

ALGERIA



Pic. 1: Map* of Afrika, w. Algeria highlited in red.
*this map has no scale

FACTS

Surface:	2,381,740 sq km
Capital:	Algiers
Form of government:	democratic republic
Inhabitants:	32,531,853 (July 2005)
Population Density:	52/km ²
Average Income:	\$6,600/year (2004)
Life Expectancy:	74.63 years(W)/71.45 years(M)
Median age:	24.36 years
Language:	Arabic (official), French, Berber dialects
Religion:	99% Sunni Muslim (state religion) Christian and Jewish 1%

Flag:



Pic. 2: Algerian Flag

INTRODUCTION

Algeria has the longest distances of North Africa, the dramatic and green coast of the north, mountains with people of strong cultural identity, endless desert, breathtaking oases, and volcanic mountains.

Algeria has had its appeal in low tourist numbers, and a cultivated and hospitable people. Today however, normal travelling in Algeria is very difficult and heavily restricted due to the ongoing conflict of the country.

HISTORY



Pic. 3: traditional berber fighter

Algeria has been inhabited by Berbers (or Amazigh) since at least 10,000 BC. From 1000 BC on, the Carthaginians beca-

me an influence on them, establishing settlements along the coast. Berber kingdoms began to emerge, most notably Numidia, and seized the opportunity offered by the Punic Wars to become independent of Carthage, only to be taken over soon after by the Roman Republic in 200 BC. As the Roman Empire collapsed, the Berbers became independent again in much of the area, while the Vandals took over parts until expelled by Justinian's generals. The Byzantine Empire then retained a precarious grip on the east of the country until the coming of the Arabs in the 8th century.

After some decades of fierce resistance under leaders such as Kusayla and Kahina, the Berbers adopted Islam en masse, but almost immediately expelled the Caliphate from Algeria, establishing an Ibadi state under the Rustamids. Having converted the Kutama of Kabylie to its cause, the Shia Fatimids overthrew the Rustamids, and conquered Egypt. They left Algeria and Tunisia to their Zirid vassals; when the latter rebelled and adopted Sunnism, they sent in a populous Arab tribe, the Banu Hilal, to weaken them, thus incidentally initiating the Arabization of the countryside. The Almoravids and Almohads, Berber dynasties from the west founded by religious reformers, brought a period of relative peace and development; however, with the Almohads' collapse, Algeria became a battleground for their three successor states, the Algerian Zayyanids, Tunisian Hafsid, and Moroccan Merinids. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Spain started attacking and taking over many coastal cities, prompting some to seek help from the Ottoman Empire.

Algeria was brought into the Ottoman Empire by Khair ad-Din and his brother Aruj, who established Algeria's modern boundaries in the north and made its coast a base for the corsairs; their privateering peaked in Algiers in the 1600s. Piracy on American vessels in the Mediterranean resulted in the First and Second Barbary War with the United States. On the pretext of a slight to their consul, the French invaded Algiers in 1830; however, intense resistance from such personalities as Emir Abdelkader made for a slow conquest of Algeria, not technically completed until the early 1900s when the last Tuareg were conquered.

Meanwhile, however, the French had made Algeria an integral part of France, a status that would end only with the collapse of the Fourth Republic. Tens of thousands of settlers from France, Italy, Spain, and Malta moved in to farm the Algerian coastal plain and occupy the most prized parts of Algeria's cities, benefiting from the French government's confiscation of com-



Pic. 4: French "Redlegs" – Line Infantry, c. 1840

munally held land. People of European descent in Algeria (the so-called *pieds-noirs*), as well as the native Algerian Jews, were full French citizens starting from the end of the 19th century; by contrast, the vast majority of Muslim Algerians remained outside of French law, and possessed neither French citizenship nor the right to vote. Algeria's social fabric was stretched to breaking point during this period: literacy dropped massively, while land confiscation uprooted much of the population.

In 1954, the National Liberation Front (FLN) launched the guerrilla Algerian War of Independence; after nearly a decade of urban and rural warfare, they succeeded in pushing the French out in 1962. Most of the 1,025,000 *pieds-noirs*, as well as 91,000 *harkis* (pro-French Muslim Algerians serving in the French Army), together forming about 10% of the population

of Algeria in 1962, fled Algeria for France in just a few months in the middle of that year..

POLITICAL SITUATION

After more than a century of rule by France, Algerians fought through much of the 1950s to achieve independence in 1962. Algeria's primary political party, the National Liberation Front (FLN), has dominated politics ever since. Many Algerians in the subsequent generation were not satisfied, however, and moved to counter the FLN's centrality in Algerian politics. The surprising first round success of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) in the December 1991 balloting spurred the Algerian army to intervene and postpone the second round of elections to prevent what the secular elite feared would be an extremist government from assuming power. The army began a crack down on the FIS that spurred FIS supporters to begin attacking government targets. The government later allowed elections featuring pro-government and moderate religious-based parties, but did not appease the activists who progressively widened their attacks. The fighting escalated into an insurgency, which saw intense fighting between 1992-98 and which resulted in over 100,000 deaths - many attributed to indiscriminate massacres of villagers by extremists. The government gained the upper hand by the late-1990s and FIS's armed wing, the Islamic Salvation Army, disbanded in January 2000. However, small numbers of armed militants persist in confronting government forces and conducting ambushes and occasional attacks on villages. The army placed Abdelaziz BOUTEFLIKA in the presidency in 1999 in a fraudulent election but claimed neutrality in his 2004 landslide reelection victory. Longstanding problems continue to face BOUTEFLIKA in his second term, including the ethnic minority Berbers' ongoing autonomy campaign, large-scale unemployment, a shortage of housing, unreliable electrical and water supplies, government inefficiencies and corruption, and the continuing - although significantly degraded - activities of extremist militants. Algeria must also diversify its petroleum-based economy, which has yielded a large cash reserve but which has not been used to redress Algeria's many social and infrastructure problems. Algeria assumed a two-year seat on the UN Security Council in January 2004.



Pic. 5: Bouteflika

The head of state is the President of the republic, who is elected to a 5-year term, renewable once. Algeria has universal suffrage. The President is the head of the Council of Ministers and of the High Security Council. He appoints the Prime Minister who also is the head of government. The Prime Minister appoints the Council of Ministers.

The Algerian parliament is bicameral, consisting of a lower chamber, the National People's Assembly (APN), with 380 members and an upper chamber, the Council of Nation, with 144 members. The APN is elected every 5 years.

ECONOMY

The hydrocarbons sector is the backbone of the economy, accounting for roughly 60% of budget revenues, 30% of GDP, and over 95% of export earnings. Algeria has the seventh-largest reserves of natural gas in the world and is the second-largest gas exporter; it ranks 14th in oil reserves.

Sustained high oil prices in recent years, along with macroeconomic policy reforms supported by the IMF, have helped improve Algeria's financial and macroeconomic indicators. Algeria is running substantial trade surpluses and building up record foreign exchange reserves. Real GDP has risen due to higher oil output and increased government spending. The government's continued efforts to diversify the economy by attracting foreign and domestic investment outside the energy sector, however, has had little success in reducing high unemployment and improving living standards. Structural reform within the economy moves ahead slowly.

Actual Data (2005):

GDP: purchasing power parity - \$212.3 billion

GDP - composition by sector: Agriculture: 10.3%, Industry: 57.4%, Services: 32.3%

Population below poverty line: 24%

Household income / consumption by percentage share:

Lowest 10%: 2.8% - Highest 10%: 26.8% (1995)

Labor force: 9.91 million

Labor force - by occupation: Agriculture 14%, industry 13.4%, construction and public works 10%, trade 14.6%, government 32%, other 16%

Unemployment rate: 27.4%

Public debt: 37.4% of GDP

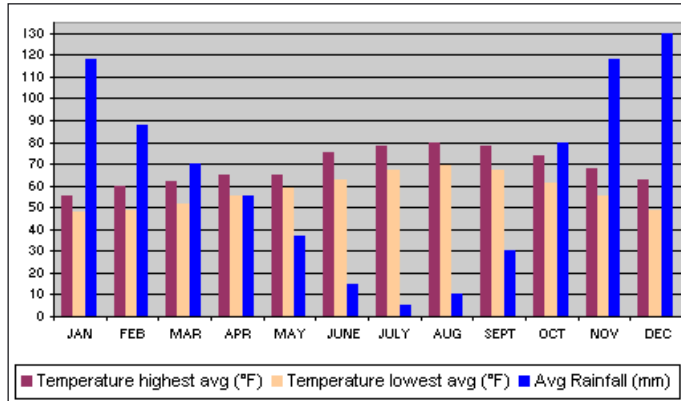
Industries: petroleum, natural gas, light industries, mining, electrical, petrochemical, food processing.

Oil - production: 1.2 million bbl/day

Natural gas production: 80.3 billion cu m
Exports commodities: petroleum, natural gas, and petroleum products 97%
Exports: \$32.16 billion f.o.b.
Exports partners: US 22.5%, Italy 17.8%, France 11.8%, Spain 10.2%, Canada 7.8%, Belgium 4.8%
Imports commodities: capital goods, foodstuffs, consumer goods.
Imports: \$15.25 billion f.o.b.
Imports partners: France 31.6%, Italy 8.5%, Germany 6.3%, Spain 5.6%, China 5.3%, US 4.9%, Turkey 4.5%
Debt - external: \$21.9 billion
Economic aid recipient: \$122.8 million

CLIMATE

Arid to semiarid; mild, wet winters with hot, dry summers along coast; drier with cold winters and hot summers on high plateau; sirocco is a hot, dust/sand-laden wind especially common in summer .



Pic. 6: Algiers Climate chart

TOPOGRAPHY

Algeria is located in Northern Africa, bordering the Mediterranean Sea, between Morocco and Tunisia - it's geographic

Images:

- Pic.1.: <http://www.demis.nl/home/pages/wms/demiswms.htm>
- Pic.2.: Flag: World Flag Database (<http://www.flags.net/index.php>)
- Pic.3.: <http://www.balagan.org.uk/war/0711/images/berber.jpg>
- Pic.4.: <http://www.lewrockwell.com/wall/wall24.html>
- Pic.5.: http://www.rainews24.it/ran24/immagini/bouteflika_abdelaziz.jpg
- Pic.6.: <http://www.africaguide.com/images/climate/algiers.gif>

coordinates are: 28 00 N, 3 00 E.
 Algeria has a total of 6,343 km Land boundaries with neighbouringborder countries: Libya 982 km, Mali 1,376 km, Mauritania 463 km, Morocco 1,559 km, Niger 956 km, Tunisia 965 km, and Western Sahara 42 km; plus a coastline of 998 km.
 The topography is mostly high plateau and desert; some mountains and a narrow discontinuous coastal plain. Mountainous areas are subject to severe earthquakes; mudslides and floods in the rainy season.
lowest point: Chott Melhrir -40 m
highest point: Tahat 3,003 m

VEGETATION

Irrigated land is only 5,600 sq km that is less than a quarter of a percent.
 Agriculture products are: wheat, barley, oats, grapes, olives, citrus, fruits; (sheep, cattle)
 The main Problem the agricultural sector is facing is soil erosion from overgrazing and other poor farming practices - resulting in desertification. The soil is also damaged by unregulated practices of raw sewage dumping, petroleum refining wastes, and other industrial effluents that are leading to the pollution of rivers and coastal waters. The Mediterranean Sea, in particular is becoming polluted from oil wastes, soil erosion, and fertilizer runoff.
 Due to poor infrastructure, potable water is only inadequately being supplied outside the main urban centers.

SOCIETY

The future for the nation of Algeria does not look entirely promising. Secular and Islamic forces continue to fight with one another, causing death and property destruction across the nation. The violence stifles economic and social growth and stigmatizes Algeria in the international political field. It also stalemates political expansion within Algeria itself. If leaders are concerned with the physical safety of the nation, they have little time for other important matters of state. Warfare also tends to create financial problems for a nation, in both the cost

Literature:

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of paying for the war and in post-war inflation and recession caused by such debts.

Aside from war, though, there are also peaceful problems in Algeria. Because most of its foodstuffs are imported, Algeria has a heavy reliance on other nations, which is not a preferable state of affairs for a leading nation. If there were a problem with foreign supply, Algeria would not be able to become self-sufficient. Also a problem with importing foodstuffs is the flow of wealth; usually the flow of wealth is away from the country buying foods. Unless Algeria's exports could make up for this purchase, debt may be incurred quickly at a slight change in market price.

Another problem is the narrow scope of Algeria's export economy. Over half of Algeria's exports, measured financially, are contained in the oil and gas industries. A very slight fluctuation in the prices of oil or gas could mean great wealth or, more likely, even more extreme poverty for Algeria. On a more hopeful note, Algeria's government recognizes this problem and is striving to fix it as quickly as possible.

Algeria does have some more promising factors, as well. The current government seems to be enjoying popular support, as well as the support of the military. If this remains the case, it means that more reforms will have a chance to be passed in legislature and be tested in reality. It also means that there is a stable leadership system in place. Stability is frequently good for morale, which is almost invariably good for the growth of a nation.

Even acknowledging the problems that remain in modern Algeria, there is still a glimmer of hope on the horizon. One day, perhaps, there will be a United States of Africa with an Algerian state. One day, perhaps, there will be a cessation of violence in North Africa. One day, perhaps, Algeria will break out of its Third World status and join the major powers of world politics. But, for now, Algeria is still struggling to stabilize itself, as it has never in its history been very stable for very long.

Websites:

- <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/print/ag.html>
- http://www3.baylor.edu/~Elijah_Beaver/algeria.htm
- http://www.arab.net/algeria/aa_population.htm
- <http://www.lewrockwell.com/>