trade deficit due to a drop in hydrocarbon exports, which represent nearly all its exports. The deficit narrowed slightly in 2017 and continued to narrow in 2018 after oil exports recovered and imports decreased.⁹¹

Algeria has a free trade agreement with the EU, and its exports with it receive preferential treatment. Algeria is also a member of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (Euromed).⁹² Algeria is a member of the African Union, the Arab League, the Arab Maghreb Union, and the Arab Free Trade Zone.⁹³ In 2010, Algeria signed a trade agreement with 21 countries in the Sao Paulo Round of Global System of Trade Preferences among Developing Countries, which promotes trade among developing countries. Currently, 42 countries have signed the agreement.⁹⁴



Exported Toyota cars
Public Domain

Many import and export businesses are run by people with close connections to the government.⁹⁵ In 2018, Algeria ranked 166 out of 190 countries for ease of doing business.⁹⁶ Algeria has been seeking accession to the World Trade Organization since 1998.⁹⁷

Tourism



*A beach at Jijel
Flickr / Naim H*

Although Algeria is located a short distance from Europe and is one of the most affordable countries to visit, it ranks 118 out of 136 countries on the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index.⁹⁸ Security remains a concern that discourages foreign tourists. The U.S. State Department continues to warn about the risk of terrorist attacks and recommends that U.S. citizens exercise increased caution when traveling to Algeria.⁹⁹

Most of the tourism in Algeria is domestic. A small number of European and American adventure seekers come to Algeria to explore the Hoggar Mountains, the Tassili n'Ajjer, and Timimoun. The Roman ruins at Timgad, Tipaza, and Djémila, and the old parts of the cities, such as the Casbah of Algiers, also attract some visitors. Spa tourism has a strong potential as well.^{100, 101}

The travel and tourism sector contributes 3.6% to Algeria's GDP and accounts for 346,500 jobs. The largest numbers of tourists come from Tunisia, followed by France and Morocco. The number of nights spent in tourist establishments is rising. Limited capacity is one of the constraints to the sector's development. The government plans to triple its lodging capacity for tourists by 2030 and bolster efforts to expand tourism as part of its economic diversification plans.¹⁰²

Banking and Finance

Algeria began moving from a socialist development model toward a market economy in 1994, but progress has been slow. The government intervenes in the economy through regulatory and protectionist measures such as price caps and subsidies on essential commodities and restricts imports and foreign engagement. The Bank of Algeria issues banknotes and is responsible for the regulation and supervision of the banking sector. It



*50 dinar
Wikimedia / Ilyesghezzal*



*Al Baraka Bank in Algeria
Wikimedia / Magharebia*

manages Algeria's foreign reserves and controls foreign exchange. In 2018, the International Monetary Fund determined that the banking sector is profitable and that the banks' liquid assets were sufficient to cover short-term liabilities. The banking system is characterized by excess liquidity due to hydrocarbon wealth, the obligation to sell foreign exchange to the central bank, and high public expenditure.^{103, 104, 105}

Algeria is a cash-based society; the private sector consists predominantly of very small enterprises that operate on cash. The use of credit cards and checks is uncommon. The Algerian Dinar (DZD) is Algeria's official currency and cannot be freely converted.¹⁰⁶ The Bank of Algeria determines the rate of the dinar against a composite of currencies. The official exchange rate ranges between 90-100 dinars to one euro. However, on the black market, the dinar can be exchanged by as much as 160 dinars to one euro. Residents and non-residents may hold foreign currencies. International money transfer services, such as Western Union, are available. ATMs can be found in some cities, including at five-star hotels.^{107,}

¹⁰⁸

The capital markets are underdeveloped. Six government-controlled commercial banks dominate 95% of the financial sector. The government regularly bails them out when they encounter financial difficulties. Al Barka Bank is the only bank with mixed public and private capital. In 2017, the government announced that its six government-controlled banks would begin offering Islamic banking and Islamic financial services. Islamic law prohibits payment or acceptance of interest fees for loans.^{109, 110}

There are more than 20 foreign banks, all of which are foreign-owned subsidiaries, mostly from the Gulf countries; among the other foreign banks are Citibank, HSBC, BNP Paribas, and Societ  Generale. The government's confidence in private banking is low even though they perform better than public banks.^{111, 112}



*Societ  Generale Headquarter
Wikimedia / Olivier Passalacqua*

The government banned consumer credit (loans) in 2009 as part of its effort to reduce imports and promote local manufacturing. In 2016, the government imposed limits on vehicle imports and reintroduced consumer credit for purchasing cars, computers, household electronics, furniture, and some construction materials. Only products made or assembled in Algeria can be bought with credit.¹¹³

Algeria is not attractive to direct foreign investment due to its protectionist laws, extensive bureaucratic procedures, and corruption.^{114, 115}

Standard of Living



Homeless man
Flickr / lola khalfa

In 2018, Algeria's rating on the UNDP's Human Development Index was 85 out of 180 countries, a slight drop from 83 in 2017. However, given Algeria's hydrocarbon wealth, this ranking hides large wealth disparities.¹¹⁶ The most recent calculations of the national poverty rate are from 2011, putting the poverty rate at 5.5%, with 0.5% of the population living in extreme poverty. Poverty rates in the Sahara are double the national poverty rate and triple that of the Steppe region. About 11% of the urban population lives in slums.^{117, 118} In 2015, an Algerian human rights group estimated the poverty rate at 35%.¹¹⁹

Life expectancy stands at 76.3 years.¹²⁰ Trends in infant and under-five mortality rates are improving but still high, at 21 and 24 deaths per 1,000 live births respectively. The maternal mortality rate has also gone down to 140 per 100,000 live births in 2015, from 170 per 100,000 in 2000. Access to basic health care is limited for rural residents. However, 98% of the population has access to improved drinking water sources and sanitation.^{121, 122, 123}

Free education is available at all levels. Overall enrollment rates are high. Females have higher enrollment rates than males in the tertiary level, but not in primary education. Recent data on literacy shows improvement, with 80% of the population considered fully literate. However, literacy is uneven between the genders, with men estimated at 87% while women are 73% literate. There are significant barriers in the

job market for women, who make up only 17.4% of the total labor force.^{124, 125} Despite a law that forbids it, many women see their wages confiscated by their husbands, on pain of divorce.¹²⁶

Employment

Despite the recovery in global oil prices, unemployment climbed to 11.7% in 2018, an increase of 0.6% from 2017. Unemployment is particularly high among the educated and people under 30, who make up more than 65% of Algeria's population. In 2018, unemployment of people under 25 reached 29.10%.^{127, 128, 129} Slightly over 18% of women were unemployed in 2017, while only 8.3% of men were unemployed.¹³⁰



*Fertigation units for greenhouses in Biskra, Algeria
Flickr / Water Alternatives*

Outlook



*New bridge construction near Ain Turk.
Public Domain*

Despite efforts to diversify, the economy will continue to be mainly hydrocarbon-driven. Economic growth is projected to be 2.7% in 2019 and 1.9% in 2020. Growth estimates are based on the modest performance of the hydrocarbon sector and a slight improvement in the nonhydrocarbon sector. GDP growth will struggle to cross the 2% threshold for 2019-20. Inflation is projected to stay in the 4% range by 2020.^{131, 132}

Modest growth in 2020 will occur due to the government's restrictive fiscal policy. The decline in public expenditures will reduce the fiscal deficit, which will remain negligible at less than 2% of the GDP. Real GDP growth will be insufficient to reduce unemployment.^{133, 134}

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Algeria in Perspective

Chapter 3 | Economy

Assessment

1. Algeria's geographic proximity to Europe, beach resorts, numerous archaeological sites, and affordability make it a popular destination for foreign tourists.
2. Algeria's official currency is the Algerian franc.
3. Sonotrach is Algeria's state-owned energy conglomerate.
4. Mining is Algeria's second-largest sector after the hydrocarbon sector.
5. Algeria's hydrocarbon wealth makes it attractive to foreign direct investment.

Assessment Answers: 1. False; 2. False; 3. True; 4. False; 5. False



*Algerians in traditional costumes
Wikimedia / Yves Jalabert*

Chapter 4 | Algeria in Perspective

Society

Introduction

When Arab-Muslims reached North Africa in the 8th century, the entire region embraced the Arabic language and Islam. As a result, nearly all Algerians today are Muslims and speak Arabic, but the majority of the population is of non-Arab origin.¹

During the 19th century, French colonialists adapted the classic “divide and rule” strategy and pitted indigenous peoples against Arabs. Today, some of the tensions in Algerian society echo the French colonialists’ attempt to cast Algeria as a region of different tribes fighting one another, rather than a nation of one cohesive people.²

After independence in 1962, the Algerian government embraced Islam and the Arabic language and culture to establish a cohesive Algerian identity and downplayed the indigenous culture and language.³ This policy alienated indigenous non-Arabic-speaking Algerians and contributed to the Islamization of the younger generations.^{4, 5}

Ethnic and Linguistic Groups

Almost all Algerians (99%) are of non-Arab origin, with 20% of the population identifying as Amazigh (plural Imazighen). The Amazigh people have lived in North Africa since 3,000 BCE, and references to them can be found in ancient Egyptian, Greek, and Roman sources. Most indigenous Imazighen live in the mountainous region of Kabylie east of Algiers.^{6, 7}



*Algerian sahara man
Flickr / Rainer Voegeli*

The indigenous Amazigh non-Arab population of North Africa (Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia) have alternatively been referred to as Berbers, but this term is considered offensive by the Amazigh as it is derived from the word “barbarian.” Instead, they call themselves Amazigh, which means “free people” in the indigenous Tamazight language.⁸



*Berber men
Flickr / Jacob Cohen*

Algeria’s Imazighen comprise four main groups. The largest of these is the Kabyles, who inhabit the mountainous region east of Algiers in the Great Kabylie and Little Kabylie ranges. Other Imazighen groups are the Chaoui of the Aurès Mountains in northeast Algeria, the Mزاب of the northern Sahara, and the Tuareg of the southeastern Sahara.^{9, 10}

The Tuareg are a prominent Amazigh group who live in the Sahara Desert spanning parts of Algeria, Niger, Mali, Chad, and Burkina-Faso. They practice Sunni Islam and traditional African religions. The Tuareg have a matrilineal society, tracing the family line through the women. Their ancient written language, Tifinagh, is used for

ceremonies and private occasions. The Tuareg call themselves “Speakers of Tamasheq” and “People of the Veil.” Some outsiders call them the “Blue People” because of the blue veils commonly worn by Tuareg men.^{11, 12, 13}

Algerian Arabs live in the northern part of the country and speak an Algerian dialect of Arabic as their first language.¹⁴



Trilingual signs at the Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi-Ouzou
Wikimedia / Vermondo

Languages

After Algeria gained independence from France in 1962, Arabic was declared the country’s only national and official language. This means that Arabic is recognized both as an important part of the Algerian national identity (national language status) and as a language used in official contexts such as government activities (official status). In 2002, an amendment to the constitution made Tamazight a second national language.

In 2017, after years of protests and demonstrations against what was perceived by the Amazigh population as cultural injustice, a revision to the constitution named Tamazight as Algeria’s second official language and established the Algerian academy for the Tamazight language.^{15, 16, 17}

Nearly 20% of the population speaks the Tamazight language. Each Amazigh group speaks a separate but similar language that evolved from the **Amazigh** branch of the Afro-Asiatic language family. Arabic comes from a separate Semitic branch of the Afro-Asiatic language family.^{18, 19}

Algerian Arabic differs from written Arabic and from Modern Standard Arabic, which is the formal language of instruction in schools. Algerian Arabic borrows many words from Tamazight, Turkish, and French and has a simplified vowel system. There are local variations of Arabic in different parts of the country, and small portions of the population speak some African languages. A Bedouin dialect of Arabic (Algerian Saharan Arabic) is spoken by a small number of people in the Saharan part of Algeria.^{20, 21, 22}

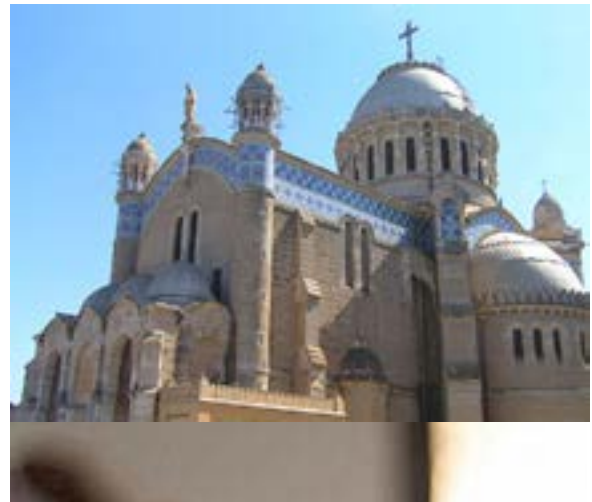
French, the colonial language, has no official status but is still widespread. French is taught in schools and used in government, higher education, and the business world,

despite decades of government policies that discourage French literacy. The government policy of Arabization has been a source of tension in Amazigh-majority regions.^{23, 24}

Some observers believe that the policy also increased Islamic radicalization among Algerian youth by bringing in Arabic instructors from Egypt, Syria, and Iraq who held extreme religious views. Following the decade-long civil war against Islamist groups, the Algerian government reintroduced French into the school curriculum.²⁵

Religion

Islam is the state religion of Algeria, but not every denomination of Islam is welcomed by the authorities. Public officials consider Salafi, Wahhabi, Shia, and Ahmadi beliefs as foreign influences, and one religious council declared Ahmadi belief outside of Islam. The government regulates the import of religious materials and public religious activities. Muslim religious services can take place only in buildings registered with the state.²⁶



Algerians have the right to practice any religion as long as they respect public order and regulations. Proselytizing of Muslims by non-Muslims is a crime, but conversion from Islam is not prohibited. Insulting any religion, particularly the Prophet Muhammad, is a criminal offense.²⁷

More than 99% of the population is Muslim, following the Maliki school of Sunni Islam. Christians make up most of the remaining 1%. The government estimates that the majority of Christians are foreign residents. The Christian community includes Roman Catholics, Seventh-day Adventists, Methodists, the Protestant Church of Algeria, Lutherans, the Reformed Church, Anglicans, and Egyptian Coptic Christians. Most Christians belong to various Protestant groups, but Roman Catholicism is the largest church in Algeria, comprising four dioceses and one archdiocese. The Ministry of Interior grants association status to religious groups; only registered associations are officially recognized.^{28, 29}

Most Imazighen converted to Islam relatively quickly after the first Arab invasions in the 7th century but resisted Arab rule and the institution of Arab culture and language.

Imazighen political parties remain wary of Islamist philosophy, viewing it as an element of the government's Arabization policy that contributes to the marginalization of their culture and language. Some Algerian Islamic fundamentalists consider **Imazighen** as secular.^{30, 31, 32}



Algerian muslim man
Flickr / Medafco Développement

Islamic fundamentalists also consider some Amazigh traditional religious practices as heretical, such as the cult of *marabouts*, which practices the worship of holy men believed to be capable of performing miracles.³³ Maraboutism emerged in North Africa from the Sufi mystical orders that arrived in Algeria during the Arab migrations of the 11th century. From the 13th to the 19th centuries, Sufi tradition, as manifested through maraboutism, was the dominant form of Islamic practice throughout Algeria. Today, the practice is common in the isolated Amazigh villages of Kabylia and the Aurès Mountains.^{34, 35, 36}

Most of Algeria's once sizable Jewish minority left after independence; almost all who remained left the country following the civil war of the 1990s. Currently, there are fewer than 200 Jews left in Algeria.^{37, 38}

Cuisine

Algerian cuisine is a blend of flavors, aromas, and ingredients reflecting the many cultures that influenced Algeria throughout the centuries, from the Amazigh to the Romans, Arabs, Turks, Spanish, and French. Common ingredients include lamb, chicken and fish along with grains, vegetables, and dried fruits. Spices such as cumin, caraway, marjoram, coriander, and fennel are used in many dishes. The Arabs brought saffron, nutmeg, ginger, cloves, and cinnamon to the area. Spanish invaders brought olives and olive oil, plums, oranges, and peaches.



Grilled rabbit of Algeria
Wikimedia / Nasimanilsen25

The Ottomans introduced the population to their sweet pastries. The Amazigh created Algeria's national dish, couscous, prepared from grains of semolina wheat, rolled into small pellets and dried in the sun. The pellets are steamed and mixed into a light, fluffy mound. Spicy vegetable stews such as zucchini, roasted potatoes, and carrots, as well as beef, lamb, mutton, and fish are added to the couscous and served in a deep dish. Couscous is also served as a dessert, with cinnamon, nutmeg, dates, and figs.^{39, 40}



Preparation of Méchoui
Wikimedia / Andre Piquet

Jwaz, *mechoui*, *dolma*, and *bagita* are other popular dishes. *Jwaz* is a slow-cooked vegetable dish. It is prepared mostly in rural areas and includes carrots, potatoes, tomatoes, and onions. *Mechoui* refers to a stuffed, slow roasted whole sheep or lamb, cooked on an outdoor spit. In traditional homes, the host pulls the meat off the bone and serves the guests using his hands. *Mechoui* is a festive dish served on special occasions. Dolma, which is grape leaves stuffed with rice and meat, is a popular

appetizer in Mediterranean cuisine. *Bagita* is the Algerian baguette, a testimonial to the French influence on Algerian culture. Bread is an integral part of every meal and accompanies even vegetable curries and meat stews. Traditional families eat flat wheat bread.⁴¹

The favorite drink is tea with fresh mint (*etzai*), but coffee is also popular, served extremely strong with a glass of water on the side.⁴² Fresh juices are popular as well; children favor apricot nectar. *Sahlab*, a sweet, milky drink, is popular in Algeria as much as it is all over the Middle East. *Basbousa*, Egyptian semolina cake, and *tamina*, roasted semolina with butter and honey, are among Algeria's sweets.^{43, 44}

Traditional Dress

Most Algerian urban residents wear Western clothing. Many women also wear the *hijab*, a headscarf that covers the head and the neck, but wearing it is a matter of choice rather than social expectation. For some women, the hijab is as much a fashion



Algerian clothing in an exhibit
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statement as an expression of religious piety or ideology. In other cases, it may be worn as a way to make a single woman more attractive to prospective husbands.^{45, 46, 47}



Algerian women clothing
Flickr / iñaki do Campo Gan

The *haik*, a long veil made of wool or silk that hides the lower part of the face, symbolizes Algerian resistance to French colonialism and is making a comeback. During the Ottoman rule, women who lived in cities used to wear it outside the home. The *haik* can be white or golden-beige, depending on the region, or black for mourning.⁴⁸

Traditional clothing is no longer worn in much of Algeria, except in the southern Sahara. There, Tuareg men still wear the *tagelmust*, a piece of cloth used as a turban and a veil that conceals the face. Traditionally, the *tagelmust* was dyed indigo blue, and resulted in the Tuareg being referred to as the “Blue Men of the Sahara” or “Men of the Veil.” In recent times, other colors have become popular. Tuareg men use the *tagelmust* as protection from blowing desert sands and to convey modesty.^{49, 50, 51}

Gender Issues

The constitution provides for gender equality, but aspects of Algeria’s family code, which has strong elements of Islamic law, along with traditional social practices discriminate against women.^{52, 53} In spite of revisions made to the family code in 2005, some women’s rights organizations believe that the current law should be replaced by secular civil laws.⁵⁴



Algerian women working in the field
Flickr / CAFNR

According to the World Bank, Algeria ranks among the countries with the lowest level of women’s participation in the workforce. In 2018, only 18.38% of the workforce was female.⁵⁵ Tradition restricts women from work and travel opportunities, and many women engage in unpaid work in the agriculture, textile, and clothing sectors.⁵⁶

In spite of these restrictions, women represent a majority of workers in fields such as education and health care. Women also make up 70% of Algeria’s lawyers, 60% of its judges, and up to 60% of university students.⁵⁷

The legal minimum age of marriage is 19 for both men and women. A judge can grant an age exemption for minors so that minors may marry with parental consent, but parents cannot force their children to marry against their wills. Married women under 18 need permission from their husbands to travel abroad. About 3% of girls are married before they reach 18, mostly in rural areas. In 2003, the government ratified the Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and committed to eliminating child, early, and forced marriage by 2030.^{58, 59, 60}



Algerians in traditional costumes
Wikimedia / Yves Jalaber

Muslim women cannot marry non-Muslims, but the law is not always enforced. Same-sex relations and same-sex marriage are illegal. Women may seek divorce for some reasons. Custody of children is usually awarded to the mother, although she cannot make decisions about their education or take them out of the country without the father’s permission. The wife retains the family’s home until the children reach age 18.

Men can marry up to four wives as long as the current wife or wives agree and a judge determines that the man can support an additional wife.⁶¹

In December 2015, Algeria’s parliament criminalized some forms of domestic violence in its penal code, but domestic violence remains a widespread problem. There are only three state-run shelters specifically for women victims of violence. The law also criminalizes rape but does not address spousal rape. Sexual harassment occurs in the workplace and women experience harassment when they are in public.^{62, 63, 64}

Women may own businesses, enter into contracts, and pursue careers similar to those of men. However, they do face discrimination in employment and are less likely to receive equal pay or promotions.⁶⁵ In 2016, the Women’s Affairs Minister, Mounia

Meslem, caused a public outcry when she suggested that married women who hold senior positions should donate their wages to the national treasury because they can live off their husbands' salaries.⁶⁶

Arts

Music

Algeria is the birthplace of *rai* (translated “opinion”), a musical genre that first emerged in the 1920s and 1930s in northwestern Algeria and has since spread far beyond the nation’s borders.⁶⁷ *Rai* is Amazigh-style music that originally used traditional instruments and songs woven around Arabic love poetry. The music gradually evolved into an urban musical style that expressed the pains, pleasures, and desires of working-class life.⁶⁸ Over time, new instruments and styles were added to the mix, including rock and rap.⁶⁹ Early *rai* singers were women, known as *cheikas* and *meddahas*, who performed at *meddahas* (social events strictly for women), weddings, religious festivals, and clubs (*cheikas*).⁷⁰



Cheb Khalid
Flickr / Magharebia

Later generations of *rai* performers were dominated by men and had a more pop-oriented style. References to sexual pleasure, food, alcohol, and social problems such as unemployment made *rai* popular with Algeria’s lower classes, but it was barely tolerated by the government and angrily railed against by Islamist groups.⁷¹ When several *rai* performers were murdered by Islamic militants during the 1990s civil war, many of their peers fled to France.⁷²

Literature

Algeria’s multicultural landscape and tumultuous history have given rise to many remarkable writers and literary works in Arabic, indigenous languages, and the colonialists’ French. The Algerian-born Albert Camus (1913-60) became one the preeminent French writers of the 20th century. His novels, plays, and essays , including *The Stranger*, *The Plague*, and *The Fall*, dealt with man’s existential and



Albert Camus in 1957
Public Domain

moral crises in the face of alienation, evil, and mortality. A *pie-d-noir*, he opposed colonialism but did not fully support Algerian independence. He won the 1957 Nobel Prize for Literature.⁷³

The works of Assia Djebar (1936-2015) dealt with the role of women in colonial and independent Algeria, the effects of colonialism and patriarchy, and Algerian national identity. She is best known for the novels *Children of the New World* and

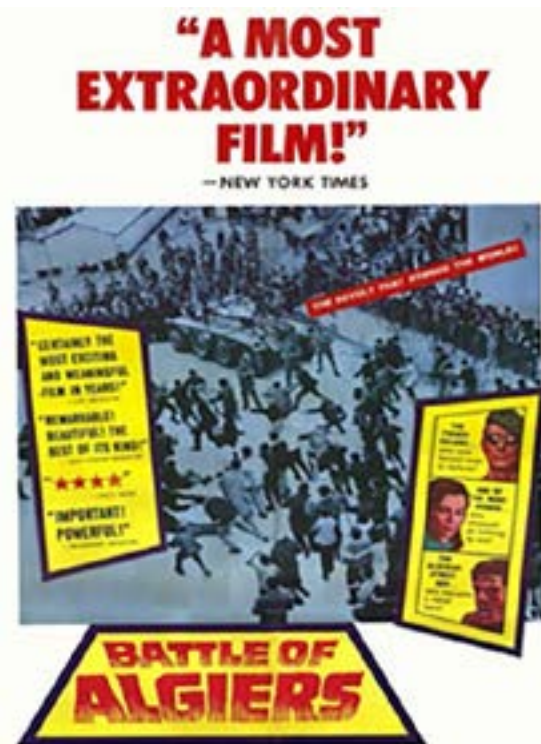
The Naive Larks.^{74, 75} In 2014, the Algerian writer Kamel Daoud won France's top literary award and international acclaim for *The Mersault Investigation*. The novel is an Algerian-perspective reimagining of Albert Camus's 1942 novel *The Stranger*, in which a French colonist senselessly kills an unnamed Arab man.^{76, 77}

Film

In 1970, the film *Z*, a joint French-Algerian production directed by Costa-Gavras, won Algeria its first and only Academy Award for Best Foreign Film. The film, shot mostly in Algeria, depicts the student uprising in Greece and the assassination of the Greek politician Gregory Lambrax in 1963.⁷⁸

The Battle of Algiers (1966) details the brutality of the French suppression of the 1950 Algerian uprising. Its black-and-white documentary-style depiction of urban guerrilla warfare tactics are so relevant that the Pentagon arranged a special in-house screening of the film during the Iraq War in 2003. The film was rereleased in 2007.^{79, 80}

Chronicle of the Years of Fire won the Cannes Film Festival Palme d'Or in 1975.



The Battle of Algiers
Wikimedia / Film Fan

Directed by native Algerian Mohammed Lakhdar-Hamina, the film depicts the struggle against French colonial rule between the beginning of World War II and the start of the Algerian Revolution.⁸¹ *The Ball* (1983), *Dust of Life* (1995), *Days of Glory* (2006), and *Outside the Law* (2010) were nominated for Academy Awards for Best Foreign Language Film.⁸²

Films by Algerian-born director Merzak Allouache include several documentaries and feature films. *Bab el-Oued City* (1994), which won the International Critics Award at Cannes, depicted the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in Algeria. His latest film, *Divine Wind*, a drama about two Jihadists, was released in 2018.^{83, 84}

Sports and Recreation

Soccer is the king of sports in Algeria. Until recently, the Algerian national team, Les Fennecs (The Desert Foxes) was considered one of the best teams in Africa.



Algerian Fan Leads the Crowd
Flickr / Drew Douglas

Many Algerians whose families moved to France when they were still children, along with French-born players with dual nationalities, choose to play for Algeria. In 2010, the team finished in fourth place in the African Cup and qualified for the 2010 World Cup in South Africa after a 24-year absence. The team participated in the 2014 World Cup in Brazil, where it played against South Korea and the eventual champion Germany. In 2017, to the consternation of many Algerians, the team failed to qualify for the World Cup in Russia.^{85, 86}

Algeria has national men's and women's volleyball and handball teams. In spite of opposition from religious conservatives, women in the national volleyball team can play and wear shorts. In 2008, the national female volleyball team qualified for the Beijing Olympics.⁸⁷

Since Algeria's first Olympic competition in the Tokyo Summer Olympics of 1964, its athletes have won 17 medals; nine medals in track and field—four of which were gold, in the 1,500 m event—six in boxing, and two in judo.⁸⁸ Hassiba Boulmerka, who ran the 1,500 m women's final, won Algeria's first gold medal at the 1992 Summer Olympics in Barcelona.⁸⁹ Noureddine Morceli won the men's 1,500 m gold medal in

1996 and held the world record for fastest time from 1992 to 1998. Morceli also held the world record for the mile from 1993 to 1999.⁹⁰ Nouria Merah-Benida won a gold medal running the 1,500 m event at the 2000 Summer Olympics in Sydney.⁹¹ In the 2012 Summer Olympics in London, Taoufik Makhloufi won the fourth gold medal for his country at the 1,500 m event.⁹²



*Algeria's Mohamed Boudraa in a preliminary
Flickr / Singapore 2010 Youth Olympic Games*

In the desert regions, horseracing and camel racing are popular. On the coast, beach resorts offer water sports and swimming. There are several ski resorts in the Tell Atlas Mountains, one of which is in Chr ea National Park.^{93, 94}

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Chapter 4 | Society

Assessment

1. French is one of the official languages of Algeria.
2. The Blue Men of the Sahara are the Tuareg.
3. Tamazight is the national dish of Algeria, usually served with wheat dumplings or barley.
4. Algerian female athletes were not allowed to participate in the Olympic Games before 2011.
5. Albert Camus was a notable Algerian-born author, philosopher, and journalist.

Assessment Answers: 1. False; 2. True; 3. False; 4. False; 5. True



The port city of Oran
Wikimedia / Maya-Anais Yataghèn

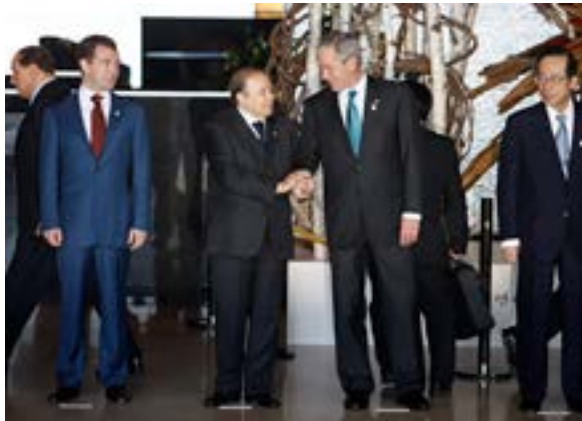
Security

Introduction

Algeria's future is uncertain. Economic stagnation and the announcement made in March 2019 by President Bouteflika that he would run for a fifth consecutive term in the election, despite his poor health, sparked the largest street protests in Algeria in over two decades. Government officials, judges, and senior military officers withdrew their support of the president and joined the opposition to his re-election. Furthermore, the military, the defender of Algeria's political order, is in transition after almost all its senior leaders were replaced ahead of the president's announcement.^{1, 2} In March 2019, Bouteflika relented and withdrew himself from the upcoming presidential election, rescheduled for 4 July 2019.^{3, 4}

Relations between the United States and Algeria are distant but not hostile, focusing mainly on counterterrorism. With the exception of Morocco, Algeria's relations with its neighbors are generally good. The porous southern borders with Mali, Niger, and Mauritania provide opportunities for cooperation in the fight against jihadists and human and drug traffickers. Algeria has also asserted itself as a regional leader when it helped diffuse political and security crises that threatened Libya, Tunisia, and Mali.^{5,6}

U.S.-Algerian Relations



President George W. Bush shares a moment with President Abdelaziz Bouteflika of Algeria
Wikimedia / White House photo by Eric Draper

The United States and Algeria established diplomatic relations when Algeria became independent in 1962. Algeria severed relations with the United States following the 1967 Six-Day War between Israel and its Arab neighbors. Diplomatic relations resumed in 1974.^{7, 8} In 1981, Algeria mediated the release of U.S. hostages from Iran.⁹

Algeria's foreign policy position, marked by economic nationalism, nonalignment, isolationism, and noninterference, has put it at odds with the United States. However, the rise of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), al-Murabitoun, the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO), Ansar ad-Din, Boko Haram, and other groups that pledge allegiance to ISIS throughout the Maghreb and the Sahel has brought the two countries closer.¹⁰

Today, U.S. and Algerian law enforcement and security agencies cooperate in the fight against crime and terrorism on Algeria's border region. In 2018, the United States provided USD 2 million in aid to Algeria for international military education and training (IMET) and for nonproliferation, antiterrorism, and demining. The United States also provides funds to promote economic growth, strengthen civil society, and address violent extremism. However, Algeria's participation in the U.S.-led Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership has not led into additional aid from Congress.¹¹

Algeria and the United States have good commerce and trade relations. The United States is one of Algeria's top trading partners, and Algeria is one of the top U.S. trading partners in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. The United States imports mainly crude oil from Algeria; U.S. foreign direct investment, which

concentrates in the oil and gas sector, reached USD 3 billion in 2017. The two countries signed a Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty and a 10-year Agreement on Science and Technology Cooperation in 2018. In January 2019, Algeria's foreign minister came to Washington for the fourth session of the U.S.-Algeria Strategic Dialogue and met with the U.S. secretary of state.^{12, 13, 14}



*Algerian embassy in Washington D.C., United States.
Wikimedia / AgnosticPreachersKi*

Algeria's close ties with Russia are in conflict with the United States—Algeria's military has Russian fighter jets, air defense systems, and tanks. Algeria's criticism of Israel and opposition to the 2011 NATO intervention in Libya also cause tension with the United States.^{15, 16}

Relations with Neighboring Countries



*Abdelaziz Bouteflika in the G8 family photo, 2010
Wikimedia / Official White House Photo by Pete Souza*

Since the 2011 regional upheaval, Algeria has had to cope with its weakened neighbors and the jihadist threat along parts of its 6,500 km (4,039 mi) eastern and southern land borders. In Libya, it backed the negotiations with the United Nations and conducted discreet diplomacy to reconcile warring factions. In Mali, it hosted and brokered peace talks between the Malian government and the northern rebel factions. In Tunisia, it has been a quiet backer of the consensus between Islamists and secularists since 2014. Relations with

Morocco still have room for improvement.¹⁷

Morocco

Relations between Algeria and Morocco have been strained for decades, impeding economic cooperation between the two countries and economic integration in the Maghreb. The 1,600 km (995 mi) land border between the two countries has been open for only 10 years since Algeria gained independence in 1962.^{18, 19}

Between September 1963 and February 1964, Algeria and Morocco fought the brief Sand War over territories in Western Sahara. The border between the two countries was demarcated in 1972. Morocco took 20 years to ratify the border agreement, but hostilities between the two countries over the status of Western Sahara persist.^{20, 21, 22}

After Spain relinquished control of the territory of Western Sahara in 1975, Morocco and Mauritania claimed the territory as their own. Algeria actively backed the Polisario Front—a secessionist organization of Sahrawi rebels who seek to gain independence from Morocco in Western Sahara—in the fight against Morocco. In 1976, Algerian forces clashed with Moroccan forces, nearly causing a full-scale war between the two countries. In 1991, a U.N.-backed ceasefire was reached, leaving 80% of Western Sahara’s territory to Morocco and the rest to the Polisario Front. Mauritania withdrew its claim to the territory and recognized the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) in 1984.^{23, 24, 25}



*Bouteflika urges co-operation with Morocco
Flickr / Magharebia*

In 1976, Algeria and Morocco broke off relations after Morocco’s “Green March” into Western Sahara. Relations were restored in 1988, and the border reopened.²⁶ After a terrorist attack on a hotel in Marrakech in 1994, Morocco, suspecting Algerian involvement, instituted visa requirements for Algerian citizens. Algeria retaliated by closing all the border crossings with Morocco, a situation that persists to this day.^{27, 28}

SADR-run Western Sahara was recognized by the African Union and by 85 U.N. members, some of which have since withdrawn their recognition. Western Sahara is considered a non-self-governing territory by the United Nations. Between 100,000 and 200,⁰⁰⁰ Sahrawi refugees live in camps near the western Algerian town of Tindouf, not far from the Moroccan and Western Sahara borders.^{29, 30} In 2018, the United Nations hosted talks in Geneva between Morocco, Algeria, Mauritania, and the Polisario Front for the first time since 2012.^{31, 32}

Mali



Abdelaziz Bouteflika in the G8 family photo, 2010
Wikimedia / Official White House Photo by Pete Souza

Algeria played a key role in the resolution of the 2012 armed conflict between the Malian government and separatist Tuareg rebel groups that declared the new state of Azawad in northern Mali. In July 2014, Algeria led an international mediation effort—sponsored by the United Nations—that resulted in an agreement between the warring parties. In 2015, the inter-Malian peace agreement was signed, and Algeria brokered the national reconciliation effort, similar to the national reconciliation that was conducted after

Algeria’s civil war. The two countries continue to coordinate the fight against terrorism, illegal migration, and crime, and plan more economic cooperation.^{33, 34, 35}

Algeria and Mali are members of the Joint Military Staff Committee (CEMOC), which includes Algeria’s southern neighbors Mauritania and Niger. The committee was launched in the southern Algerian town of Tamanrasset in 2010 with the goal of coordinating the fight against terrorism, organized crime, and drug and human trafficking.^{36, 37, 38}

Mauritania

The Western Sahara conflict determined much of Algeria’s relations with Mauritania, but recent tensions between Morocco and Mauritania and a thaw in the relations between the Polisario Front and Mauritania’s president provided Algeria and Mauritania with an opportunity to open a new page in their relations.³⁹

In 2016, Mauritania and Algeria reached a landmark agreement to open their first border crossing, between Tindouf and Choum, for the movement of people and goods.⁴⁰ At the end of 2018, the Mauritanian foreign minister visited Algeria to discuss the relations between the two countries, and during a trade fair in Mauritania, the two countries signed nine commercial treaties.^{41, 42, 43}



Nouakchott hosts '5+5' meeting on maritime security
Flickr / Magharebia

Niger



Map of Trans-Saharan Highway (Algiers-Lagos Highway)
Wikimedia / Rexparry sydney

Algeria and Niger maintain strong ties. The two countries cooperate mainly in the areas of security and education, and senior government officials from Niger visit Algiers frequently.^{44, 45}

Algeria donates food and medicine to refugee camps in Niger and Mauritania.⁴⁶ Since 2016, Algeria has deported thousands of migrants from various African and Middle Eastern nations to Niger without consulting the Nigerien government, prompting the Nigerien interior minister to protest the move. The busiest border crossing between the two countries is at Assamaka, a small village on the Nigerien side.^{47, 48, 49}

Libya

The traditionally stable relations between Libya and Algeria have been rocked by the long unrest in Libya. In May 2014, the Algerian-Libyan border was closed, and Algerian troops conducted several exercises near the border areas.^{50, 51, 52}

Consistent with its nonintervention doctrine, Algeria pushes for dialogue and a comprehensive reconciliation between all the warring parties in Libya. It does not support any military intervention and has been a major supporter of the U.N.-backed Libyan Political Agreement (LPA).^{53, 54, 55}



Algeria works to repair Libya relations
Flickr / Magharebia

In December 2016, Algeria banned General Khalifa Haftar—the Libyan National Army (LNA) chief who rules the eastern half of the country and is supported by Egypt—from entering the country in his military uniform because Algeria does not recognize him as commander of the Libyan Armed Forces. Algeria discusses matters of security cooperation and coordination, terrorist infiltration, arms smuggling, and borders issues only with the internationally recognized representatives of the Libyan people, the Government of National Accord (GNA), which is based in Tripoli.^{56, 57, 58}

Tunisia



*Tunisian, Algerian players react to CAN clash
Flickr / Magharebia*

In 1983, Algeria and Tunisia became economically linked with the opening of the Trans-Med natural gas pipeline, which transports Algerian gas to Italy via Tunisia and the Mediterranean Sea.⁵⁹

Bilateral relations between the two countries are strong, especially in the fields of security and tourism. Tunisia hosts millions of Algerian tourists annually, and the two countries share security intelligence and coordinate counterterrorism operations on

their common border. Trade between the two countries is low.^{60, 61, 62}

In 2016, Tunisia's President Caïd Essebs made his first official state visit as president to Algeria, marking an improvement in relations, which had been tense since his secular party defeated the moderate Islamist party in the 2014 parliamentary election.^{63, 64, 65}

Police

The Sûreté Nationale is the civil police of Algeria, including the riot police force, which carries out policing activities in urban areas. The Sûreté Nationale performs police functions such as life and property protection, crime investigation, traffic management, and the dispatching of police contingents to work with customs inspectors at legal points of entry. The Sûreté Nationale operates under the Ministry of the Interior.⁶⁶



*Police escort through oncoming traffic
Flickr / Dan Sloan*

Military

Algeria maintains a constitutional prohibition on military deployment outside the country and a policy of regional noninterference. Military acquisition is purposed mostly for counterterrorism operations, but some appear to be better suited for defense against invasion.⁶⁷



*The Algerian military delegation enters BAE's Typhoon building
Flickr / Campaign Against Arms Trade*

The Ministry of Defence oversees the People's National Army (PNA), which is the land force of the military and the second-largest army in North Africa after Egypt's. The PNA is particularly active on the borders, preventing armed jihadist groups from entering Algeria and stopping human and drug smuggling. Other branches of the armed forces include the navy and air force, the air-territory defense force, the National Gendarmerie, and the Republican Guard, which operates under the direct authority of the president.^{68, 69, 70}

Since 2006, women's status in the army has been equal to that of men, and they can be promoted to the rank of general. Since 2009, five women have reached the rank of general in the PNA. However, opportunities for most women are limited, and women function mostly in support roles.⁷¹

Algeria has an active duty military force of approximately 130,000 members, with an additional 150,000 reserve personnel.⁷² Military service is mandatory for all Algerian citizens beginning with registration at 18 years. Citizens begin service at 19 and serve for 12 months.⁷³

The military is well equipped. The number of aircraft used by all the branches is 550, including fighter jets and attack and transport helicopters. Land forces have nearly 2,500 combat tanks, 7,000 armored fighting vehicles, and hundreds of rocket projectors and self-propelled and towed artillery.⁷⁴ The navy operates from three bases on the Mediterranean coast, in Algiers, Annaba, and Mers-el-Kebir. The navy has 85 assets, including destroyers, frigates, and submarines.^{75, 76} In 2017, Algeria increased its defense budget to reach USD 10.5 billion and signed major contracts for purchases of military equipment with Russia, China, Italy, Germany, and the United Kingdom. Algeria's most recent Russian arms purchases include 200 modernized Russian T-90SA

Tagil main battle tanks, short-range mobile ballistic missile systems, TOS-1A Blazing Sun multibarrel mobile rocket launchers, submarines, and patrol ships.^{77, 78}

The Republican Guard is the national cavalry that carries out honors for the president and his guests. In 2006, the Republican Guard became an autonomous military force with its own command.⁷⁹



Algerian delegates visit Ranger Training Brigade
Flickr / US Army Africa

The National Gendarmerie (Gendarmerie Nationale), a component of the Algerian military, polices rural areas and conducts security surveillance of rural residents. The units use armored personnel vehicles, light armored weapons, transport and patrol vehicles, and light helicopters. The gendarmerie operates its own schools. The main training center is at Sidi Bel Abbes.⁸⁰

Analysts believe that ultimate power in Algeria rests with the military. Military leaders have collectively been referred to as *le pouvoir* (the power).^{81, 82}

Issues Affecting Stability

Terrorism and Terrorist Groups



Algeria tightens summer security
Flickr / Magharebia

Algeria is classified as a high-risk country politically, environmentally, and for security. Among some of its neighbors, it is considered higher risk than Tunisia and Morocco, but lower than Libya.⁸³ Since the end of the civil war, major terrorist attacks and bombings have become rare in Algeria, but al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and small militant groups tied to Islamic State (ISIS) are still active in the country. A large terrorist attack was orchestrated by al-Mulathamun Battalion

(AMB) in 2013, when 30 gunmen stormed a natural gas facility in Amenas and took dozens of hostages, mostly foreign nationals. Thirty-eight people were killed during the rescue operation, only one of whom was Algerian.^{84, 85, 86}

In 2018, for the first time in 26 years, there were no terrorist attacks in Algeria, apart from random clashes between the armed forces and militants affiliated with AQIM and ISIS. The most recent terrorist bombing took place in August 2017, when a suicide bomber detonated a suicide belt outside a police station in western Algeria, killing two police officers. The bomber was connected to Jund al-Khilafa, an al-Qaeda splinter group that pledged allegiance to ISIS.^{87, 88}



*AQIM Tuareg militant in Sahel, December 2012.
Flickr / Maghareb*

The primary terrorist group in Algeria is AQIM, an organization formally known as the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC). The GSPC was established in 1996 as an offshoot of the Armed Islamic Group (GIA), the most violent of the Islamist militant groups that fought against the Algerian government during the 1990s civil war.^{89, 90}

Al-Murabitoun is another violent jihadist group that seeks to impose Sharia law throughout West Africa. The group, led by Algerian-born Mokhtar Belmokhtar, was formed in 2013 through the merger of two AQIM splinter groups: al-Mulathamun Battalion and the Malian-based Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO). The group recruits in Algeria and is active in southwestern Libya, Niger, and Mali. In 2015, Al-Murabitoun militants stormed the Radisson Blu Hotel in Bamako, Mali, killing 21 people. The group is associated with AQIM.^{91, 92}



*People's National Assembly building.
Wikimedia / Magharebia*

Jund al-Khilafah was formed in 2014 when AQIM commander and former GIA fighter Abdelmalek Gouri (Khaled Abu Suleiman) broke off from al-Qaeda's North African affiliate and swore allegiance to ISIS. Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the leader of ISIS, recognized the group as an affiliate and referred to it as Wilayat al-Jazair.⁹³

Political Instability

Risk of political instability is growing in Algeria. In mid-February 2019, the largest

protests in over two decades broke out across the country when President Bouteflika announced his intention to run for a fifth consecutive term. After several weeks of protests, Bouteflika announced that he would not seek a fifth term, and canceled the April election to allow for consultations on reforms. After a series of protests against the cancellation, the election was rescheduled for 4 July 2019.^{94, 95} As peaceful protests continued across the country, senior officials from the ruling FLN began showing signs of breaking with the president. On March 26, the army chief of staff demanded President Bouteflika be declared unfit to rule.⁹⁶ Furthermore, the short-term bounce that the economy experienced in 2018 is beginning to dwindle, unemployment is expected to rise, and organized labor groups promise strikes to demand higher wages and benefits.^{97, 98}

Water Security

Population growth, urbanization, climate change, increased industrialization, and agricultural development put high pressure on Algeria's water resources and needs. To boost the water storage capacity, the government plans to have 139 operational dams by 2030. As of 2019, Algeria has 75 operational dams, with water capacity reaching 68%. Algeria also has desalination plants on the Mediterranean coast, which provide 20% of the total water needs of the country. The Algerian Energy Company oversees 13 desalination plants, 11 of which are already operational.^{99, 100}



Traditional fountains such as this one in the old city of Algiers are being replaced by piped drinking water supply to homes.

Wikimedia / Jean-marie pirard

Many provinces still face challenges of water distribution because about 30% of fresh water production is lost due to poor transport and distribution infrastructure.¹⁰¹

Cybersecurity

In 2017, the International Telecommunication Union ranked Algeria 67 out of 193 countries in the “Global Cybersecurity Index,” due to the legal framework that the government had established. However, little has been done to confront the dangers inherent in new technologies.^{102, 103}

In 2019, an industry study determined that Algeria was the least cybersecure out of 60 countries examined. According to the study, Algeria, which lacks strong legislation for cybersecurity, had the world's highest percentage of computer malware infections (32.41%) and one of the highest percentages of mobile phone infections with malware (22.88%).¹⁰⁴



Global Cybersecurity Index was created jointly by ITU and market analysts ABI Research. Wikimedia / ITU Pictures

Outlook

Political uncertainty in Algeria is extremely high as of early 2019. The president is in poor health, and he has not named a successor. There is a concern that if Bouteflika names a successor and that person is elected, they will not receive wide support.^{105, 106}



View of the oil port of Béjaïa. Wikimedia / Yaco1980

Economic uncertainty is also high. The oil and gas sectors are experiencing the effects of decades-long mismanagement. The worsening economic circumstances prevent the state from providing the services that citizens are accustomed to receiving. Protest and strikes over basic services are more frequent, last longer, and are more intense.¹⁰⁷

The military and police use violence to quash and manage protests, but they are overextended and overworked. If protestors were to die during clashes with law enforcement, stronger protests against the government would likely ensue.¹⁰⁸

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¹⁰⁷ Geoff D. Porter, “Political Instability in Algeria,” Council on Foreign Relations, 7 March 2019, <https://www.cfr.org/report/political-instability-algeria>

¹⁰⁸ Geoff D. Porter, “Political Instability in Algeria,” Council on Foreign Relations, 7 March 2019, <https://www.cfr.org/report/political-instability-algeria>

Chapter 5 | Security

Assessment

1. Algeria's relations with Morocco have been strained since Algeria gained independence in 1962.
2. The Joint Military Staff Committee (CEMOC) coordinates U.S.-Algeria counterterrorist activities in the Sahara and the Sahel.
3. The Sûreté Nationale is a Non-Arab separatist group that fights for autonomy in the Aurès Mountains.
4. Women can serve in the Algerian People's National Army.
5. Al-Murabitoun is a violent jihadist group associated with Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).

Assessment Answers: 1. True; 2. True; 3. False; 4. True; 5. True

Algeria in Perspective

Further Readings and Resources

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Chronicles of the Years of Embers. Directed by Mohamed Lakhdar-Hamina. France, 1975.

Omar Gatlato. Directed by Merzak Allouache. France, 1976.

Outside the Law. Directed by Rachid Bouchareb. France, 2010.

Algeria in Perspective

Final Assessment

1. *Chotts* are the volcanic rock spires found in the Ahaggar mountain chain.
2. The famous old quarter of Algiers is called *Casbah*.
3. Hassi R'Mel is the highest peak in the Saharan Atlas Mountains.
4. The city of Oran was named after a nearby gold mine discovered by the Romans.
5. Over 80% of Algeria's land mass is desert.
6. The Battle of Algiers was a decisive battle against the invading Ottomans in the 16th century.
7. Algerians and French settlers joined in a rare show of solidarity to celebrate the end of World War II on 8 May 1945.
8. Since most of Algeria is desert and only 12% of arable land is irrigated, Algeria has to import most of its food.
9. Algeria has no state religion.
10. The city of Annaba is a popular tourist destination.

11. Algeria has not experienced a military coup since gaining independence in 1962.
12. Many regions in Algeria are susceptible to deadly flash floods.
13. The victory of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) in the 1991 elections was a precursor to Algeria's Civil War.
14. The Berber Spring refers to the year that followed the government decision to make Tamazight Algeria's second official language.
15. Dates are one of Algeria's most important agricultural crops.
16. Polygamy is legal in Algeria.
17. In 2009, the government of Algeria banned consumer credit because payment or acceptance of interest fees for loans are prohibited by Sharia law.
18. Algeria's solution to the overfished Mediterranean Sea is fish farming in the Sahara Desert.
19. Most Imazighen are Muslims.
20. Women are playing an increasingly important role in the Algerian labor market.
21. *Rai* is a type of Algerian pop music.

22. The border between Algeria and Mauritania has been closed since Mauritania claimed parts of Western Sahara in 1975.

23. Military service in Algeria is mandatory.

24. Algeria buys most of its military equipment from Russia.

25. Cybersecurity is one of the fastest growing sectors in Algeria.

Assessment Answers: 1. False; 2. True; 3. False; 4. False; 5. True; 6. False; 7. False; 8. True; 9. False; 10. True; 11. False; 12. True; 13. True; 14. False; 15. True; 16. True; 17. False; 18. True; 19. True; 20. False; 21. True; 22. False; 23. True; 24. True; 25. False