

**UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF COLONIAL RULE ON ALGERIA'S
POSTINDEPENDENCE FOREIGN POLICY**

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Abstract

This study focused basically on understanding the impact of colonial rule on Algeria's postindependence foreign policy. Algeria's initial post-independence presidents: Ahmed Ben Bella and Houari Boumediene followed a fierce anti-imperialist strategy of third world solidarity. Algerian leadership in the Group of 77, the Nonaligned Movement and the drive to construct a new International Economic Order in North-South relations were all part of the reasons for such a foreign policy reflected in the 1976 National Charter. Thus, President Chadli Benjedid steadily moved Algerian diplomacy's focus from third world leadership to a regional strategy which focused on the Maghreb, culminating in the formation of the Union du Maghreb Arabe in the 1980s. Algerian foreign policy retreated even farther during the terrible internal crises of the 1990s. Despite President Abdelaziz Bouteflika's participation in the revolution, he has been able to keep the country's foreign policy focused on national interests. The constructivist theory was used to explain Algerian nationalism and conservative policies, particularly after the country gained independence from France in 1962.

Keywords: Imperialism, Domination, Colonial Rule, Foreign Policy, Maghreb
Introduction

Starting in February 2019, thousands and later millions of Algerians took to the streets to voice their displeasure with their ailing eighty-two-year-old president, Abdelaziz Bouteflika, who sought to run for what would have been a fifth term. After weeks of peaceful and orderly mass protests, the long-standing president resigned in April 2019, before a new election could be held. As this new "battle of Algiers" continues to unfold, some Algerian and European observers have warned that Islamists will try to infiltrate the movement. Their fear is that Islamists may seek to recreate the conditions that prevailed in the 1990s when the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) exploited the country's 1989 democratic opening to call for the establishment of an Islamic state; Jihadi violence erupted after the military interrupted the electoral process in 1991, and the country descended into a decade-long civil war (1991–2001). (Dalia, 2019). Since Algeria gained independence from France in 1962, it has maintained an assertive foreign strategy. In the 1960s and 1970s, Algeria was noted for its support for third world policies and independence movements. Since its independence, following the events of the Algerian War of Independence in the 1950s, Algeria has diplomatic relations with over 100 nations and over 90 countries have diplomatic representation in Algiers. Algerian foreign policy, notably in the 1960s and 1970s, was considered as "active" by the US, particularly in support of Third World independence movements. Following Algeria's independence from France in 1962, the US and Algeria established diplomatic ties. In the aftermath of the Arab-Israeli War in 1967, Algeria cut ties with the US, but they were restored in 1974.

Algeria is a capable and strategically positioned partner with which the US has strong diplomatic, law enforcement, economic, and security ties. Algeria and the United States have frequent civilian and military interactions. In January 2019, the two countries took part in the US-Algeria Strategic Dialogue. (US State Department, 2021).

According to Edge (2006), Algerian foreign policy is highly influenced by the country's nationalistic outlook. It would be impossible to detect how Algerian foreign policy has changed over time until we grasp how nationalism has influenced Algerian foreign policy. It will be difficult to appreciate the concept of Algerian foreign policy without first understanding the country's historical context. As a result, this part will be devoted to a brief historical backdrop, with a focus on the country's independence movement and post-independence activity. Algeria severed diplomatic ties with the United States in 1967, owing to the United States' backing for Israel. It would take another decade for diplomatic relations to be restored. In the 1970s and 1980s, relations strengthened, particularly during the Iranian hostage crisis (1979-1981). Algeria was seen by the Iranian government at the time as a possible mediator, as it was both Islamic and non-aligned.

Theoretical Framework

This work adopted the constructivist theory to explain nationalism and conservatives' policies of Algeria especially after its independence from France in 1962. Constructivism theory was propounded by Jean Piaget in 1972. The major proponents of constructivism include; Kenneth Waltz, Jean Piaget, Alexander Wendt and Martha Finnemore. Constructivism is a social theory in international relations that claims that important parts of international relations are affected by ideational variables (which are historically and socially created), not only material causes. Wendt (1999) maintained that collectively held ideas are the most significant ideational variables; these collectively held beliefs create actors' interests and identities.

Constructivism theory basically asserts that significant aspects of international relations are shaped by ideational factors (which are historically and socially constructed), not simply material factors. The most important ideational factors are those that are collectively held; these collectively held beliefs construct the interests and identities of actors. Constructivists see identities and interests of actors as socially constructed and changeable; identities are not static and cannot be exogenously assumed. Analyses can only provide substantive explanations or predictions once the relevant actors and their interests have been identified, as well as the content of social structures. Constructivists see power as the ability to structure and constitute the nature of social relations between actors.

Ideational factors and a strong sense of national was pivotal in shaping Algeria's post-colonial policies especially under president Houari Boumediene and Algeria's non alignment policy of the cold war era also goes as far to consolidate this argument. Algeria's own revolutionary past, as well as its dedication to self-determination and nationalism, have long impacted its foreign policy. Algeria has been a significant leader in both the area and the developing globe, pledging to defend and further the revolution against imperialism. The ideological goals of the initial postindependence years have been subjugated to more important economic and strategic considerations as time have gone. Even during Boumediene's austere socialist years, economic concerns played a key influence in influencing the direction of foreign policy toward both the East and the West. Algeria's own economic and political issues, as well as the changing global

environment and world economy, had hampered Algerian foreign policy by the late 1980s. Algeria's ideological commitments were transformed by the new internal government, which shifted the country away from its socialist orientation and closer to the West. Algeria's regional economic and political efforts began to take precedent over a broader ideological commitment to the developing countries and Africa. Algeria's foreign policy objectives were revised by the 1976 National Charter, which renounced the commitment to socialist revolution and shifted toward nonalignment in the international arena. The internal situation increasing popular discontent and declining government income and level of living restricted the government's ability to commit it abroad. The emphasis shifted to issues of direct significance to the home economy. Concurrently, the rise of popular movements and opposition parties put political restrictions on foreign policy players, as demonstrated by the government's abrupt turnaround of its position on Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990 (U.S. Library of Congress, 2012).

Overview of Algerian Foreign Policy

Algeria's foreign policy was fiercely patriotic and anti-Western during its first decade of independence. The antagonism against the West, notably the United States, was exacerbated by Algeria's independence from a foreign colonial authority. One of the most important foreign policies during this period was the Algerian government's backing for independent and revolutionary groups all over the world, including the provision of guns, cash, and training. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), rebels against Portuguese colonial control in Mozambique, and Muslim guerillas battling the Christian Ethiopian government in Eritrea were among those who benefitted from Algerian help. Algerians decisively voted for independence on July 1, 1962, and French President Charles de Gaulle formally accepted the result on July 3. Ben Bella, a member of the ALN, was appointed as the leader of the new independent government and moved to consolidate control. In 1965, he was deposed in a coup orchestrated by Abdelaziz Bouteflika (Hussey, 2014.)

The Algerian government faced severe problems as a result of the changing geopolitical setting in North Africa and the Sahel. Since the country's independence in 1962, the government's foreign policy decisions have been influenced by the ideologies, concepts and practices that have guided the country's foreign policy decisions. As a result, Algeria's previous foreign policy paradigm, which emphasized state sovereignty and non-interference in domestic issues, has clashed with the developing trend of international humanitarian action. The Algerian government's opposition to international action in Libya, for example, was seen as a mockery by many on the Arab street. Algerian official behavior has been largely perceived as motivated by a desire to prevent or restrict democracy contagion at its borders since the start of the Arab revolts in early 2011. At first look, Algeria's attitude toward the Arab Spring appears to have been conditioned by worries of democratic dispersion into Algerian territory. However, in actuality, this is hardly the most important component in defining Algerian foreign policy. When one considers Algeria's geostrategic considerations and foreign policy vision, the regime's reasoning appears less nefarious (Anouar & Boukhars, 2013).

Domestic issues, security policy, and geostrategic imperatives determined the regime's response to the Arab revolutions. Algerian officials were concerned about the possible disintegrative implications of neighboring nations' authoritarian institutions collapsing on Algeria's internal

stability as well as its position in the regional power balance. The paper also seeks to demonstrate how Algeria's position reflects a widening gap between its long-standing strategic posture and a rapidly changing regional order that runs opposite to the goals and principles it promotes. Absolutist views of sovereignty and a steadfast aversion to interventionism, especially in the face of grave humanitarian situations, may contribute to the banalization of Algerian foreign policy ideals. Most crucially, Algeria may miss out on the chance to play a role in handling numerous crises in its immediate vicinity, such as the unfolding crisis in Mali, and shaping the continuing discussion over international legal restrictions on "duty to protect." The country's response to these new circumstances will have ramifications for the rest of the world. Algeria's strength positions it in a unique position to shape events (Driss, 2012).

Algeria has maintained an international architecture that defends state sovereignty and the right to decolonization since gaining independence in 1962. It became a powerful voice of African and Arab revolutionaries, as well as a leading advocate for developing-world rights, rejecting the Cold War's rigid bipolar structure and mobilizing support in multilateral forums for its agenda of self-determination, border inviolability, non-interference in domestic affairs, and sovereign equality. Houari Boumedienne, an Algerian guerrilla-turned-statesman, delivered a well-received address before the United Nations General Assembly in April 1974, calling for the formation of a new world order that protects the rights of the poor. He said that the previous system was dedicated to the Third World's impoverishment and promoted global disparities. The ascension of Abdelaziz Bouteflika, the former foreign minister of Houari Boumedienne, to the presidency in April 1999 re-energized Algerian foreign policy (Whaley, 2016)

Bouteflika was adamant about repairing Algeria's tarnished reputation. His position was made easier by the country's gradual restoration to peace and rising economic prospects. Bouteflika then set out to reclaim Algeria's leadership role on the African continent, as evidenced by its role in brokering a peace deal between Ethiopia and Eritrea in 2000, the creation of a cabinet position dedicated solely to Africa in 2001, and the formation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). Algeria's geopolitical aspirations were bolstered by the profound changes in the international geopolitical environment produced by the 9/11 attacks on the United States. The international community's image of Algeria shifted tremendously. Long seen as a significant source of violent extremism and a human rights offender, the country has since become a victim of Islamist terrorism as well as a crucial player in the worldwide war against terrorism. The emergence of violent extremist organizations in Algeria's southern hinterland bolstered Bouteflika's drive to make Algeria the trans-Saharan region's cornerstone in international counterterrorism operations (Anouar & Boukhars, 2013).

Conceptualization of Algerian War of Independence

Historically, the Algerian War is also known as the Algerian Revolution or the Algerian War of Independence and sometimes referred to as the War of November in Algeria. The Algerian War started in 1954 and ended in 1962. The war resulted in Algeria's independence from France which was fought between France and the Algerian National Liberation Front (ANLF). It was a significant decolonization struggle marked by guerrilla fighting and the use of torture. The struggle also devolved into a civil war between and among the communities. The conflict took place mostly

in Algeria, with ramifications in metropolitan France. The conflict, which was effectively launched by members of the National Liberation Front (FLN) on 1 November 1954, during "Red All Saints' Day," caused serious political crises in France, leading to the fall of the Fourth Republic (1946–58), which was replaced by the Fifth Republic with a strengthened presidency (Perville, 2002).

Algeria's first post-independence presidents, Ahmed Ben Bella and Houari Boumediene, pursued an anti-imperialist Third World solidarity agenda. As stated in the 1976 National Charter, Algerian leadership in the Group of 77, the Nonaligned Movement, and the push to build a New International Economic Order in North-South ties were all part of the justification for such a foreign policy. President Chadli Benjedid gradually shifted Algerian diplomacy's focus from Third World leadership to a regional strategy focused on the Maghreb, culminating in the 1980s with the founding of the Union du Maghreb Arabe. During the horrific domestic problems of the 1990s, Algerian foreign policy receded even further. The severity of the French soldiers' actions according to Matthew (2002) failed to win hearts and minds in Algeria, alienated support in metropolitan France, and tarnished French prestige overseas. As the conflict carried on, the French people gradually turned against it and many of France's important allies, including the US, shifted from backing France to abstaining from the UN discussion on Algeria. Following large pro-independence protests in Algiers and other towns in 1960, as well as a United Nations decision recognizing the right to independence, Charles de Gaulle, the first president of the Fifth Republic, chose to initiate a series of discussions with the FLN. These were completed in March 1962 with the signing of the Évian Accords.

Algerie-Française and the War of Algerian Independence (1830-1962)

France colonization in Algeria started with controversies. France, by that time, sought reasons for colonization of territories overseas of France. In 1827, one of the officials in Algiers enraged at the Government of France for refusing to pay a debt incurred at the days of Napoleon. The Algerian official then struck the French Consul in Algiers. This act was considered as an insult to France, demanding an apology. The official refused to apologize, so the Government of France blockaded port of Algiers in retaliation. Yet the blockade turned into failure: no apology was asked (Greenhalgh, 2014).

In 1830, some 34,000 French soldiers landed at Sidi Ferruch, twenty-seven kilometers west of Algiers. The French later invaded Algiers, facing no resistance. The colonization of Algeria had begun. The French was looking to expand their influence in North Africa, yet the colonization of Algiers gave the French Government nothing to do, especially the overthrow of the king Charles X for a constitutional monarchy. This confusion paved the way for the first revolution after French colonization Algiers, led by a local leader named Abd al-Qadir. Believed as a descendant of the Islamic Prophet Muhammad, Abd al-Qadir conducted guerilla warfare in 1830-1847 to expel the colonialists French. However, French army, with around 100,000 men suppressed the struggle with the strategy of 'total war', burning villages, crops, livestock's, and fining people who supported Abd al-Qadir. This so-called 'pacification' strategy succeeded, Abd al-Qadir finally surrendered to the authorities. After the defeat of Abd al-Qadir, the French was finally able to conquer all the territories of present-day Algeria. In 1871, Algeria was legally incorporated into the State of France becoming a department-distancing Algeria from the legal status of a 'colony', instead a part of

France itself – although the level of exploitation in Algeria should give them the status of colony instead (Greenhalgh, 2014).

On its way, the Algerians gained their awareness on their rights, especially the political rights, which they were actually entitled of, but never gained so. There were those Algerians who served in the French Army during the two world wars; there were also intellectuals and religious leaders who were influenced by the Arab nationalist movements for independence from foreign control, such as that in Egypt (Edge 2006). The choice of independence movement through armed struggle only came after the event of May 8, 1945. On that day, which was the day of the Allied victory over Nazi Germany, Algerian Muslims celebrated the event while also demanding equality. The event led into violence, house burning and manslaughter of thousands of Muslims. In the morning of *Toussaint* (All Saints' Day) of November 1, 1954, the *maquisards* (guerillas) under the name of National Liberation Front (*Front de Libération Nationale*, FLN) launched guerilla warfare against France. Attacking military installations, police posts, warehouses, communication facilities, and public utilities; the FLN later broadcasted a proclamation from Cairo, asking for Muslims to join the Algerian struggle. The Government of France responded in practically the same light. François Mitterrand, the French minister of interior responded that war was the only negotiation possible. Pierre Mendès-France, the French premier responded that since Algeria was a *département* of France, secession of Algeria from the metropolitan France would be impossible (Metz, 1994).

With some discarded French, German, and American light arms; those *maquisards* evolved into the National Liberation Army (*Armée de Libération Nationale*, ALN), a disciplined fighting force of nearly 40,000 men. Taking the strategies of ambushes and night raids, the ALN created fear among even their nationals, killing about 6,000 Muslims in the first two years. The French did not stand and keep silent. With the French Army, the French authority ruthlessly applied the principle of 'collective responsibility' to villages suspected of sheltering, supplying, or cooperating with the guerrillas (Metz, 1994).

One of the key events on the Algerian War of Independence is the event known as "The General's Putsch" in April 1961. Important elements of the French Army intended to seize control of Algeria as well as topple the leader of France, General Charles de Gaulle. This event marked the turning point in the attitude towards the Algerian War. De Gaulle himself by then prepared to abandon the colons. Talks with the FLN reopened at Evian in May 1961; a ceasefire by then was agreed to take force on March 19, 1962. One organization on the General's Putsch, the Secret Army Organization (*Organisation de l'Armée Secrète*, OAS) unleashed a new terrorist campaign in between the Evian Accord and the Referendum in Algeria, set three months after the enforcement of the ceasefire. The terrorist attacks were aimed not only to the French Army and police, but also to the Muslims, seeking to provoke a major breach the ceasefire. However, the OAS goals were failed, and a truce was signed on June 17, 1962, with some 350,000 colons and 1.4 million refugees left Algeria by then. The referendum was then done on July 1, 1962. Some 6 of 6.5 million Algerian electorate casted their ballots in the referendum for independence. The result was nearly unanimous. De Gaulle proclaimed Algeria an independent state on July 3. The Provisional Executive, however, proclaimed it on July 5, the 132nd anniversary of the French entry into Algeria as the day of independence. (Layachi, 2007).

Algeria's Foreign Policy under Ahmed Ben Bella (1962-1965)

Algeria established close relations with several other countries with a worldwide influence after gaining independence in 1962. Algerians continued the dynamics that began during the Algerian War of Independence and utilized the country's unique geopolitical location – at the crossroads of Europe, Sub-Saharan Africa, and the Arabian world – to push its own interests into the Cold War. Algeria started to regard itself as a full participant in the Cold War, rather than a bystander caught in the crossfire between the Western and Eastern blocs. Algeria, as a newly freed country from the colonial authority of a Western power – France – and having conducted a socialist-oriented liberation war, was naturally predisposed to move towards the Soviet Union and its supporters. The country's strategic advantages, on the other hand, boosted its prominence in the eyes of the Western block. France's primary goal was to protect its interests in Algeria's oil and gas fields. In 1963, Charles de Gaulle told Algeria's finance minister, "If the Algerian government keeps its obligations and considers our interests, it can depend on our assistance (Mesbah, 2013).

As a result, French economic aid continued to flow into Algeria in order to maintain control over the petroleum and gas industries, as well as to continue using Algerian land to conduct atomic testing in the Saharan desert. Under Ben Bella, diplomatic ties with France were restored, with oil and gas discussions resulting to a deal in 1964. The United States, for its part, wished to keep Algeria from becoming yet another socialist country to join the ranks of the Soviet bloc. As a result, in addition to modest military weapons, the US provided Algeria with a feeding program (PL-480) that gave free food to the populace. However, Algeria's backing for anti-colonial forces in Africa ran counter to American interests on the continent, resulting in an indirect confrontation with the US and an increasingly antagonistic relationship between the two countries (Byrne, 2009).

Algeria's Foreign Policy under Houari Boumediene (1965 –1978)

Algerian foreign relations under Houari Boumediene's presidency saw a change toward more stable and Algero-centred policies in response to Ben Bella's cosmopolitanism. This increased emphasis on the country's economic necessities and traditional Islamic culture, however, did not signal the end of the age of foreign ambitions. During the Boumediene era, Pan-Africanism and Pan-Arabism were strengthened. Algeria joined the Arab League in 1962 and hosted the Arab League's 1973 summit in Algiers. This close relationship with other Arab countries, particularly Egypt, was strengthened upon Boumediene's ascension to power. For example, in 1966, Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser dispatched hundreds of professors to assist Algeria in Arabizing its educational system. Following Nasser's death in 1970, Boumediene came to symbolize the political vision of Pan-Arabism; and in 1973, Algeria played a key part in the organizing of the war against Israel, as well as advocating for oil to be used as a weapon in the OPEC (Robert, 2016).

Furthermore, Algiers hosted the Pan-African Cultural Festival in 1969: this magnificent exhibition of an African identity, created from the continent's common experience with Western imperialism, unified anticolonial activists from many Third World nations. Far from being antagonistic, Pan-Arabism and Pan-Africanism were united under Algerian influence: following the Yom Kippur War in 1973, Boumediène convened an extraordinary session of the Organization for African Unity, which resulted in the formation of a special committee to coordinate the Organization and the Arab

League, as well as the suspension of diplomatic relations between 42 African states and Israel. Finally, Boumediène presided over a larger and more powerful Non-Aligned Movement in 1973 (Entelis, 2013). Algeria's international policy was driven by the desire for "liberation" from Western neocolonial economic dominance. As a result, in October 1967, Algiers hosted the conference of the "Group of 77," which unified 77 developing nations on key revisions: a worldwide reform of trade conditions and more coordination among Third World countries to determine raw material pricing. Furthermore, the major ideas of Boumediène's presentation to the United Nations General Assembly in 1974 – reparations for colonialism and resource transfer from North to South – were approved by the UN. The notion of a "new international economic order" emerged as a way to reshape the world economy to the benefit of developing countries, based on the principle of sovereign equality between states (Başbakanlık, 2011).

Boumediène took pleasure in Algeria's non-aligned position, asserting the country's remoteness from both Soviet-style socialism and Western capitalism, even as the country's prosperity grew. However, the Communist bloc's popularity did not dwindle. Indeed, due to their reliance on raw commodities and a lack of hard currency, trade between Third World nations remained minimal. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, was able to offer military weapons, industrial knowledge, and trade outputs: the Soviets supplanted France as the top destination for Algerian wine, and contributed 200,000 tons of wheat when the country was struck by a drought in 1966. Once again, the support Algeria received from the Soviet bloc was not exclusive to that of the Western bloc. Even though Boumediène took strong public stands, as when he claimed in 1969 after a summer of violence against Algerians living in France that if the French government could not insure the security of Algerian immigrants, he would repatriate them regardless of the cost, Algerian-French relations were progressively normalized during the 1970 decade. This posturing, like the nationalization of oil in 1971, served to increase his popularity in internal politics. However, France remained a model of prosperity, Algeria was still heavily dependent on France economically, and in 1975, French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing made the first presidential visit since independence. More generally, Algeria continued to do business with the West, and avoided to be overly dependent on Soviet support. Indeed, despite the break of relations with the United States after the Six-Day War in 1967, the Americans had almost replaced France as Algeria's primary trade partner by the early 1970s. Therefore, the competition between the West and the USSR gave Algeria opportunities to diversify its economic partnerships (Mokhefi, 2015).

After Abdelaziz Bouteflika, the country's long term president, was forced from power in April by the Hirak, a self-organized protest movement that erupted in February 2019 and drew millions of people to twice-weekly marches. However, this created a power vacuum that no existing elites could fill since they lacked popular legitimacy. Since that time, the army has been forced to publicly take the position of decision-maker in the country. Algerians have long been aware of the military leadership's omnipotence in the country, but the mask of a civilian president has allowed it to escape direct accountability for its acts. Since the president's removal, the army's only option for avoiding conflict with the massive popular protest movement – which is now demanding a transfer of military power to civilians and the establishment of the rule of law – has been to press for the appointment of a new head of state – anyone – as soon as possible. In September, army head Ahmed Gaid Salah stated that the presidential election will be held on December 12th, despite the fact that the election had already been postponed twice due to crowd pressure and did not

appear to be adequate to resolve the problem. The general's failure to create a political architecture that legitimizes the voting process, combined with the continuation of a non-elected interim government beyond its constitutional term, have created an ideological vacuum that is filled with the slogans of millions of demonstrators across the country every week. The Hirak has drastically shifted the balance of power in Algeria's political system by becoming, de facto, the sole feasible platform for any discussions on a new accord between the government and the people. Beyond the deadlock of rigged elections imposed from on high, the Algerian army's job will be to find a means to integrate the increased decision-making authority demanded by the Algerian people while creating an institutional framework that ensures its own legitimacy (Boubekeur, 2019).

Conclusion

It is important to understand the foreign policy posture of Algeria and how these factors have shaped it and continues to shape it. On October 10, 1988, President Bendjedid promised political reforms, which followed with a constitutional amendment accepted by a national referendum on November 3, 1988. The changes included the separation of party and state, restructuring of executive and legislative authority, free elections, elimination of ideological commitment to socialism, freedom to assemble and creation of independent parties, and reduction of the role of military in politics. Nonetheless, the Algerian government has a daunting task to unify three large factors in Algerian politics: the military, the Islamists, and the civic associations. All these factors have their own role in shaping Algerian domestic and foreign policy.

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