CHAPTER SIX
Chapter Six

6. Chadli Benjedid’s Foreign Policy, 1979 to 1992

Chadli Benjedid was born on April 14, 1929, in Sebba near Annaba. He adopted the nom
de guerre Chadli (Arabic Shadhili) when he became a soldier in the Algerian liberation
movement (FLN) in the 1950s.\(^1\) He became commander of the 13\(^{th}\) Battalion on the
Tunisian frontier in 1960. Later he joined the staff of Col. Houari Boumedienne on the
Moroccan border. In 1964, he took over command of the Oran military region and was
instrumental in Boumedienne’s coup against President Ben Bella in June 1965.

However, after the coup, Bendjedid was appointed to the Revolutionary Council, but his
main concern was to ensure his control over the Oran military command, and in 1969, he
was promoted to the rank of colonel\(^2\). He served as Minister of Defense from November
1978 to February 1979, when he assumed the presidency, following the death of
Boumedienne. He was reelected as president twice in 1984 and 1988. In response to the
popular protest in 1989, he introduced a variety of democratic reforms; however, when
the FIS (Islamic Front Salvation) gained a resounding victory in elections held on
December 28, 1991, Bendjedid’s position was weakened and he was forced to resign by
the Algerian military on January 12, 1992.\(^3\)

\(^1\) [http://www.rulers.org/indexb2.html](http://www.rulers.org/indexb2.html)

\(^2\) Ibid.

\(^3\) [http://hjem.get2net.dk/algerweb/appendix.htm](http://hjem.get2net.dk/algerweb/appendix.htm)
6.1 Algerian Foreign Policy under Chadli Benjedid 1979-1992

When Chadli Benjedid was elected to the presidency in February 1979, it was clear that the president had different views, some of which concerned Algerian foreign policy, which will be underlined in this chapter. However, chadli Benjedid still followed the policy of Boumedienne in supporting liberation movements. The right of people for national self-determination remained as much a prominent foreign policy concern under chadli Benjedid as it was under his immediate predecessor⁴.

In the fall of 1970s, however, Algeria determinedly pursued a policy of nonalignment that facilitated relations with the west. Economic and political liberation also likewise reduced the barriers inhibiting diplomatic relations with Europe and the Unite States especially in the end of 1980s. Algeria’s salient shift that marked Chadli’s foreign policy as John P. Entelis pointed out: “shifted toward regional concerns and away from unsustainable ideological commitments, efforts towards forging a greater Maghrib have dominated Algerian foreign policy”⁵. This policy shift was aided by Libya’s aggressive trans-Sahara policies, and the reestablishment of diplomatic relations between Libya and Morocco, following the unity scheme concluded in August 1984 between two countries. Other signs of diplomatic moderation were on December 20, 1981 when Chadli in a state-of-the nation address to the country’s National Assembly set out a “good neighboring policy”.

⁵ Ibid., 192
6.1.1 Chadli Benjedid’s Foreign Policy in the Maghrib

6.1.1.1 Morocco

Intra-Maghribin relations had alternated between periods of relative détente and periods of tension, hostility and armed conflict. The rivalry between Algeria and Morocco for regional supremacy had all worked to inhibit the development of a political consensus in North Relations’ Africa post-independence\(^6\). However, the most important obstacle that was behind the tension between the two states was the West Sahara issue. However, the Algeria government made a series of official visits between the two countries which indicated that Algeria’s hitherto hard line attitude toward Morocco might be softening.

Throughout 1982, the Saharan Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) gained diplomatic recognition from the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and many other independent states, and the (SDAR) was accepted into the Organization of Africa Unity at a foreign ministers’ meet in Addis Ababa in February 1982\(^7\).

In 1983, a meeting was held in Morocco-Algeria frontier, and many issues were discussed, but no agreement was reached on the Sahara question and diplomatic relation

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\(^6\) [http://www.carnelian-international.com/algeria/national_security.htm](http://www.carnelian-international.com/algeria/national_security.htm)

\(^7\) [http://countrystudies.us/algeria/148.htm](http://countrystudies.us/algeria/148.htm)
was not reestablished. However, on August 14, 1984, the Arab African Federation between Morocco and Libya signed in Oujda\(^8\), (Morocco-Algeria Frontier) where this federation (alliance) was seen by Algeria as a significant shift in the regional balance of power. For Algeria, the Oujda treaty was reviled as a potential cause of destruction and discord, and as a completely wrong approach to the stated goal for unity of the whole of the Maghrib\(^9\).

Under these circumstances, however, on November 17, 1984 at the Addis-Abba meeting of O.A.U. and under strong Algerian pressure, the S.A.D.R was seated as the fifty-first ember of the all-African organization:

"The Oujda accord, however, so infuriated Algiers that it threw caution to the wind and lobbied actively among OAU members to allow the SADR its legal representative. Days earlier the Algerians had succeeded in obtaining Nigerian recognition for SADR, placing additional diplomatic pressure on the Moroccans, who predictably withdrew from the OAU on November 3, 1984 - the first such member-state to do so since the founding of the organization in 1963".\(^{10}\)

However, when the SADR gained diplomatic recognition from the Organization of African Unity (O.A.U), Morocco came under international pressure and as a result, the Moroccan government finally proposed a rational referendum to determine the Saharan territory, which was to be overseen by the O.A.U., but this proposal was rejected by the King of Morocco Hassan (II).

\(^8\) in 1984 Morocco and Libya announced that they had secretly negotiated an alliance, but it was a short-lived Alliance
\(^{10}\) John P. Entelis: *Algeria, the Revolution Institutionalized* P, 198
In 1987 the Moroccan government again agreed to recognize the Polisario and to meet to "discuss their grievances". Algeria stipulated a solitary precondition for the re-establishment of diplomatic relations recognition with the Polisario, and talks toward a definitive answer to the Western Saharan quagmire. Without a firm commitment from the Moroccan king, Algeria conceded and resumed diplomatic relation in 1988\textsuperscript{11}.

In the late 1980s, Algeria's concerns to improve regional stability, were disturbed by festering disputes with Morocco and Libya. Reflecting an improving relationship, was the formation in February 1989 of the union of the Arab Maghrib (Union du Maghreb Arabe) (UMA) with Algeria, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, and Mauritania as members. The primary goal of the UMA was to improve economic cooperation. The agreement also contained important security clauses.

Algeria's recommencement of diplomatic relations with Morocco was accompanied by the opening of borders. A number of joint economic initiatives also eased the security situation its on western flank. On other hand, Morocco's acceptance of the United Nation's (U.N) peace plan for the western Saharan ad the conclusion of the UMA treaty in 1989 further helped to lessen remaining tensions.

\textsuperscript{11} http://countrystudies.us/Algeria/148.htm
6.1.1.2. Tunisia

Algeria's relations with Tunisia had been less troublesome. However, Tunisia had consistently made efforts to align with Algeria, as in the 1970s, Tunisia reversed its position on the Western Sahara so as not to provoke Algerian authorities.

Tunisia was the first country to sign the treaty of fraternity and concord with Algeria in 1983\textsuperscript{12}, and many important agreements had been concluded in the early 1980s, including the simultaneous lifting of Tunisia travel ban on Algeria tourists, and Algeria's elimination of an exit visa requirement for its own citizens.

In September 1981, Algeria-Tunisia relations marked the creation of a bi-national high commission that met in Tunis. However in the following months, the relations between the states improved: "the improvement, was maintained as high level delegation went to each country's capital this was capped by the highly publicized and emotionally charged visits of Benjedid to Tunisia and Bourguiba to Algiers in 1983 (March 18-20 and May 29-31)"\textsuperscript{13}. This visit was marked with the signing of a twenty-year treaty of friendship and harmony between Algeria and Tunisia, and two main objectives were reached at the end of the summit:

\textsuperscript{12}http://reference.allrefer.com/country-guide-study/algeria/algeria166.html
the treaty pledged each nation to respect the other's territorial sovereignty, to refrain from supporting insurrectionist movement in the other country, and to abstain from using force for resolving diplomatic controversies.

\textsuperscript{13}John P. Entelis: \textit{Algeria, the Revolution Institutionalized} P, 194
a) The treaty emphasized the historic "community of destiny" of the Maghribin world and invited other states to membership in an eventual political union. However, this invitation was quickly taken up by Mauritania in December 1983.

b) It provided for small adjustments of the common frontier and pledged both parties not to permit violent act directed against each others' regimes and not to allow hostile groups to utilize each other's territories as bases for attack.

The most concrete form of cooperation occurred in the energy field. The building of a natural gas pipeline from Algeria through Tunisia reaching the Italian mainland was: "a major technological and political achievement given past difficulties in overcoming diverse economic, nationalistic and bureaucratic interest existing on all sides". This pipeline symbolized how deep the relations improved between the two states under Benjedid's regime.

However, Algeria and Tunisia since the disagreement over the border had generally been united when faced with Libyan bellicosity, and when in 1985, Tunisia came under pressure from Libya in the form of border troop movements and violations of Tunisia's air space, Algeria backed Tunisia by moving its troops to the frontier area. On the other hand in 1985, and after three years of negotiation, Algeria signed a border agreement with Mauritania.

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\(^{14}\text{Ibid.},\ 194\)
\(^{15}\text{http://reference.allrefer.com/country-guide-study/algeria/algeria164.html}\)
6.1.1.3. Libya

Algeria’s relations with Libya were regarded as somewhat more friendly, especially under the Boumedinne regime. Libya supported the Polisario in the Western Sahara facilitating post independence Algerian relations with Libya\textsuperscript{16}. However, in the 1980s, the relationship suffered several setbacks and Chadli’s government had been much less patience with and tolerance of Qaddafi’s rhetorical excesses and military adventurism.

Several issues with respect to the Libyan foreign policy behavior angered the Algerian leadership. For instance,

a) The attacks against Cafsa in 1980 and Kasserine in 1982 in Tunisia, infuriated Algiers;

b) Algeria also disagreed with Libya’s direct involvement in the Chad civil War;

c) Libya’s support for anti-Arafat forces within the P.L.O.;

d) Libya’s consistent price-cutting in the international oil market, thereby undermining Algeria’s attempt to maintain O.P.E.C solidarity in negotiations with western customers;

e) The unilateral and previously unannounced resumption of Libyan-Moroccan diplomatic relations undercut Algeria support for a resolution

\textsuperscript{16} http://www.netcyclo.com/places/polit/nations/algeria/ag-int.htm
sponsored by the organization of African unity (O.A.U) for revolving the
Sahara dispute;
f) Colonel Qaddafi was trying to forge some kind of vague trans-Saharan
republic from Chad to Mauritania which could arose irredentist aspirations
among some of Algeria's already independent minded Berber tribes in the
south, has aroused consternation and dismay in Algeria.\textsuperscript{17}

These concerns were sharply aggravated following the announcement of Morocco
and Libya that they had secretly negotiated an alliance in 1984 in Oujda, Morocco.
Algeria interpreted the agreement as upsetting the strategic balance in the Maghrib, and
the Alliance’s effect was short lived.

On the other hand, on these many issues the Algerians had always sought to
discuss their dissimilarity with their neighboring states in order to achieve the sort of
regional stability and they feel very much important for Algeria’s development.

It is in this context that Qaddafi paid a visit to Algiers on July 24 and 25, 1983.

“despite the inflated rhetoric in support of creating a greater Arab Maghreb contained in
the joint communiqué made public at the end of visit, it was clear that Algeria’s
participation was but another way of disarming and neutralizing Libya so that Algeria
effort to create amore temperate political climate within which the business of economic
and social development could take place would not be inhibited\textsuperscript{18}

Finally in 1988 Libya was invited to participate in the inter-Maghrib commission that
was responsible for developing the North African Union. The formulation of the U.M.A

\textsuperscript{17} John P. Entelis: \textit{Algeria, the Revolution Institutionalized} P, 195
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., p. 196
February 1989 marked the first formal political or economic collaboration between the two countries.

6.1.2. Benjedid’s Foreign Policy in the Middle East

The Algerian government has always supported the mainstream faction of the P.L.O under the leadership of Yasir Arafat, hosting sessions of the P.L.O National Council, and intervening on its behalf in diplomatic negotiations.

The Palestinian National Council (P.N.C), the so-called parliament of the P.L.O., had met in 1960s and 1970s in Palestine Amman, Cairo, and then in Damascus in 1981. However, after the invasion of Israel on Lebanon 1982, the political situation in the Middle East had forced the idea to make a meeting of P.L.O. in Syria. It was rejected as was Tunis, the logical nest choice, given the move of P.L.O headquarters there and it being the location of the Arab League\(^\text{19}\). But it was Algiers that was finally chosen by the Palestinian leadership-the choice was an important message to the Arabs world and to the world. Ibrahim Abu-Lughod explains this choice:

Continues to symbolize a successful militant liberation struggle against settler-colonialism, and remains firmly ensconced in the anti-imperialist camp. Algeria has nurtured the Palestinian movement since its inception, but unlike many Arab states, has refrained from intervening in the internal affairs of the movement. In his welcoming remarks to the Council, Algerian President Chadli Benjedid warned the Palestinians that they, like others before them, will be subjected to enormous pressures to accept less than their legitimate rights; but he assured them that Algeria respected the integrity of Palestinian decision-making. Finally, it would have been virtually impossible for any Arab state to comment either

\(^{19}\) Ibid., p. 191
adversely or derisively on holding the council in Algiers, as there is an Arab national consensus on Algeria, which protected the gathering of February 14-22, 1983 from the fickle opinions of competing Arab states.  

The Palestinian issue and the Arab World remained for Algeria’s policy environment. They are subordinate to the Maghribin region itself. However, in the first half of the 1980s, Algeria was preoccupied in the mediation between several internal political and personality splits that had divided the Palestinians and the Arab World in general. For instance, the mediation between P.L.O and Syria which had reached crisis proportions, especially since a Syrian-backed faction of Al-Fatah forced out the last of Arafat’s troops from Tripoli, Lebanon, in December 1983.

However, Algeria came to assume a key mediating role in this dispute, but the deep divisions, personal rivalries, and political mistrust besetting the Palestinian movement made mediation very much difficult even for so adroit such diplomatic negotiate as Algeria.

However, in 1987, a meeting of the Palestine National Council in Algiers transmitted a mixed series of message to the rest of the world. Initially, it appeared that radical Palestinian factions had scored a major triumph by forcing Yasser Arafat to welcome them back into the Palestine Liberation organization (P.L.O) fold and to espouse their had-line positions, all in order to promote Palestinian unity. The meeting

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22 John P. Entelis: Algeria, the Revolution Institutionalized P, 200

23 [http://www.worldlandi.com/publi](http://www.worldlandi.com/publi)
of the National Council-parliament in exile was symptomatic of the problems confronting these displaced peoples. They continued to seek release from their diaspora and achieve self-determination in a land of their own.

On November 15 1988 the Palestinian National Council declared under a meeting in Algiers, the establishment of a Palestinian state. At the same time, they accepted the U, N resolution 242, which in reality was the recognition of Israel.

Algeria continued to support the Palestine Liberation Organization (P.L.O) whose efforts against Israel had long been viewed by the Algerians as similar to the struggle against the French by their own revolutionaries

6.1.3. Chadli Bendjejdid’s Foreign Policy and the West

Under this section, two majors power that had particular relations under Chadli Benjedid’s regime in the 1980s will be discussed.

6.1.3.1. France

France maintained a historical favored position in Algerian foreign relations. This benevolent relationship had several reasons; first, because Algeria experienced a high level of dependency on France especially in the first years after independence; second, France supplied much-needed financial assistance through a steady supply of essential imports, and technical.
As we have seen above, this relationship was altered in the early Boumedienne’s years when the Algerian government assured control over French-owned petroleum extraction and pipeline interests and nationalized industrial and energy enterprises. Shortly afterward, the Algerian interest resumed. The French-Algerian relations resurfaced because France wanted to maintain its privileged position in the strategically and economically important Algerian nation; on the other hand, Algeria hoped to receive needed technical and financial assistance.

In 1983, Benjedid was the first ever Algerian leader to be invited to France on an official tour. However, this progress in relations between the two states did not improve to a high level, despite strained political relations, and economic ties with France such as oil and gas which had persisted throughout the independence of Algeria. However, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, gas agreements were in a vast growth of bilateral trade into the billions of dollars. However, in the 1980s, the dispute over natural gas prices led to a drastic drop in French Algerian relations especially on economic cooperation as “the former price fell more then 10 billion French Franc, the latter 12 billion French between 1985 and 1987.”

In 1988, Algeria had faced a difficult period after the collapse of the oil prices, and the country experienced economic turmoil. However, the French government gave full support to Benjedid’s government to overcome the crisis. On other hand, the immigrant of Algerians in France had very much influence on the relations between the two states. French policies toward Algerian immigrants were inconsistent, and the French population had generally been unfavorable toward its Arab population:

24 http://countrystudies.us/algeria/150.htm
In the early 1990s, nearly 20 percent of all Algerian export and imports were destined for or originated from France. More than 1 million Algerians resided in France and there were numerous francophone in Algerian, creating a tremendous cultural overlap. French remained the language of instruction in most school and the language used in more than two thirds of all newspapers and periodicals and on numerous television programs.  

So, Algeria-French relations were not only politic-economic ties but it was also a share of cultural background that transcended diplomatic maneuvers, and persisted throughout periods of "disenchantment" and strained relations. All these things had been done by France colony which lasted 132 years. So it is very difficult to eradicate this cultural background in three decades as it would probably take about three or four generations.

6.1.3.2. Unites States

The relations between Algeria and United Stated under Chadli Benjejdid's regime improved very much, as it was under Boumedinne's regime that Algeria and United States had competing foreign policy objectives. However, Algeria's obligations to the Third World in its struggle against capitalism and imperialism antagonized relations with the United States, seen, in Algerian eyes, to embody all that the revolution scorned. Following the Arab-Israel war in 1967 Algeria broke diplomatic relations with the United States, and relations remained hostile throughout the next decade. The war in Vietnam and the sympathies for Morocco in the Western Sahara, and its support for Israel all aggravated a fundamental ideological and political antagonism. However, by the end of 1970s, the relations between the two states had become closer, for many reasons. The increased United States demands for energy and the Algerian need

Ibid.,
of capital and technical assistance, decreased tensions after the relative isolation from the west under Boumedienne’s regime. Benjedid’s regime enhanced relations between the two states, especially when Algeria played a grand role in the release of the fifty-two United States hostages from Iran in 1981.\textsuperscript{26} This resolution opened the path to peaceful relations with the United States:

“the Third World character of this mediation effort was reaffirmed in October 1982 with Algeria’s temporary unwillingness to release funds to U.S companies that had been awarded millions of dollars in claims against the Iranian government by an international tribunal because of its pivotal role in the hostage negotiation, Algeria had been designated as the intermediary that had to approve payments.”\textsuperscript{27}

However, by the end of the Cold War, the collapse of Soviet Union in 1989, and the collapse of oil prices led to a total internal politic-economic crisis. Algeria’s government was in search of alternative sources of aid and found it in the United States. “In 1990 Algeria received U.S. $ 25.8 million in financial assistance, and bought U.S. $ 1.0 billion in import from United States, indicating that the United States had become an important international partner.”\textsuperscript{28}

In 1989, however, a new constitution was adopted lifting the ban on labor strikes and allowing the creation of opposition parties. However, the liberalization of Algerian politics allowed for the expression of long dormant Islamic opposition to one-party rule

\textsuperscript{26} On November 4, 1979, Iranian militants stormed the United States Embassy in Tehran and took approximately seventy Americans captive. This terrorist act triggered the most profound crisis of the Carter presidency and began a personal ordeal for Jimmy Carter and the American people that lasted 444 days. However, Sixty-six Americans were taken captive when Iranian militants seized the U.S. Embassy in Tehran on Nov. 4, 1979, including three who were at the Iranian Foreign Ministry. Six more Americans escaped. Of the 66 who were taken hostage, 13 were released on Nov. 19 and 20, 1979; one was released on July 11, 1980, and the remaining 52 were released on Jan

\textsuperscript{27} John P. Entelis: \textit{Algeria, the Revolution Institutionalized} P. 199

\textsuperscript{28} \texttt{http://countrystudies.us/algeria/147.htm}
The FIS gained enormous popularity, and won a majority of the National Assembly seats in the first round of general elections in December 1991 and stood poised to win the final round. President Benjedid declared the election results unacceptable, prohibited the FIS, and dissolved the National Assembly. One week later, Benjedid resigned under pressure from the military, and Algeria entered into a bloody decade.

6.1.4. Chadli Benjedid’s Foreign Policy and the Easter Block

Chadli’s relations with the Eastern bloc during the 1980s were based on the doctrine of nonalignment principal, however one can observe this policy in Chadli visit to Yugoslavia, China, and India in April 1982, as he went to deliver a clear message:

He wants to reestablish a more balanced nonaligned posture that may ultimately replace the Boumediene forged Algiers-Hanoi-Havana axis with Chadli’s own Algiers-Belgrade- New Delhi axis. These visits to China, Yugoslavia, and India represented more publicly important and ideologically valuable shifts in Algeria’s non-alignment orientation then the earlier steps taken in the area of arms purches.

However, Chadli speech in Belgrade called for the “reactivation of the nonaligned movement as a means by which to reduce East-West conflict and thereby facilitate the resolution of intra-Third World differences.” Chadli’s diplomacy established the present regime’s principle that only in reestablishing “the primary of the nonalignment principle can Algeria translated its regional and continental concerns”.

29 http://www.yale.edu/iforum/Winter1996/

30 John P. Entelis: Algeria, the Revolution Institutionalized P.204

31 Ibid., P. 204
Chdli Benjedid’s embraced the nonalignment principle as an effective foreign policy, as one of the observers describe this policy as to “try to maintain a moral and political presence in the world that would make it difficult for superpower to go on a rampage; raise the moral and political costs of interventions by powerful state; and don’t barter away your autonomy, for it is much tougher to recover it once you get used to depending upon others for essential needs.”27

In sum, Chadli Benjedid’s foreign policy in 1984s was characterized by regionalism, in which Chadli was more interested to build a grand Maghrib that could face other regional groupings such as European Community (E.U) and more importantly, to enhance the cooperation between the Maghrib States particularly in the economic field. On the other hand, in the second half of the 1980s, Chadli Benjedid’s relations with the West was quite flexible especially with France and United States, due to the alteration of the international system that forced Algeria to reexamine its policy particularly with the collapse of the Soviet Union that resulted the end of the Cold War.