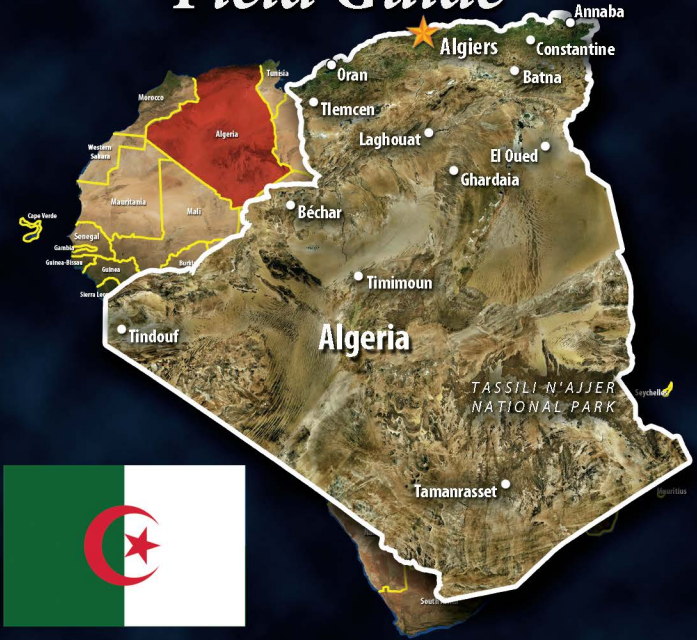
Expeditionary Culture Field Guide



ALGERIA

U.S. AIR FORCE

About this Guide

This guide is designed to prepare you to deploy to culturally complex environments and achieve mission objectives. The fundamental information contained within will help you understand the cultural dimension of your assigned location and gain skills necessary for success.

The guide consists of 2 parts:

Part 1 introduces "Culture General," the foundational knowledge you need to operate effectively in any global environment.

Part 2 presents "Culture Specific" Algeria, focusing on unique cultural features of Algerian society and is designed to complement other pre-deployment training. It applies culture-general concepts to help increase your knowledge of your assigned deployment location (Photo courtesy of Wikimedia).

For further information, visit the Air Force Culture and Language Center (AFCLC) website at www.airuniversity.af.edu/AFCLC/ or contact AFCLC's Region Team at AFCLC.Region@us.af.mil.

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PART 1 – CULTURE GENERAL

What is Culture?

Fundamental to all aspects of human existence, culture shapes the way humans view life and functions as a tool we use to adapt to our social and physical environments. A culture is the sum of all of the beliefs, values, behaviors, and symbols that have meaning for a society. All human beings have culture, and individuals within a culture share a general set of beliefs and values.

Members of a culture also usually assign the same meanings to the symbols in that culture. A symbol is when one thing – an image, word, object, idea, or story – represents another thing. For example, the American flag is a physical and visual symbol of a core American value – freedom. At the same time, the story of George Washington admitting to having chopped down a cherry tree is also symbolic, representing the importance Americans place on personal honesty and leadership integrity.

Force Multiplier

The military services have learned through experience the importance of understanding other cultures. Unlike the 20th-century bipolar world order that dominated US strategy for nearly half a century, today the US military is operating in what we classify as asymmetric or irregular conflict zones where the notion of cross-cultural interactions is on the leading edge of our engagement strategies.

We have come to view the people themselves, rather than the political system or physical environment, as the decisive feature in conflict areas. Our primary objective hinges on influencing constructive change through peaceful means where possible. We achieve this endeavor by encouraging local nationals to focus on developing stable political, social, and

economic institutions that reflect their cultural beliefs and traditions.

Therefore, understanding the basic concepts of culture serves as a force multiplier. Achieving an awareness and respect of a society's values and beliefs enables deploying forces to build relationships with people from other cultures, positively influence their actions, and ultimately achieve mission success.

Cultural Domains

Culture is not just represented by the beliefs we carry internally but also by our behaviors and by the systems members of a culture create to organize their lives. These systems, such as political or educational institutions, help us to live in a manner that is appropriate to our culture and encourages us to perpetuate that culture into the future.

We can organize these behaviors and systems into categories – what the Air Force refers to as "cultural domains" – in order to better understand the primary values and characteristics of a society. A cross-culturally competent military member can use these domains – which include kinship, language and communication, and social and political systems among others (see chart on next page) – as tools for understanding and adapting to any culture. For example, by understanding the ways different cultures define family or kinship, a deployed military member can more effectively interact with members of that culture.

Social Behaviors Across Cultures

While humankind shares basic behaviors, various groups enact or even group those behaviors differently across cultural boundaries. For example, all societies obtain food for survival, although agrarian societies generally produce their own food for limited consumption using very basic techniques.

Conversely, industrialized nations have more sophisticated market economies, producing foodstuffs for

universal consumption. Likewise, all cultures value history and tradition, although they represent these concepts through a variety of unique forms of symbolism. While the dominant world religions share the belief in one God, their worship practices vary with their traditional historical development. Similarly, in many kin-based cultures where familial bonds are foundational to social identity, it is customary for family or friends to serve as godparents, while for other societies this practice is nearly non-existent.

Worldview

One of our basic human behaviors is the tendency to classify others as similar or different according to our cultural standard.

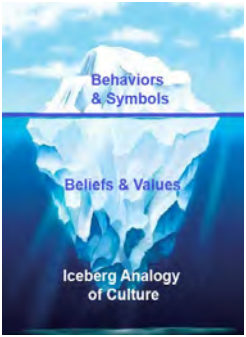
As depicted in the chart below, we can apply the 12 cultural domains to help us compare similarities and differences across cultures. We evaluate others' behavior to determine if they are "people like me" or "people not like me." Consequently, we assume that individuals falling into the "like me" category share our perspectives and values.

This collective perspective forms our worldview– how we see the world and understand our place in it. Your worldview functions as a lens through which you see and understand the world. It helps you to interpret your experiences and the values and behaviors of other people that you encounter. Consider your worldview as a way of framing behavior, providing an accountability standard for our actions and a logical explanation of why we individually or collectively act in a certain manner.

Cultural Belief System

An important component of a worldview is our belief system. A community's belief system sets its universal standards of what is good and bad, defines right and wrong behavior, and assigns a value of meaningful or meaningless. Our beliefs form the fundamental values we hold to be true – regardless of whether there is physical evidence to support these ideas. Beliefs are a central facet of human culture. They are shared views about world order and how the universe was physically and socially constructed.

While all people have beliefs, their specific components tend to vary depending upon respective world views. What people classify as good or bad, right or wrong depends on our deeply-held beliefs we started developing early in life that have help shape our characters. Likewise, these values are ingrained in our personalities and shape our behavior patterns and our self-identities. Because cultural beliefs are intensely held, they are difficult, though not impossible, to change.



Core Beliefs

Core beliefs shape and influence certain behaviors and also serve to rationalize those behaviors. Therefore, knowledge of individual or group beliefs can be useful in comprehending or making sense of their activities. We will use the iceberg model for classifying culture to illustrate two levels of meaning, as depicted. Beliefs and values, portrayed by the

deeper and greater level of the submerged iceberg, are seldom visible but are indicated / hinted at / referenced by our behaviors and symbols (top level). It is important to recognize, though, that the parts of culture that are not visible (under the waterline) are informing and shaping what is being made visible (above the waterline).

In many cases, different worldviews may present behaviors that are contrary to our own beliefs, particularly in many regions where US forces deploy. Your ability to suspend judgment in order to understand another perspective is essential to establishing relationships with your host-nation counterparts. The ability to withhold your opinion and strive to understand a culture from a member of that culture's perspective is known as cultural relativism. It often involves taking an alternate perspective when interpreting others' behaviors and is critical to your ability to achieve mission success.

As you travel throughout the African Continent, you will encounter cultural patterns of meaning that are common among most African countries. What follows is a general description of 12 cultural domains which are used to frame those commonalities.

CULTURAL DOMAINS

1. History and Myth

History and myth are related concepts. History is a record of the past that is based on verifiable facts and events. Myth can act as a type of historical record, although it is usually a story which members of a culture use to explain community origins or important events that are not verifiable or which occurred prior to written language.

Africa has a history that spans the entire existence of humankind. In ancient times prior to the emergence of written languages, history and wisdom were preserved across generations

and ethnic boundaries through oral folk legends or myths. Most early human evolution began as hunting and gathering cultures in East and South Africa, with countries such as Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, and South Africa renowned for their early human sites. In the last several millennia, the development of agriculture and pastoralism (animal herding) replaced hunting and gathering lifestyles (Photo: *Kutubiyya Mosque* courtesy of CultureGrams, ProQuest, 2013).

Ancient civilizations evolved in all corners of Africa, inspired in part by peoples from the Middle East bringing trade, beliefs, customs, language, and on occasion, colonization. Far from being isolated empires, the African civilizations were intimately connected by commerce and marriage throughout various regions of the continent, and when confronted by outsiders, managed to adapt to their influences. Eventually, Arab traders introduced Islam to Africa and also instituted the Trans-Saharan African slave trade that lasted from the 7th to 19th Centuries.

The “golden age” of European exploration, which lasted from the 18th to mid-20th century, prompted the wholesale exploitation of Africans resources – first human assets through slavery, followed by natural resources such as minerals, precious gems and metals, and wildlife, thereby diminishing most of what was traditional and African.

The introduction of the European Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade altered the slave trade through both the sheer number of Africans enslaved and through the cementing of a racist ideology of Black inferiority to legitimize the institution of slavery. Slavery decimated the African continent for over 400 years through the forced relocation of an estimated 25 to 30 million Africans worldwide. This figure does not include those Africans who died aboard ships or during capture. While abolition of the slave trade dissolved the institution of slavery, it did not end the European

presence on the African continent nor did it drastically alter their attitudes towards Africans.

Starting in the mid-19th century, European colonialism served to redefine African ethnic relations on a large scale; however, as African societies began to resist colonial rule and seek their independence, widespread ethnic conflict and genocide occurred. Sustained westernization and globalization continue to shape the continent through poverty, disease, and social reform. A history still to be recorded, Africa's future identity faces many challenges in critical areas such as environmental change, ethnic strife, women's health and security, and education.

2. Political and Social Relations

Political relations are the ways in which members of a community organize leadership, power, and authority. Social relations are all of the ways in which individuals are linked to others in their community. Traditional African political organizations in the form of bands, tribes, and chiefdoms have existed for several millennia and continue to influence contemporary African governments. Uncommon in modern society, bands are limited to hunting and gathering economies, such as the !Kung of the southern African Kalahari Desert and foragers of central African forests.

Tribes are still represented today across the African political landscape, although the use of the word "tribe" is sometimes misinterpreted due to its western notion of "primitiveness" and oftentimes substituted with the term "ethnic group." Lacking centralized authority, tribes are organized around segmented descent groups or in some cases age groups.

Everyday governance is discharged through councils of respected elders and sanctioned through ritual and other means. East African pastoralist groups such as the Maasai,

along with some West African tribes and the Berbers in North Africa, represent this type of organization.

Chiefdoms or kingdoms are ruled by kings or queens from a royal clan and generally incorporate millions of subjects. Kingdoms such as the Zulu or Swazi in southern Africa developed through conquest, while others like Ghana's Ashante developed through an association of related traditional states. However, colonialism eventually diluted the power and reach of these empires, whose leaders were often retained as indirect rulers or figureheads.

Today, all three of these political organizations still exist, although in the confines of modern African nation-states created by colonial powers who had little regard or understanding of African cultures. This juxtaposition of modernity with tradition has caused severe conflict throughout the continent.

Challenged to construct their respective "national" identities, regional leaders attempt to do so by diluting the traditionally cohesive power of ancestry. These national ruling elites, who derive their power from wealth and commerce rather than tribal affiliation, feel threatened by loyalty to these traditional organizations, labeling their rule as "tribalism."

This "class versus descent" scrimmage for power has resulted in conflicts across the continent and a dramatic divergence of interests. As a means to overcome these and other issues on the continent, a 55-nation federation, the African Union (AU), was formed in 2002. AU's charter is to promote "greater unity and solidarity between African countries and peoples" by building partnerships in all segments of "civil society."

3. Religion and Spirituality

Religion is a cultural belief system that provides meaning to members of a community. Religious and spiritual beliefs help preserve the social order by defining proper behavior. They also create social unity by defining shared identity, offer

individuals peace of mind, and explain the causes of events in a society. Prior to the arrival of Islam and Christianity, the African continent consisted of orally transmitted indigenous religious practices. As in many societies, African indigenous beliefs influenced diet, subsistence patterns, family structures, marriage practices, and healing and burial processes. In essence, Africans constructed their worldview through their indigenous religions.

Today, the African continent is primarily either Muslim or Christian. Other faiths such as Judaism and Hinduism exist as pockets in different regions of the continent, primarily in urban areas. The historical trajectories of Islamic and Christian expansion in Africa offer intriguing commonalities in how Africans across the continent initially reacted to the introduction of each of those religions. For example, it is common throughout the continent to find a blending of many elements of indigenous religious practices with local Islam and Christianity (Photo courtesy of Wikimedia).

Consequently, many African native religions share similarities with religions such as Christianity, Islam, and Judaism in their understanding of God as the creator and ruler of all life, although He is considered untouchable by humans.

However, unlike Christianity and Islam, many African indigenous religions believe that God is not directly involved in people's lives. To them there is a spirit world populated with former good and bad human beings. The good spirits intercede with God on behalf of their living families to whom they then relay God's will through dreams and acquired possessions. The bad spirits work to bring misfortune through sickness,

death, or natural disasters to those who behave inappropriately.

Many indigenous African religions revere "nature" spirits living in the sky, water, and forests. These impersonal spirits help protect people from harm and provide them with life's essential ingredients such as water, sun, and wildlife. This belief system is commonly referred to as animism.

Just as spirits mediate relations between God and humans, religious specialists act as mediators between spirits and humans to provide protection from harm.

4. Family and Kinship

The domain of family and kinship refers to groups of people related through blood ties, marriage, or through strong emotional bonds that influence them to treat each other like family members (often called "fictive kin"). The traditional African family with respect to marriage, family structure, and descent is a much different arrangement than is found in most American families. Likewise, there are several components of the traditional African family that are common to all African cultures.

First, perhaps the most difficult feature to reconcile to Americans is that of polygyny – the practice of a husband having more than one wife. A benefit of this arrangement is that it promotes societal alliances through marriage, procreation, and family wealth through female labor.

Second, due to polygyny, the family in most African cultures has historically consisted of an expanded set of kin or relatives that extends well beyond the American notion of a nuclear family. This arrangement created a family environment where children considered all siblings as "brothers and sisters" and all of the wives/mothers as "mother."

Third, the extended African family traces descent through either the male or female side of the family, a practice which differs considerably from the American family. Patrilineal descent (through the male side of the family) is the more common approach and usually features polygyny. The matrilineal (through the female bloodline) marriage pattern is more uncommon and almost always features monogamy – it is rare to encounter a wife having more than one husband.

Lastly, it is common for two or more blood lines (lineages) to share a common ancestor and collectively form a clan, which is the largest social unit. Clans do not have formal leaders or organizational structures. Membership is transferred from father to child and cuts across ethnic and social boundaries.

The dramatic social changes in Africa during and after colonialism in the last 4 decades have obviously affected the traditional family, and variations on these 3 features can be found across the continent.

5. Sex and Gender

Sex refers to the biological/reproductive differences between males and females, while gender is a more flexible concept that refers to a culture's categorizing of masculine and feminine behaviors, symbols, and social roles. Gender roles in Africa follow no single model nor is there a generalized concept of sex and common standard of sexual behavior.

Prehistorically, gender role differentiation in Africa's hunting and gathering cultures was based on a division of labor featuring different, yet complementary, sets of responsibilities for males and females, adults and children. Females gathered over half the caloric needs from natural vegetation, while also reproducing and raising offspring. Males were primarily hunters but also assisted with gathering.

These gender patterns continued as agricultural practices advanced.

Females shared in farming while continuing to provide for the family's subsistence, and males produced the cash crops. Pastoralists like the Maasai of Kenya traditionally have featured males involved in cattle-raising and females in food production.

The 19th-century European colonial period introduced a cash economy into Africa, with female labor used to produce the cash crops. By inserting male authority over females, colonial administrators disrupted the distinct yet complementary male/female relationship that had been traditionally African.

More recently, western influence across the continent has dramatically altered the traditional gender roles. Educational and professional opportunities for females, along with increased family migrations to urban areas, have radically altered traditional male and female gender roles.

Likewise, the number of singles parents and even child- or other relative-led families has increased with the predominance of HIV/AIDS-related deaths and warfare, further altering traditional gender responsibilities. Additionally, ethnic conflicts involving abuse of women are prevalent in many unstable countries, and while the rubric of traditional African gender generally remains, the forces of change are gradually ripping it away.

6. Language and Communication

Language is a system for sharing information symbolically, whereby words are used to represent ideas. Communication is defined as the cultural practice of sharing meaning in interaction, both verbally and non-verbally. America is predominantly a monolingual society, where traditionally, fluency in a second language has been considered a luxury rather than a necessity. Conversely, national survival for many societies in Africa required them throughout their existence to adopt multilingual

practices, if for no other reason than to preserve their native heritage.

You may find it challenging to comprehend the scope of Africa's linguistic diversity. There are over 2,000 African languages (many spoken-only) from 6 major language families, and perhaps 100 of these languages are used to communicate among the more dominant ethnic groups such as Berber, Swahili, Yoruba, and others.

Official languages of African nation-states are few, yet the linguistic diversity expressed across the continent (Nigeria has 250 languages) has prompted an awareness of the value of Africa's linguistic traditions. While most areas of the continent speak the adopted language of their colonial past – such as French and Portuguese in West Africa, French and Arabic in Morocco, and English in Kenya and South Africa – the majority of people also speak one or more traditional "indigenous" languages of their and other ethnic groups. As African independence spread throughout the continent, ethnic groups continued to depend on their indigenous identifiers, such as language, to celebrate their "release" from colonial rule and to preserve a sense of indigenous identity.

While communication styles tend to vary by ethnic or social groups, Africans generally are friendly and outgoing people although they tend to communicate with reserve to avoid confrontation. As in most kin-based societies, Africans believe that saving face or protecting one's honor and dignity are of utmost importance; therefore, they avoid public criticism and controversial topics at all costs – even to the extent of withholding their honest opinion or modifying the truth.

Africans admire and even expect extended greetings and small talk, and to attempt to rush or avoid social graces is considered disrespectful. Similarly, Africans avoid direct eye contact when communicating with new acquaintances and people of status,

particularly elders. They also are fond of non-verbal gestures, and it is common throughout African societies for members of the same gender to hold hands or touch while conversing.

7. Learning and Knowledge

All cultures require that the older generation transmit important information to the younger generation. This information can be strictly factual (for example, how to fulfill subsistence and health requirements) and culturally traditional (the beliefs, behaviors, and symbols that have meaning to the community). This knowledge transfer may occur through structured, formalized systems such as schools or through informal learning by watching adults or peers.

The contemporary African educational system hardly resembles the traditional pre-colonial structure, whereby community elders were primarily responsible for preparing youth for adulthood. Their instruction included fundamentals of ethnic ritual and ceremony, along with customary protocol for their distinctive gender roles. A rite-of-passage commemorating their successful journey from childhood to adulthood served as a form of graduation.

European colonialism brought a more structured, formal educational system that catered to a small group of African elite who demonstrated potential to administer expanding colonial territories. Following independence, many African nations adopted the European system because they believed it would prepare them to be more competitive in intra-continental and global marketplaces, thereby enhancing their quality of life.

However, progress in developing and maintaining reliable educational institutions has been slow for a variety of reasons. Since most Africans live in rural environments, they continue to rely heavily on child labor for family survival, resulting in decreased school enrollments or early withdrawals. Likewise, widespread HIV/AIDS epidemics, ethnic conflict, teacher and resource deficits, and inaccessibility to remote rural areas also hamper progress. According to 2017 statistics, about 80% of

the continent's children were enrolled in primary school, leaving over 33 million African children without any schooling at all.

8. Time and Space

In every society, people occupy space and time in ways that are not directly linked to physical survival. In low-context western cultures, people tend to be preoccupied with strict time management, devoting less effort to relationship-building. Conversely, most African cultures are traditionally high-context societies, whereby people center their activities on socializing and establishing close associations, having little regard for the passage-of-time.

Only after establishing trust and honor will your typical African counterpart agreeably proceed with business. In his worldview, time is a precious commodity used to establish relationships and form alliances. Any attempt to accelerate the tempo at the expense of social pleasantries will likely result in deadlock.

To an African, close physical proximity between individuals encourages cooperative trust, and for centuries they have viewed human linkage as a core element to survival. This closeness is best represented in a traditional African village where strong kinship connections are evidenced by a display of close interpersonal relations among family members.

While conventional African concepts of time and space remain intact, throughout the continent western influence and globalization have stepped up the pace of African living, mostly in urban areas. Consequently, rural-to-urban migrations have reshaped traditional social and subsistence patterns.

9. Aesthetics and Recreation

Every culture has its own forms of creative expression that are guided by aesthetic principles of imagination, beauty, skill and style. Prior to 19th-century European colonization of Africa,

recreation served a vital subsistence role, whereby adolescents and adults alike participated in intellectually stimulating leisurely activities that concurrently served to develop essential hunting and pastoral skills.

Games of chance and skill were important to early childhood development, providing social outlets within and outside their community. Featuring wrestling, jumping and running; traditional African sport was steeped in religious ritual.

Along with colonialism came the introduction to Africa of western sports such as soccer, cricket, rugby and track and field. This emphasis on western sport continued to thrive with African independence and globalization, as seen in sporting events such as the Olympics and the World Cup.

Leaders such as Nelson Mandela skillfully employed sport to promote a unified South African nation. Importing the predominantly “white” game of rugby, Mandela used it to fuse a racially divided country following his election in 1992. This event is the theme of the motion picture “Invictus,” exemplifying how sport can serve to create national identities and overcome ethnic division. His efforts have inspired many other African nations to follow suit.

Likewise, East African countries such as Kenya and Ethiopia have produced the world’s dominant male and female distance runners, and South Africa, Cameroon and Nigeria emerged as strong contenders in the 2010 World Cup. African nations are now competing in leagues such as the International Basketball Association (FIBA) World Championships, and there is also a

growing number of African basketball players on US college campuses and in the National Basketball Association (NBA).

10. Sustenance and Health

Societies have different methods of transforming natural resources into food. These methods can shape residence patterns, family structures and economics. Theories of disease and healing practices exist in all cultures and serve as adaptive responses to disease and illness.

Despite having only 17% of the global population, Africa is a victim of many of the world's debilitating health disorders. According to the World Health Organization, 70% of the global HIV/AIDS cases and 92% of malarial diseases occur in Africa.

These and other medical conditions are attributed primarily to viral infection and widespread poverty caused by extreme climatic conditions and civil unrest, coupled with inadequate preventative measures. While extensive drought generates widespread famine, civil disturbances generate millions of displaced persons. Likewise, with only 63% of the Sub-Saharan African population having access to safe drinking water, water-born bacterial diseases such as cholera and schistosomiasis are common.

Many people in Africa lack access to western medicine, and as a result depend on traditional health practices to combat disease. In addition, some traditional beliefs run counter to western medical practice and perhaps discourage individuals from utilizing those services even when they are available. This problem is further intensified by lack of federal regulatory healthcare management.

While modern healthcare procedures are more common in urban areas, many rural people rely on traditional practitioners who use a variety of plants and herbs to treat patients. Similarly, many families have their own secret remedies. While in some cases traditional medicine proves effective with fewer side effects than modern drugs, traditional practices do not adequately treat many of the more serious conditions.

On a positive note, western influence has stimulated some progress in combating Africa's health crisis. More resources are devoted to achieving basic human security by assessing disease symptoms early and with scientific accuracy.

11. Economics and Resources

This domain refers to beliefs regarding appropriate ways for a society to produce, distribute, and consume goods and services. Traditionally having an agrarian-based economy, Africa today remains predominantly agricultural, featuring less industrialization than most other parts of the world. Post-colonial adversities such as civil war, disease, poverty, and unstable dictatorships posed unusual hardship on several young African nations; however, Africa currently stands at the cross-roads of economic development with many nations becoming some of fastest growing regions in the world.

Colonialism institutionalized the exploitation of Africa's mineral resources, resulting in today's oil industry dominating the economic market in several coastal regions. A surge in global oil prices; a growing African middle class; and reduction in civil wars, foreign aid, and inflation collectively promise a more positive outlook for the future.

Countries such as Botswana, Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt, and South Africa are economically the wealthiest on the continent, with regions such as East Africa showing signs of economic stability. Despite the economic upswing, much of sub-Saharan

Africa's future economic prosperity is held hostage by devastating diseases such as AIDS, particularly in areas of southern Africa, and the growing effects of climate change and man-made environmental degradation throughout the subcontinent.

12. Technology and Material

Societies use technology to transform their physical world, and culture heavily influences the development and use of technology. Africa lags far behind most of the world in manufacturing capacity and output. Even the more economically-developed nations such as South Africa are competitively weak when compared to non-African industrialized nations. During the 1970s and 1980s, Africa experienced some growth in raw exports although this increase did little to boost long-term manufacturing capacity.

Today, Africa is experiencing an actual decline in manufacturing capacity due primarily to a lull in the global economy, along with other indigenous issues such as environmental stress, poor physical and organizational infrastructure, and a shortage of skilled personnel. Likewise, African manufacturing capacity is no match against global powers such as China and significant Southeast Asian markets.

International aid from both governmental and non-governmental organizations has helped African nations establish preliminary economic footholds. For example, many of them have dedicated industrial developmental zones to attract foreign investment and increase export-related manufacturing capacity, although Africa is far removed from having a significant role in the global marketplace in the foreseeable future.

Now that we have introduced general concepts that characterize African society at large, we will now focus on specific features of Algerian society.

PART 2 – CULTURE SPECIFIC

1. HISTORY AND MYTH

Overview

Shaped by waves of foreign influences, Algeria is a rich and vibrant society of both cultural and geographic contrasts. Bloodshed has marked much of Algeria's modern history, although the fear of renewed violence, coupled with promises of reforms, have thus far helped to insulate Algeria from the political changes sweeping other parts of the Middle East.

Early History

Algeria has been populated for over 200,000 years. While the earliest inhabitants were hunter-gatherers, later people transitioned to a more settled cattle-herding lifestyle as depicted in cave paintings crafted about 8,000 years ago at Tassili n'Ajjer in southeastern Algeria (pictured). Other paintings show the crocodiles, rhinoceroses, and other animals that lived in the once-lush Sahara. These ancestors of today's Berber population wore woven clothes, made pottery, and domesticated dogs before the Sahara became desert around 3000 BC.

The Influence of Regional Empires

Carthage: Phoenicians from the eastern Mediterranean established Carthage in present-day Tunisia by 800 BC, creating trade links with Berber populations throughout Algeria (see *Political and Social Relations*). The Berbers were largely subservient to the Phoenicians: some were enslaved or forced to fight in the military, while others were obliged to pay tribute to Carthage. After a war between Rome and Carthage, Berber soldiers revolted around 240 BC and helped to diminish Carthagian control in the region.

Numidians: Between 202 and 25 BC, a particularly strong indigenous Berber kingdom called Numidia existed in northern

Algeria. The kingdom was historically divided, with the eastern portion allied with Carthage and the western portion allied with Rome. When King Masinissa assumed leadership in the East, he switched his allegiance to Rome and was subsequently rewarded with leadership of both halves of Numidia and hundreds of new Roman colonies in his territory.

Romans: Algeria proved difficult to rule despite the fact that it provided significant amounts of grain to the Roman Empire during 4 centuries of Roman domination. Between the 2nd and 4th centuries AD, much of Algeria was Christianized while several Jewish communities—composed of Berber converts, exiles from Palestine, and other settlers—flourished (see *Religion and Spirituality*). Berber rebellions against Roman rule were ongoing and especially vigorous in the 4th century (Pictured: Roman Arc of Trajan in Algeria).

Vandals and Byzantines: In 429 AD, Germanic Vandals defeated Rome to establish a short-lived coastal kingdom. As the Roman Empire's successor, the Byzantine Empire defeated the Vandals in 533 AD and gained control of eastern Algeria. Byzantine's disinterest and poor governance, coupled with indigenous Berber groups' ongoing opposition, gave the Berbers considerable autonomy during this time.

Advent of Islam

Desiring to spread their new religion, early Muslim converts from the Arabian Peninsula invaded Algeria around 642 AD, beginning nearly 1,200 years of uninterrupted Islamic rule that would leave an indelible imprint on Algerian society (see *Religion and Spirituality*). While some nomadic Berber groups embraced the new religion and facilitated further Arab conquests, other Berber groups, including some Christian and Jewish groups, initially resisted in defense of their lifestyles.

While early Arab invaders were self-governed, the Umayyad caliphate from Syria moved in once it recognized the benefits of controlling the Mediterranean Sea. Many Berbers converted en masse in the face of this organized might. Berbers often

accepted Islam while rejecting Arabization, the process by which non-Arab people adopt Arabic language and cultural customs in place of their own. Many Berber narratives today reflect pride in Berbers' Islamic faith, while indicating their preference for their own traditions over Arabic ones.

Dihya al-Kahina: Between History and Myth

In contrast to history, which is intended to serve as an objective record of the past based on verifiable facts, myths embody cultural values and often explain the origins of humans and the natural world. Myths are important because they provide a sense of unique heritage and identity.

The Algerian myth of Dihya al-Kahina is based on a real person who lived in the Aures Mountains of Algeria in the 700s AD and fought Muslim invaders. Sources variously describe her as a queen of the Berbers, Jewess, female warrior, despot, bird enthusiast, and sorceress. Other sources describe her as pagan or Christian because she carried icons into battle, while still others dispute that she was not a woman at all. Kahina is a title that some critics use mockingly to suggest she could tell the future, which is forbidden in Islam, while others suggest this name alludes to her membership in a priestly Jewish tribe.

Although the historical truth remains murky, different Algerian groups have borrowed aspects of the Dihya legends to fit their own narratives. Muslim commentators suggest Dihya represented everything wrong with pre-Islamic Algeria, while exalting virtuous Arab conquerors. Berbers celebrate her fierce independence in the wake of Arabization and use her name proudly. The French even referred to this myth to emphasize that Arab and Muslim cultures were once foreign invaders, too.

Islamic Rule

Different Islamic groups governed Algeria from the late 7th to the 13th centuries with varying degrees of indigenous support. Although militarily weak, Sunni Rustimid rule allowed a renaissance of arts and sciences from 761 to 909. Shia Fatimids governed next but then outsourced their rule to the Berber Zirids in 972 who returned Algeria to Sunnism (see *Religion and Spirituality*). Tired of Berber intransigence and angered by the reversion to Sunnism, the Fatimids sent the Arab Banu Hilal tribe to suppress the Berbers in the 1050s, which accelerated Arabization (Pictured: The Sidi Uqba Mosque circa 1890).

An Islamic Berber dynasty called the Almoravids then conquered Algiers, Algeria, and parts of Spain from its capital in Marrakesh, Morocco. In 1151, the Almohads, followers of the Maliki school of Sunni Islam (still predominant today), supplanted the Almoravids (see *Religion and Spirituality*). By the 13th century, Algeria was split again with the Hafsids governing eastern Algeria from Tunis, Tunisia and the Zianides controlling western Algeria from Tlemcen, Algeria.

Spain, Red Beard, and the Ottoman Empire

Spain's unification under Christian control in 1492 produced two key consequences for Algeria—Spain began to vie for naval supremacy in the Mediterranean, while Jews and Muslims who had been exiled from Spain fled to Algeria. Spain's maneuverings made Algeria strategically important and vulnerable to Spanish attacks. By the early 1500s, Spain controlled several Algerian coastal cities. Desperate, Algeria appealed to the Ottoman Empire centered in Istanbul, Turkey for help to fend off Spanish incursions.

In 1516, Muslim pirate Khayr ad-Din, known as Red Beard, established a base at Algiers to protect Algeria from Spanish assaults, and in turn, counterattack and plunder Spain. Khayr ad-Din eventually became an Ottoman provincial governor and thus helped establish Ottoman rule in Algeria.

Ottoman provincial governors had lifetime appointments but were later replaced by pashas who ruled for 3-year terms with the help of elite soldiers (***janissaries***) from around the Empire. Ottoman rule excluded Arabic-speaking and Berber peoples from positions of leadership: natives became second-class citizens in their own lands. By the mid-1600s, the poorly paid ***janissaries*** rebelled, establishing a different ruling structure led by a ***dey***. Although ***deys*** ruled from 1671 to 1830, centralized Turkish control gradually diminished.

France Invades

To salvage his rule at home and protest mistreatment of a French diplomat to Algeria, French King Charles X blockaded Algerian ports beginning in 1827, executing a French invasion of Algiers on July 5, 1830. French troops raped locals, desecrated religious sites, and plundered the treasury. While Charles X abdicated his throne a month later, French parliamentarians voted to keep Algeria to preserve national prestige. By the 1940s French, Spanish, Italian, and Maltese settlers known as ***colons*** or ***pied noirs*** (colonists or black feet) began colonization in earnest. In 1848, Algeria was designated an integral part of France, although parts of the Sahara were not conquered until 1920.

Abd al-Qadir: Algerians challenged French domination from the beginning. Leveraging religious and tribal networks for support, Abd al-Qadir (pictured) set up a viable Muslim state in 1832. By 1839, it encompassed two-thirds of Algeria and blocked French territorial expansion into the interior. A series of battles with French forces—interrupted briefly by a 1837 treaty—ended in Abd al-Qadir's defeat in 1847. Abd al-Qadir surrendered on the condition that he would not be incarcerated or forced into exile, although the French reneged and imprisoned him until 1852. Once free, Abd al-Qadir moved to Damascus, Syria where he thwarted a massacre of Christians, including the French consul, for which the French honored him. Although he never returned to Algeria, Abd al-Qadir became an enduring symbol of resistance.

Impact of French colonization

In 2012, French President François Hollande acknowledged that for 132 years "Algeria was subjected to a brutal and unfair system: colonization." Indeed, French colonial leaders had done little to improve the lives of indigenous Algerians and also treated poor European settlers badly. Although the French had established new health services, infrastructure, and agricultural methods, these projects were undertaken largely to enhance Algeria's value to France and encourage European settlement.

French colonial authorities subjected Algerians to heavy tax burdens and land confiscations. By the early 1900s, non-European indigenous Algerians comprised 90% of the population and paid 70% of taxes, although they generated a mere 20% of national income. Despite their contributions, most Algerians were denied French citizenship and viewed merely as subjects with limited rights.

French colonial policies also eroded traditional religious education, while French attempts at bicultural instruction failed (see *Learning and Knowledge*). On the eve of independence, only 10% of Algerians could read, as French education chiefly benefitted ***colons*** and Algerian elites. Frustrated by the injustice of colonial policies, a handful of French-educated Muslim Algerians—called ***évolués*** or evolved ones—began advocating for greater equality and Algerian nationalism (Photo: An Algerian market in 1899).

Growing Nationalism

The 1920s and 1930s saw an increase in national consciousness and the founding of several pro-independence groups. Although Algerian Muslims fought and died alongside French soldiers during World War II, they were still denied the equal rights requested in a 1943 manifesto. As the war ended, Algerian nationalists, encouraged by global anti-colonial movements, pressed for independence.

In May 1945, the French brutally crushed peaceful independence demonstrations in the towns of Sétif and Guelma. Algerians killed over 100 ***colons*** in response, inciting French reprisals that resulted in the deaths of over 8,000

Algerians. This calamity further tainted French and Muslim relations, substantiating some nationalists' beliefs that Algerian sovereignty would require armed struggle.

The War for Independence

The Algerian struggles came to head on November 1, 1954 when members of the new pro-independence National Liberation Front (FLN) attacked police, military, and other public ***colon*** institutions. Refusing to negotiate with what French Minister of the Interior François Mitterrand called "enemies of the homeland," the French authorities responded with more force and escalated violence on both sides. Lopsided death totals like those from the 1955 Battle of Philippeville—in which 123 ***colons*** versus 12,000 Algerians died—helped persuade Algerians who were initially reluctant to support independence.

All-out war commenced shortly thereafter. ***Colons*** formed vigilante groups to conduct ***ratonades*** (literally "rat hunts") against Algerians, while FLN guerilla attacks targeted ***colon*** civilians and Algerian collaborators (Photo: FLN leaders in 1962).

The Battle of Algiers, a centerpiece of the urban insurgency, began on September 30, 1956 with female revolutionaries bombing downtown sites. Some 400,000 French troops were deployed to quell the rebellion as local civilian French leadership abdicated control to the military. Although the battle was a tactical success for France, its sheer force and ethically questionable means repulsed many in France and inspired Algerian revolutionaries to fight harder. Conflicts continued for several more years.

Referendum: In 1958, French prime minister Charles De Gaulle claimed Algeria would always be French territory but began making concessions in the attempt to reduce further resistance. FLN leaders rejected promises of voting rights and greater autonomy and stepped up their attacks. A ceasefire declared in March 1962 afforded Algeria the right to self-

determination and also asserted the rights of ***colons***. In a July 1962 referendum, Algerians voted overwhelmingly for independence (Pictured: Referendum ballot). About 1 million Algerians died in the struggle, while 1 million ***colons*** returned to France.

RÉFÉRENDUM D'AUTODÉTERMINATION
DU 1er JUILLET 1962
Voulez-vous que l'Algérie devienne un État indépendant coopérant avec la France dans les conditions définies par les déclarations du 19 mars 1962?
هَلْ تُرِيد أنْ تُصْبِحَ ٱلْجَزَائِر دَوْلَة مُسْتَقِلَّة
مُتَعَاوِنَة مَعَ فَرَنْسَا حَسَبَ الشروط المُقَرَّرَة في
تَصْرِيحَات ١٩ مَارس ١٩٦٢؟
OUI
نعم

Post-Independence

After independence, the FLN transitioned from a violent opposition group to a governing power. Algeria's first President, pro-Socialist FLN leader Ahmed Ben Bella, inherited a scarred country with 70% unemployment and damaged infrastructure. He implemented an ineffective policy of ***autogestion***, or self-management, in which factory and agricultural workers took control of vacant enterprises. In 1965, defense minister and FLN Chief of Staff Colonel Houari Boumedienne ousted Bella, citing his unsuccessful policies and personal eccentricities.

Boumedienne defended army interests and helped to modernize Algeria. Under his authoritarian watch, life expectancy and literacy rates improved, industrialization began, agriculture was collectivized, and the oil industry was nationalized. The 1976 constitution enshrined socialism and Islam as the nation's building blocks and made the FLN the only permissible political party. After Boumedienne's December 1978 death, Chadli Bendjedid assumed the Presidency.

Discontent and Democracy: During the 1980s, Algeria simmered with unrest. Berbers protested Arabization, while Islamists protested concessions to the Berbers and creeping "indecent" secular mores. The government walked a fine line between courting Islamists to bolster its religious credentials and cracking down on them with police violence.

Soaring inflation, high unemployment, unfavorable oil prices, and other economic woes prompted anti-government protests in the late 1980s. In reaction to severe riots in October 1988, the government changed the constitution to allow opposition political parties. One of the over 20 new parties, the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), proclaimed that a vote for it was a vote for God and that anything else was blasphemy.

After the FIS party's local electoral success in 1990, the FLN government jailed FIS leaders and imposed electoral constraints. Nevertheless, the FIS won 188 of 430 seats outright in the December 1991 general elections (to the FLN's 15 seats) and seemed poised to win enough seats in a second round of voting to amend the constitution in its favor.

Civil War

In January 1992, the military stepped in to prevent the second round of voting, dissolved Parliament, and forced Bendjedid to resign, ushering in a 5-member High State Council (HCS) chaired by Mohamed Boudiaf. Boudiaf outlawed the FIS in March, sparking clashes between government security forces and FIS activists. A bodyguard with alleged Islamist ties assassinated Boudiaf in June 1992. These incidents precipitated the civil war that Algerians call the "Dark Decade."

Multiple Islamist armed groups emerged, targeting government officials and security forces, journalists, and intellectuals. They also fought among themselves and by late 1993 had attacked foreigners and civilians as well. The Islamic Armed Movement (MIA) regrouped into the Islamic Salvation Army (AIS), the military wing of the FIS. The Armed Islamic Group (GIA) battled the FIS and then splintered to form the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC). The government responded with extrajudicial killings and aerial bombings. An estimated 200,000 people died and over 6,000 disappeared in the war.

In the midst of the violence, former HCS chair Liamine Zeroual won a 5-year presidential term in 1995, and 1997 parliamentary elections brought the newly-formed Democratic National Rally and moderate Islamist Movement of Society for Peace to power. In 1999, military-backed candidate Abdelaziz Bouteflika (pictured) was elected President.

Approved by 98% of voters, the 1999 Civil Concord law pardoned thousands of fighters. This accord halted the conflict and disbanded AIS, but some groups continued their attacks.

Post-Civil War Developments

As Algeria emerged from the violence of the civil war, some Berber groups called for greater autonomy and cultural recognition in 2001, resulting in clashes with government security forces. Bouteflika promised greater investment in the Berber regions and acknowledged the Berber language as a national language (see *Language and Communication*).

Algerian voters re-elected Bouteflika in 2004 amid claims of voting fraud. Attempting to heal societal wounds, legislators passed the 2005 Civil Harmony Act and Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation, granting amnesty for most crimes committed during the war and the release of some prisoners.

Rejecting several amnesty offers, GSPC fighters never disbanded. Instead, GSPC had transformed into al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) by 2007. Initially organized to overthrow governments in the region and establish Islamic states, AQIM carried out multiple bombings in the capital city of Algiers in 2007 and 2008, killing dozens and leading the Algerian military to assume a more active role in countering terrorism (see *Political and Social Relations*).

Algeria Amidst Arab Spring Uprisings

After removing constitutional barriers to his re-election, Bouteflika was elected to a third term in 2009 in the midst of major challenges. Inspired by Arab Spring uprisings (series of political protest and civil war in parts of North Africa) in neighboring Tunisia, Algerians protested high unemployment and food prices in early 2011. Although Algerian grievances resemble those of Tunisia and Egypt, where their governments were overthrown, Algerian protests have been less severe for fear of renewed bloodshed. As of early 2013, Algerian leaders have pursued minor reforms, lifted emergency laws, and increased wages and subsidies. While small demonstrations are likely to continue, a full-scale revolution is unlikely, in part because Algerians are tired of instability and violence.

2. POLITICAL AND SOCIAL RELATIONS

Official Name

People's Democratic Republic of Algeria
Al Jumhuriyah al Jaza'iriyah ad Dimugratiyah ash Sha'biyah (Arabic)
République Algérienne Démocratique et Populaire (French)
Tagduda Tamegdayt Tayerfant Tazzayrit (Tamazight)

Political Borders

Tunisia: 500 mi
Libya: 610 mi
Niger: 594 mi
Mali: 855 mi
Mauritania: 288 mi
Western Sahara: 26 mi
Morocco: 969 mi
Coastline: 620 mi

Capital

Algiers

Demographics

Algeria's population of 43 million is growing at approximately 1.52% per year. As of 2020, 74% of Algerians live in urban areas primarily in the North, the other 26% live primarily in the south. The population density of Algeria is 45 people per sq mi. Nearly 2.8 million people live in Algiers, the largest city, with a population density of 19,971 people per sq mi.

Flag

The Algerian flag consists of 2 equal vertical bands of green (hoist side) and white with a red crescent and star in the center. Green symbolizes Islam and nature, white is for peace and purity, and red for liberty. The crescent and star symbols represent Islam. The extra-long crescent horns are associated with happiness in Algeria.

Geography

With an area of 919,595 square miles, Algeria is the largest country in Africa by territorial size and is almost 3.5 times the size of Texas. Situated in North Africa, Algeria borders Tunisia and Libya to the East; Niger, Mali, and Mauritania to the South; and Morocco and Western Sahara to the West. Algeria has an extended northern coastline along the Mediterranean Sea.

Algeria has 3 distinct geographic regions: the coastline and northern mountains—collectively referred to as the ***Tell***—the high plateau, and the Sahara Desert. The Sahara covers over 80% of Algeria and includes a variety of desert landscapes. The ***Tell*** and highlands represent 4% and 9% of Algeria's total area respectively. Only 3% of Algerian land today is arable, and less than 0.3% of land is devoted to permanent crop cultivation.

Algeria has 2 mountain ranges: the Tell Atlas in the North along the coast and the Ahaggar in the desertous Southwest. Algeria's highest point is Mount Tahat (pictured), a 9,852-ft peak in southern Algeria that is also the tallest in the Ahaggar range. The lowest point is Chott Melrhir, a salt lake in the Northeast 131 ft below sea level. The Tell Atlas Mountains contain the only rivers that remain wet all year, while the high plateau has salty marshes and shallow lakes. Groundwater resources are limited and depend on erratic rains.

Climate

Algeria's 3 regions have distinct climates. The ***Tell*** has a mild, temperate climate similar to southern California, characterized by warm summers and cool, wet winters. While summer temperatures average in the 90s°F, winter temperatures usually hover in the 50s°F. In the mountains, annual rainfall totals approach 30 inches, and snow is usual. Largely barren and arid, the high plateau experiences hot summers and cold, sometimes freezing winters. This region receives most of its annual 10-20in of rain in winter and spring.

The world's largest subtropical desert, the Sahara, receives infrequent precipitation: some parts do not see rain for up to 20 years. Temperatures can reach 130°F in the shade in May, the

hottest month, although evening temperatures drop dramatically. Sirocco winds carry dust and sand from the Sahara across Algeria in the summer.

Natural Hazards

Floods, earthquakes, fires, and mudslides are common natural hazards in northern Algeria, threatening most of the country's population and critical infrastructure. Algeria had 36 floods between 1980 and 2010, while earthquakes in 1980 and 2003 killed over 2,000 people each and caused extensive damage.

Government

Although recognized as a democracy, the President and an unelected and unaccountable group of military and intelligence officials known as the ***le Pouvoir*** ("the power" in French) hold the real power in the republic. The country is divided administratively into 48 ***wilayat*** ("provinces" in Arabic).

Executive Branch

Elected by popular vote, the President serves as head-of-state and Minister of National Defense. Current President Abdelmadjid Tebboune, assumed office on 19 December 2019. The President appoints provincial governors, certain legislators, cabinet officials, and the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister has far less power than the President. As head-of-government, he advises the President on appointments and presents the government's program in the legislature. Current Prime Minister Abdelaziz Djerad was appointed in December 2019.

Legislative Branch

Officially, legislative authority rests with a 2-chamber Parliament, composed of the 144-member upper Council of the Nation and the 462-member lower National People's Assembly (pictured). The President selects 1/3rd of the Council of the Nation representatives, while local assemblies select the remaining 96 members to serve 6-year terms. National People's Assembly members are popularly elected to 5-year terms; 8 seats are reserved for

Algerians living abroad. In the May 2017 legislative elections, the President's National Liberation Front (FLN) won 164 of 462 lower house seats, while the National Rally for Democracy party received 97 seats. In total, 34 parties are represented.

Judicial Branch

Algeria's legal code is a mix of French civil and ***shari'a*** or Islamic law elements. Constitutionally upheld as the state religion, Islam informs judicial matters on family, personal status, and inheritance (see *Family and Kinship*). Civil and criminal cases are first tried in one of the 218 sub-provincial courts. Cases may be elevated to provincial level courts or the Supreme Court for appeal. Heavy case loads, inadequate rule of law, and low judicial salaries contribute to courts' corruption.

Political Climate

Algerian laws and organizational structures limit democracy. Although Algerians hold strong political opinions and try to stay informed, they are unable to influence political outcomes. Despite 40 registered political parties, there is little meaningful political expression or accountability. Election fraud, from meddling to outright violence, is routine. Worse, the underlying circumstances that led to Civil War in the 1990s have not been resolved (see *History and Myth*). Many Islamic parties remain outlawed, and the military would likely step in again if it believed electoral outcomes threatened its power (Photo: The Central Military Museum in Algiers, Algeria).

Despite the nominal independence of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches, *le Pouvoir* and the President dominate the Algerian government. Potential successors to President Bouteflika, who seemed unlikely to seek another term in 2014 due to poor health, are jockeying for position. However, observers speculate that the real decision-making will take place behind closed doors rather than in a democratic process.

Many political leaders have access to Algeria's petroleum wealth, which accounts for 60% of government revenues (see

Economics and Resources). Amidst protests against rising food prices, unemployment, housing shortages, and inadequate political freedoms, these revenues have helped regime members stay in power. Since the Arab Spring uprisings (see *History and Myth*), Algeria's leaders have enacted some reforms, thereby ending the state of emergency that had been in place since 1992. Nevertheless, there has been little change in the political system as a whole.

Defense

Algeria is a regional military and intelligence powerhouse. Its military, the People's National Army (ANP), comprises the Land Forces, the Navy of the Republic of Algeria, the Air Force, and the Territorial Air Defense Forces. Before 1988's shift to a multi-party system, the military was a conscription-based force. Today, the Algerian military is a well-trained professional force, receiving most of its military equipment from Russia and China.

Algeria spent nearly $10.39 billion on military expenses in 2019. In 2019, active armed forces personnel numbered over 130,000 and defense expenditure comprised 6.02% of the GDP. Male Algerians between the ages of 19 and 30 must complete 18 months of military service (Photo: Then-US Air Forces in Europe Commander General in Algeria in 2006).

Algeria's armed forces have adapted to increased internal security threats since the 1990s. Algeria has augmented its counter-terrorism (CT) and anti-insurgency capabilities and collaborates with regional partners to reduce terrorist threats. Algeria's peacekeeping activities have been limited to Africa.

Air Force and Territorial Air Defense Force: Internally focused, the Air Force's principal tasks are to support anti-terrorist operations, bolster land and maritime reconnaissance and surveillance, and provide airlift support. Separated from the Air Force in 1988, the Territorial Air Defense Force defends Algerian air space and controls general air traffic. As of mid-2016, the Air Force counted 119 combat aircraft, 8

reconnaissance aircraft, 67 transport planes, 166 helicopters, and 14,000 personnel. Russia is the Air Force's most important supplier, although Algeria has considered US, French, and Swedish bids to support new combat aircraft and airborne early warning and control capabilities.

Land Forces: Algeria's largest service, the Land Forces, developed out of the President's FLN's armed wing. Today, its mission centers on protecting Algeria from external threats and maintaining internal security, often by providing artillery and air support to security force operations. Land Forces totaled 447,200 personnel including paramilitary and reserves.

Navy: Algerian sailors (pictured) safeguard the country's coastline, harbors, territorial waters, and sea lines of communication from 5 naval bases on the Mediterranean Sea. The Navy focuses on conventional sea challenges. This orientation, coupled with a relatively small budget, makes it difficult to combat the less traditional naval challenges it faces, including migration, smuggling, and terrorism at sea. Modernization is slowly underway through refurbishments and procurements of submarines, missiles, corvettes, and more. To fulfill its CT support role, the Navy employs 3 Rais-class frigates that could serve as amphibious operations platforms. As of 2019, there were 6,500 Algerian naval and coast guard personnel.

Paramilitary Forces and National Police: The National Gendarmerie and National Police share responsibility for internal security and CT operations. With its 20,000 members, the National Gendarmerie serves as a rural paramilitary police force, answering directly to the President. The 150,000-strong National Police keeps order in urban areas and reports to the Minister of the Interior. Both groups have been accused of human rights violations such as harassing journalists and torturing CT suspects. Another 1,200 elite Republican Guard corps and 16,000 internal security forces report to the General Directorate of National Security and the Ministry of Interior.

Algerian Air Force Rank Insignia

Airman 1st Class | Corporal | Sergeant | Staff Sergeant | Master Sergeant | Sergeant Major | 2nd Lieutenant

1st Lieutenant | Captain | Major | Lt Colonel | Colonel | Brig Gen | Maj Gen | Lt Gen

Security Issues

Terrorism: Terrorism is Algeria's chief security threat. From its bases in the Kabyle region and neighboring Mali, al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM - see *History and Myth*) remains the most active insurgent group threatening regional stability. AQIM has bombed, assassinated, and ambushed foreigners and members of the Algerian government, military, and police.

While al-Qaeda may not maintain centralized control over AQIM, it continues to influence and encourage AQIM and similar groups' terrorist acts. AQIM is also involved in criminal enterprises to fund its activities. Kidnapping is a significant moneymaker in spite of Algerian efforts to dissuade other countries from paying ransoms for their citizens. In January 2013, 30 hostages taken from a southeastern Algerian oil plant were killed during an Algerian raid to rescue them from an AQIM-associated group called the Battalion of Blood.

Trafficking and Refugees: Because of its porous borders and location between sub-Saharan Africa and Europe, Algeria is a country of origin and transit point for human-trafficking. The Algerian government does not comply with the minimum standards for eliminating labor and sex-trafficking, achieving negligible efforts to solve the problem. This disinterest, plus ongoing civil unrest, poverty, and lack of employment opportunities, has allowed criminal syndicates to expand their trafficking and smuggling operations.

Algeria hosts over 165,000 refugees, most of whom are fleeing instability in other parts of Africa. Refugees from Western Sahara (pictured) live in camps controlled by Western Sahara's chief organization fighting for independence from Morocco, posing a point of contention in Morocco-Algerian relations. In addition to the over 4,000 Palestinian refugees present in the country, Algeria houses a number of other Arabs—Iraqis, Libyans, and Syrians—who are attempting to escape unrest in their home countries.

Foreign Relations

Algeria's fierce fight for independence helped to steer its early foreign policy toward the Non-Aligned Movement, a bloc of developing countries favoring Third World solidarity over imperialism or alignment with either the US or USSR during the Cold War. This course led Algeria to form ties with non-Western states, including Indonesia and Vietnam, which shared similar independence experiences. Algeria actively promoted these ideas until the 1990s.

In recent years and under Bouteflika's tenure, Algeria has moderated its revolutionary rhetoric to build more constructive relationships with the US and Europe but remains skeptical of Western interference in the region. Most recently, Algeria criticized NATO's operation in Libya, offering sanctuary to members of Muammar Gadhafi's fallen regime.

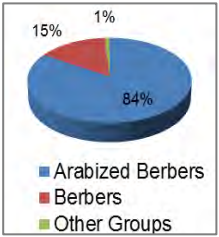
Algeria-US Relations: Many older Algerians fondly remember US support during their struggle against France, even when the US and Algeria were estranged during the Cold War. Relations improved as the US sought CT support after 9/11. Today, security issues and trade are the primary areas of cooperation in Algerian-US relations. US desires for greater political openness in Algeria and Algerian suspicions about US regional aims temper the prospect of a deeper partnership.

US and Algerian forces have conducted joint military exercises, launched a Joint Military Dialogue, and conducted high-ranking personnel visits. Former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton (pictured with Bouteflika above) visited Algeria in October 2012 to urge Algerian support for efforts to combat AQIM. Algeria is also part of US-led Trans Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP), which facilitates CT cooperation among Algeria, Mauritania, Mali, Chad, Niger, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Senegal, Morocco, and Tunisia. The TSCTP is designed to build these countries' capacity to deny terrorists safe haven and free movement and reduce illicit activities in the sparsely populated Sahara.

Algeria-Morocco Relations: Revolutionary Algeria and monarchical Morocco are regional rivals representing divergent paths away from colonialism. Their competition led to a brief war in 1963, an unresolved border dispute and the closing of their land border, and then the 1975 to 1991 Western Sahara War. Morocco considers Western Sahara its territory, while Algeria views Western Saharan independence as the only appropriate post-colonial step. Despite strained relations, some official bilateral visits occur, along with low-level cooperation on trade, tourism, and intelligence sharing.

Algeria-France Relations: Despite lukewarm diplomatic relations, France and Algeria have a close trade relationship. Today, France is Algeria's leading import partner, accepting 12% of Algerian exports (see *Economics and Resources*).

Ethnic Groups



Nearly all Algerians are ethnically Berber or of mixed Arab-Berber (or Arabized Berber) descent. Most Algerians identify themselves as Arabs, meaning that they (or their ancestors) adopted Arab culture and language as their primary identity despite Berber ethnic roots. A significant minority self-identify as Berber, which manifests in the continued use of Berber languages and cultural traditions. Both groups share the Islamic faith and emphasize hospitality. Differences between the 2 groups are more aptly described as cultural identity preferences rather than racial or ethnic markers.

Arab Algerians

Arab Algerians, sometimes also referred to as Arab- or Arabized Berbers, speak Arabic as their primary language and follow Arab cultural customs, which link them to Islamic and Arabic history and the larger Arab Middle East. Approximately 84% of Algerians consider themselves Arab, many of whom claim ancestry from Arab settlers.

Berbers

Rejecting the disparaging ancient Greek nickname for their people from which the term "Berber" derives, today's Berbers

as a group often refer to themselves as ***Imazighen*** or “free or noble men” (singular ***Amazigh***). Algerians who embrace their Berber identity usually speak a Berber language and refer to Berber historic and cultural narratives (see *History and Myth*). Many live in Berber-majority communities. Berbers comprise about 15% of the population, although exact numbers are hard to determine since the census does not count them separately.

The waves of Arabization from the 7th through the present centuries have included periods of discrimination against Berbers, their languages, and their traditions. In recent decades, Berbers have lobbied for greater national recognition and resources with some success. In 2002, the government recognized the Berber language, Tamazight, as a national language (see *Language and Communication*).

There is considerable diversity in customs, language, and lifestyles among Algeria’s Berber groups. The Kabyle Imazighen, who reside in the Kabylie Mountains east of Algiers, form the largest Berber group. Other groups include the Chaouias of the Aures Mountains, the M’zabite near the Sahara’s northern edge, and the Tuareg of the Sahara (pictured). While some traditional Berber communities in the South tend livestock and live as nomads, many Berbers lead modern urban lifestyles indistinguishable from their Arabized countrymen.

Other Groups

Groups that have neither Berber nor Arab ancestry comprise roughly 1% of Algeria’s population. The ancestors of most non-Berber Algerians arrived from France, Spain, Italy, Malta, or Corsica during colonization (see *History and Myth*).

Social Relations

Because Algeria has been at the crossroads of many civilizations (see *History and Myth*), many Algerians have mixed ancestry. For example, a sizeable percentage of Algerians have some Turkish or European heritage, a fact that helps to account for the diversity of skin tones and features in the population. Physical differences alone have little bearing on

social status. Instead, other factors, such as employment, wealth, age, educational attainment, and the extended family's social standing, more strongly correlate with social status.

Algeria's gap between rich and poor has a significant impact on social relations. In 2017, nearly 9.43 million or 23% of Algerians lived in poverty, while living standards and job prospects have continued to decrease in recent years. The political and military elite, established wealthy families, while top businessmen form the upper tier of Algerian society. These elites are usually urban Arab Algerians who intermarry, have access to the best education, and often marginalize countrymen they consider "provincial" due to accent or lifestyle.

Algeria is a status-conscious society in which salary and job title matter. Thus, un- and under- employment are serious social problems, particularly for the 60% of Algerians under 30. This lack of opportunity creates a sense of hopelessness about the future. Urban young men without prospects are called ***Hittists*** ("those who hold up the walls" in Arabic) because they have little better to do than lean against walls. The inability to find suitable work forces young people to delay marriage and procreation, depriving them of the elevated social status that accompanies those milestones (see *Family and Kinship*).

Algerian social relations revolve around personal relationships, particularly those within the extended family (pictured), and the construct of honor. For families, honor implies maintaining the collective family's good reputation. Failing to do so brings serious consequences, depending on the severity of the misconduct and the family's strictness. Individuals are expected to uphold the family's interests over their own even when personal concerns conflict with the family's. This sacrifice is not completely selfless, as family members in good standing expect to benefit from relatives' ***wasta***, or connections, clout, or influence.

3. RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY

Overview

Sunni Islam is the state religion of Algeria, and today, 99% of Algerians identify themselves as Muslim. The remaining 1% of the population are Christian, while Algeria's formerly large Jewish population has dwindled significantly to fewer than 100.

Although not always strictly enforced, restrictions on religious freedom include the prohibition of proselytizing by non-Muslims, strict controls on the import of religious materials, and limits on public assembly by non-Muslims. In an effort to prevent Islamic extremism, the government also prohibits Muslim literature that promotes violence and monitors activities at religious schools and mosques (Photo: The Great Mosque in Algiers, which dates to the 11th century).

Muslim Faith

Origins of Islam

Islam dates to the 6th century when Muhammad, whom Muslims consider God's final Prophet, was born in Mecca in what is today Saudi Arabia. Muslims believe that while Muhammad was meditating in the desert, the Archangel Gabriel visited him over a 23-year period, revealing the Qur'an, or Holy Book, to guide their lives and shape their values.

Meaning of Islam

Islam is a way of life to its adherents. The term Islam literally means submission to the will of God, and a Muslim is "a person who submits to God."

Muslim Sects

Islam is divided into two sects: Sunni and Shi'a. Sunnis are distinguished by their belief that the leader (*Caliph*) of the Muslim community (*Ummah*) should be elected. Conversely, Shi'a Muslims believe the religious leader should be a direct

descendant of the Prophet Muhammad. As elsewhere in the Maghreb (area encompassing northwestern Africa), almost all of Algeria's Muslims belong to the Maliki school of the Sunni sect, a generally tolerant school of Islamic thought that preaches the primacy of the Qur'an over later teachings, predominates.

Five Pillars of Islam

There are 5 basic principles of the Islamic faith.

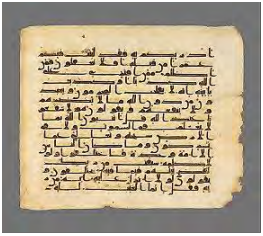
- **Profession of Faith (*Shahada*):** "There is no god but God, and Muhammad is His Messenger."
- **Prayer (*Salat*):** Pray 5 times a day while facing the Ka'aba in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. The Ka'aba is considered the center of the Muslim world and a unifying focal point for Islamic worship (Photo: US Marine at the Ka'aba in 2012).

- **Charity (*Zakat*):** Donate a percentage of one's income to the poor or needy.
- **Fasting (*Sawm*):** Abstain from food, drink, and sexual relations from sunrise to sunset during the holy month of Ramadan.
- **Pilgrimage to Mecca (The *Hajj*):** Perform the pilgrimage to Mecca once in a lifetime.

Shared Perspectives

Many Islamic tenets parallel those of Judaism and Christianity. In fact, Muslims consider Christians and Jews "people of the Book," referring to biblical scriptures, because they also believe in one God.

Abraham: All 3 faiths trace their lineage to Abraham, known as *Ibrahim* in Islam. However, Christians and Jews trace their descent to Abraham, his wife Sarah, and their son Isaac; while Muslims trace theirs to Abraham and his Egyptian concubine, Hagar, and their son Ishmael.



Scriptures: Much of the content of the Qur'an is similar to teachings and stories found in the Christian Bible's Old and New Testaments. Likewise, Muslims view Islam as a completion of previous revelations to Jewish and Christian prophets. However, Muslims believe Jews and Christians altered God's word and that Muhammad received the true revelation of God (Pictured: Qur'an page from 8th century North Africa).

Jesus: The three religions differ significantly in their understanding of the role of Jesus. While Christians consider him the divine Messiah who fulfills Jewish Scriptures, Jews are still waiting for the Messiah to come. Muslims recognize Jesus as a prophet but do not acknowledge his divinity or the Christian trinity.

View of Death: Muslims believe that God determines the time of death and birth. While people grieve the loss of family members or friends, they do not view death itself as a negative event, as Muslims believe that a person who lived a good life goes on to live in Heaven.

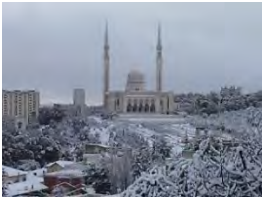
Concept of Jihad

The concept of jihad, or inner striving, is a fundamental element within Islam. Traditionally, it is the principled and moral pursuit of God's command to lead a virtuous life. It should not be confused with the publicized violence often associated with jihad. Most Muslims are strongly opposed to terrorism and consider it contrary to Islamic beliefs.

Ramadan

Ramadan is a month-long time for inner reflection, self-control, and focus on God. During this time, Muslims who are physically able are required to fast from dawn to sunset. Many Muslims believe that denying their hunger helps them to learn self-control, appreciate the difficulties of the poor, and gain spiritual renewal—by fasting, a Muslim learns to appreciate the good in life. It is common for Muslims to break their fast at sunset with a light snack followed by prayer and then dinner. Ramadan is

observed during the 9th month of the Islamic calendar (see *Time and Space*) and includes 3 holy days.



- **Lailat al-Qadr:** Known as "The Night of Power," this day marks Muhammad's receipt of the first verses of the Qur'an.
- **Eid al-Adha:** This day is the "Festival of Sacrifice" and commemorates Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son, Ishmael, as proof of his loyalty to God. It is celebrated on the day the Hajj ends.
- **Eid al-Fitr:** It is a 3-day "Festival of Fast-Breaking" celebrated at Ramadan's end (Photo: The Abd al-Qadir Mosque in Constantine, Algeria).

Sufi Tradition: Characterized by mysticism and ritualistic prayer, the Sufi tradition of Islam was important in Algeria's past. ***Marabouts***, Islamic teachers believed to hold special powers, were venerated as spiritual guides and healers. During the colonial period, Sufi brotherhoods promoted Islam as a way to reject French cultural influences. Since independence and the proclamation of Sunni Islam as the state religion, membership in such brotherhoods has decreased significantly.

The Introduction of Organized Religion

Judaism

Judaism was the first "foreign" religion to come to the region when Jewish traders began arriving in the 9th century BC. By Roman times (see *History and Myth*), many towns had substantial Jewish populations which included a number of indigenous Berber tribesmen who had converted to Judaism. Later, large numbers of Jews fleeing the Inquisition in Spain arrived in the 15th century. Under France's colonial administration, Jewish Algerians were naturalized as French citizens by 1870, which afforded them more rights than Muslim Algerians (see *History and Myth*).

By 1941, Algeria's Jewish population numbered about 111,000 and was largely assimilated into French Algerian society and

culture. Although spared the deportation to concentration camps that their colleagues in Europe suffered, Algeria's Jews experienced political and legal discrimination, and in some cases, incarceration during World War II. Broad anti-Semitism in French colonial society supported the implementation of anti-Jewish laws and encouraged Muslim acts against Jews and Jewish businesses (Photo: The Oran synagogue in the early 20th century now used as a mosque).

Although they were welcomed in the nationalist movement against the French after World War II, most of Algeria's Jews left the country following independence in 1962 when they were denied Algerian citizenship. More left in the 1990s to escape acts of terrorism against them.

Christianity

Christianity arrived in Algeria during the 2nd century AD, and by the end of the 4th century, most settled areas in the coastal plains had been Christianized. Saint Augustine was an Algerian who served as Bishop of Hippo (now Annaba) in the fifth century. Very influential and well-known in the early Church, Augustine was among the first philosophers to espouse the idea of a just war. Christianity retreated gradually after the Arab invasions of the seventh century (see *History and Myth)*.

Christianity was re-introduced during the French colonial period, and the Roman Catholic diocese of Algiers was established in 1838. Few conversions of the Muslim population occurred, so Christian organizations in the French colony, such as White Fathers, instead concentrated on education and charitable work. By the early 1980s, the Roman Catholic population numbered about 45,000. During the civil war of the 1990s, most Christians were concentrated in the cities (see *History and Myth*).

Islam

Unlike the arrival of Judaism and Christianity, the arrival of Islam had pervasive and long-lasting effects on the region. Both Islamization and Arabization resulted in the displacement

of native social, political, and educational structures (see *History and Myth*).

Introduction of Islam: After Muhammad's death, Islam spread as conquering armies moved out of Arabia. In the 7th century, Arab armies began their sweep across northern Africa. Many Berbers converted to Islam, although this conversion did not necessarily translate into support for Arabs. The ruling Arabs tended to treat Berbers as second-class Muslims, taxing them heavily, even enslaving them, and provoking many Berber tribes to revolt. The most famous Berber leader who resisted Arab expansion was a woman known as Dihya al-Kahina, said to have died fighting the Arabs in 702 (see *History and Myth*).

The Arabs' progression across the region was irregular, both militarily and in number of converts. There was substantial conflict as the leaders of different Islamic movements battled for power and control in the region (see *History and Myth*). By the 12th century, most inhabitants had converted to Sunni Islam, with a few tribes converting to Shi'a Islam. Generally, it took far longer for Islam to spread to the South: a number of Tuareg Berbers converted to Islam only in the 15th century (see *Political and Social Relations*).

During the 11th and 12th centuries, Spanish Muslims were a great source of artistic and intellectual inspiration (see *History and Myth*), influencing the construction of many elaborate mosques that still stand today. Also during this period, *marabouts* wandered the rural regions, drawing many followers. Believed to possess divine grace and the ability to perform miracles, *marabouts* offered spiritual guidance and often held political power. After their deaths, *marabouts'* followers often built large tombs that became pilgrimage sites (Pictured: Funerary stele with ancient Arabic script from 1308).

Islam in the French Colony: In 1830, invading French troops defeated the Muslim Ottoman Turks who had ruled the region since the early 16th century (see *History and Myth*). According to Islam, a Muslim society ruled

by non-Muslims is unacceptable. As a result, Islam provided an important basis from which to resist French colonialism and cultural influences throughout the years of French occupation.

Since French citizenship meant Muslims had to be governed by civil rather than Islamic law, few Muslims chose to become French citizens during the colonial period. Algerian Muslims bitterly resented the inequality and were further enraged and alienated when (see *History and Myth*) Algerian Jews were granted full citizenship. The French installed a particularly stringent penal code applied solely to Muslims, which along with other unfair and repressive French policies provoked the emergence of a class of nationalist Muslim leaders in the 1920s and 1930s (Photo: The Grand Mosque of Algiers in 2009).

Islam and Independence: The ensuing struggle for independence was linked with the country's Islamic history, beliefs, and values. Some nationalist fighters called themselves ***mujahedin*** (warriors of jihad), and, in its 1954 proclamation, the National Liberation Front (FLN) sought support by calling for the restoration of the Algerian state within the principles of Islam (see *History and Myth*).

Islam in the Post-Independence Period: After independence, the Algerian government asserted control over religious activities, with Islam becoming the religion of the state. Some Algerians protested that Western practices still dominated social and cultural life and used Islamic narratives to frame their resistance to Western practices. Militant Islamic movements appeared, and violence flared in the 1980s, erupting in full force in the 1990s (see *History and Myth*).

Religion Today

Islam provides Algerian society with its central cultural identity, providing individuals moral and ethical guidelines for living. The number of strict adherents to Islam is, however, smaller than the number who identify as Muslim. Regardless, Islam remains a significant part of Algerian identity. Even those who do not practice the religion the rest of the year typically fast for

Ramadan, just as many non-religious people in the US celebrate Christmas. Conventional Muslims consume neither alcohol nor pork (see *Sustenance and Health*).

Both Muslim leaders and the government publicly criticize acts of violence committed in the name of Islam. Despite this stance, violent extremists continue to pose a significant security threat to the country. They commit acts of violence against what they consider to be an illegitimate government and those who do not share their interpretation of Islam.

Although Algerian society generally tolerates foreigners and citizens who practice religions other than Islam, some local converts to Christianity keep a low profile to avoid potential conflict. While conversion itself is not illegal, proselytization is a criminal offense. Although the government periodically restricts the importation of non-Islamic religious texts, such texts are readily available in Algiers, while government-owned radio stations broadcast Christmas and Easter services in French.

Islam: The government continues to fund mosques, imams (worship leaders), and the study of Islam in public schools (see *Learning and Knowledge*). The state hires and trains all imams, and only government-designated imams may preach in mosques. All Muslim services, except for daily prayers, may only be performed in state-sanctioned mosques. The government usually provides preapproved sermon topics and reserves the right to review Friday sermons before they are delivered.

Christianity: Due to conversion to Islam (see Introduction to Islam above), there are probably fewer than 45,000 Christians remaining in Algeria today (exact numbers are unknown), many of whom are evangelical Christians living in the northern Kabylie region. Other denominations include Methodists and other Protestants, Roman Catholics, and Egyptian Coptic Christians (Pictured: The Algiers cathedral in 1899).

4. FAMILY AND KINSHIP

Overview

Algerian society centers on the family. Individuals are generally expected to subordinate their own desires to those of their extended families, thereby respecting and honoring familial unity. To do otherwise would bring shame upon the group.

Family Structure

Algerian families are typically multigenerational and patriarchal, meaning the father is considered the authoritative head of the extended-family household. Single dwellings, particularly in the South and in rural areas, often include not only a father, mother, and several children (nuclear family) but also grandparents, aunts, and single adult daughters.

Men hold most familial power and serve as economic providers, while women of all generations are responsible for raising children and attending to domestic chores. Despite the importance of the extended family, the institution began to weaken following independence (see *History and Myth*) in favor of single- or nuclear-family units.

Polygyny: Polygyny, the practice of men having multiple wives at the same time, is legal but rare. In accordance with ***shari'a*** (Islamic) law, Algerian men may have up to four wives. However, Algerian civil law requires men to demonstrate a reason for taking multiple wives, proof that he can support them, and the consent of a man's first wife, which limits the practice.

Children: Children are considered a blessing from God, and families typically include two or three offspring. Children are expected to obey their parents and care for them in their old age. Since males are afforded more status than females, many mothers cultivate closer relationships with their sons, allowing them to play and explore freely. By contrast, daughters do a larger share of household chores to prepare them for womanhood (see *Sex and Gender*).

Residence

Residences vary in Algeria, ranging from apartments and houses to tents. In both urban and rural areas, Algerian homes tend to consist of bedrooms, a receiving room, a dining room, a kitchen, and a bathroom. Many homes have a central courtyard and are surrounded by high walls to maintain security and privacy. In the years since independence, the housing supply has failed to keep pace with population growth, leading to the development of shantytowns near major cities. To accommodate their semi-nomadic lifestyle, some Berbers in the South live in tents woven from grass, wool, and goat hair.

Rites of Passage

Algerians commemorate the three major stages of life—birth, adulthood, and death—with the commemorative ceremonies.

Birth and Naming: The first rite of passage that Algerian children undergo is a naming ceremony, which typically occurs a week after birth. During this ceremony, the newborn child is given a name formally and presented to the community. Friends and relatives offer gifts to the infant's family.

Circumcision: For boys circumcision may be conducted during the naming ceremony. Although Islamic tradition requires that the procedure be performed the first, second, or third week after birth, many urban families tend to conduct the procedure later. In Berber communities, circumcision generally occurs around age 2. Although common among a number of African countries, female circumcision is rare in Algeria.

Dating

Algerians rarely date openly due to strict Islamic customs that limit interaction between unrelated, unmarried members of the opposite sex. Nevertheless, it is relatively common in urban areas for young women, including those who wear the Islamic veil (see *Aesthetics and Recreation*), to flirt or hold hands with young men. Moreover, some Western courting practices, such as Internet dating and celebrating Valentine's Day, have begun to filter into Algerian society.

Marriage

Algerians view marriage as a lasting bond between two people and two families. For women especially, marriage confers new social status within the family and community. Accordingly, matchmaking is a family affair, and many parents screen potential marriage partners for their children based on wealth, social standing, and a variety of other factors.

In traditional families, parents usually make the final choice of a marriage partner with the consent of their daughter or son. Algerian parents with a more modern sensibility may allow their children to select a spouse on their own, although those parents typically still offer advice and reserve the right to reject an unsuitable match. In both cases, love is viewed more as a consequence of marriage than as a motivation for it. As women's roles have expanded beyond the home, the practice of arranged marriage has become less common (see *Sex and Gender*). Breaking with the tradition of marrying young, the average age of marriage has risen to 31, driven in part by pervasively high unemployment that renders marriage financially difficult (see *Political and Social Relations*).

Wedding Arrangements: When a man and his family identify a suitable potential wife, his family visits her family to ask for her hand in marriage. Once an offer is accepted, the families decide upon a wedding date and begin making arrangements and negotiation of a customary bride price. This tradition refers to a compensation from the prospective groom to the bride's family for loss of her and her forthcoming children's labor.

Weddings: Although practices vary by region, weddings are a time of celebration for all Algerians and can last as long as three days. Traditional weddings consist of the ***lehlal***, or the signing of the marriage contract, followed by the reception. In modern weddings, these parts often are combined into a single ceremony.

On the day of the wedding, the bride is accompanied by close female relatives to a ***hammam***, or Turkish bath, after which she returns home and has her hands and feet decorated with

henna (pictured), a reddish brown dye made from the henna plant. Typically, she dons an extravagant dress and jewelry, which usually are gifts from her future husband. She joins him at the wedding reception, where the couple sits together in throne-like chairs as well-wishers dine, dance, and celebrate.

Code de Famille

The *Code de Famille*, or Family Code, is a set of laws enacted in 1984 to regulate Algerian marriage in accordance with *shari'a* or Islamic law. In its original form, the Code included a number of provisions that discriminated against women. For example, an article required that women obey their husbands, while another provision required that women have a ***wali***, or male guardian, to execute her marriage contract.

Many discriminatory provisions were revoked when the Code was amended in 2005. While women still are required to have a *wali*, he is now a purely symbolic figure that the woman chooses freely. Another notable change to the Code permits women to initiate a divorce, while still retaining custody over the couple's children and her bride price—a precedent uncommon in many Muslim societies.

Death

According to Islamic tradition, Algerian funerals and burial typically occur within 24 hours of death. The deceased is washed, wrapped in white cloth shroud, and then carried to a mosque where mourners offer prayers prior to burial. The body is buried without a casket and with the head pointing towards the Islamic holy city of Mecca, Saudi Arabia (see *Religion and Spirituality*). Once three days have passed since the death, friends and family members of the deceased gather to pray and read from the Qur'an. The mourners hold a second prayer session after 40 days. Algerians also honor the deceased through their celebration of ***Ashura***, a holiday on which Sunni Muslims visit the graves of their relatives.

5. SEX AND GENDER

Overview

Through legal reforms and government-sponsored programs, Algeria has become a regional leader in gender equality in recent years. Nevertheless, laws and social attitudes continue to place women in a subordinate position to men.

Gender Roles and Work

In traditional Algerian society, men are expected to act as strong and faithful providers for both their immediate and extended families, while women are expected to function as modest and responsible keepers of the household. Accordingly, few Algerian women held jobs outside the home before Algeria attained its independence in 1963. In recent years, women have assumed an increasingly prominent role in the workplace due to their expanded access to education and their families' need for multiple incomes.

In the traditional Algerian society that still prevails in many rural areas, women are responsible for childcare and other domestic tasks such as cooking, cleaning, and fetching water. Men are responsible for generating income by cultivating cash crops, herding livestock, or producing handicrafts such as carpets, baskets, and pottery. Despite this traditional division, many rural women have begun to function as providers as men increasingly have moved to cities in search of work.

Men still dominate the formal labor force, at a rate more than twice that of women (82% vs. 18%). Although women have recently expanded their presence in the formal economy, most employed women still perform service sector jobs that replicate their domestic roles. Expanded educational opportunities enable some women to seek vocations in education, medicine, and law (see *Learning and Knowledge*).

Gender and Politics

Since independence, women have been legally entitled to participate in political life on an equal basis with men. Despite the benefit of political equality, Algerian women have been underrepresented in government. In an effort to address this disparity, the government in 2012 created a quota that requires a certain percentage of women to represent each party. In the first election after the creation of the quota, female representation in Algeria's National People's Assembly jumped from 8% to 32%—higher than the US House of Representatives rate (Photo: Maram Abdelhamid, an Arab-American political consultant, discusses politics with Algerians).

Women are even better represented in the judicial branch, where they account for 45% of magistrates, although they have yet to gain much representation in the executive branch. There were no women in the Algerian Cabinet until 1985, and even today women account for only 5 of 39 Cabinet posts.

Gender and Education

There are strong educational disparities between the sexes in Algeria, where the male literacy rate is 14% higher than that for female. This trend is strongest in rural areas, where twice as many women as men are illiterate. Since the introduction of compulsory primary school for all children, literacy and post-primary enrollment rates have improved. Females now account for a majority of post-primary students (see *Learning and Knowledge*).

Rape and Gender-Based Violence (GBV)

The Algerian penal code establishes rape as a criminal offense, describing it as an "attack on the honor" of the victim and her family. Due to their esteemed social status (see *Family and Kinship)*, men often escape legal punishment even when there is clear evidence that they have committed sexual assault. In the rare cases in which a man is prosecuted, he can avoid all punishment by marrying his victim. Algeria has no laws that specifically criminalize spousal rape or domestic violence.

Tuareg Women

In southern Algeria, Tuareg society is unique for its other Algerian counterparts in that it is matrilineal, meaning that both honor and descent are traced through the female line (see *Political and Social Relations*).

The prominence of Tuareg women is not limited to their role in defining lineage. Tuaregs hold women in high regard, and their society has a long history of female rulers. Moreover, women play a vital economic role in Tuareg society, as most landowners are female. Finally, men rather than women wear the veil in Tuareg society as a rite of passage into manhood and as protection from the elements.

Sex and Procreation

Algerian families tend to be large, with couples in both rural and urban areas having several children (see *Family and Kinship*). Since 2006 the government has promoted condom use both for birth control and for halting the spread of HIV/AIDS. In 2015, 59.4% of women regularly used at least one form of contraception. Consequently, birthrates are on the decline as demonstrated by Algeria's total 2020 fertility rate at an estimated 2.6 children per woman, down from 6.8 just 30 years earlier. It is legal to buy and sell contraceptives, although it is socially unacceptable for women to buy them alone.

Homosexuality

Both Islam and the Algerian constitution forbid homosexuality, which is punishable by fines and up to three years imprisonment. Since overt homosexuality circumvents traditionally acceptable family functions and structures, most Algerians have a negative view of both homosexuals and those who support homosexual practices. Some Algerians even consider homosexuality as an affront to family honor, which has inspired the occurrence of some honor killings.

6. LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION

Language Overview

The primary languages spoken in Algeria are Arabic, Berber, and French. During the colonial period when France attempted to supplant local culture, French became the primary language of Algeria especially in formal contexts such as business, government, and education. After independence, the government began to pursue Arabization, a policy designed to undo colonial influence by replacing French language and culture with Arabic equivalents (see *History and Myth*).

Although Arabization has achieved many of its aims, it has had several side effects. The policy has succeeded, for example, in making young Algerians more proficient in Arabic than older Algerians, who prefer French. Similarly, Arabization has marginalized Berber speakers and suppressed the use of their languages. Furthermore, some observers claim that the Middle Eastern instructors hired to teach Arabic in Algeria have increased Islamic extremism among Algeria's youth.

Arabic

Spoken by about 73% of the population, Arabic is the official language of Algeria. Algerians use different forms of Arabic for different purposes. Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), a version of the language used across the Arabic-speaking world in written and formally spoken contexts, is used in Algeria for education, media, and government. Algerian Arabic, or ***darija***, a local, colloquial form of the language, is used in most other contexts, including casual conversation (Pictured: An Algerian stamp with Arabic writing).

Due to the historical influence of Berber, French, and Turkish, Algerian Arabic differs substantially from MSA. In addition to having a distinct vowel system, Algerian Arabic is pronounced differently. Although speakers of related "Maghreb" (northwestern Africa) Arabic dialects generally understand Algerian Arabic, the

language can be difficult for Middle Eastern Arabic speakers to understand.

Berber Languages

About 27% of the Algerian population speaks one of the Berber or Amazigh languages, a closely related group of languages spoken most extensively in Algeria, Libya, Mali, Morocco, and Niger. Berber languages are sometimes referred to collectively as Tamazight, which the Algerian government recognized as a national—but not official—language in 2002. There is an ancient Berber alphabet known as ***tifinagh***, although relatively few speakers can read or write their Berber language.

Four main Berber languages are used in Algeria. Kabyle or Taqbaylit is the most widely spoken and is used mainly in the mountainous coastal region of Kabylie. The remaining Berber languages in Algeria are Chaouia, M'zab, and Tuareg. These languages are spoken collectively by fewer than 2 million Algerians and are confined mostly to the Aures Mountains, the northern Sahara, and the southeastern Sahara, respectively (Photo: Tuareg men).

French

Spoken primarily as a second language by around 20% of the Algerian population, French was the colonial language of Algeria. Despite decades of government efforts to discourage its use, French continues to be popular in Algeria as a second language and language of business. Many French words and phrases are used in Algerian Arabic.

Communication Overview

Communicating effectively with Algerians requires not just the ability to speak Arabic, French, or a Berber language but also the ability to interact in culturally competent ways. Communication competence includes paralanguage (speech, volume, rate, and intonation), nonverbal communication (personal space, touch, and gestures), and interaction management (conversation initiation, turn-taking, and termination). When used properly, these aspects of

communication ensure that statements are interpreted as the speaker intends.

Communication Style

Algerians typically are warm and friendly with relatives and friends, although they may be reticent toward and even distrustful of strangers. Although Algerians often express their views openly and directly, they do so with care, as it is impolite to embarrass another person in public. Partly for this reason, Algerians are reluctant to confront interpersonal problems directly. Instead, they use nonverbal cues to express dissatisfaction or concern.

Greetings

When greeting people, Algerians typically shake hands for a prolonged period of time and inquire about topics such as health and work. Some Algerians also maintain the French custom of ***Faire la Bise***, in which close friends or relatives touch cheeks and make kissing noises. In contrast to some Islamic countries, it is acceptable in Algeria for unrelated men and women to shake hands, although a man typically waits for the woman to initiate the handshake. When women do not proffer, they usually are not trying to be rude but are displaying modesty (Photo: President Bouteflika greets US Deputy Secretary of State William J. Burns).

Forms of Address

Algerians generally address strangers and new acquaintances by their title and last name. In most cases, first names are used only between relatives and close friends. In French language contexts, the formal version of “you” (*vous*) is used with new acquaintances and superiors. Often, the less formal version of “you” (*tu*) will be used as acquaintances become more familiar.

Algerians who are familiar but unrelated may address one another as “brother” or “sister,” sometimes in combination with a last name. Similarly, Algerians may address an unrelated older person as “uncle” or “aunt.” Berbers show respect for all elders by using the terms *dada* (male) or *nana* (female). *Agma*, the Berber word for “brother,” is used to mean “man” or “dude.”

Conversational Topics

Appropriate conversational topics in Algeria vary depending on the gender of the people conversing. For example, although it is rude for a man to ask another man about his wife, it is perfectly acceptable for him to ask a woman about her husband. Art, sports, travel, and work are appropriate for conversations with all people. Knowledge about Algeria's soccer teams will impress many Algerians (see *Aesthetics and Recreation*) (Photo: US Ambassador Henry Ensher conversing with Algerians).

Algerians do not customarily discuss potentially contentious personal opinions in public, while foreign nationals should avoid topics that could escalate to heated debates. Therefore, religion and sexuality are generally inappropriate for social conversation. If such topics are raised, the discussion should be devoid of ridicule and remain neutral to diffuse tensions.

Gestures

Like most people, Algerians use various gestures to emphasize or substitute for spoken words. For example, two Algerians can greet one another at a distance by clasping their hands in front of their chests. Similarly, they can show thanks or appreciation by pressing their right hands flat against their chests. An Algerian man can slap another man on the palm to compliment a clever or humorous remark. Likewise, he can request another person's patience by joining the fingers of his upturned right hand and then moving the hand up and down slightly.

Although extending the index finger is an acceptable way to issue a warning in Algeria, it is impolite to use the same gesture to indicate direction. Similarly, it is rude to summon a person by moving the index finger back and forth over an upturned palm. To summon appropriately, turn the palm downward and then wave either the fingers or the whole hand.

Language Training Resources

Please view the Air Force Culture and Language Center website at www.airuniversity.af.edu/AFCLC/ and click on "Resources" for access to language training and other resources.

Arabic Pronunciation and Transliteration

Transliteration is the process of spelling out Arabic words using the Roman (Latin) alphabet. Although Arabic dialects generally are consistent in the way words are spelled and pronounced using Arabic script, there are many different ways of converting Arabic sounds into the Roman alphabet. Countries like Algeria that were under French rule also spell words differently. Some common differences in consonants are summarized below.

Common English Transliteration	Common French Transliteration	Romanized Arabic
S or ss	C	Nasser vs. Nacer (name of former Egyptian leader)
Sh	Ch	Shab vs. Cheb (word for “young man”)
J	Dj	Ben/Bin Jedid vs. Bendjedid (name of former Algerian President)

Since Arabic words often include sounds or letters for which there is no equivalent in the Roman alphabet, the following symbols and letters are used to represent those sounds and letters when they are transliterated into the Roman alphabet.

Letters or Symbol	Description	Example
gh	Like the guttural French “r”	Pa**r**is (as pronounced by a French person)
Kh or x	Strong “h”	lo**ch** (as pronounced by a Scottish person)
H	Whispered “h”	**h**oot
dH	Soft “th”	**th**is
‘	Glottal stop	Pause in the middle of “uh-oh”
q	“k” sound from the throat; “g”; or glottal stop	**cou**gh; **g**olf; pause in the middle of “uh-oh”

Useful Translations

English	French	Romanized Arabic
Yes	Oui	Eyh
No	Non	Laa-la
Please	S'il vous plaît	OoRaasek
Thank you	Merci	SaHa
You are welcome	De rien	Bilaa mzeeya
Hello	Bonjour	Ah-laa
Goodbye	Au revoir	Tibqa 'ala KhayR
Do you speak English?	Parlez-vous anglais?	tah-daR al-ingleezeeya?
I do not speak Algerian Arabic	Je ne parle pas l'arabe algérien	Maa-nah-daRsh ad-darija
I understand	Je comprends	Rani faahem (male)/faahema (female)
I do not understand	Je ne comprends pas	Ma raneesh faahem (male)/faahema (female)
How are you?	Comment allez-vous?	WashRakk?
I am fine, thank you. And you?	Bien, merci, et vous?	Laa-baas SaHa, wanteya (to a male)/wantiya (to a female)?
What is your name?	Comment vous appelez vous?	Wismek?
My name is ___	Je m'appelle ___	Wasimnee ___
Pleased to meet you	Enchanté	MitshaRfeen
I am here to help you	Je suis ici pour vous aidez	Raanee hnaa baash n'aawnek
I need help	J'ai besoin d'aide	NisHaq m'aawna
I need the police	J'ai besoin de la police	NisHaq la polees
Repeat it	Répétez	'Aawid-haa
Straight ahead	Droit	DeeRekt
Right	À droite	LeesaaR
Left	À gauche	Yeemeen

7. LEARNING AND KNOWLEDGE

Literacy

- Total population over age 15 who can read and write: 81%
- Male: 87%
- Female: 75% (2018 estimate)

Islamic Education

Islam arrived in what is now Algeria less than a century after Islam's founding in 622 (see *Religion and Spirituality*), and Islamic education came soon thereafter. Within a few centuries, Algerian cities such as Algiers, Béjaïa, and Tlemcen had become centers of Islamic study, hosting Muslim academics like notable historian Ibn Khaldun. During this time, Islamic scholarship divided into several schools of thought with distinct views on 6 main topics: religion, politics, astronomy, geography, vocational training, and natural science. Algeria was home to an especially diverse collection of perspectives on theology and legal philosophy.

Apart from the activities of Islamic intellectuals, however, the goal of most Islamic education was simply to help Muslims read and memorize the Qur'an (see *Religion and Spirituality*). Accordingly, lessons focused on learning about the prophet Muhammad, studying the Arabic language, and reciting verses from the Qur'an. Although early Islamic education took place mostly in mosques and private homes, instruction was eventually offered in learning centers known as ***kuttab***.

Islamic Education in Berber Communities

After the introduction of Islam, Berber communities traditionally hired an ***imam*** or ***fqih*** (Islamic scholar) to lead prayers at the local mosque, deliver sermons each Friday (Muslim holy day), and train young men to recite the Qur'an. In addition, the ***fqih*** was responsible for providing the community with charms bearing Qur'anic verses to bring good fortune and defend against disease.

Colonial Era Education

After the French conquered Algeria in 1830, they tried to use the educational system to assimilate indigenous Algerians into French society (see *History and Myth*). By using a French-language curriculum, the French colonizers hoped to replace local values with their own (see *Language and Communication*). Nevertheless, relatively few Algerians attended and therefore were not exposed to the French educational system. Consequently, literacy rates and enrollment in formal schools plummeted among Algerians during the 19th century (Photo: Algerians in 1899).

In the early 20th century, the situation began to shift. In 1917, for example, the French instituted a policy of universal, compulsory primary education for Muslim boys. Around the same time, Algerians who had worked abroad during World War I began returning home with a greater appreciation for a French education and less of a resolute opposition to anything French. Consequently, the French integrated the previously segregated French and Muslim schools in 1949, although only 12% of Algerian children were enrolled in school by 1958.

Education after Independence

At independence the country's schools still catered mostly to the privileged, French-speaking elite. In an effort to reverse this trend, the new government pursued a policy of mass education, hoping to bolster the economy and promote national pride. It guaranteed free, universal, and compulsory education to all Algerians, sought to improve teacher quality, and emphasized technical, scientific, and vocational education. Finally, the government instituted a policy of Arabization designed to undo French influence by replacing French language and curriculum with Arabic and Afro-Arab instruction (see *Language and Communication*).

Modern Education System

Despite Algeria's post-independence education reforms, the system remains old-fashioned and betrays many hallmarks of

its French roots. For example, instruction emphasizes learning facts by rote memorization and scoring well on cumulative examinations. Although the language of instruction is Arabic, French and English are studied as foreign languages. Algeria uses the 6+3+3 model, which signifies 6 years of primary school, 3 years of lower secondary school, and 3 years of upper secondary school. Although the first 9 years are compulsory, many children, especially girls, drop out earlier because they must work to support their families.

Basic (6+3): A basic education in Algeria consists of 9 years of schooling that divide into 3 equal cycles. The first cycle includes manual work to develop motor skills, while the second cycle introduces topics from language, mathematics, religion, national studies, and environmental studies. The third cycle builds on the first two cycles and also includes lessons about social and cultural topics. At the conclusion of the 9th year, students must pass the *Brevet d'Enseignement Fondamental*, a final examination, to continue to upper secondary school.

Secondary (+3): Upper secondary school students join either the "general" or the "technical" streams. The purpose of the general stream is to prepare students for post-secondary study, while the technical stream is designed to prepare students for a career. There are 11 ***séries***, or concentrations, within the two broad streams, as well as four concentrations that combine the two streams.

During the first year of upper secondary school, students from both streams take the same core curriculum, which includes Arabic, English, French, history, geography, physical science, and Islamic studies. The second year is similar but includes courses tailored more narrowly to each student's stream. In the third year, students specialize in their streams.

Post-Secondary: As of 2017, Algeria had nearly 100 post-secondary institutions, which includes 50 universities. Concentrated mostly in the northern part of the country,

universities provide the most general option for post-secondary study. They encompass a broad range of faculties that are further subdivided into departments. University centers are similar but in most cases are smaller, more remote, and limited in their offerings.

In contrast to the general options offered by universities and university centers, national schools and national institutes offer specialized coursework. National schools, which are open only to the best qualified graduates of technical secondary streams, specialize in theoretical and applied science, while national institutes focus on specialized training programs intended to prepare students for specific technical careers.

Vocational Education

Vocational education historically has had a negative reputation in Algeria. The French channeled many Algerians into low-quality vocational schools during the colonial era, while the general stream became the more prestigious path to government employment. Since the early 1980s, the Algerian government has implemented programs to expand and improve vocational education to address the economic need for more skilled, technical workers.

Challenges to the Education System

Algeria's education system faces a number of difficulties. The amount of funding available for education varies due to fluctuations in the oil markets upon which the government depends for much of its revenue (see *Economics and Resources*). Consequently, resources such as instructional materials and equipment are often in short supply. In addition, teachers are often underpaid, which provides less of an incentive for the brightest students to become teachers. Besides overcrowded facilities, periodic teacher strikes often limit class hours.

8. TIME AND SPACE

Concept of Time

As members of a diverse society, Algerians experience time in different ways. Although many urban Algerians subscribe to the Western notion of time as a finite resource, rural Algerians take a relaxed view of time that accommodates meaningful personal interaction, such as frequent, unplanned social visits.

Time and Work

Algerians generally work from 8:00am-12:00pm, take a 2-hour lunch break, and then continue working from about 2:00pm-5:30pm. Banking hours usually run from 9:00am-3:00pm, sometimes with a break for lunch. For some Algerians, the workday is punctuated by ***salat***, which consists of 5 daily prayers (see *Religion and Spirituality*). After independence, the government defined the weekend as Thursday and Friday to accommodate the Muslim day of worship each Friday. In 2009, the government shifted the weekend to Friday and Saturday to align Algeria's work week more closely with global markets.

Punctuality

Although punctuality is not especially important in Algeria, it is appreciated and encouraged, particularly in business contexts. Foreign nationals are advised to arrive on time for appointments, although expect their Algerian counterparts to be late. Consequently, patience is essential in professional settings. Appointments typically are confirmed 1 to 2 days in advance.

Negotiations

Personal relationships and local character references are helpful for negotiating and conducting business in Algeria. Trust is indispensable, whether it comes from a prior relationship or is built through a series of interactions. For this reason, foreign nationals should take the time to build rapport with Algerians before "getting down to business."

Lunar Islamic Calendar

Most Algerians schedule daily routine events using the Western calendar. Muslim holidays align with the Islamic calendar, which is a lunar calendar also containing 12 months, although it is 11 days shorter than the Western calendar. Days begin at sunset on what the Western calendar would define as the previous day. Consequently, each new week begins at sunset on Saturday, while the Muslim holy day of Friday begins on Thursday evening.

Holidays

National Holidays

National holidays occur on fixed dates:

- January 1: New Year's Day
- May 1: Labor Day
- June 19: Overthrow of Ahmed Ben Bella
- July 5: Independence Day
- November 1: National Day (Revolution Day)

Religious Months and Holidays

Religious holidays occur on variable dates set by the Islamic calendar (see "Lunar Islamic Calendar"):

- ***First of Muharram***: Islamic New Year
- ***Ashura***: 10th day of ***Muharram***
- ***Mawlid***: Birthday of the Prophet Muhammad
- ***Eid al-Fitr***: End of ***Ramadan***
- ***Eid al-Adha***: The Festival of the Sacrifice

Personal Space

Algerians tend to converse at short distances, although usually not closer than 2.5 ft. Although Algerian men often hold each other's arms while talking, they never do the same when talking to Algerian women in order to avoid the perception of being flirtatious or disrespectful. Foreign nationals are advised to limit or avoid conversational touching with an Algerian counterpart until a close relationship has been established.

Public Space: Many Algerians engage in behaviors in public spaces that may seem unfamiliar to foreign nationals. For example, Algerians do not typically form lines when waiting, so people generally must politely assert themselves to be noticed and attended to in Algerian establishments. Another example has to do with cleanliness. Although Algerians typically keep their homes and other private spaces spotlessly clean, many Algerian cities experience large amounts of litter, and public restrooms are typically dirty. Finally, due to widespread use of smokeless tobacco products, Algerian men sometimes spit in public – a behavior usually not intended to be disrespectful.

Eye Contact: The customs surrounding eye contact in Algeria are complex. Eye contact during conversation is appropriate between men, as insufficient eye contact conveys a sense that the conversation is unimportant. However, staring is avoided, as is prolonged eye contact between unrelated men and women. In addition, it usually is considered respectful for children to avoid eye contact when interacting with their elders.

Physical Taboos

Like people from many cultures throughout Africa, the Middle East, and Asia, Algerians reserve the left hand for personal hygiene and consider it unclean. They typically use the right or both hands when eating, gesturing, accepting items, or greeting another person. Foreign nationals should behave likewise to avoid offense. Algerians also may take offense if a person's index finger or the sole of his foot is pointed at them.

Photographs

Many Algerians are open to being photographed and appreciate the opportunity to see themselves in a picture. It is always best to request permission before taking a photograph of Algerians, especially in rural areas. A photographer should know the Algerian women personally before requesting to photograph them. Photographing military, gendarme, or government personnel or installations is prohibited.

9. AESTHETICS AND RECREATION

Overview

Algerian clothing, games, music, and artwork reflect a variety of cultural influences from Berber, Arab, and European sources. Algerian aesthetic and recreational preferences demonstrate Algerians' interests in globalization and modernity as well as their pride in uniquely Algerian and Islamic traditions.

Dress

Standards of dress in Algeria are less strict than those in many other Islamic countries. For example, female foreign nationals are not expected to wear head coverings for modesty. Nevertheless, both male and female visitors to Algeria are advised to dress conservatively—even in extreme heat—and to avoid wearing sleeveless tops and short pants/skirts.

Urban: Most urban Algerians have adopted modern, Western-style dress. Men typically wear suits and ties in business and other formal situations, while most women wear modest dresses or long-sleeved blouses and skirts that fall below the knee. Despite their relatively liberal approach to attire, many urban women wear a ***hijab***, or head scarf. In some cases, this decision is driven as much by fashion as by religious devotion.

Rural: Rural Algerians are more likely to wear traditional Algerian clothing, although some dress in Western-style jeans and T-shirts. For men, traditional clothing often consists of a long cotton shirt worn under a white wool cloak known as a ***gondoura***. Men also sometimes wear a ***bornou*** (pictured), a type of cape made either from linen (for summer wear) or wool (for winter wear). The traditional male headwear is a short, round, usually red cap known as a ***fez*** (also pictured).

Islamic custom has retained a pronounced influence on the traditional attire of rural women, which typically varies by region. Most of them wear a ***hijab*** outside the home, while

some women dress even more conservatively by wearing a ***haik***, a dress that, like the ***burqa*** of Afghanistan, covers the body from head to toe.

Recreation

The ability to entertain guests is important and highly valued in Algerian society. Algerians enjoy spending time with friends and relatives in a variety of social settings. Women often gather in their homes, while men tend to frequent cafés where they meet friends to drink tea and play cards, dominoes, checkers, or backgammon.

Sports

Sports are important in Algerian society, where men value physical fitness. Many Algerians devote significant time to playing recreational sports, and an even larger number follow professional sports teams. The most popular sports are soccer, basketball, volleyball, handball, martial arts, tennis, and track and field.

Schools place great emphasis on physical education, where both boys and girls participate equally in athletics at a young age. As girls mature, physical fitness becomes less of a priority than for boys, whereby athletics tends to become male-dominated. Still, some women continue to participate in track and field events, which are considered most suitable for women, some of whom have even won Olympic medals.

Soccer: Soccer, or “football” as it is known to many Africans, is the most popular sport in Algeria. Males of all ages either watch or participate in pick-up games that occur on streets and in parks. Moreover, the Algerian national team, *Les Fennecs* (the Desert Foxes), is a major source of national pride to Algerians. Following back-to-back FIFA World Cup appearances in the 1980s, *Les Fennecs* have had mixed success. Since winning the Africa Cup of Nations in 1990, the team qualified for the World Cup in 2010 only to be defeated in early rounds. As of early 2017, *Les Fennecs* were ranked 67th worldwide.

Music

Raï*:** Popular music in Algeria is dominated by ***raï, which means "opinion" in Arabic. Initially, *raï* was a women's genre used to express taboo topics of love, emotion, and sexuality. Now, men are known to sing *raï*, which is considered an urban genre, although its themes are now typically less explicit and directed to a general audience. *Raï* has absorbed influences ranging from American disco to Moroccan wedding songs.

Chaabi: Another popular music genre called ***chaabi*** (popular) typically explores moral themes and includes traditional Algerian, Spanish, and Jewish stylistic influences. The most common instruments include the ***oud***, a stringed instrument similar to a lute; the ***rhita***, a type of reed flute; and various small drums.

Other Music: Other common genres in Algeria include Kabyle music and pan-Arab pop. With its roots in the northern Berber region, Kabyle music provided the soundtrack for post-independence political protest and growing Berber cultural consciousness (see *Political and Social Relations*).

Literature and Folklore

Literature generally has been vital to the decolonization process for many Algerians. Notable essayists, novelists, playwrights, and poets and authors include Kateb Yacine (pictured), Assia Djebar (who used the pen name Fatima-Zohra Imalayen), and Mohammed Dib. These and many other authors wrote about Algeria's struggle to escape from colonial rule and establish a national identity amid social unrest and government upheaval. While Algeria produces modern literature in both French and Arabic, Algerian literature takes its cues on style and subject matter predominantly from French literature (see *Language and Communication*).

Most Algerian folklore is based on local traditions and religious history. Stories about the life of the prophet Muhammad and legends about Muslim leaders who defied Christian Crusaders and French colonists are especially popular. Algerian tales about ***marabouts***, Sufi Muslim leaders of the past who were thought to be blessed with divine grace, are also widely told (see *Religion and Spirituality*).

Cinema and Theater

Although some Algerians during the French colonial period viewed theater as a Western imposition, others co-opted French theatrical culture for their own artistic expression, establishing acting troupes as early as the 1920s. While some troupes performed modern plays, others staged morality plays intended to inspire their audiences to live within Islamic values. Today, Algerian theater is thriving and has produced a number of famous playwrights. Many Algerian cities have beautiful theaters dating to the colonial era that are used to entertain Algerian audiences with contemporary performances of both Algerian and international works (Pictured: The theater of Algiers in 1913).

Although Algeria has a handful of cinemas, they do not enjoy broad popularity because pirated DVDs are widely available. Since many of the cinemas that do exist primarily show adult movies, Algerians typically watch standard movies at home. For a country with little cinematic output, Algeria has produced several notable directors, including Mohammed Lakhdar-Hamina and Bourlem Guerdjou.

Arts and Crafts

Islamic and Berber influence is evident in many of Algeria's arts and crafts. Typical design elements, such as geometric shapes and patterns and calligraphy, decorate buildings, rugs, pottery, metalwork, and basketry. The Algerian craft industry was estimated to employ around 200,000 people in 2006 and has continued to grow due to government programs that promote Algerian handicrafts in global markets.

10. SUSTENANCE AND HEALTH

Sustenance Overview

Algerian cuisine includes a complex blend of flavors shaped by Berber, Arab, French, Turkish, Spanish, and even Roman influences. Although it consists of herbs and spices such as mint, coriander, parsley, and garlic, Algerian cuisine is typically blander than that of other North African countries.

Dining Customs

Although dining customs vary by region and family, a typical meal in Algeria is eaten from a low table known as ***tbla*** or ***mida***. Urban Algerian families usually eat together at Western-style dining tables, while some rural families tend to eat at gender-specific tables. Food is eaten either with utensils or with the thumb, forefinger, and middle finger of the right hand (see "Physical Taboos" section in *Time and Space*).

Algerians consider it rude and gluttonous for a guest to pick up food with more than 3 fingers or to request more food than was offered initially. It is considered polite in Algeria for guests to leave a small amount of food on the plate to indicate that they are finished. As in many cultures, it is considered unacceptable to slurp or use a sleeve as a napkin. Although Algerians do not usually eat or drink in public except in restaurants, it is acceptable to consume non-alcoholic beverages while strolling on a hot day.

Diet

The core of the Algerian diet is ***couscous*** (pictured), a type of pasta made from small pieces of semolina (high protein durum wheat). Other common staples include barley, corn, and rice. Bread, which Algerians use to scoop food from the plate and to absorb sauces and stews, also accompanies many meals. Nuts and dried fruits are common in Algeria – figs, dates, and almonds are particularly popular.

Meat: The most popular types of meat in Algeria are chicken, turkey, and mutton (mature sheep). Beef is relatively rare, while pork is essentially unavailable due to Islamic dietary restrictions (see below). Since Algerians generally try to consume as much of the slaughtered animal as possible, they commonly eat dishes featuring eyes, testicles, and various internal organs.

Popular Dishes: Algerian meals typically consist of *couscous* with vegetables and lamb, chicken, or fish. *Couscous* is often paired with ***tagine***, a popular stew of meat and vegetables named after the pot in which it is made. Algerians sometimes make sweet *couscous* by preparing it with raisins and sugar.

In rural areas, popular dishes include ***mechoui***, or fire-roasted lamb served with bread, vegetables, and dried fruit, as well as ***chakhchoukha***, which is made by combining shredded noodles with chickpeas, vegetables, beef, pepper, and tomato sauce. Families often eat ***chorba***, a soup made from lamb, grains, chickpeas, tomato sauce, and cinnamon, lemon, or coriander after sunset during Ramadan to break their fast (see *Religion and Spirituality*).

Beverages: Coffee and tea are Algeria's most popular beverages. Northern Algerians tend to prefer coffee, while southern Algerians favor tea. Compared to Western versions, Algerian coffee and tea are strong and bitter. Coffee and tea consumption carry important social connotations in Algeria. For example, an offer of mint tea should not be refused in an Algerian's home. Guests must drink at least three small cups of tea to be polite. Soft drinks also are popular, as is ***sharbat*** (pictured center), a drink made from milk and fruit juice.

Islamic Dietary Restrictions: In accordance with Islamic law, observant Algerian Muslims do not consume pork products or alcoholic beverages. In addition, almost all Algerians fast from sunrise until sunset during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan (see *Religion and Spirituality*).

Health Overview

The Algerian healthcare system consists of private facilities, public hospitals, and public clinics. Although the government has provided free healthcare to poor citizens and at graduated rates for higher-income citizens since 1975, Algerians often prefer private facilities because public facilities are typically overburdened. Since the public system changed its focus to disease prevention in 1984, the government has emphasized the development of rural clinics over larger, more advanced hospitals. Nevertheless, the remoteness of rural clinics renders them inaccessible for many Algerians (Photo: Algerian-American Dr. Elias Zerhouni visiting Algeria in 2010).

By African standards, Algeria is a relatively healthy country. At 77.5 years, life expectancy in 2020 was slightly higher than the Middle East and North African average and 16 years higher than that of sub-Saharan Africa. Moreover, Algeria's HIV/AIDS prevalence rate is among the lowest in the world at 0.1%.

Health Challenges: Algeria faces several health issues, including poor sanitation, various communicable diseases, and an upward trend in non-communicable disease. Since many rural Algerians do not have access to sanitation and clean water, diseases such as dysentery, typhoid, and cholera are common. Furthermore, hepatitis, malaria, tuberculosis, and trachoma remain prevalent. Finally, increasingly sedentary lifestyles have caused a rise in hypertension, diabetes, and respiratory and cardiovascular disease.

Water

Algeria has an outdated water infrastructure and scarce water. As of 2017, 95% of urban dwellers and 89% of rural people had access to clean water. Roughly 90% of the urban population has access to sanitation versus 82% of rural dwellers. Public restroom facilities and many homes lack running water. Water rationing and the use of bottled water are common during shortages.

11. ECONOMICS AND RESOURCES

Overview

Prior to independence, the economy of Algeria was based on agriculture. Since the mid-1950s, it increasingly has relied upon exports of oil and natural gas. Although this change brought a large amount of wealth to Algeria, it also has led to several problems that have yet to be fully addressed.

One issue, for example, is Algeria's heavy dependence upon imported food, a consequence of concentrating resources on oil and natural gas extraction in lieu of agricultural production. Similarly, the volatile global oil and natural gas markets make it difficult to plan for a fiscally sustainable future. Moreover, many young Algerians are unemployed because the oil and gas industries can be sustained by a small number of workers having specific technical skills. (Photo: Algiers skyline).

Demographic trends suggest that these problems may intensify in the future. As drought increasingly drives farmers to abandon their farms, the demand for already scarce jobs will increase. Similarly, public social services will have to stretch an uncertain budget to cope with new schoolchildren and hospital patients. Finally, inequality of income and living standards will widen as the ranks of the unemployed—about 30-39% of whom are under age 25—expand (see *Political and Social Relations*).

Industry

Accounting for about 40% of gross domestic product (GDP) although just 31% of the labor force, industrial activities comprise the largest component of Algeria's economy. Like the Algerian economy as a whole, the industrial sector is dominated by the extraction, processing, and export of oil and natural gas (often referred to collectively as "hydrocarbons," a term for the group of compounds composed entirely of hydrogen and carbon).

Oil: First discovered in Algeria in the mid-1950s in the desert town of Hassi Messaoud, oil was first extracted in Algeria in 1958 (Photo: The first well at Hassi Messaoud—a water well built in 1917). Since that time, Hassi Messaoud has become the center of the Algerian oil industry, with most oil companies operating in Algeria maintaining their local headquarters in the town. As with natural gas, the exploration, transport, and marketing of Algerian oil products is the responsibility of Sonatrach, a state-owned firm.

As of 2018, Algeria was the 3rd largest oil producer in Africa and the 18th largest in the world, with 12.2 billion barrels of proven reserves and daily production of 1.26 million barrels. The main oil fields are located in the deserts of eastern Algeria near the Libyan border, while the largest of the country's four oil refineries is located in the port city of Skikda.

Natural Gas: First discovered in Algeria in 1956 at the central Algerian town of Hassi R'mel, natural gas (often simply called "gas") is Algeria's other primary export. Although oil historically has been more important than gas to the Algerian economy, the country's oil reserves are expected to be exhausted in the next few decades. Consequently, gas is poised to become the predominant Algerian export. As of 2017, Algeria was the largest natural gas producer in Africa and the 10th largest in the world, with 4.504 trillion cubic meters of proven reserves and annual production of 93.5 billion cubic meters.

Non-Hydrocarbon Mining: Although Algerian mining focuses on hydrocarbons, there is limited extraction of several other minerals, including gold, silver, iron ore, and phosphates. Most mining occurs in northeastern Algeria near the Tunisian border.

Manufacturing: Although manufacturing is declining, Algeria produces petrochemicals, pharmaceuticals, building materials, processed food, and leather goods on a relatively limited scale. The most significant manufactured goods are petrochemicals, which include ammonia, fertilizers, resins, and plastics. There is also a steel plant located in Annaba.

Services

Although services comprise just 44% of GDP, this sector—including construction, public works, trade, and government service—accounts for 60% of employment in Algeria. The government creates and directly funds almost half of the employment in the services sector.

Tourism: Tourism is still a relatively minor industry in Algeria, especially when compared to the neighboring countries of Morocco and Tunisia. Although about 2.7 million people visit Algeria each year, the majority of them are expatriate Algerians returning to visit home. Nevertheless, Algeria has many attractions to support a tourist industry. Some of the most notable attractions are the ***Casbah***, Algiers' historic citadel; the beaches of its northern coastline; the volcanoes of the Ahaggar Mountains; and southern desert cities like Tamanrasset and Timimoun.

Agriculture

Accounting for 12% of GDP and 9% of employment, activities in the agricultural sector constitute the smallest component of the Algerian economy. The small size of the agricultural sector is due primarily to the fact that only 3.2% of Algeria's land is arable, and only 7% of that land (or 0.02% of the country's total land area) is irrigated.

Most of Algeria's agricultural production consists of staples, including wheat, lentils, oats, and potatoes; and cash crops, including dates, grapes, citrus fruits, and olives (Photo: The flowers of the *Deglet Noor* date palm, which is believed to have originated in Algeria).

About 13% of Algerian territory is suitable for grazing, most of which is located in the steppes of northwestern Algeria. The most common types of livestock are cattle, chickens, goats, and sheep. Despite Algeria's long coastline, fishing is limited to small family fishing businesses which harvest sardines, mackerel, anchovies, and shellfish.

Currency

The currency of Algeria is the Algerian dinar (DA). The DA is issued in 5 banknotes (DA 100, 200, 500, 1,000, 2,000) and 7 coins (DA 1, 2, 5, 10, 20, 50, 100). Since the dinar floats freely against major currencies, its value fluctuates. In 2020, $1 was worth DA 120.14. Although the dinar subdivides into 100 ***santeem***, banknotes and coins are no longer denominated in ***santeem***. Nevertheless, Algerians frequently quote prices in thousands of ***santeem***. For example, a vendor might say "100" to indicate a price of 100,000 ***santeem*** or DA 1,000.

Foreign Trade

Algeria's exports, which totaled $37.9 billion in 2018, consisted almost entirely (94%) of hydrocarbons. The country's most important export partners in 2018 were Italy (16%), Spain (14%), France (12%), the US (11%), and the UK (7%). Imports, totaling $43.3 billion in 2018, consisted of capital goods, foodstuffs, and consumer goods. Algeria's largest import partners were China (17%), France (13%), Spain (9%), Italy (8%), and Germany (5%).

Since 1969, Algeria has been a member of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), an intergovernmental organization that coordinates oil production levels between its 14 member countries and thereby steers world oil prices (Photo: OPEC headquarters in Vienna, Austria). Algeria has explored creating a similar group for natural gas with Qatar and Russia.

Foreign Aid

In 2018, Algeria received approximately $144 million in official development assistance from donors. The most generous by far was France, which contributed an average of $130.5 million in 2017-2018. Other significant donors included Germany ($10.7 million), the US ($8.2 million), the UK ($68.7 million) and the Netherlands ($6.1 million). At that same time, Algeria received approximately $61.4 million from multilateral organizations. Almost all multilateral assistance came from the European Union and related agencies, while much of the remainder came from various United Nations agencies.

12. TECHNOLOGY AND MATERIAL

Overview

Although the French built an advanced infrastructure in parts of Algeria during the colonial era, many of the country's ports, roadways, and railways fell into disrepair following independence. In recent years, the government has pursued major projects to repair and expand its infrastructure.

Transportation

Although some Algerians own private cars, most people use buses, hired vehicles, or public transportation. Buses are used primarily for travel between cities, especially in northern Algeria, though some routes extend as far as 1,000 mi south of Algiers to the oasis city of Tamanrasset. Hired vehicles are more popular than buses and tend to be more expensive. In the South, trucks and other 4-wheel drive vehicles are the most commonly hired vehicles, while ***taxis collectifs***, or shared taxis, are typical in the North. Most shared taxis depart when full and do not operate on a fixed schedule.

Roadways: Algeria has over 69,497 mi of roadways, of which more 85% are paved. Most roads in northern Algeria are adequate, although rural roads tend to be substandard. Travel by road in Algeria is generally dangerous because many drivers are poorly trained and many roads are too narrow for high-volume traffic. Bandits are active on desert roads.

The Algerian government has instituted several policies aimed at improving its roadways and safety record. In 2010, it passed a law that promises stiff penalties for offenses such as speeding or talking on a cellular phone while driving. To improve efficiency, the government has undertaken projects such as the 6-lane, 745-mi East-West Highway, which was recently completed and stretches across northern Algeria between the country's Moroccan and Tunisian borders.

Railways: Although train service has improved between select major cities, many of Algeria's 2,610 mi of railways suffer from a combination of outdated equipment and high demand. A single main line runs from the Moroccan to the Tunisian border and connects the cities of Oran, Algiers, Constantine, and Annaba. Smaller lines split from the main line to connect with the main port cities, the mining and date-producing regions, and the plateaus of northwestern Algeria. In 2010, Algiers opened the country's first subway system.

Ports and Waterways: Approximately 90% of Algerian exports travel through the country's 9 major ports, which are located at Algiers, Annaba, Arzew, Béjaïa, Djen Djen, Jijel, Mostaganem, Oran, and Skikda. The most important of these ports is Algiers, which handles 60% of the country's container traffic. Arzew is also important because it processes 40% of Algeria's oil and gas exports (see *Economics and Resources*).

Airways: Of the 157 airports in Algeria, 64 have paved runways, while 16 handle international traffic. Houari Boumediene International Airport (ALG), which is located 12 mi southeast of Algiers, is the country's primary air transit hub. Secondary airports are located at Algiers, Annaba, Constantine, Oran, Tlemcen, and Ghardaïa.

The largest domestic airlines are Air Algérie, the state-owned national airline, and Tassili Airlines, a private venture that operates both charters and scheduled flights. Air Algérie offers service from Algiers to domestic locations, such as Tamanrasset and Ghardaïa; to regional cities, including Casablanca, Dakar, and Tripoli; and to global destinations, such as Paris, Dubai, and London. Algiers also is served by foreign carriers, including Air France, British Airways, and Turkish Airlines.

Energy

In 2017, 99% of Algerians had access to electricity. Algeria's large reserves of hydrocarbons enable it to generate almost all (92-95% as of 2016) of its domestic energy supply from natural gas.

Media

Although general media censorship is not supported by Algerian law, particular laws do prohibit defamation of government officials. These laws, plus the government's stake in many of Algeria's primary media outlets, provide Algerian journalists strong incentives to censor themselves.

Radio and TV: The state-owned *Enterprise Nationale de Television* (ENTV) operates Algeria's national broadcast TV stations, offering a blend of news and light entertainment in Arabic, Berber, and French. The *Enterprise National de Radiodiffusion Sonore*, also state-owned, operates 3 radio stations that broadcast in Arabic, Berber, and French. Although the Algerian government controls and operates all of the country's public radio and TV stations, many Algerians can and do access uncensored international TV programming through rooftop satellite dishes (pictured). Some Algerians have multiple dishes so they can receive both European and Arabic channels.

Print Media: There are about 45 French- or Arabic-language daily newspapers published in Algeria with a collective circulation of 1.5 million. Although the Algerian government publishes 2 Arabic newspapers (*El-Chaab* and *El-Massa*) and 2 French newspapers (*El-Moudjahid* and *Horizons*), private publications, such as *El Khabar*, *Le Quotidien d'Oran*, *Liberté*, and *El Watan*, have the highest circulation rates.

Telecommunications

Cellular phones are much more popular than fixed-line phones among both business and private customers. There were more than 10 times as many cellular subscriptions (51.4 million) as fixed-line subscriptions (4.2 million) in 2018. Texting and smartphones are increasingly popular in urban areas. Due to the high cost of personal computers and Internet access, only about 60% of Algerians used the Internet in 2018, although rates of Internet use are much higher in urban areas.

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