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Chapter 1 Geography

Introduction
Algeria is the second-largest country in Africa, trailing only Sudan, and the 11th-largest country in the world.\(^1\) Over 80% of Algeria’s vast expanse is desert, part of the world’s largest desert—the Sahara—which separates the mountainous northern regions of North Africa from the Sub-Saharan transition zone to the south known as the Sahel.\(^2\) Algeria’s desert interior, though sparsely populated, is hardly a forgotten wasteland. Oil and natural gas fields, which provide most of Algeria’s export revenues, lie in this region.\(^3\) These energy resources are transported to foreign markets from Algeria’s port cities, delivered by pipelines that must traverse the mountains and high plateaus of the north. It is in this northern region that all of Algeria’s largest cities are found.

Geographic Regions and Topographic Features

The Tell
Algeria’s most populous and agriculturally productive region is the Tell, an area of generally east-west mountain ranges and intervening plains. From the Moroccan border on the west to the Soummam River on the east, the Tell is home to Algeria’s two largest cities, Algiers and Oran, as well as many of its vineyards, citrus groves, orchards, and market gardens.\(^4\), \(^5\) The Tell Atlas ranges become more rugged east of Algiers. Here, the Great Kayblie mountain block consists of

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\(^4\) History.com, “Algeria: Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing” (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2009), http://www.history.com/topics/algeria

several ranges where towns and farming villages have long been a homeland for much of Algeria’s Imazighen (Berber) population.  

The High Plateaus and the Saharan Atlas Mountains
Immediately south of the Tell region lies a stretch of arid upland plateaus. (Technically, these plateaus are high-elevation basins 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 the western part of the region, the plateau heights drop to below 400 m (1,312 ft) in the vicinity of Chott el-Hodna, a saline lake. Chott el-Hodna is one of several salt basins in the highland plateaus that become lakes or marshes during rainy periods.

The Saharan Atlas Mountains parallel the Tell Atlas to the north in a general southwest-to-northeast direction. Its ranges are generally higher and less fragmented than the Tell. The Saharan Atlas Mountains receive more rainfall on average than do the High Plateaus and serve as grazing lands for livestock.

Northeastern Algeria
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 Berber tribespeople. Djebel Chélía, the highest peak in this range at 2,328 m (7,638 ft), is the highest point in northern Algeria. To the north of the Aurès Mountains, the Little Kabylie Mountains drop abruptly to the sea except in a few coastal plains. Between the Little Kayblie

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Mountains and the Aurès Mountains are high plains that contain some of the region’s largest cities (Sétif and Constantine). The farms on these plains produce much of Algeria’s grains.  

Sahara

Algeria’s portion of the Sahara lies south of the Saharan Atlas Mountain. Although this entire region is dry, it is far from uniform in its physical features. Great swaths of sand dunes, known as ergs, lie in the eastern (Grand Erg Oriental) and western (Grand Erg Occidental) Sahara and constitute about one quarter of Algeria’s area. In the center of the Sahara region are humud (singular, hamada)—flat, rocky, desert terrains with limited vegetation. One such hamada region is the Plateau du Tademait, a huge, barren stretch of land that is invariably described as “desolate” or “featureless” by visitors. To the Tademait’s south, the volcanic Ahaggar Mountains rise from the desert floor, surrounded on their northern and eastern flanks by the sandstone plateau of Tassili n’Ajjer. Mt. Tahat in the Ahaggar Mountains is Algeria’s highest point at 3,003 m (9,952 ft). East of the Ahaggar Mountains lies the Tanezrouft region, a hyperarid region of sandstone formations whose name derives from the Tuareg word for “waterless desert.” With virtually no water or vegetation, the Tanezrouft is avoided by most travelers.

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21 The Tuareg are a Berber tribespeople who have long been the principal inhabitants of the Sahara region.
Climate

Algeria’s wettest areas are along the Mediterranean coast and in the higher regions of the Tell Atlas Mountains. The bulk of this rainfall occurs between September and May, with the winter months producing the most reliable precipitation in the Tell Atlas.\(^2^4\) Above 900 m (3,000 ft), snowfall may occur.\(^2^5\) In the coastal regions and the Tell Atlas Mountains, annual rainfall totals generally increase from west to east.\(^2^6\) Precipitation rates drop dramatically beginning on the southern slopes of the Saharan Atlas and Aurès Mountains.\(^2^7\), \(^2^8\), \(^2^9\) Within most of the Sahara region, average rainfall figures are less than 100 mm (3.9 in), and often much less.\(^3^0\)

Temperatures during the Algerian year are mildest in the coastal region and do not exhibit the large daily fluctuations seen in the mountain/high plateau regions and the Sahara.\(^3^1\) Average daily temperature extremes (the difference between average daily maximum and average daily minimum temperatures) over the course of the year range between 5–8°C (9–12.4°F) in coastal Algiers, contrasted with 17–24°C (30.6–43.2°F) and 15–16°C (27–28.8°F) at In Salah (central Sahara) and Batna (northeastern high plateau), respectively.\(^3^2\), \(^3^3\), \(^3^4\) Temperatures in the Sahara can climb as high as 50°C (122°F) during summer days.\(^3^5\) Northward-blowing winds from the desert, commonly

known as sirocco in Europe and as *chichili* in Algeria, bring heat, dust, and sand to the northern mountain regions, often at gale-force wind speeds.\(^{36, 37}\)

**Rivers and Lakes**

**Rivers**

Algeria has few rivers, and most flow from the Tell Atlas Mountains toward the Mediterranean coast.\(^{38}\) The longest is the Chelif, whose farthest tributary (the Sebgag River) rises in one of the ranges of the Saharan Atlas Mountains. After meandering northward across the High Plateaus, the Chelif River cuts a gorge through the Tell Atlas Mountains.\(^{39}\) Thereafter, the Chelif flows primarily westward to its mouth near the coastal city of Mostaganem. The 725-km-long (450-mi) Chelif is not navigable, but is heavily used for irrigation and drinking water in its lower reaches. As a result, the river no longer flows in these stretches during the dry summer months.\(^{40}\)

Of Algeria’s other rivers, the Sahel-Soummam carries the greatest amount of water and is the unofficial dividing line between Algeria’s Tell and northeastern regions.\(^{41, 42}\) 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 Sahara Atlas Mountains often fill *chotts*, salt lakes located in geographic depressions.\(^{43}\) The ephemeral *chotts* are the primary non-riverine bodies of water in Algeria. Among the few natural freshwater lakes (not *chotts*) are lakes Oubeïra and Tonga, which are separated by only a few kilometers near the coast and the Tunisian border. Both lakes are quite shallow (0.7–3 m, 2–10 ft) and provide important habitats for

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\(^{43}\) History.com, “Algeria: Drainage” (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2009), [http://www.history.com/topics/algeria](http://www.history.com/topics/algeria)
flora and fauna. 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.  

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<td>692,516</td>
<td>771,066</td>
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<td>Constantine</td>
<td>462,187</td>
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<tr>
<td>Annaba</td>
<td>348,554</td>
<td>383,504</td>
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<td>Batna</td>
<td>242,514</td>
<td>317,206</td>
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<td>Sétif</td>
<td>211,859</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sidi bel Abbès</td>
<td>180,260</td>
<td>208,498</td>
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<tr>
<td>Biskra</td>
<td>170,956</td>
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**Algiers**

The capital and largest city in Algeria also has one of its richest histories. Founded as a trading port by the Phoenicians (who named it Ikosim), it became the Roman city of Icosium after being conquered in the second century C.E. Invasions during the seventh century brought Arabs and Islam to the city. The modern city was founded in the 10th century C.E. under the Berber Zirids (972–1148), who ruled a vassal state of the Fatimid Caliphate. Algiers’ present-day English name derives from its Arabic name El Djazair (“the islands”), a reference to tiny islets (now connected to land) in the city’s harbor that were transformed into Spanish forts in 1510. Under nominal Ottoman Empire control for the next three centuries, Algiers became one of the bases of the Barbary pirates who regularly raided Mediterranean trading ships. The city’s famous Casbah (Arabic for “fortress”) was built then. Once a walled city (the walls are now largely gone), the Casbah is still home to nearly 50,000 people, living in whitewashed stone and brick houses tucked among winding narrow alleyways. Since 1992, this historic heart of Algiers has been designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Many buildings in the Casbah have suffered serious neglect. Piecemeal restoration has occurred over the years, but Algeria’s lack of a significant tourism base has provided little impetus for a more sustained program of repair.

Algiers sits between its busy port on the eastern side and the Sahel Hills to the west, which separate the city from its agricultural hinterland. The city suffered greatly during

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the Algerian War for Independence (1954–1962) and the Algerian civil war that spanned a decade between the 1990s and the early 2000s.\(^{57}\) The city also suffered a flash flood in 2001, which killed more than 900 people, and an earthquake in 2003, which led to the deaths of more than 400 residents.\(^{58,59}\)

**Oran**

Like Algiers, Algeria’s “second city” is an important port and one of its most important commercial, industrial, and financial hubs. The city’s name is a French translation of the Arabic word for “two lions,” because lions (since hunted to extinction) were native to the area when the city was founded.\(^{60}\) Oran’s proximity to Morocco to the west and Spain to the north has fostered Oran’s development as a trade center.

Oran’s history traces to the 10th century, when Moors from Spain’s Andalucia region are believed to have founded the port as an alternative to the Moroccan port of Ceuta for handling the gold trade of West Africa. In the 19th century, the French occupied Oran and the rest of Algeria, and the city became predominately European. The city also became a haven for Jewish immigrants from elsewhere in Algeria and Morocco.\(^{61}\) Oran’s trade during the French period primarily consisted of agricultural goods. Heavy industrial development came to Oran only after independence in 1962, when much of the large European community, collectively referred to as *pieds-noirs*, left the city.\(^{62}\) During the war for independence, Oran was a center of operations for the French nationalist terrorist group *Organisation de l’armée secréte* (OAS).\(^{63}\)

Culturally, Oran is famous as the birthplace of *raï* (pronounced “rye”), the popular Algerian pop music that is a mix of Western and Bedouin musical traditions.\(^{64}\) Some of the most famous *raï* musicians who emerged in the seminal period of the late 1970s and

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1980s got their start in the cabarets of Oran. The city is also an educational center of Algeria, hosting three major universities.

**Constantine**

Constantine is Algeria’s largest inland city, lying 50 km from Algeria’s northeastern coast. The city is on a plateau that is bisected by the dramatically steep Rhumel Gorge. The two sides of Constantine are connected by narrow car and pedestrian bridges. Founded as Sarim Batim by Carthaginians, Constantine later became known as ancient Cirta while serving as the capital of the Berber kingdom of Numidia. The city was destroyed in the early fourth century C.E. during a Roman Empire power struggle. It was rebuilt a few years later and subsequently renamed after the Roman Emperor Constantine I (Constantine the Great). Many of Algeria’s noted Roman ruins are in the region surrounding Constantine.

Today, Constantine is a regional administrative center that handles the local grain trade, and it has a small industrial sector that produces textiles, leather goods, wool, flour, and tractors. The city is also home to one of the world’s largest mosques that is also the site of Algeria’s first Islamic university: the Mosque, University, and Islamic School of Amir Abdel Kader.

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**Annaba**

Annaba is the modern incarnation of the ancient Roman city of Hippo Regius, and some of the ruins of Hippo Regius are still visible today. 74 Between 396 and 430, Hippo Regius was home to the Christian theologian and philosopher Augustine of Hippo, later to become Saint Augustine. One of Annaba’s modern architectural landmarks is the Basilica of Saint Augustine, constructed during the late 19th century on a small hill above the Roman ruins. 75

Modern Annaba is a bustling port city and 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. 76 Fertilizer and aluminum plants are also located in the Annaba region. 77 At the city’s northern end are a string of coves and beaches with a backdrop of the mountains lying to Annaba’s west. In summer, these beaches are popular with locals and also attract some foreign visitors. 78

**Batna**

Of Algeria’s largest cities, Batna is the highest (1040 m, 3,410 ft) and the youngest (founded as a French fort in 1846). 79 Batna’s location near a pass between the Aurès Mountains to the south and the Batna Mountains to the north provided critical rationale for the city’s original siting. The French, however, were not the first occupiers of the region to recognize the area’s tactical importance. The Romans constructed a military camp named Lambaesis about 11 km (7 mi) from present-day Batna in 75 C.E. Its ruins, as well as the architectural remains of other nearby Roman era sites—Timgad and Medracen—help make Batna the center of a modest local tourism. 80 Transportation also helps drive the local economy. The city lies on an important road

75 Anthony Ham, Nana Luckham, and Anthony Sattin, “Northeast Algeria,” in Algeria (Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications, 2007), 113.
and rail corridor linking Algeria’s eastern Sahara with Constantine and the port cities of the northeastern coast (Annaba, Skikda).

**Environmental Concerns**

Algeria faces a variety of environmental concerns. Coastal pollution is a problem, especially in areas adjacent to large industrial complexes such as those at Skikda and Arzew. The former is the site of a large petrochemical complex and refinery, while the latter is Algeria’s largest oil and gas terminal and is also the location of one of Algeria’s four refineries.\(^{81, 82}\) Fertilizer runoff, inadequate sewage treatment, and other forms of industrial wastes have exacerbated the problems.\(^{83}\)

Deforestation of Algeria’s once-plentiful forest lands has a negative effect on Algeria’s wildlife and has also contributed to desertification. As the Saharan desert lands have continued to spread northward, the Algerian government has resorted to the planting of Aleppo pine forests as a breakwall against the desert’s encroachment.\(^{84}\) Algeria’s periods of violence have contributed to the deforestation problem. The French used napalm during the War of Independence to clear mountainous areas where the nationalist resistance was hidden. The Algerian government also cleared forests in the 1990s during the Algerian Civil War as a means to root out Islamist fighters taking refuge in these areas.\(^{85, 86}\)

As a mostly dry country, Algeria must closely monitor its water supply. Since 1962, the amount of available water in Algeria on a per-capita basis has decreased from 1,500 m\(^3\) (53,000 ft\(^3\)) to 500 m\(^3\) (18,000 ft\(^3\)). Among the reasons for the drop in water supply were growing demand, drought, water pollution, deteriorating water supply networks, and largely uncontrolled siphoning through illegal water and sanitation connections.\(^{87, 88}\) As a result of these problems, less than 20% of Algerian water customers have unrestricted 24-

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\(^{81}\) U.S. Department of Energy, “Country Analysis Briefs: Algeria: Quick Facts” (Energy Information Administration, June 2010), [http://www.eia.doe.gov/cabs/Algeria/Profile.html](http://www.eia.doe.gov/cabs/Algeria/Profile.html)


\(^{84}\) Jonathan Oakes, “Background Information: Geography,” in *Algeria* (Chalfont St. Peter, UK: Bradt Travel Guides, 2008), 4.


16 hour access to water. The Algerian government has responded with an ambitious program to build 28 coastal desalination plants by the year 2020, including the largest such facility in Africa.

Natural Hazards
Algeria’s diverse topography and weather extremes make parts of the country susceptible to flash floods and landslides during brief periods of heavy rains, and to fires and drought during dry periods. The nation’s most damaging natural disasters are earthquakes. Algeria’s Atlas Mountains are the geologic result of the convergence of the African and Eurasian tectonic plates, and in this region is where the majority of Algeria’s seismic activity occurs. Since 1980, five major earthquakes have struck Algeria, leaving thousands of people dead and causing billions of dollars in damage. The most devastating recent quakes occurred in 1980 when a magnitude 7.3 temblor in the region around Chlef left 3,000 people dead and 8,000 injured, and in 2003 when one near the coastal city of Bourmerdès (about 60 km/37 mi east of Algiers) left 2,300 dead and 11,000 people injured. The city of Chlef has been particularly affected, having already been largely destroyed by a quake in 1954.

Floods in Algeria unleash large amounts of water down dry riverbeds that sometimes trigger mudslides in steeper canyon regions. In October 2008, the Saharan oasis city of Ghardaïa and surrounding villages were struck by flash floods that killed 89 people and left thousands homeless. Parts of Ghardaïa, a medieval-era town that is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, were buried in mud up to 8 m (26 ft).

in November 2001 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 it became independent in 1962. 


Chapter 1 Assessments

1. Sand dunes cover one-quarter of Algeria.

**True**

Known as *ergs*, these sand dunes are located in the eastern and western parts of the Sahara.

2. The longest river in Algeria is the Chelif.

**True**

While it is the longest river in Algeria, most of the Chelif is not navigable.

3. Algiers was founded as a trading city by the Romans.

**False**

Algiers was founded by the Phoenicians as a trading city.

4. The historic heart of Oran has been designated a UNESCO World Heritage site.

**False**

The historic heart of Algiers has been designated a UNESCO World Heritage site.

5. Salt lakes are the primary non-river bodies of water in Algeria.

**True**

Known as *chotts*, these salt lakes are found in geographic depressions.
Chapter 2 History

Introduction
Algeria’s colorful history includes the stuff of 1940s Hollywood adventure movies: remote Roman army garrisons, plundering Barbary pirates, and French Foreign Legionnaires marching through the Saharan sands. These historical snapshots, though superficial, illustrate that Algerian history includes multiple invasions. The native Berbers have been resilient, adapting when necessary—most notably in the Arab invasions of the 7th and 11th centuries. The concept of a separate Algerian state appears relatively late in the historical narrative, during the Ottoman era.

Since gaining independence from France in 1962, the Algerian government has worked to define a unique national identity. This includes attempts to sweep aside cultural and linguistic differences through a “one-party-fits-all” political structure and an often divisive Arabization policy. The civil war of the 1990s and early 2000s was a defining national historical moment, leaving wounds in Algeria’s cultural fabric that remain unhealed.

Prehistory
A robust archaeological record reveals the presence of hominids (human-like predecessors) stretching to 200,000 B.C.E. Remnants from Neanderthals date to 43,000–30,000 B.C.E., and human fossils and artifacts date from around 15,000–10,000 B.C.E.\textsuperscript{101,102} Cave paintings in the Algerian Sahara, dating from 6,000–1,200 B.C.E., show giraffes, elephants, and other animals that today are only found in much wetter environments.\textsuperscript{103,104}

Somewhere along the way a group of indigenous people emerged within North Africa that today are referred to as the Berbers. The Berbers are a highly diverse group of people whose languages are remarkably similar. Their origins are speculative, as little evidence exists for major migrations into the region. It has been argued that migration into North Africa by early Berbers likely occurred relatively briefly, and was followed by an extended period of isolation from outsiders.

**The Carthaginians**

During the mid- to late eighth century B.C.E., Phoenician traders arrived by sea in North Africa from their home port in modern-day Lebanon. The Phoenicians established the colony of Carthage, which quickly expanded and became the center of Phoenician settlements along the North African coast. Rather than try to conquer the Berber tribes, the Carthaginians initially focused on developing trade relations with their neighbors. After a military defeat by the Greeks in Sicily in 480 B.C.E., the Carthaginian leader Hanno initiated a colonization policy toward Carthage’s hinterland. Many Berbers in modern-day Libya and Tunisia became, in effect, serfs for their Carthaginian overlords. Other Berber tribespeople were taken as slaves or recruited for the Carthaginian military.

Following the Punic Wars against Rome in the third century B.C.E, Berber soldiers in the Carthaginian army rebelled, gaining control of some North African territories. Further military defeats helped Masinissa, the Berber leader and Roman ally, establish himself as king of the Berber-populated region. This region included eastern and central Algeria as

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well as western Tunisia. Parts of the kingdom survived for about 150 years until being annexed into the Roman Empire as the Africa Nova province.

**Romans and Vandals**

For most of the next 500 years, northern Algeria was under Roman rule. Striking ruins from this period remain scattered throughout the Algerian countryside, including those at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage Sites at Djemila, Timgad, and Tipasa. Algeria and other parts of North Africa became known as the “granary of the empire,” exporting grain, fruit, and olive oil to other parts of the Roman domain.

Christianity began to spread in the region during the second century C.E., and by the end of the fourth century most settled areas had largely converted. In rural mountains and desert regions, Christianity vied with Judaism and traditional tribal beliefs, with people sometimes mixing Christian and non-Christian practices.

Roman rule over North Africa was disrupted in 429 B.C.E., when members of a Germanic tribe known as the Vandals invaded North Africa from Spain. Within a decade the Vandals established control over all of North Africa, but their reign was tenuous and short. With the Romans no longer around, several independent Berber kingdoms took root in the mountains and inland deserts. The Vandals were more interested in using their North African bases—most notably, Carthage—to launch lucrative pirate raids throughout the Mediterranean.

In 533, Byzantine (Eastern Roman Empire) General Belisarius landed in modern-day Tunisia with an army that quickly routed the Vandal plunderers and brought North Africa once again under nominal Roman imperial control. During much of the next century, the

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Byzantines were preoccupied with military affairs elsewhere, allowing Berber kingdoms to thrive in the hinterlands.123, 124

**Arab Conquests**

The next foreign invasion forever changed the region’s identity. On the Arabian Peninsula, Islam spread during the early decades of the seventh century, its message carried by a prophet from Mecca named Muhammad.125 After Muhammad’s death in 632 C.E., Arab military forces waged campaigns of conquest, spreading Islam as they went. Although the Arab armies quickly conquered western Asia, they faced prolonged resistance in North Africa.126 Byzantine and Berber forces in the region of modern-day Tunisia and eastern Algeria successfully resisted the Arab armies for several decades. Despite this resistance, by 711 all of North Africa was under the control of the Umayyad caliphate, the Arab hereditary monarchy that carried the mantle of Islam from the late seventh century through the first half of the eighth century.127, 128 A revolt against the Umayyads led to the Abbasid Caliphate in 750. The Abbasids were not as vested in maintaining Arab control over the Islamic empire; thus, they allowed regional dynasties to emerge in the far-flung corners of the non-Arab Muslim world.129

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 significantly “Arabized.” Not until the mid-11th century, when two large tribes of Arab Bedouins invaded the region of modern-day Algeria and Tunisia, did native Berber society begin to significantly fuse with Arab culture. The use of Arabic as a primary language in the Algerian countryside can be traced to this time.130, 131

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Berber Dynasties
From the mid-11th through mid-13th centuries, the western part of North Africa spawned Islamic reform movements that ultimately emerged as powerful Berber dynasties. The first was the Almoravids, led by Lamtuna Berbers from the western Sahara. After establishing the southern Moroccan city of Marrakesh as their capital in 1062, the Almoravids conquered a large part of the western Sahara and Sahel, central and southern Spain, and western Algeria all the way to Algiers. The Almoravids’ empire ended around the middle of the 12th century. Another religious rebellion arose in Morocco’s High Atlas Mountains in the 1120s. Known as the Almohads, these Berber 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 passed, and its original conservative teachings were abandoned and replaced by more tolerant interpretations. Ongoing wars in Spain drained the Almohad coffers. By 1271, the last Almohad stronghold in Marrakesh fell. The Zayanid and Hafsid dynasties took over the Algerian part of the Almohad empire. The Zayanid capital of Tlemcen became known as the “pearl of the Mahgrib [North Africa]” and prospered as a gateway for desert caravan trade.

The Ottomans
By the early 16th century, the North African Berber dynasties were under assault by Christian Spain, which had cast out or forcefully converted its Muslim population, and Spanish crusaders were establishing forts on the North African coast. The Spanish rapidly established presidios (forts) in Oran, Algiers, Tlemcen, Bejaia, and other cities.

Brothers Aruj and Khair ad Din were privateers (a polite term for pirates), who moved their base of operations to Algiers and staged campaigns against Spanish strongholds during the 1510s and 1520s. Aruj was killed in 1518, but his brother carried on with assistance from the Ottoman Empire. By 1533 Khair ad Din, now known far and wide as Barbarossa (“Redbeard”), had successfully pushed the Spanish out of many of their North African enclaves. He was appointed beylerbey (provincial governor) and admiral of the Ottoman fleet by the Ottoman Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent, and Algiers became the center of Ottoman administration in North Africa.

Barbary Pirates
Algiers became the home port of many of the privateers who made the so-called Barbary Coast (derived from “Berber”) the scourge of Mediterranean and Atlantic shipping over the next several centuries. For the first time, Algeria emerged as a separate geographical and political entity. Ottoman rule over the Algerian regency was relatively hands-off. As long as the local governor (known as the dey) and his provincial chiefs (beys) received their share of the spoils, the


By 1815, the United States and most of Europe’s naval powers were at war against Algeria and the other privateering states of North Africa.\footnote{Anthony Toth, “Chapter 1: Historical Setting: Islam and the Arabs, 642–1830: Ottoman Rule,” in \textit{Algeria: A Country Study} (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1993), 22.} An attack on 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 it did little to curtail attacks on foreign ships. But the end of the era of the Algerian Barbary state was little more than a decade away—the culmination of a series of events famously triggered by the actions of an insulted \textit{dey} and his fly whisk.\footnote{Tony Zurlo, “2: Many Masters: History to the Nineteenth Century,” in \textit{Algeria} (Detroit: Lucent Books, 2005), 28.}

\section*{The French Conquest}


The successful invasion of Algiers failed to help Charles X, who was deposed a few weeks later. French settlers began streaming into the countryside outside Algiers, moving onto valuable, confiscated farmland.\footnote{Ross Marlay and Lesley J. Pruitt, “Algeria,” in \textit{Encyclopedia of the Developing World}, vol. 1 (New York: Routledge, 2006), 28.} 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 colonialists were Bey Haj Ahmed of Constantine and Abdel Kader, leader of the western tribes. An initial campaign against Ahmed in 1836 led to a French retreat, but Constantine was conquered the next year in a fierce battle that forced Ahmed to flee to the southern plains of the Saharan Atlas. Abdel Kader fared better for a while after signing a treaty with the French in 1837, but by 1839 French plans to expand into the interior brought the two sides into conflict again. Fighting continued until Abdel Kader, forced into refuge in Morocco, surrendered in December 1847.

Colonial Algeria

The French policy of assimilating their new colony into the French world was completely opposite that of the Ottomans. French settlers began arriving in Algeria in droves, receiving free or cheap farmland as an enticement. For French authorities such as Minister of War General Etienne-Maurice Gérard, Algeria represented “a vast outlet for our surplus population.” These French settlers came to be known as colons or pieds-noirs (“black feet”). There was also an influx of newcomers to Algeria from other European Mediterranean countries. Rural Muslim Algerian families found themselves uprooted by this settler migration, forced either to relocate farther inland, or to move to cities to find work there.

Unlike elsewhere in colonial North Africa, Algeria became intrinsically interwoven with its colonizer in administrative and economic matters as well as in French public perception. Algeria was divided into three départements (French states) that, in theory at least, were comparable to those that made up European France. But Algerian Muslims, unlike the Christian and Jewish population of the colony, were not automatically entitled to French citizenship. Only after 1865 were Muslims allowed to apply for French citizenship, provided they were willing to renounce their religion. According to a U.S.

government report, fewer than 3,000 Algerian Muslims took this step during the entire French colonial era.\(^{164}\)

Periodic revolts continued in the tribal regions outside the cities. An 1866 drought and crop failure in the Berber-populated region of Kabylia led to an estimated death toll of 20% over the next 3 years. When rebellion broke out there in 1871, it quickly spread to the Sahara before the French military was able to suppress it. The French imposed heavy fines on Muslims involved in the revolt—fines that were often collected by forcing landowners to sell their acreage at government-set prices.\(^{165}\)

**Algerian Nationalism**

A new generation of Algerian Muslims emerged in the 1920s and 1930s, many of whom had served in the French military or worked in French factories during World War I.\(^{166}\) Having been exposed to a higher standard of living and a more democratic political environment while in France, they returned to Algeria less willing to accept the status quo.\(^{167}\) A smaller but influential group was the évolutés, the French-educated members of Muslim families that had managed to rise within the mainly closed colonial system. The first Algerian political reform movement, the Young Algerians, consisted primarily of évolutés and emerged even prior to World War I. After the war, other groups sprang up: the Federation of Elected Natives (FEI) was an offshoot of the Young Algerians; the Star of North Africa (ENA), a Paris-based group with communist support that was the first to push for Algerian independence; and the Party of the Algerian People (PPA).\(^{168}\)

World War II was a turning point in Algeria’s path towards independence. After Germany invaded France in 1940, Algeria came under the control of 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 actually French citizens. This percentage was similar to that of the French Algerian enlistees, i.e., *colons*.\(^{169}\) 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 the Algerians viewed as half-hearted reform measures. By the end of the war, even moderate Ferhat Abbas, who had long supported Algeria’s integration with France, had come to the conclusion that Algerian independence within a French federation was the only viable path.

**The Algerian War of Independence**

Post-war Algeria was a powder keg waiting for a match. Disparities in income and economic opportunities between the *colons* and the Muslims contributed to growing friction. Radicalism and 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 front for the revolutionary National Liberation Army (ALN).

Fighting began on 1 November 1954, with attacks against military and police installations and critical infrastructure in the Aurès Mountains. The initial French response was resolute. On 12 November, French Premier Pierre Mendès declared “The Algerian departments are part of the French Republic….Between them and metropolitan France there can be no conceivable secession.” The war took a new turn in August 1955, when over 100 civilians were killed near the city of Phillipeville (Skikda). The level of terrorist violence in this guerrilla war escalated significantly thereafter, with thousands of civilian *colons* and Muslims victimized by bombings and shootings. From 1957 to

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1960, French forces took more than 2 million people from Algerian mountain villages and put them in detention camps.175

As the conflict dragged on, opposition grew in France as more and more young citizens were conscripted into the French military. World opinion also tended to side with the FLN’s demand for independence.176 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 and to overthrow the de Gaulle government in France. The coup plot came to nothing, as most of the French military stayed loyal to the government.177, 178

**Independent Algeria**

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. Fewer than 30,000 of Algeria’s European population stayed in Algeria following independence.179

With the fight against the French no longer a unifying force, Algeria’s leadership within the FLN became highly factional. Two leading figures emerged during this period: Ahmed Ben Bella, one of the chefs historiques, and Colonel Houari Boumédiène, the chief of staff of the ALN. The two men formed an alliance, with Ben Bella serving as Algeria’s premier and Boumédiène as defense minister.180 Ferhat Abbas was elected president of the National Assembly but resigned less than a year later in protest of the FLN’s increasingly dominant role in the

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drafting of the new constitution.\footnote{Benjamin Stora, “11: Ben Bella’s Algeria (1963–1965),” in \textit{Algeria, 1830–2000: A Short History} (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 133.} This constitution was passed in a September 1963 referendum. Ben Bella was elected the nation’s first president a week later.\footnote{Benjamin Stora, “11: Ben Bella’s Algeria (1963–1965),” in \textit{Algeria, 1830–2000: A Short History} (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 133.}

Ben Bella pushed for agricultural reform and nationalization of large businesses and industries.\footnote{Answers.com, “Ahmed Ben Bella,” Gale Encyclopedia of Biography, No date, \url{http://www.answers.com/topic/ahmed-ben-bella}} State-owned enterprises were run by the workers and government-appointed directors, a policy known as autogestion.\footnote{Anthony Toth, “Chapter 1: Historical Setting: Independent Algeria, 1962–1992: Aftermath of the War,” in \textit{Algeria: A Country Study} (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1993), 58.} Ben Bella also focused on consolidating his power base by purging potential political opponents. As Boumédiène saw his closest allies fall victim to this process, he removed Ben Bella from power in a June 1965 military coup. This was a key event in the early history of independent Algeria.\footnote{Benjamin Stora, “12: Boumédiène, the State, and the Institutions,” in \textit{Algeria, 1830–2000: A Short History} (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 144.} Boumédiène held power in Algeria for the next 13 years. The Boumédiène coup also marked the first of many instances when the military controlled the transition of power in Algeria.\footnote{Tony Zurlo, “4: The Struggle for Stability,” in \textit{Algeria} (Detroit: Lucent Books, 2005), 47.}

The Boumédiène Era

Under Boumédiène, the FLN remained the sole political party in Algeria, although the military remained the most powerful state institution.\footnote{Anthony Toth, “Chapter 1: Historical Setting: Independent Algeria, 1962–1992: Ben Bella and the FLN,” in \textit{Algeria: A Country Study} (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1993), 58–60.} Boumédiène survived several coups and an assassination attempt in 1967, after which he strengthened his power by exiling or imprisoning his opponents. Politicians and military officials shared power in the Council of the Revolution, initially a 26-member consultative body that oversaw the activities of the country’s cabinet, which was appointed by Boumédiène.

Algeria’s economy under the Boumédiène regime continued on the socialist path established during the Ben Bella period. Regular Three- and Four-Year Plans generally emphasized the development of state-run, capital-intensive heavy industries. As a
result, unemployment remained high because of lack of attention to labor-intensive segments of the economy, such as agriculture and light manufacturing. Many of Algeria’s heavy industrial development was funded by hydrocarbon exports.

During the last years of the Boumédiène regime, Algeria’s central government began to take on a more formally defined structure. The country’s first constitution, passed in 1963, had been suspended since the 1965 coup ousting Ben Bella. In 1976 a National Charter was approved, followed by the drafting of a new constitution the next year. Both documents reaffirmed the FLN’s role as Algeria’s sole political party and continued the tradition of an executive office with strongly consolidated powers.

### Sliding Toward Crisis

Boumédiène died in December 1978, leaving no obvious successor. The two leading candidates failed to gather the support of the senior military leadership, who instead selected Colonel Chadli Bendjedid as a compromise. In February 1979, he was officially elected Algeria’s new president with 94% of the vote (a typical margin in a country with just one political party). Bendjedid, a member of the Council of the Revolution but hardly a major political player prior to his election, was generally viewed as a “loyal, business-like, and competent professional.”

Early expectations were that he would continue to carry out the Boumédiène agenda; this would not be the case. He broke many large state-run enterprises into smaller pieces—weakening their monopolization of the country’s investment capital—and liberalized the economy. Light industries and

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agriculture were given much larger shares of the nation’s budget, at the expense of heavy industries.197

During the 1980s, Algeria continued to face issues of national identity, a vestige of the French colonial era.198 Language was one of these issues. A government policy mandating greater use of Arabic in education (rather than French) touched off protests in March 1980 by Kabyle (Berber) students who felt that their culture and language (Tamazigh) was being slighted. These protests eventually turned violent and spilled over into the surrounding Kabylia regions.199

Ultimately, declining economic conditions provoked the most significant changes in the Algerian government. Oil prices dropped in the mid-1980s, forcing Algeria to spend an ever-higher percentage of its budget on repaying its debt.200 A cascade of problems, including unemployment, inflation, and a lack of housing and basic services, continued to get worse.201 In October 1988, riots broke out in Algiers and spread to other major cities, forcing the government to call a state of emergency and send in security forces to quell the violence.

Reforms

After the so-called “Black October” riots, the government implemented various political reforms, as well as some other measures meant to appease the demands of the growing Islamist movement within the country. A new constitution passed in 1989 guaranteed various freedoms of expression and congregation, officially dropped “socialist” from the nation’s description, and removed references to the rights of women included in the country’s previous constitution.202 (The latter change reflected restrictions in women’s marital rights instituted in a family code passed in 1984, backed by conservative Islamists.)203

Perhaps the most important political change was the constitution’s removal of many restrictions on the formation of political organizations. Within months of the

constitution’s approval, numerous political parties sprang to life. Foremost among these was the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), which sought to base the country’s legal system on Islamic Shari’a law. The FIS won more than 54% of the vote in local elections held in 1990, though this high percentage was partly a result of election boycotts by other, non-Islamist parties. After the FIS won 47% of the votes during the first round of voting for seats in the National Assembly, held in December 1991, it was clear they would have a substantial legislative majority after the January 1992 second-round of voting. Some Algerian liberals feared that an Iranian-style theocratic state would result if the FIS were to sweep into power.

The Algerian Civil War

The 1992 second-round elections were never held, however—the FIS’s pending political ascendancy caused the military leadership to take political control. Bendjedid was forced to resign, as military leaders felt he had been too accommodating to the FIS. Mohamed Boudiaf, one of the nine chefs historiques of the War of Independence, returned from a 27-year exile in Morocco to become head of the newly created High Council of State (HCE). In March 1992, a state of emergency was called. The FIS was soon outlawed, and thousands of its members were arrested. Militant Islamic groups—most notably, the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) and the Islamic Salvation Army (AIS) —retaliated by initiating a string of attacks that plunged Algeria into a violent civil war that lasted for over a decade. It is estimated that over 100,000 Algerian civilians were killed during this conflict.

Boudiaf was assassinated in June 1992. He was subsequently replaced by civilian Ali Kafi and later by retired General Liamine Zeroual, who 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 not only the GIA and other Islamist groups but also civilian vigilante organizations armed by the government.\textsuperscript{213} Zeroual’s failed attempts to negotiate a peace settlement caused him to lose favor with the military, and in 1998 he announced his intention to step down from office before the conclusion of his term in 2000.\textsuperscript{214}

**Peace Measures**

Abdelaziz Bouteflika, who served as foreign minister in the Boumédiène government during the 1960s and 1970s, was the choice of the military and the two main political parties in the coalition government in the 1999 presidential election.\textsuperscript{215} He was the easy victor after all his opponents pulled out of the race on the eve of the election, citing concerns about electoral fraud.\textsuperscript{216} A few months after the 1999 election, Bouteflika put a proposed Law on Civil Harmony on the ballot for Algerian voters, an act that granted freedom from prosecution to any combatants in the ongoing violence who had not “killed, raped, caused permanent disability, or placed bombs in public places.”\textsuperscript{217, 218, 219} The law’s passage in the referendum helped reduce the number of rebels fighting by several thousand. Thereafter, the fighting began to die down significantly, although one group, Al Qaeda in the Land of Islamic Maghreb (formerly known as the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat), has continued to carry out sporadic suicide bombings and other terrorist attacks.\textsuperscript{220}

While the fighting with Islamist groups was beginning to wind down, violent unrest broke out in the Kabylia region, where the death of a Berber teenager in police custody sparked protests in the spring of 2001.\textsuperscript{221, 222} In subsequent negotiations with Berber

\textsuperscript{221} Tony Zurlo, “4: The Struggle for Stability,” in *Algeria* (Detroit: Lucent Books, 2005), 58.
leaders, Tamazight, the Berber language, was recognized as a national language of Algeria, and compensation was offered to the families of Berber victims who died in fighting with governmental security forces.223, 224

**Recent Events**

Bouteflika was re-elected president in 2004 and 2009 in elections hounded by charges of biased media coverage and voting irregularities.225 Constitutional amendments in 2008 eliminated presidential term limits in order for Bouteflika to run in 2009. In the years between Bouteflika’s two successful re-elections, he once again scheduled an amnesty referendum for Algerian voters. The 2005 Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation was much broader than the 1999 Law on Civil Harmony. It granted amnesty to all involved during the “black years” fighting (as the conflict is sometimes called) with the exception of those who carried out rape, mass murders, or bombings in public places.226 Despite the charter’s approval by a suspiciously high 97% of the Algerian voters, critics have argued that it has made it impossible to come to terms with the violence during the civil war. In essence it makes the fates of the roughly 10,000 “disappeared” Algerians impossible to trace.227, 228 A subsequent decree criminalized any discussion of the disappearances that serves to “undermine the good reputation of [state] agents who honorably served the country or to tarnish the image of Algeria internationally.” The decree has been roundly criticized by international human rights organizations for attempting to curtail public discussion of the Algerian civil war.229

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Chapter 2 Assessments

1. Since ancient times, Algeria has been an independent identity.

False

Algeria only assumed an independent identity during the Ottoman era.

2. The original human inhabitants of present-day Algeria were Berbers.

True

While the origins of the Berbers are speculative, they were the first humans to settle in the area.

3. During the Roman Empire, wheat and olives cultivated in Algeria were exported to Europe.

True

Algeria became a granary, or bread basket, of the empire.

4. Islam became Algeria’s dominant religion in the 5th century.

False

Islam spread into North Africa during the 7th century. By 711, the entire region was under the control of the Umayyad caliphate.

5. The introduction of Islam “Arabized” the native Berber population.

False

The government’s post-independence “Arabization” policies had some success spreading Arabic language and culture, but in many areas Berber people maintain their own languages and traditions.
Chapter 3 Economy

Introduction
Algeria’s current economic atmosphere seems in many ways ideal. The country has a consistent balance-of-trade surplus, has reduced its public and external debt significantly, has shown a steady, year-to-year increase in its gross domestic product (GDP), and sits upon a large cushion of foreign currency reserves generated by its hydrocarbon (mostly oil and gas) exports. Inflation has remained low, and the country generally avoided the painful effects of the 2008–2009 credit crisis that pushed many of the world’s largest economies into negative growth.

However, cracks in Algeria’s economy are evident when looking beyond the promising statistics. Attempts to diversify Algeria’s industrial sector beyond hydrocarbon production have yielded spotty results. The hydrocarbon industry’s relatively limited labor needs, combined with a lack of labor-intensive alternative industries, have contributed to chronically high national unemployment. Unemployment is especially high among the country’s high percentage of young people. Many of Algeria’s larger businesses remain inefficiently-run, state-owned enterprises due to bureaucratic resistance stalling privatization efforts. An emphasis on private sector development in the early 2000s has since shifted toward expenditures on large-scale infrastructure and social programs. Without the development of new businesses to take advantage of these programs, the government investments are not as likely to produce the desired results.230

Agriculture

Algeria’s agricultural sector (including livestock production, fishing, and wood products) generates only about 8% of the gross domestic product. Although this economic sector may not produce a large percentage of Algeria’s economic output, it contributes significantly to employment; Agriculture employs an estimated 14–21% of the total labor force.

Only a little more than 3% of Algeria’s land is suitable for agricultural crops, and much of its agricultural cultivation occurs on the narrow coastal plains. Rainfall variability has stifled attempts to expand farmlands to steppe and desert areas. Less than 7% of Algeria’s arable land is irrigated, making average annual rainfall totals a key determinant in whether land can be developed for crop production. The primary food crops are wheat, barley, and potatoes, while dates are the most significant cash crop (food grown mostly for export). Algeria does not produce enough grains to meet domestic needs and each year must import a substantial amount of wheat and, to a lesser extent, maize (corn). Because of the nation’s fickle rainfall patterns, these import amounts can vary significantly year to year. In 2008, when

drought conditions cut wheat production nearly in half compared to 2007, Algeria was the world’s second-largest importer of wheat, trailing Japan.  

Many of Algeria’s grazing lands are found in the steppes and High Plateaus, which are generally too dry for crop production. Sheep, cattle, and chickens provide meat and dairy products that comprise five of Algeria’s nine most valuable agricultural commodities. (Potatoes, grapes, dates, and wheat are the other four.)

Despite Algeria’s extensive Mediterranean coastline, the annual fish catch is dwarfed by those of neighboring Morocco and Tunisia. Although fish consumption has been increasing in Algeria, demand has been somewhat tempered by high prices due to overfishing.

Algeria’s limited forest lands are not a major source of economic revenue, although both cork oaks and Aleppo pines are harvested. The city of Jijel on the northeastern coast is the center of Algeria’s cork production and is surrounded by cork oak plantations.

**Industry**

In a typical year a little over 61% of Algeria’s GDP flows from the industrial sector, and hydrocarbons are responsible for roughly half this percentage. (In 2009, the industrial sector’s contribution to GDP dropped to 55%, attributable to the slumping demand for oil and gas during the depth of the worldwide recession.) Algeria has been slow to privatize many of its state-owned enterprises (SOEs), which largely remain inefficient and noncompetitive in world

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Manufacturing has been steadily declining from nearly 15% of GDP in 1988 to less than 5% in only 20 years. Among the most significant manufacturing segments in Algeria are food processing, textiles, metals, chemicals, and construction materials.

**Energy Resources**

The hydrocarbons sector is the backbone of Algeria’s economy, providing 60% of its budget revenues, almost 30% of its GDP, and more than 97% of its export receipts in 2008. Algeria’s hydrocarbons have also led to the development of petrochemical plants that produce ammonia and chemical fertilizers. The state-owned company Sonatrach oversees the exploration, transport, and marketing of Algeria’s oil and gas products. It is the largest Algerian company.

Algeria’s oil reserves are the third-largest in Africa. The largest oil fields are in basins in the Sahara near the Libyan border. Algeria’s total annual oil production (crude plus refined products) steadily rose from 1999 to 2008, but declined slightly in 2009 partly as a result of Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) quota cuts. The nation has an extensive network of oil pipelines that connects the Saharan oil fields with the port cities of Arzew, Bejaïa, and Skikda in Algeria and La Skhira in Tunisia. Skikda is also the site of Algeria’s largest refinery, with twice the capacity of the nation’s other three refineries combined.

Much of Algeria’s gas is in a field near Hassi R’Mell, not far from the famed Saharan oasis town of Ghardaïa. Trans-Mediterranean gas pipelines run from Hassi R’Mell 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 (LNG) on tankers. In recent decades Algeria has increased its use of natural gas to generate electricity. In 2008, nearly 60% of its total energy use came from natural gas.

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Natural Resources

Algeria’s mineral resources are relatively substantial and diverse. Among the metals mined are gold, silver, and iron ore. Algeria was once a major producer of mercury, but after claims of technical problems, all mining for cinnabar (mercury’s primary ore) ceased in 2003.\(^{260}\), \(^{261}\) Most of Algeria’s iron ore is mined in the northeast near the Tunisian border and transported to the country’s primary steel plant at Annaba.\(^{262}\)

Lead and zinc mining ceased in 2007, although plans are in the works for a Chinese-owned joint venture to reopen one of the closed mines.\(^{264}\) A large lead-zinc deposit discovered near Bejaia, potentially one of the world’s largest, has gone through final feasibility studies; mining of this deposit may begin within the next 5 to 6 years.\(^{265}\)

Numerous industrial minerals are also extracted in Algeria, including barite, bentonite and other clays, stone, gravel, gypsum, phosphate, quartz, pozzolan, salt, and sand.\(^{266}\) Several of these minerals are ingredients in the production of cement, which is also produced in northern Algeria.\(^{267}\)

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\(^{265}\) Terramin Australia Limited, “Positive DFS for Tala Hamza Project,” 12 October 2010, [http://www.infomine.com/index/pr/Pa937481.PDF](http://www.infomine.com/index/pr/Pa937481.PDF)


Trade

Algeria annually exports more than it imports, and the size of its trade surplus depends mostly upon worldwide demand for oil and gas. In 2009, oil and gas products generated over 98% of Algeria’s total export revenues from goods, a trend similar to previous years. Countries of the European Union received much of the gas, while the United States was the largest importer of Algerian oil. Overall, the United States, Italy, Spain, France, and the Netherlands were the leading export markets for Algerian goods in 2009, combining for over 63% of total exports. Beyond hydrocarbons, Algeria’s most important exports were ammonia, remelted scrap iron or steel ingots, and calcium phosphates, but the values of these exports were miniscule in comparison to the hydrocarbon sector.

Algeria’s imports cover a broad selection of items, including food (led by wheat and milk), trucks, cars, steel products, pharmaceuticals, jet engines, and numerous other consumer and capital goods. France, China, Italy, Spain, and Germany were the leading exporters of goods to Algeria in 2009. Algeria was the European Union’s 13th-largest trading partner (imports and exports combined) in 2009, exceeding all countries in Africa and the Middle East.

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Tourism

Algeria’s tourism industry plays a relatively insignificant part in the economy. Security, although improved in recent years, remains a concern that discourages many potential international visitors. The U.S. State Department continues to warn about the risk of terrorist attacks in Algeria and recommends that “U.S. citizens avoid overland travel in Algeria.”

Currently, Algeria attracts nearly 2 million visitors each year, but roughly 70% are Algerian expatriate nationals who are returning for family visits. In addition to security concerns, the lack of tourism infrastructure—in particular, a shortage of international-standard hotel rooms—has been a problem in attracting visitors to Algeria. The Algerian Ministry of Tourism is trying to address this problem by implementing a program directed at increasing hotel rooms by 10% by 2014, raising the nation’s total capacity to 75,000 rooms. There are some preliminary signs that Algeria’s attempts to increase its tourism base are helping. In 2001, tourism contributed only 1.7% of Algeria’s GDP, but that figure had risen to 6.4% by 2008.

Banking and Currency

The dinar (symbol: DZD) is Algeria’s official currency. Its name traces to the denarius, a coin used during the period of the Roman Empire. Its exchange rate floats within a range based on a composite of currencies. Since 2004, the dinar’s value has fluctuated between 65 and 75 DZD to the U.S. dollar (USD).

Algeria’s banking system consists of 16 privately owned and 6 state-owned commercial banks. Despite the larger number of private banks, all of which are foreign-owned subsidiaries, the state-owned banks control between 80 and 90% of all banking assets. The public banks also hold a relatively high percentage of defaulted or near-defaulted non-performing loans (NPLs)—more than twice the percentage of NPLs held by private banks. Most of the public banks’ NPLs had been made to unprofitable state-owned enterprises (SOEs). Although the Algerian government announced its intent to sell its majority or minority stakes in the public banks, the credit crisis of 2008 and 2009 effectively put such plans on hold.

Although the market share of the private banks is small compared to the state-owned banks, it has been steadily increasing in recent years. Three of the private banks also provide shari’a-compliant banking activities consistent with Islamic law, which prohibits payment or acceptance of interest fees for loans. In August 2009, the Algerian government banned all consumer loans except home mortgages. Some thought this

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move was a governmental reaction to a shrinking trade surplus, as hydrocarbon revenues slumped and demand for foreign goods continued to rise. The consumer credit ban fell hardest on the nation’s private banks, which provided about three-quarters of consumer loans.293, 294

**Investment**

Although Algeria in the past has encouraged foreign investment in its economy, the nation currently is following a path of “economic nationalism” in which measures have been enacted to give Algerian investors preferential treatment. Among these measures are a requirement that foreign companies be majority-owned by Algerian nationals if they are to receive the same privileges as domestic businesses, and increased restrictions on foreign firms bidding against Algerian companies on state contracts.295

There are several reasons for the change in investment policy. Algeria finds itself with large reserves of cash and a greatly reduced debt load after several years of high oil and gas revenues, thus diminishing the immediate need for foreign investors’ money.296 In addition, earlier privatizations to foreign firms have become politically charged, most notably when one of Algeria’s leading cement producers, owned by an Egyptian company, was sold to a French conglomerate.297 In Algeria, where colonial scars run deep, the sale of former state-owned properties to French-controlled companies will inevitably raise hackles. Finally, Algeria’s relatively lenient policy toward the transfer of Algerian-based profits to the country of company ownership, rather than reinvestment in the Algerian operations, triggered a backlash that ultimately resulted in a change in the country’s tax code.298

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One sector of the economy in which foreign investment has been actively encouraged is tourism.\textsuperscript{299} As noted earlier, growth of Algerian tourism has been hampered by a lack of international-standard hotel rooms. Foreign hotel-industry companies have been actively building or planning new hotels in all of Algeria’s larger cities.\textsuperscript{300}

**Transportation**

Until recently, Algeria’s transportation system had been mostly neglected since the colonial era. Roads were poorly maintained, railways were served by aging equipment, and most ports had not received sufficient investment to fully revamp to modern container handling standards.\textsuperscript{301} Although these and other problems still exist, Algeria has recently embarked on major programs to improve its overall transportation infrastructure.

Foremost among the improvements to its roads is the East–West Highway, which has been called the world’s largest public works project.\textsuperscript{302} Stretching from the Tunisian border on the east to the Moroccan border on the west, the six-lane East–West Highway will connect many of the largest cities in the northern part of the country, including Annaba, Constantine, Sétif, Algiers, and Oran. The highway, budgeted at USD 11.2 billion, is financed completely by the Algerian government.\textsuperscript{303} Originally scheduled to be completed in 2010, the project has been marred by delays, charges of corruption, and Algerian dissatisfaction with the Chinese and Japanese firms contracted to build two large segments of the highway.\textsuperscript{304, 305}

Numerous rail projects are also in the works. These include numerous lines linking the larger cities of the High Plateaus region, and a 170-km, electrified, double-rail system.

east of Algiers. Metropolitan rail systems are also being developed. The cities of Algiers, Oran, and Constantine are slated to open light-rail systems by 2020, and Algiers’ long-delayed metro subway system finally opened its first line in 2010.

Currently, nearly 60% of Algeria’s container traffic goes through the Port of Algiers, with most of the remainder split by Oran, Bejaïa, and Skikda. A new deepwater port that will connect to the East–West Highway system is being built at Djen Djen (between Bejaïa and Skikda). It is expected that Djen Djen will ultimately be Algeria’s primary container port. The new port is being developed in a joint venture between Algeria’s state-owned port authority and Dubai Ports World. Arzew, Algeria’s primary port for hydrocarbons, is also being expanded in order to handle traffic related to a petrochemical plant under construction there.

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Standard of Living
Algeria has a high unemployment rate (officially 9.9%, but other estimates place it much higher).\textsuperscript{316, 317} Younger would-be workers suffer the highest unemployment rate and have been the target of social programs that offer monthly grants to the unemployed in exchange for their work on socially beneficial governmental projects.\textsuperscript{318} But unemployment is just one of several socioeconomic problems that Algeria faces. Housing shortages, inadequate health care and educational services, glaring income disparities, and governmental corruption are ongoing concerns. When events such as perceived inequities in the distribution of public housing or price spikes in food and other items occur, dissatisfaction among segments of the Algerian public can quickly escalate into street protests and riots. Such was the case in the October Riots of 1988 and, more recently, in the food-price protests of January 2011.\textsuperscript{319, 320}

Organizations
Algeria is a member state of several organizations that promote economic ties and represent common economic interests. Undoubtedly the most important of these is the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), whose members export a significant amount of the world’s crude oil. OPEC has frequently been labeled a cartel that affects world oil prices by setting production quotas among its members. Although many of its members are also large producers of natural gas, OPEC does not set natural gas production quotas. In recent years, Russia, Qatar, and Algeria—three of the world’s largest natural gas exporters—have discussed establishing a cartel organization similar to OPEC for natural gas.\textsuperscript{321, 322}

\textsuperscript{321} Agence France-Presse, “Russia, Algeria Meet as Gas OPEC Plan Gains Ground,” 19 February 2008, http://afp.google.com/article/ALeqM5gdmseuavZ2sxYEnR4yysXjab5Zf9w
Algeria formally proposed instituting such natural gas supply constraints at the 2010 meeting of the Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF). The intent is to bolster market prices on the spot market (i.e., surplus gas that is sold for immediate delivery).\footnote{Guy Chazan, “Natural-Gas Cuts Likely Off the Cartel Table,” \textit{Wall Street Journal}, 17 April 2010, \url{http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702304180804575187993517477572.html}} No such action was approved by the GECF members.
Chapter 3 Assessments

1. Algeria’s dominant source of national revenue comes from hydrocarbons.

**True**

The hydrocarbons sector is the backbone of Algeria’s economy, providing the nation with 60% of its budget revenues, almost 30% of its GDP, and more than 97% of its export receipts in 2008.

2. Algeria grows enough grains to meet its domestic needs.

**False**

Algeria does not produce enough grains to meet domestic needs and must import a substantial amount of wheat and, to a lesser extent, maize (corn) each year.

3. Algeria’s industrial sector is largely comprised of state-owned businesses.

**True**

Algeria has been slow to privatize many of its state-owned enterprises, which largely remain inefficient and non-competitive in world markets.

4. Algeria’s oil reserves are the third largest in Africa.

**True**

The largest Algerian oil fields are in basins located in the Sahara, near the Libyan border. Libya and Nigeria are the only African countries with larger oil reserves than Algeria.

5. Algeria is a major producer of mercury.

**False**

In the past Algeria was a large producer of mercury, but production ceased in 2003 following claims of technical problems.
Chapter 4 Society

Introduction
Many of the tensions in Algerian society reflect the changes that have swept the nation since winning independence from France in 1962. The Algerian government embraced Islam and Arabic language and culture early on as a way to establish a cohesive Algerian identity after 130 years of French domination. This policy has increasingly alienated non-Arabic-speaking Algerians (i.e., the Berbers), while contributing to Islamic fervor among younger generations.

Government economic policies increasingly spurred an exodus from the rural countryside to the cities, leading to urban housing shortages. Unemployment began to soar due to declines in agriculture, traditionally the nation’s primary employment sector. New, urban, state-run industries could not generate sufficient jobs to support the growing population. Unemployed Algerian youths, ill-prepared by the educational system for the few available jobs and generally unable to emigrate to France or other countries, became disaffected. Some took to street crime, while others gravitated to radical Islam.

These societal issues remain pertinent as Algeria struggles to balance traditional Islamic values with the desires of its populace for equality and greater economic opportunities.

Ethnic and Linguistic Groups

Roughly 80% of Algerians are classified as Arabs, while the remaining 20% are Berbers. Today, the distinctions between these two groups are mostly cultural and linguistic. Both groups generally trace their ancestry to indigenous Berber clans that inhabited modern-day Algeria before the arrival of Arabs in the seventh century C.E. 330, 331

Algerian Arabs primarily live in the northern part of the country and speak an Algerian dialect of Arabic as their first language. 332 It differs significantly from written Arabic or from Modern Standard Arabic, which is the language of instruction in schools. 333 A Bedouin dialect of Arabic (Algerian Saharan Arabic) is spoken by a much smaller number of people in the Saharan part of Algeria. 334, 335

Algeria’s Berbers comprise four main groups. The largest of these is the Kabyles, who mostly inhabit the mountainous region east of Algiers in the Great Kabylie and Little Kabylie ranges. Other Berber groups are the Chaouia of the Aurès Mountains of northeast Algeria, the Mzab of the northern Sahara, and the Tuareg of the southeastern Sahara. 336 Each group speaks a separate but similar language evolved from the Berber branch of the Afro-Asiatic language family. Arabic is from the separate Semitic branch of the Afro-Asiatic language family. 337, 338

French, the colonial language, is still widespread in the Algerian business world despite decades of government policies discouraging French literacy and banning it as a language of instruction. After independence, the Algerian government sought to cut ties with the colonial era by pursuing Arabization, a policy that embraced Arabic culture and

language. This policy has long been a source of tension in Berber-majority regions. 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 has reintroduced French into the school curriculum.

Religion

Islam is the state religion of Algeria, and roughly 99% of the population is Sunni Muslim. Christians make up most of the remaining 1%, of which Evangelical Christian denominations make up the largest segment. The only Christian group officially recognized by the Algerian government is the Roman Catholic Church. Most of Algeria’s once sizable Jewish minority left after independence; almost all who had remained left the country following the civil war of the 1990s.

Although Berbers are Muslim, many Algerian Islamic fundamentalists view them as a secular force. Most Berbers converted to Islam relatively quickly after the first invasions in the seventh century, but they resisted Arab rule and the institution of Arab culture and language. In modern-day Algeria, Berber political parties remain wary of Islamist philosophy, viewing it as an element of the government’s Arabization policy that contributes to the further marginalization of Berber culture and language.

Many Islamic fundamentalists consider some Berber traditional religious practices heretical, such as the cult of marabouts (holy men believed to be able to perform miracles). Maraboutism developed from the Sufi mystical orders that arrived in

Algeria during the Arab migrations of the 11th century.\(^{347}\) From the 13th to the 19th centuries, Sufi tradition, as manifested through maraboutism, was the dominant form of Islamic practice throughout Algeria.\(^{348}\) Today, it is common in the isolated Berber villages of Kabylia and the Aurès Mountains.\(^{349}\)

**Gender Issues**

Women’s legal status in Algeria is defined by the Family Code, a highly restrictive document based on shari’a (Islamic law). The 1984 passage of the Family Code spurred Algeria’s first post-independence feminist movement.\(^{350}\) Parts of the Family Code were reformed in 2005, theoretically giving women greater rights in marriage and divorce, but led to problems such as divorced women not being able to afford housing.\(^{351}\) Implementation of the new provisions has been slow due to a lack of general knowledge and understanding in many parts of the country.\(^{352}\)

Outside the home, women have begun to take an increasingly prominent place in the workplace. They now represent a majority of workers in fields such as education and health care.\(^{353}\) Women also make up 70% of Algeria’s lawyers and 60% of its judges, and account for up to 60% of university students.\(^{354}\) However, the increasing presence of women in the working world does not reflect any tendency toward secularization. Studies have shown that young Algerian women are more religious than in previous generations and still likely to be wearing the hijab (head covering) while working alongside men.\(^{355}\)


Clothing
Most Algerian men and women in cities now wear Western clothing. Many women also wear the hijab, but wearing the veil is a matter of choice rather than social expectation. For some women, the hijab is as much a fashion statement as an expression of religious piety. In other cases, it may even be worn as a way to make a single woman more attractive (i.e., more marriageable) to would-be husbands. 356

Traditional clothing is no longer worn on a daily basis in much of Algeria, except in the southern Sahara. There, the Tuareg men still wear the taguelmoust, a piece of cloth used as both a turban and a veil. Traditionally, the taguelmoust was dyed indigo blue, and leaching of the dyes into the skin resulted in the Tuareg sometimes being referred to as the “Blue Men of the Sahara.” In recent times other colors have become popular as well. Tuareg men use the taguelmoust as protection from blowing desert sands and to convey modesty within the culture’s social hierarchy. 357, 358

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. The Bedouin-style music used traditional instruments and songs woven around Arabic love poetry. The music gradually evolved into an urban musical style that boldly expressed the pains, pleasures, and desires of working-class life. 359 Over time, new instruments and styles were added to the mix, including rock and rap. 360 Early rai singers were women, known as cheikas and meddahas, who performed either at social events strictly for women (meddahas) or at weddings, religious festivals, and clubs (cheikas). 361

357 Anthony Ham, Nana Luckham, and Anthony Sattin, “Traveling in the Sahara: Tying Your Taguelmoust,” in Algeria (Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications, 2007), 68.
Later generations of *raï* performers were increasingly dominated by men with a more pop-oriented style. References to sexual pleasure, food, alcohol, and social problems such as unemployment made *raï* popular with Algeria’s lower classes, but it was barely tolerated by the government and angrily railed against by Islamist groups. When several *raï* performers were murdered by Islamic militants during the 1990s civil war, many of their peers fled to France.

**Film**

Funded by the Algerian government, 1965’s *The Battle of Algiers* unsparedly details the urban warfare that took place during Algeria’s war of independence. Its documentary-style depiction of urban guerrilla warfare tactics remains timely—it was featured in a Pentagon special screening during the Iraq War in 2003.

Other notable Algerian films include the 1975 Cannes Film Festival Palme d’Or winner *Chronicle of the Years of Fire* (1975); Academy Award nominees for Best Foreign Language Film *Dust of Life* (1995), *Days of Glory* (2006), and *Outside the Law* (2010); and works by Merzak Allouache, whose popular films *Omar Gatlato* (1976), and *Bab el-Oued City* (1994) focus on the daily realities many Algerians face.

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366 Film Study Center at Harvard University, “Merzak Allouache: The McMillan-Stewart Fellowship in Distinguished Filmmaking,” 2005, [http://www.filmstudycenter.org/people_fellows_0506.html](http://www.filmstudycenter.org/people_fellows_0506.html)
Sports and Recreation

Football (soccer) is king in Algeria. The Algerian national team, known as Les Fennecs (The Desert Foxes), has been one of the better teams in Africa, finishing in fourth place in the 2010 African Cup and qualifying for the 2010 World Cup in South Africa. Algeria has also qualified for the World Cup two other times (1982, 1986), narrowly missing qualifying for the second round in 1982 after a stunning upset of the defending champion West Germany. The team’s fortunes declined through the 1990s and most of 2000s, reaching a low point in 2006, when the Foxes stumbled badly in African Zone qualifying for the World Cup.

Since Algeria’s first Olympic competition in 1964, its teams have won 14 medals, most in either boxing or middle- to long-distance track events. Runner Houssiba Boulmerka won Algeria’s first gold medal, at the 1992 Summer Olympics in Barcelona, Spain. Noureddine Morceli won the men’s 1,500 m Olympic gold medal in 1996, and held the world’s record for fastest time from 1992–1998. Morceli also held the world’s record for the mile from 1993 to 1999.

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Chapter 4 Assessments

1. Algeria’s Berbers all share the same language and cultural traits.
   \textbf{False}

   There are four main Berber groups; they speak different but related languages and have distinct traditions and cultural practices unique to their group.

2. All Muslims believe that \textit{marabouts} have special religious powers.
   \textbf{False}

   Certain Berber groups believe that \textit{marabouts}, or holy men of the Sufi Islamic tradition, can perform miracles. Many fundamental Muslims think this practice goes against Islam.

3. Female students outnumber males at universities in Algeria.
   \textbf{True}

   Females constitute approximately 60\% of the enrollment.

4. Islamist groups view \textit{raï} music as a positive contribution to society.
   \textbf{False}

   Islamist groups view \textit{raï} as a decadent form of entertainment and often disapprove of its lyrics. Islamists killed some prominent \textit{raï} musicians in the 1990s, leading others to flee the country.

5. Basketball is the national pastime in Algeria.
   \textbf{False}

   Football (soccer) is the national pastime in Algeria.
Chapter 5 Security

Introduction
Algeria is scarred by a violent civil war that left few corners of the nation untouched. Although Algeria has returned to a relatively normal state, persistent terrorist activities still plague some regions. With the exception of Morocco, Algeria’s relations with its neighbors are generally good. However, its porous southern borders with Mali, Niger, and Mauritania provide opportunities for smugglers and terrorists. The internal political and economic situation in Algeria remains problematic. Many Algerians are concerned about the traditional power alliance between the country’s military leaders and the presidency. This alliance has been relatively unrestrained due to the absence of strong opposition parties. High unemployment and housing shortages plague the daily lives of many Algerians, particularly the young. Similar problems brought down neighboring governments in North Africa during the early months of 2011. It remains unclear to what extent the regional winds of political change will affect the Algerian government.

U.S.–Algerian Relations
The United States and Algeria have established strong relations “in key areas of mutual concern,” such as law enforcement and counterterrorism. In the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, bilateral military and security cooperation increased between the two nations. Most U.S. annual aid to Algeria (roughly USD 1.8 to 2.7 million) goes to counterterrorism, military training, and law enforcement programs. Algeria’s southern regions, which extend into the Sahel, are considered particularly strategic because they are vulnerable to the establishment of bases for terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).

Algeria and the United States also have strong trade ties. The United States is Algeria’s largest trading partner, while Algeria

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is the United States’ second-largest trading partner in the Arab world.\textsuperscript{375} An extensive part of this trade is importation of Algerian crude oil.\textsuperscript{376} American businesses have invested nearly USD 5.5 billion in Algeria, primarily in its hydrocarbon sector.\textsuperscript{377, 378}

The U.S. government’s appreciation for Algeria’s assistance in counterterrorism operations has been balanced by its desire to see the Bouteflika administration speed up the democratic reform process.\textsuperscript{379, 380} The two countries have also been on different sides of several regional issues, including the Iraq War, accusations by the U.S. that Syria supported terrorism in Lebanon, and the Darfur conflict in Sudan.\textsuperscript{381}

### Relations with Neighboring Countries

**Morocco**

Morocco and Algeria, the two largest countries in North Africa, have been rivals since their independence in 1956 and 1962, respectively. After Algeria declared independence, Morocco asserted authority over some of Algeria’s northwestern Saharan land claims, leading to the brief “sands war” of October–November 1963.\textsuperscript{382} The borders in this region were not settled until 1972.\textsuperscript{383}

A longer point of contention between them has been the status of Western Sahara, a former Spanish colony claimed by Morocco. The Frente Popular de Liberación de Saguía el Hamra y Río de Oro (Polisario Front), an organization of Western Saharan nationalists, rejects Morocco’s claim. After Morocco invaded Western Sahara in 1975,
the Algerian-backed Polisario Front guerrillas fought until a ceasefire was reached in 1991.\textsuperscript{384} Today, tens of thousands of Sahrawi refugees from Western Sahara inhabit camps near the Algerian town of Tindouf, close to the Moroccan border. The first of these refugees arrived in 1975. Since then, the camps have been under the formal administration of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), but in practice are run by the Polisario Front.\textsuperscript{385} As such, they are the day-to-day headquarters of Western Sahara’s self-declared government-in-exile, the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR). Currently, SADR controls a small, mostly unpopulated section of Western Sahara east of a heavily mined, defensive sand berm built by Morocco.\textsuperscript{386, 387}

Algeria and Morocco broke off relations in 1976 because of the Western Sahara conflict, and finally restored them in 1988. After a terrorist attack on a Marrakech hotel in 1994, Morocco, suspecting Algerian involvement, instituted visa requirements for Algerian citizens. Algeria responded by closing all border crossings, which remain closed to this day.\textsuperscript{388} This freeze in relations helped paralyze the Union du Maghreb Arabe (UMA; Arab Maghreb Union), a regional organization formed in 1989 with the goal of fostering North African political and economic cooperation.\textsuperscript{389}

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{384} Jacob Mundy, “Algeria and the Western Sahara Dispute,” \textit{Maghreb Center Journal}, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2010): 2–4, \url{http://maghrebcenter.org/journal/MaghrebCenter Journal Mundy_Algeria-W Sahara.pdf}
\textsuperscript{385} Carol Migdalovitz, Congressional Research Service, “Background Note: Algeria,” 22 November 2010, 10, \url{http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/152624.pdf}
\textsuperscript{388} The Economist, “Algeria and Morocco: Open That Border,” 27 May 2010, \url{http://www.economist.com/node/16219845}
\textsuperscript{389} Jacob Mundy, “Algeria and the Western Sahara Dispute,” \textit{Maghreb Center Journal}, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2010): 10–11, \url{http://maghrebcenter.org/journal/MaghrebCenter Journal Mundy_Algeria-W Sahara.pdf}
\end{footnotesize}
Mauritania, Mali, and Niger
Algeria’s long southern border with Mauritania, Mali, and Niger straddles a remote, poorly policed region of the southern Sahara. Smuggling of goods, weapons, humans, and drugs are significant problems in this area. In addition, Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), whose main base is in the Kabylie region of northern Algeria, has established a second base in the southern Algerian borderlands and is involved in some of these illegal activities. For several years, AQIM terrorists operating from these four countries’ border regions have kidnapped tourists, foreign workers, security forces, and even local citizens—sometimes leading to executions when payments are not made. In several of these attacks, the hideout has been in Mali, where the hostages were taken after being kidnapped in Algeria, Mauritania, or Niger.

The cross-border nature of the AQIM threat has spurred the region’s first joint military patrols between Mali and Mauritania. Military cooperation among the four countries, which have formed a counterterrorism coalition, will most likely increase if AQIM’s activities in the Sahara continue to escalate.

391 Kwesi Aning, “Potential New Hotspots For Extremism and Opportunities to Mitigate the Danger: The Case of the Sahel” (conference paper, St Antony’s College, Oxford University, 8–9 October 2010) http://www.sant.ox.ac.uk/centres/Aningpaper.pdf
393 Kwesi Aning, “Potential New Hotspots For Extremism and Opportunities to Mitigate the Danger: The Case of the Sahel” (conference paper, St Antony’s College, Oxford University, 8–9 October 2010) http://www.sant.ox.ac.uk/centres/Aningpaper.pdf
Libya
Algeria’s relations with Libya have generally been stable and friendly since the late 1980s. One blip occurred during the mid-1990s, when Libya temporarily withdrew from the Union du Magrèb Arâb (AMU) in protest of its members’ (including Algeria) adherence to UN sanctions against Libya for its role in the Lockerbie bombing. The two countries also have a long standing but benign border dispute over more than 32,000 sq km (12,350 sq mi) of land currently part of southeastern Algeria. Economically, the two countries have limited trade links (less than USD 50 million in total trade volume in 2008). This is not surprising, however, because the economies of Algeria and Libya rely heavily on hydrocarbon exports.

Tunisia
Tunisia and Algeria have generally maintained positive bilateral relations since the 1980s, following a period of strained relations in the 1970s when each country accused the other of granting refuge to its political adversaries. In 1983, the two countries 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. A decade later, Algeria and Tunisia successfully concluded negotiations on a border agreement that ended a 20-year dispute over the demarcation of the boundary. Tunisia is also Algeria’s leading trade partner among

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countries of the AMU, although total trade between the two is less than 1% of Algeria’s total annual trade.\footnote{European Commission, “Algeria: Algeria’s Trade With Main Partners (2009),” EUROSTAT, 18 January 2011, 6, \url{http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2006/september/tradoc_113343.pdf}}

**Military**


Algeria also has a sizable paramilitary force that is actually larger than the active-duty military. Much of the fighting during Algeria’s civil war of the 1990s and early 2000s was carried out by these groups rather than the regular army.\footnote{Anthony Cordesman and Aram Nerguizian, “The Military Forces of Algeria,” in *The North African Military Balance: Force Developments in the Maghreb* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2009), 42.} Among these groups are the Gendarmerie Nationale, a component of the Algerian military primarily responsible for policing in rural areas; and the Ministry of the Interior’s Sûreté Nationale, which carries out policing activities in urban areas.\footnote{Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, U.S. Department of State, “Background Note: Algeria,” 2 August 2010, \url{http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/8005.htm}}

Algerian military leaders have long played a largely behind-the-scenes role in governmental and economic affairs, and have collectively been referred to as *le pouvoir* (“the power”).\footnote{Jean R. Tartter, “Chapter 5: National Security: External Security Problems and Policies: Strategic Perspectives,” in *Algeria: A Country Study* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, December 1993), 254–256.} Virtually all the country’s presidents have either had a military
background or won election with the consensus backing of the military (as in the case of current president Adelaziz Bouteflika). In recent years, Bouteflika has strengthened his position relative to the military through the forced retirement of senior and mid-level army officers who held power during the civil war years. Whether he successfully reversed the balance of power between the military and government is debatable.422, 423

**Terrorist Groups and Activities**

The primary terrorist group in Algeria is Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), an organization formally known as the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC). The GSPC began 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.424 The GSPC initially rejected the GIA’s indiscriminate attacks against civilian targets and soon took over most of the GIA’s financial and supply networks, possibly with the assistance of Al Qaeda contacts.425, 426

In 2004, GSPC leadership fell to Abdelmalek Droukdel (a.k.a. Abu Musab Abdul Wadud), who formally linked the GSPC with the Al Qaeda network in September 2006.427, 428 Thereafter, suicide bombings and attacks against Western targets became part of the terrorist organization’s methods.429 To date, AQIM’s most high-profile attack

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419 Peter Philipp and Spencer Kimball, “Powerful Military Make Regime Change in Algeria Unlikely,” *Deutsche Welle*, 14 February 2011, [http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,,14841818,00.html](http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,,14841818,00.html)
420 Ed Blanche, “Algeria the Battle Within; President Bouteflika Clips the Wings of Algeria’s Long-Powerful Military,” BNET, May 2006, [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m2742/is_367/ai_n24987369/](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m2742/is_367/ai_n24987369/)
422 Ed Blanche, “Algeria the Battle Within; President Bouteflika Clips the Wings of Algeria’s Long-Powerful Military,” BNET, May 2006, [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m2742/is_367/ai_n24987369/](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m2742/is_367/ai_n24987369/)
423 Peter Philipp and Spencer Kimball, “Powerful Military Make Regime Change in Algeria Unlikely,” *Deutsche Welle*, 14 February 2011, [http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,,14841818,00.html](http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,,14841818,00.html)
occurred on December 2007, when 42 people were killed by 2 simultaneous suicide car bombs in Algiers. The Algerian Supreme Court building and the local headquarters of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees were targeted in the bombings.\textsuperscript{430}

The number of high-profile terrorist attacks by AQIM has decreased since 2009.\textsuperscript{431, 432} Numerous low-level terrorist operations—such as roadside bombings using improvised explosive devices (IEDs)—still occur, more than half of them in the Kabylie provinces of Tizi Ouzou and Boumerdès.\textsuperscript{433} AQIM’s terrorist activities in the south mostly involve kidnappings for ransom, primarily in Mali, Niger, and Mauritania since 2009. A notable exception was the June 2010 attack against an Algerian gendarme (police) patrol near the Mali border that left 12 dead, including a customs agent who had been taken hostage.\textsuperscript{434}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{430} National Counterterrorism Center, “Worldwide Incidents Tracking System,” 2011, \url{https://wits.nctc.gov/FederalDiscoverWITS/index.do?Rev=Incident&R=9155&nav=Rd%3DGroupType%257C4294967065%257CIslamic%2BExtremist%2528Sunni%2529%257C%257CIncludedGroupNationalities%257C4294957750%257CAfrica%26Nrc%3Did%2B20039%2Bdynrank%2Bdisabled%26N%3D0}


\textsuperscript{432} National Counterterrorism Center, “Al-Qa’ida in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM),” 2011, \url{http://www.nctc.gov/site/groups/aqim.html}

\textsuperscript{433} National Counterterrorism Center, “Worldwide Incidents Tracking System,” 2011, \url{https://wits.nctc.gov/FederalDiscoverWITS/index.do?Rd=GroupType|4294967065|Islamic+Extremist+%28Sunni%29|Africa&rpp=100&Nf=p_IncidentDate|GT+20060101&&p_IncidentDate|GT+20090101&Ns=p_IncidentDate&N=0}

\textsuperscript{434} National Counterterrorism Center, “Worldwide Incidents Tracking System,” 2011, \url{https://wits.nctc.gov/FederalDiscoverWITS/index.do?Rev=Incident&R=27586&nav=Rd%3DGroupType%257C4294967065%257CIslamic%2BExtremist%2528Sunni%2529%257C%257CCountry%257C429495648%26Nrc%3Did%2B20060101|p_IncidentDate|GT+20090101&Ns=p_IncidentDate&N=0}
\end{flushright}
Other Issues Affecting Stability

Political Reform
The early months of 2011 saw a series of popular revolts against the long-time autocratic governments in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya, where leaders had collectively held power for over 90 years. To varying degrees, Algeria has many of the problems that fed the revolts in countries to its east: high youth unemployment, high-level government corruption, prolonged state-of-emergency regulations that have suppressed dissent and discouraged the development of opposition political movements, and a president who has seemed increasingly intent to serve for life.435

Unemployment and rising food prices led to protests in Algeria in January 2011 and a call for broad political reforms.436 Police clamped down on demonstrations with batons and tear gas, and calls for reform began to lose momentum.437 In an attempt to defuse public anger, the Algerian government agreed in February 2011 to end the state-of-emergency regulations, though large-scale protest gatherings were still not allowed.

Despite the general discontent with the government, Algeria is different from its neighbors in that it underwent a relatively recent period of brutal civil war in which innocent civilians were often the victims. Few Algerians wish the country to go through another episode of violent political uprising. As Karim Tabbou, national secretary of the Socialist Forces Front (a leading political party in the Kabylie region) noted, “Most Algerians don’t want to risk an adventure… Symbolically, people are still traumatized by what happened before.”438

Water and Food

Algeria is one of Africa’s most populous nations, with an estimated 35 million people. Most live in the small, northernmost part of the country. Water is a crucial and chronically insufficient resource for Algerians. Riots tied to water shortages have occurred in some regions in recent years. During a drought in 2006, water availability in Algiers was cut in half to just 8 hours a day. Recognizing the problem, the Algerian government has set aside large sums of money to build new dams and desalinization facilities and to repair the estimated 30% of Algerian water pipes that leak.

Algerian reservoirs are currently used almost exclusively for drinking water, so when droughts occur, as in 2008, the country’s agricultural harvests are subject to sharp declines. Even during years with normal rainfall, Algeria must import a large amount of its food staples. Global price increases for wheat, sugar, and other key imports cause consumer prices to rise dramatically unless the government implements price controls. The Bouteflika administration enacted such measures after food-price riots broke out in January 2011.

Chapter 5 Assessments

1. Algeria’s relations with Morocco have generally been friendly.

False

Numerous issues have made relations tense. The border remains closed to this day.

2. The Algerian army was the main fighting force in the 1990s civil war.

False

Most of the fighting was conducted by paramilitary forces and national police organizations.

3. The Algerian paramilitary is larger than the active-duty army.

True

Algeria’s various paramilitary groups had around 180,000 people in 2008, compared to roughly 147,000 active-duty personnel.

4. Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Algeria have formed a security alliance.

True

Because all these countries faced a threat from Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, cooperation was attractive.

5. Tunisia and Algeria have limited trade linkages.

False

Tunisia and Algeria have strong trade linkages. By contrast, Algeria’s trade linkages with Libya are quite modest.
Final Assessments

1. Annaba is the highest city in Algeria.
2. Earthquakes pose the greatest natural disaster threat to Algeria.
3. The city of Constantine is divided into two parts.
4. Chichili are northward-blowing winds.
5. All Algerians have unrestricted access to water.
6. Under French colonial rule, Algeria was divided into three départements (states).
7. The term pied-noirs refers to Algerians who worked for the French colonial government.
8. French-educated Muslims (évolués) were the first to organize a political reform movement.
9. The “Black October” riots occurred in 1492.
10. The current Algerian constitution limits the amount of terms a president can serve.
11. Algeria typically enjoys an annual trade surplus.
12. Over half of visitors to Algeria are expatriate nationals coming back to visit family.
13. The value of Algerian currency, the dinar, is fixed.
14. Private banks dominate the financial services market in Algeria.
15. Algeria is not a member of OPEC.
16. The legal status of women in Algeria is defined by shari’a law.
17. Raï was originally Bedouin-style music.
18. Women are not required to veil in Algeria.
20. Algerian athletes have excelled in track events at the Olympics.
21. Most Algerian presidents have had strong military ties.
22. The Bouteflika government implemented price controls in response to 2011 riots over food prices.

23. Unemployment disproportionately affects workers over the age of 50 in Algeria.

24. The Union du Magreb Arab (AMU) was formed as a security organization.

25. Sahwari refugees from Western Sahara live in refugee camps near the Algerian town of Tindouf.
Further Resources

Books


Films


