Algerian Foreign Policy Under President Tebboune: Reviving Traditional Role in a Changing World

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Abstract:

This paper examines the evolution of Algerian foreign policy under President Tebboune since late 2019, focusing on Algeria's renewed efforts to assert its geopolitical and diplomatic influence after a period of relative isolation. It proceeds in three sections: first, it outlines the foundational principles of Algerian foreign policy as enshrined in the 2020 constitution; second, it analyzes Algeria's intensified diplomatic engagement since 2019, particularly with international actors and within the Security Council; and third, it evaluates the scope and character of these changes through the lens of Charles Hermann's foreign policy change model.

The paper argues that Algerian diplomacy's regional and international engagement has altered the intensity and scope of its foreign policy, consistent with Hermann's model's first level of change. While adjustments such as amendments to military doctrine, adoption of economic diplomacy, consistent positions on regional and international matters, and leadership within the Security Council have occurred, the core objectives and implementation methods of Algerian foreign policy remain unchanged. Despite geopolitical limitations, the current leadership has successfully revitalized Algeria's foreign policy dynamics within established parameters.

Keywords: *Algeria; Foreign Policy; President Tebboune; Change; International Role & Status.*

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Introduction:

Algeria's prominent position and distinguished history of struggle, coupled with its pioneering diplomacy in defending just causes, have earned it global recognition. This standing stems from its unique combination of material, geographical, political, and historical assets, reinforced by its adherence to principles and international norms. This explains Algeria's high diplomatic standing in the 1970s and 1980s, both in Africa and worldwide.

The leading role that Algeria played in the 1970s and 1980s, especially within the framework of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Organization of African Unity, required the development of a clear approach to Algerian diplomacy based on purifying the international atmosphere and mediating to resolve disputes between countries. Its active activity achieved prominent diplomatic successes, including the restoration of China's legitimate seat in the United Nations, ending the Iraqi-Iranian conflict, the Egyptian-Libyan conflict, and Portugal's conflicts with its African colonies in the 1970s. Algerian diplomacy topped the international scene during the American hostage crisis in Tehran in the early 1980s, and in ending the war between Ethiopia and Eritrea at the beginning of the current millennium. It has also been a state sponsoring peace in Mali for many years, not to mention its carrying the banner of defending the issues of the Third World in the corridors of the United Nations on many times.

Coinciding with the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the socialist bloc, Algeria entered a series of internal disturbances and violence in the 1990s, which negatively affected the performance of Algerian diplomacy. Despite the great dynamism that characterized the movements of Algerian diplomacy with the rise of former diplomat Abdelaziz Bouteflika to the presidency in the late 1990s, the president's illness and the weakness of the regime's apparatus in the second half of President Bouteflika's rule plunged Algeria into a second decade of introversion. Algerian diplomacy then witnessed significant setbacks at a time when dangerous regional events were taking place. Algeria was almost completely absent from the regional and international scenes for many years, and this withdrawal allowed opposing parties to expand their influence in regional and international areas and bodies that have historically been known for their diplomatic closeness to Algeria.

With the transfer of power to the current leadership, Algerian decision-makers were aware of the need to revive diplomacy. Upon President Abdelmadjid Tebboune's rise to power in late 2019, Algeria recognized the necessity of reinvigorating its foreign diplomatic activity for two main reasons: addressing geopolitical and border security threats, and countering rivals' agendas within regional and continental bodies to restore its traditional influence. Algeria's "new diplomacy" prioritized resolving regional conflicts, leading to active engagement in the Libyan, Malian, and Sudanese crises, as well as strengthened ties with Tunisia, Mauritania, Turkey, and Italy. Simultaneously, Algeria skillfully managed diplomatic

differences with Spain, France, and Morocco, while taking decisive action on regional and international issues within the Security Council.

Relying on the momentum of current Algerian diplomacy, this paper seeks to assess the extent of change that has affected the orientations of Algeria's foreign policy in light of theoretical perceptions related to this matter. Specifically, the paper questions the extent to which the momentum of Algeria's diplomatic activity after 2019 has influenced the change in the orientations of its foreign policy and its implementation tools.

The effort to address the presented problem begins by examining the constants of Algerian foreign policy, reviewing its core concepts and principles as outlined in the 2020 constitution. The second section explores the shifts in Algerian foreign policy since late 2019. Finally, the paper assesses the extent and degree of change in current Algerian foreign policy in light of Charles Herman's model for measuring foreign policy change.

1. Algerian Foreign Policy: Constants and Principles:

Foreign policy encompasses a state's interactions with the external world. Theoretically, it constitutes a complex and contested area of study. The following section explores the theoretical aspects of foreign policy, while the next examines the principles underpinning Algerian foreign policy in practice.

a. Concept of Foreign policy:

The concept of foreign policy lacks a universally accepted definition in international relations, with researchers divided on its conceptualization. Commonly, definitions begin with a state's external objectives. For instance, Encyclopedia Britannica defines it as "general objectives that guide the activities and relationships of one state in its interactions with other states… [while] Diplomacy is the tool of foreign policy, and war, alliances, and international trade may all be manifestations of it"(Encyclopaedia Britanica, 2025).

Alternatively, some researchers define foreign policy based on the bureaucratic interactions between official agencies and their external environment, In this context, George Modelski's define foreign policy as "the system of activities evolved by communities for changing the behaviour of other states and for adjusting their own activities to the international environment"(Modelski G., 1962, pp.6-7), It is important to note here that Modelski specifically referred to aspects of policy designed to alter states' current behavior as the primary objectives of foreign policy.

In this context, Bruce Russett & Harvey Starr noted: "People do not agree on exactly what should be included here, but they are concerned with the policies that states declare, the decisions taken within governmental circles, the actions actually taken by governments, and consequences of the behaviour of

governments and their official representatives. Foreign policy is the output of the state into the global system"(Fatih T., 1994, p.117).

Finally, a third trend defines foreign policy by focusing on the decision-making processes and states' behavior in their external environment. Patrick M. Morgan define foreign policy as "Specific official actions undertaken by authoritarian decision-makers in a national government, or their representatives, aimed at influencing the behavior of other international actors"(Sayed S. 1998, p.09).

In sum, Foreign policy guides a state's interactions with other states and the external environment, aiming to achieve specific goals. States leverage their power to influence others through foreign policy, persuading them to align with their objectives. In the words of Norman J. Padelford and George A. Lincoln, "A State's Foreign Policy is totality of its dealings with the external environment. Therefore, Foreign Policy is the overall result of the process by which a state translates its broadly conceived goals and interests into specific courses of action in order to achieve its objectives and preserve its interests (Sultana A.M. 2022, p.02).

b. Principles of Algerian Foreign Policy:

Since regaining its sovereignty, Algeria's foreign policy has consistently adhered to principles enshrined in its constitution. These include supporting just causes and resolving international disputes peacefully, as affirmed in Articles 31-33 and 91 of the 2020 Constitution:

Art. 31*. — Algeria refrains from resorting to war to undermine the legitimate sovereignty and freedom of other peoples.*

It strives to settle international disputes by peaceful means.

Algeria may, within the framework of respect for the principles and objectives of the United Nations, the African Union, and the League of Arab States, participate in peacekeeping.

Art. 32*. — Algeria stands in solidarity with all peoples who are fighting for political and economic liberation, for the right to self-determination and against all racial discrimination.*

Art 33*. — Algeria strives to strengthen international cooperation and develop friendly relations between States, based on equality, mutual interest, and non-interference in internal affairs. It subscribes to the principles and objectives of the Charter of the United Nations.*

Art. 91. *— In addition to the powers expressly conferred on him by other provisions of the Constitution, the President of the Republic enjoys the following powers and prerogatives:*

… decides on sending units of the National People's Army abroad after approval by a two-thirds (2/3) majority of each chamber of Parliament.

Algeria's current foreign policy principles, based on the preceding articles, can be summarized as follows (Djeddou F. 2017, pp.10-11/bareche A & Regouli K., 2021, p.507):

- *Respecting and supporting the charters and principles of the United Nations, the League of Arab States and the African Union*:
- *Rejecting the use of force to resolve international disputes and conflicts:*
- *Supporting liberation movements in the world:*
- *Resolving disputes by peaceful means:*
- *Supporting international cooperation and developing international relations:*

Algeria's foreign policy promotes positive interstate relations. Article 33 of the 2020 Constitution enshrines mutual respect, equality, and common interests as guiding principles, reflecting a long-standing commitment despite significant global changes.

2. The Dynamics of Algerian Foreign Policy Since 2019:

President Tebboune's ascent coincided with a decline in Algeria's foreign engagement, reversing Bouteflika's earlier inactivity. This marginalization weakened Algeria's political and diplomatic influence both regionally and internationally, hindering its ability to address critical issues, even within its own sphere of influence.

Speeches by President Tebboune and Foreign Ministers Boukadoum, Lamamra, and Attaf consistently emphasize national sovereignty, non-interference, global justice (especially for Palestine and the Sahrawi), and international peace. This focus, however, accompanies a foreign policy shift that has re-established Algeria as a key regional and global player.

a. A More Assertive and Proactive Foreign Policy:

The 2020 Algerian constitutional revision, specifically regarding military doctrine, marked a significant step towards a more proactive external role for Algeria. Recognizing that its long-standing military doctrine hindered its regional and continental diplomatic leadership, and that evolving political and security challenges in neighboring countries threatened its interests, Algeria revised its defensive strategy. Article 91 of the 2020 constitution now allows for military intervention beyond its borders for specific missions, subject to parliamentary approval, a change with considerable geopolitical and military implications.

Algeria's foreign policy now leverages economic influence to advance its diplomatic and economic goals. Established on February 11, 2020, the Algerian Agency for International Cooperation for Solidarity and Development (AICA) strengthens ties with geopolitically significant countries like Tunisia, Mauritania,

Mali, and Niger. AICA embodies President Tebboune's commitment, made at the 2020 African Union Summit, to a multidimensional Algerian diplomacy. The agency focuses on economic and development initiatives in the Sahel region and across Africa (Ainouche O., 2021, p.41), with projects already underway in Mali, Niger, and Western Sahara.

Algeria's ability to take decisive and explicit positions and decisions in its foreign policy has increased significantly, as evidenced by the severing of diplomatic relations with Morocco (August 21, 2021), the ban on French military flights (October 3, 2021), the declaration of material and moral support for Palestine, and the withdrawal of Algerian ambassadors from Madrid (March 2022 - November 2023) and Paris (July 2024 -...) against the backdrop of the shifting positions of the two countries on the Western Sahara issue. Additionally, Algeria has shown strong positions and significant diplomatic activity within the Security Council in defense of the Palestinian cause.

Concurrently, Algeria's pursuit of independence from French influence aligns with the burgeoning Russia-China-Turkey triangle, nations President Tebboune has formally visited. This is underscored by his campaign promise to reassess Algeria's ties with France and Algeria's ambition to join BRICS, signaling a distinct gravitation towards non-Western global entities.

Algerian diplomacy also succeeded, through mediation efforts in uniting Palestinian factions and securing their agreement to the reconciliation plan outlined in the "Algiers Declaration" on October 12, 2022. Algeria also successfully hosted the Arab Summit in November 2022 and the Seventh Summit of the Gas Exporting Countries Forum in March 2024. Additionally, Algerian diplomacy worked to ease tensions in both the regional and continental spheres, including attempts to mediate between Ethiopia, Egypt, and Sudan, efforts to create conditions for resolving the Libyan crisis through conferences of neighboring countries, and continuous follow-up on the implementation of the peace agreement in Mali.

b. Algeria's Security Council Membership: A Prominent Role in International Diplomacy:

The election of Algeria as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council for the 2023-2025 term, marking its fourth tenure after previous terms in 1968-1969, 1988-1989, and 2004-2005 (Henneberg, S., 2024), strengthens its position as a significant actor on both regional and global stages. As the sole Arab representative and one of three African seats, Algeria's role in the Security Council underscores its growing influence.

In general, Algeria maintains a positive diplomatic legacy that it has acquired through its previous experiences in the Security Council. During its third membership (2004-2005), Algeria made significant efforts in addressing the situations in Iraq, Palestine, and the conflict in Darfur. It contributed to the adoption of resolutions related to the protection of civilians and the provision of

humanitarian aid to victims of the civil war in Sudan. Additionally, it adopted a resolution urging Iran to cooperate with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). During its second term (1988-1989), Algeria played a prominent role in addressing the Libyan crisis, known as the "Lockerbie case," and in ending the Iran-Iraq war (Henneberg, S.,).

Algeria's recent UN Security Council membership has been marked by a turbulent international environment and deep divisions within the Council, coinciding with its efforts to restore regional and global political and diplomatic standing. This period has seen numerous crises demanding the Council's attention, including the conflicts in Gaza, Ukraine, Sudan, the Sahel, Palestine, Syria, and Western Sahara.

Aligning with its foreign policy principles, the Palestinian issue remains central to Algeria's diplomatic efforts in the Security Council. Following its success in uniting Palestinian factions with the "Algiers Declaration" on October 12, 2022 (Eljoulani A., p.10), Algeria hosted an Arab Summit in November of the same year, leading to the formation of the Arab Open-Ended Committee to support Palestine's bid for full UN membership (Djamel M., 2023). On April 18, 2024, Algeria presented a draft resolution to the Council, proposing Palestine's admission as a full member. The resolution garnered 12 votes in favor, but was vetoed by the United States, with the United Kingdom and Switzerland abstaining (SC Report, May 2024).

Upon joining the Security Council in January 2024, Algeria actively engaged in diplomatic efforts to end the Israeli war on Gaza and secure the release of hostages. On February 20, 2024, Algeria presented a draft resolution to the Security Council calling for an immediate ceasefire and the unconditional release of all prisoners, but it was vetoed by the United States despite receiving 13 votes in favor and one abstention from the United Kingdom. Conversely, Algeria, along with Russia and China, voted against the United States' draft resolution of March 22, 2024, which also sought an immediate and sustainable ceasefire (Aljazeera Staff, 2024).

After a US draft resolution failed and Israeli aggression in Gaza continued, Algeria spearheaded Resolution 2728, passed on March 25, 2024. The resolution, backed by ten elected Council members, demanded an immediate Ramadan ceasefire leading to a lasting cessation of hostilities. It passed 14-0 with a US abstention, following three prior US vetoes of similar resolutions (Birkenkötter H.,2024). Later, on June 10, 2024, Algeria and 13 other nations approved US draft Resolution 2735, proposing a three-phase ceasefire: a six-week prisoner exchange, a permanent end to hostilities, and a multi-year reconstruction plan for Gaza. Russia abstained.

On November 20, 2024, Algeria returned to the UN Security Council to submit a draft resolution calling for an immediate, unconditional, and permanent ceasefire in Gaza. The resolution aimed to ensure compliance with international law, allow humanitarian aid to reach Gaza, secure the release of Israeli prisoners in

Gaza and Palestinian prisoners in Israel, and express support for UNRWA's work in Gaza. The draft received 14 votes but was vetoed by the United States (Aljazeera Staff).

While Algeria strongly advocated for Palestine during the Israeli war on Gaza, including pushing for Security Council resolutions on a ceasefire, aid, and UN membership, the Russia-Ukraine war presented a diplomatic challenge. Caught between its principles of non-alignment and its historical ties to Russia, Algeria abstained from UN General Assembly votes condemning the invasion and annexation of Ukrainian territories, and opposed suspending Russia from the Human Rights Council in 2022(Henneberg S.). However, Algeria firmly rebuked the Russian delegate in a Security Council session in August 2024 regarding comments about Algerian boxer Imane Khalif.

Regionally, in October 2024, Algeria sought to exploit the opportunity of renewing the mandate of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) to introduce two amendments to the American draft resolution. The first proposal included emphasizing support for efforts to hold a referendum on self-determination for the Sahrawi people, while the second amendment included expanding the mandate of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara to monitor human rights violations and abuses committed in Western Sahara. As a result of the majority of Security Council members not responding to the proposed amendments, Algeria boycotted the Security Council session in which Resolution 2756 (October 31, 2024) was adopted to renew the MINURSO mandate in Western Sahara, after 12 members voted in favor of the resolution and Russia and Mozambique abstained (SC Report, Oct. 2024).

During its presidency of the United Nations Security Council in January 2025, Algeria played an active role in the Council's adoption of Resolution 2769 on January 16, 2025, which allowed the Libyan Investment Authority to manage its frozen assets, valued at approximately $70 billion (S/RES/2769). Additionally, Algeria—alongside China and Russia—abstained from voting on Security Council Resolution 2768, which condemned the Houthi attacks in the Red Sea.

In a historic diplomatic achievement, Algeria successfully advocated for equal access to Security Council documents, overcoming long-standing practices that restricted non-permanent members. After intensive diplomatic efforts and despite resistance from some permanent members, the Council adopted an amendment to Memorandum 507(2017), explicitly guaranteeing all members unrestricted access to relevant documents without discrimination (Walid A., Dec.2024).

3. Shifts in Algerian Foreign Policy Since 2019: An Analysis of Recent Developments:

To understand changes in Algerian foreign policy, it is essential to consider the theoretical background in this issue.

a. Foreign Policy Change: A Literature Review:

The study of change in foreign policy is a relatively recent focus in international relations theory. This is largely because Cold War foreign policies were primarily stable, driven by consistent state ideologies and the overarching East-West ideological competition. However, the 1980s saw the beginnings of change as ideology's influence waned and pragmatic approaches gained prominence (Bouchenafa C, 2013, p. 227).

In this context, and always within the framework of the constant and usual interaction between theory and practice, international relations theorists, beginning in the 1980s, developed several theoretical models to explain the reasons for this change, its scope, and its effects. Prominent among these works are those of Kjell Goldmann, Kalevi Holsti, Jan Hallenberg, Charles Hermann, and Jacob Gustavsson. All of these works focused on the change in foreign policy in the sense that it refers to the forms of behaviors, goals, and tools that international units resort to in order to adapt to international or domestic circumstances, allowing them to interact naturally with those circumstances (Bouchenafa C., p.230).

Charles F. Hermann's work: "Changing Course: When Governments Choose to Redirect Foreign Policy" (1990), represents the most appropriate theoretical framework for estimating the extent of change in foreign policy, His work highlighted four distinct levels of change (Herman C.F., 1990, pp.5-6):

- *Adjustment Changes:* These are changes that occur at the level of efforts (more/less) and/or at the level of the scope of recipients of these efforts (what is done, how it is done, and the intended goals of the action do not change at this level).
- *Program Changes*: Changes here occur at the level of the ways or means by which the problem or goal is addressed. Unlike Adjustment Changes, which take on a quantitative character (more/less, broad/narrow), program changes take on a qualitative character and include new tools of political management (change occurs at the level of what is done and how it is done, while the intended goals of the action do not change).
- *Problem/Goal Changes:* Change at this level occurs when the main problem and/or goal addressed by the foreign policy is replaced or eliminated. In this type of change, the goals of foreign policy are replaced.
- *International Orientation Changes:* This level represents the most extreme form of change in foreign policy, and involves a complete reorientation of the actor's orientations toward international affairs. This type involves a fundamental shift in the actor's international role and activities, not at the

level of a single issue or a specific group of other actors, but rather a major and simultaneous change.

Based on the theoretical background above, this section evaluates the shift in Algerian foreign policy under President Abdelmadjid Tebboune by exploring its key aspects since late 2019.

b. Applying the concepts of change to Algerian foreign policy since 2019:

To understand Algerian foreign policy shifts since 2019, we must examine the scope of change. Assessing this change requires considering: (1) how many foreign policy areas were affected, and (2) the magnitude of the impact on those areas. Political and security issues take precedence over economic concerns, and all three outweigh cultural, social, and religious matters.

Returning to Charles Hermann's earlier model of levels of change, Algeria's current foreign behavior patterns fall within the scope of first-level changes, meaning they only touch on the levels of effort and scope, without changing the objectives or means of implementing foreign policy. This is natural given the long period of stagnation in Algerian foreign policy under former President Abdelaziz Bouteflika. With some emotion, it can be said that the current political leadership has breathed new life into the constants of Algeria's foreign policy and into its dynamics.

In this context, Algeria's policy towards Morocco represented the most extreme form of foreign policy efforts, which was directly reflected in the transition of relations between the two countries from a turbulent state to a stage of complete severance (severing diplomatic relations, closing airspace, cutting off gas supplies, etc.) (Loukal M., 2022, p.979). Similarly to the stance towards Morocco, Algeria took firm and unprecedented positions and decisions towards Spain and France against the background of their changing position on the Western Sahara issue (withdrawal and recall of ambassadors, economic boycott, diplomatic disputes, etc.). In contrast, Algeria strengthened its economic partnerships and political rapprochement with other countries such as Italy, Turkey, China, and Russia.

Algerian diplomacy has significantly evolved regionally and internationally, particularly since 2019, as Algeria seeks to be a key diplomatic player. Despite this ambition, Algeria maintains its traditional non-aligned stance, cautiously navigating continental conflicts, especially in neighboring countries. Its foreign policy remains balanced, objective, and avoids narrow self-interests, consistently advocating for state sovereignty and peaceful resolutions to international disputes.

In this context specifically, Algeria has emerged as a leading diplomatic force regionally and internationally through its principled and ethical approach to global issues. Following its success in reconciling Palestinian factions and hosting the Arab Summit, Algeria has actively championed just causes within the Security Council, notably the Palestinian and Sahrawi issues. Its efforts to halt the Israeli

aggression in Gaza have notably challenged the United States. This consistent adherence to its foreign policy principles largely explains Algeria's strong regional and international standing.

Despite the amendment to the constitution, allowing the Algerian army to assume certain roles beyond its borders, and Algeria's recent adoption of an economic diplomacy approach through the work of the Algerian Agency for International Cooperation for Solidarity and Development (AICA); suggests a relative change in the instruments of foreign policy implementation, the stability of Algerian policy goals and the principles of its external behavior have so far demonstrated that the change falls within the scope of first-level changes in the previous Charles Hermann model.

Conclusion:

Recognizing the negative geopolitical consequences of its past inward-looking diplomacy and the risks from regional instability, Algeria has revitalized its diplomatic efforts to protect its interests. This involved a comprehensive assessment of its foreign policy and security challenges. In late 2019, the new leadership reviewed the military's defensive doctrine, authorizing potential deployment of the Algerian army on specific missions abroad. This preemptive measure strengthens Algerian diplomacy in volatile regions and reinforces Algeria's commitment to preventing foreign intervention in neighboring countries.

Practically, a set of internal and external factors have provided a favorable climate for activating Algerian foreign policy at the current stage. Internally, Algeria has maintained its political and socio-economic stability amidst a turbulent environment. Internationally, the Russian-Ukrainian war has strengthened Algeria's position in the global energy market and opened wide horizons for its foreign policy. Additionally, Algeria's hosting of several regional and international summits, as well as its election to the UN Security Council, have contributed to its prominence on the global diplomatic stage, particularly in the context of its significant efforts to halt the Israeli aggression on Gaza.

Amidst the dynamics that characterized Algeria's efforts to regain its international standing and establish itself as a regional player, Algeria maintained its foreign policy traditions based on the principles of renouncing the use of force in international relations, non-interference in the affairs of other states and respecting their sovereignty, championing just causes in the world, supporting international cooperation, and resolving disputes through peaceful means. However, this did not prevent Algeria from taking strong and firm positions against international parties hostile to its interests. In this context, Algeria adopted a strict approach to managing its geopolitical differences with Morocco, France, and Spain. Additionally, Official statements and visits by Algerian officials reinforced the traditional foreign policy approach closer to the Moscow-Beijing axis.

Applying Hermann's model, Algeria's foreign policy transformations remained limited to the first level. The instruments, principles, and goals of its foreign policy remained unchanged, indicating a continued adaptive approach driven by international transformations and growing regional threats, necessitating a reconsideration of the army's role. The decline of Algerian diplomacy spurred renewed foreign policy activity focused on securing the regional environment. However, obstacles persist, including the loss of traditional influence and obstruction from regional and international actors.

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