

1: Algerian hostage crisis | World | The Guardian

INTRODUCTION. A human rights crisis in Algeria which has already claimed tens of thousands of lives has continued to worsen. In the past year thousands have been killed in what has been the most intense period of violence since the beginning of the conflict.

These are external links and will open in a new window Close share panel Twenty-two Britons who survived the hostage crisis in Algeria have been arriving back in the UK. Some of them - or their relatives - have spoken to the media about their experiences and expressed sadness for the colleagues who died. His family told the BBC, through Devon and Cornwall Police, they were glad he was safe "but he has lost some good mates". He was critical of the authorities and BP and Orion for failing to communicate with the family. We were kept up to date from friends who worked in the oil and gas industry and the news. He said when he heard the emergency alarm: What we know Interactive timeline with satellite photos He went on: There was no food for two days, no telecommunications, no electricity, no running water. So I just lay still and relaxed. I slept most of the time really. I was escorted out by what looked like their special forces. They got us out quickly and safely. He said he was working at the plant when the power went down - a fairly common occurrence. It was not until they heard sustained gunfire that he and his colleagues decided to hide in an office. They got a satellite telephone, locked the door and stuck pieces of paper to the windows of the room so nobody could see inside. Media playback is unsupported on your device Media caption Escaped hostage Alan Wright: For the next nine hours, the group tried to stay out of sight, not knowing what was happening. They then left the office for another room, and the foreign workers among the group grew concerned that the Algerian nationals would leave them - and inadvertently betray their position. Mr Wright phoned home a few hours later to reassure his family, he said, although he was still in grave danger. He spoke to his wife, declining to speak to his two young daughters as he did not want his last conversation with them to be on a crackly phone. The next morning, despite initial doubts, Mr Wright went along with a plan by the Algerians to escape. He was given a hat to wear to make him "look less expat" and they cut the wire perimeter fence. Relief was mixed with unease, he said. In the interview, he said he was "very relieved to be out". The year-old was reportedly being transported in a convoy of jeeps in an attempt by the hostage-takers to leave the plant, when Algerian army helicopters fired on them. The vehicle Stephen McFaul was in crashed, and he managed to escape. At one point explosives were placed around his neck by his captors. His year-old son Dylan had said he could not wait to give his father "a big hug". No-one should have to go through that just for a job. He said he felt sorry for anybody who had been hurt and paid tribute to his rescuers. I was very impressed with the Algerian army. Are you, or is someone you know, affected by the issues in this story? Send us your experiences using the form below.

2: The Crisis in Algeria

*The Algerian War, also known as the Algerian War of Independence or the Algerian Revolution (Arabic: ⵝⵓⵔ ⵏ ⵍⵣⵣⵓⵢⵔ ⵏ ⵍⵣⵣⵓⵢⵔ; Berber languages: *Tagrawla Tadzayrit*; French: *Guerre d'Algérie* or *Révolution algérienne*) was a war between France and the Algerian National Liberation Front (French: *Front de Libération Nationale* - FLN) from 1954 to 1962, which led to Algeria gaining its independence from France.*

Directed by Marshall Bugeaud , who became the first Governor-General of Algeria , the conquest was violent, marked by a " scorched earth " policy designed to reduce the power of the native rulers, the Dey , including massacres, mass rapes, and other atrocities. Alger , Oran and Constantine. It allowed Muslims to apply for full French citizenship, a measure that few took, since it involved renouncing the right to be governed by sharia law in personal matters and was considered a kind of apostasy. Its first article stipulated: The indigenous Muslim is French; however, he will continue to be subjected to Muslim law. He may be called to functions and civil employment in Algeria. He may, on his demand, be admitted to enjoy the rights of a French citizen; in this case, he is subjected to the political and civil laws of France. The Law of September 20, granted French citizenship to all Algerian subjects, who were not required to renounce their Muslim personal status. Amid growing discontent from the Algerian population, the Third Republic " acknowledged some demands, and the Popular Front initiated the Blum-Viollette proposal in which was supposed to enlighten the Indigenous Code by giving French citizenship to a small number of Muslims. This new party was dissolved in France, which had just lost Indochina , was determined not to lose the next anti-colonial war, particularly not in its oldest and nearest major colony, which was regarded as an integral part of the republic. From Cairo , the FLN broadcast a proclamation calling on Muslims in Algeria to join in a national struggle for the "restoration of the Algerian state " sovereign, democratic and social " within the framework of the principles of Islam. He declared in the National Assembly, "One does not compromise when it comes to defending the internal peace of the nation, the unity and integrity of the Republic. The Algerian departments are part of the French Republic. They have been French for a long time, and they are irrevocably French. Between them and metropolitan France there can be no conceivable secession. Fewer than fellaghas pro-Independence fighters could be counted at the beginning of the conflict. Please help improve this article by adding citations to reliable sources. Unsourced material may be challenged and removed. The communists , who had made no move to cooperate in the uprising at the start, later tried to infiltrate the FLN, but FLN leaders publicly repudiated the support of the party. Bendjelloul and the pro-integrationist moderates had already abandoned their efforts to mediate between the French and the rebels. The six historical Leaders of the FLN: On the political front, the FLN worked to persuade"and to coerce"the Algerian masses to support the aims of the independence movement through contributions. As the FLN campaign of influence spread through the countryside, many European farmers in the interior called *Pieds-Noirs* , many of whom lived on lands taken from Muslim communities during the nineteenth century, [41] sold their holdings and sought refuge in Algiers and other Algerian cities. Colon vigilante units, whose unauthorized activities were conducted with the passive cooperation of police authorities, carried out *ratonnades* literally, rat-hunts, *raton* being a racist term for denigrating Muslim Algerians against suspected FLN members of the Muslim community. By , effective political action groups within the Algerian colonial community succeeded in convincing many of the Governors General sent by Paris that the military was not the way to resolve the conflict. A major success was the conversion of Jacques Soustelle , who went to Algeria as governor general in January determined to restore peace. Soustelle, a one-time leftist and by an ardent Gaullist, began an ambitious reform program the Soustelle Plan aimed at improving economic conditions among the Muslim population. After the Philippeville massacre[edit] This section needs additional citations for verification.

3: Algeria's Economy: The Vicious Circle of Oil and Violence | Crisis Group

The May crisis (or Algiers putsch or the coup of 13 May) was a political crisis in France during the turmoil of the Algerian War of Independence (1954-1962) which led to collapse of the Fourth Republic and its replacement by the Fifth Republic led by Charles de Gaulle who returned to power after a twelve-year absence.

Behind this refusal, there lies a desire to maintain its position as a pivotal actor in regional security matters while conducting a wait-and-see diplomacy, an approach which many observers and regional leaders have deemed incomprehensible. The initial lack of commitment could in fact be the result of conflicting positions and divergent interests within the regime and of the lack of transparency in decision-making. These factors are crippling its diplomatic power. The Arab Spring, the crisis in Mali and the attack against the Tiguentourine gas plant. Calls for national unity have also been taken up by President Bouteflika in his May speeches: Yet, instability within Libya has exposed Algeria to many uncertainties and unexpected threats that have paralyzed the government. Algiers fears that popular protests may spread to Algeria and that, combined with years of demonstrations and protests¹⁰, in according to the Minister of Interior, the regime would very well collapse. The inertia of the Algerian government and its ambiguity prior to the popular uprising in Libya explain the very late recognition of the Libyan National Transitional Council, leading to the increased isolation of Algeria on the regional scene. This position clearly showed to what extent the regional uprisings had taken the Algerian authorities by surprise. It also showed that the political matrix of Algeria has not changed; President Abdelaziz Bouteflika belongs to the same generation of Arab leaders as Muammar Gaddafi. Algeria mediated peace processes that brought a precarious end to previous Tuareg uprisings in Mali in 1991 and Algeria knows what is expected on it in this crisis, given its status as the regional military power, its influence in the far northern part of Mali Kidal, as intermediary in previous crises in northern Mali, and as the original home of al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb AQIM. This relative absence from the international policy response was first interpreted as a cautious position related to the April abduction of seven Algerian diplomats in the Malian city of Gao by the radical group Movement of Uniqueness and Jihad in West Africa MUJWA. Algeria has been continually invoking this constitutional principle, thus justifying why its forces have not crossed into Mali to eradicate AQIM, even when invited to do so by its Sahelian neighbours, particularly by Niger. This move occurred exactly five days before Iyad ag Ghaly announced the creation of a new jihadist group called Ansar al-Dine defenders of the faith in Northern Mali. The question then is why Algeria had some forces entered in Mali if Algeria is so keen not to intervene militarily on foreign soil? It is not clear what kind of forces were sent, but according to the official Algerian statements, Malian military elements were reported to be training with Algerian military counterparts in Kidal Region. Algeria withdrew its so-called military advisors from Mali and cut off military assistance at the end of when the conflict was clearly about to begin. Keenan In the summer context of entrenchment of radical groups in northern Mali with uncertain implications, Algeria has first maintained contacts with a wide range of actors, and seemed to be prioritizing access to information and influence over a clearly formulated strategy. On the international front, the situation was immensely embarrassing for Algeria who was accused of passivity and perceived it had little choice, but to try and negotiate a deal with all Tuareg rebels in order to calm down a potentially explosive situation. Algeria has expressed its preference for a political solution in Mali. He is among those leaders of the Tuareg rebellion working closely with the DRS. Moreover, he was the main leader of the Tuareg rebellion that began in and ended with the peace ceremony at Timbuktu in 2006. During that period, Iyad came under the eye of the DRS who were concerned that the rebellion might spread into Algeria. That may explain the off-the-record set of talks Algiers led along the summer. The Algerian authorities never officially acknowledged that meeting took place. In October 2006, another secret delegation of Ansar al-Dine visited Algiers. The same month the Algerian government sent a humanitarian convoy and three military vehicles to Kidal, under the control of Ansar al-Dine. In both cases, Islamist organizations were in charge of distributing the food to local populations. It seemed then more profitable for Algiers to portray the MNLA as a destabilizing force, but one which was unable to found a State according the sacrosanct principle of self-determination. Algiers had more

interest in dealing and negotiating with a familiar interlocutor, who would be easier to manage to manipulate, whom ideological principles fluctuate, and whose interests might be limited to a consistent financial gain. Thanks to Algiers, Iyad ag-Ghaly was imposed as an unavoidable interlocutor in the regional conflict exit strategy plan, to such an extent that even the ECOWAS representative eventually held talks with him in Ouagadougou in November. But even if Iyad ag-Ghaly announced he had given up implementing Sharia law throughout Mali but in Kidal, some Malian and Western observers would still have been suspicious of such sudden reversal. Paradoxically, however, Algiers still permitted a Malian Salafist to build up his credibility among other protagonists of the peace process. It seemed then that Algeria succeeded in finding out an opportunity to regain its traditional role as regional power-broker and mediator in any Tuareg conflict. By using Ansar al-Dine as a proxy in northern Mali, Algeria could pretend to provide an apparent peacemaker foreign policy, and retrieve a consistent leadership after decades of diplomatic decline. However, further serious setbacks came to contradict the Algerian strategy and prove that it was far from being wise in dealing with such a complex interlacing context. First, on the ground, the jihadist groups have strengthened their hold on the northern part of Mali and were preparing themselves for the possible military confrontation with the African forces. Such a new ethnic distribution system was the result of growing resentment by non-Algerians after they were denied leadership positions. It was also an alarming sign that locally-rooted jihadist katibas had consolidated prior to the French military intervention in January. The confidential letter from Abdelmalek Droukdel head of the AQIM northern Algeria katiba to the islamists leaders in northern Mali found out in Timbuktu in February, proves that a real synchronisation between AQIM and Ansar al-Dine did exist, and that the gathering of all the radical forces was part of a long-term strategy of entrenchment in the Azawad region: It is too early for that, God knows. Instead, it is necessary to be cautious in the matter and we must be more realistic and look at it from a broader and more complete perspective to see a historic opportunity that must be exploited to interact with the Azawad people, including all its sectors, with the aim of uniting it and rallying it behind our Islamic project, by adopting its just cause and achieving its legitimate goals, while giving it an authentic Islamist tinge. As for internal activity, in this we would be under the emirate of Ansar Dine. Our emir would follow their emir and our opinion would follow their opinion. By internal activity, we mean all activity connected to participating in bearing the responsibilities of the liberated areas. The strengthening of ties with Washington resulted in a flurry of visits to Algiers by American officials and regular invitations to the White House for Algerian ministers and President Abdelaziz Bouteflika. On the security level, there has been an increase in the number of joint operations and initiatives. The FBI has opened a field office in Algiers, Algerian officers have been trained in the United States, and there has been a series of joint intelligence missions between high-ranking DRS officers and their American counterparts. The two countries have therefore established relations that are primarily focused on the security issue, with Washington formulating and determining the principles, methods, and strategies. This move not only shows the contradictions and the incoherencies of the US administration policy, but points out the difficulties Washington D. It remains to be seen if the Algerian authorities will draw the lessons of their rapprochement with a Salafist organisation, even if it is a Tuareg one. The attack against the Tiguentourine gas plant. The attack against a Saharan strategic industrial plant by the Mokhtar Belmokhtar katiba combat unit 13 on 16 January, represented not only another strategic surprise but also a tipping point for the Algerian government, since it dragged Algeria straight into the Sahelian crisis. This town is a mere 86 kilometers from Hassi Messaoud oil field, the central node of national production. These dramatic events that occurred within six-month of each other, suggest Algiers was unable to evaluate the threat environment and revealed strong failures in the territorial security, in particular in the Sahara region which acts as the heartland of the Algerian economy. As a result, the hostage crisis shook up the internal political scene. Yet the way the In Amenas counter-offensive has been conducted reflects the way the Algerian power structure greatly differs from its neighbors. The complex distribution of power not only makes it hard to assess personal responsibility, but also shows that a handful of military officers have enjoyed a monopoly over domestic and foreign politics and have benefited disproportionately from oil and gas revenues. The regime and the army are in fact two sides of the same coin. Moreover, the power struggle within the military and security apparatus, created many

different nodes of decision-making which are difficult to identify. In fact, during the In Amenas hostages crisis, the high military command, namely General Othman Tartag number two of the DRS 16 , ardent supporter of forceful actions, ended up taking the lead of the operations in Tiguentourine, opposing the decision of the other local military commands Gendarmerie, Special Forces and Parachutists Intelligence Online Surprisingly, the aftermath of the crisis resulted in an unexpected rapprochement between Algiers and Washington in the field of intelligence and defense. The United States proposed to share with Algeria some intelligence data provided by their drones, in order to facilitate the securitization of the southern borders, and under the condition of accepting the opening of a cross border Algeria-Mali fly-zone Schmitt, Sayare ; Campbell The United States is already providing surveillance information to the French-led military operation in Mali to help combat militants there who last year seized the northern half of the country. In a cable to the State Department last week, according to administration officials, Henry S. Ensher, the United States envoy in Algiers, urged that the pursuit of the Algerian militant Mokhtar Belmokhtar, the mastermind of the gas field attack, be made a priority. In return, Algeria should play a more proactive role in the region, a role of proxy state. The aim of this deal is to limit as much as possible the interference of other western actors in Sahelian affairs, especially since the Serval Operation was activated in emergency and has caught the two countries by surprise. Does this mean that we will see an uptick in Algerian operations in the border areas in return for an increasing aid from Washington? This is what some recent assessments by Algerian officials to the Pentagon suggest: Conclusion Two years of turbulence in the Sahel have shown to what extent the Algerian government has difficulties to adapt to the new regional and international relations environment. Without a clear geostrategic vision that would forge a more realistic foreign policy, Algeria still carries a blind spot in diplomatic activity on the Sahel question. Many neighbors think the country is playing a double game that seeks, first, to perpetuate a domestic terrorist threat that could be used to demonize a possible Algerian Spring, and second, to ensure external military funding Ammour That should also give the DRS the continuous opportunity to play a key-role in the issue of terrorism and all security related regional dossiers, including in the southern part of the Algerian territory and beyond. The old elites whose principles are still rooted in the s and s ignore the effects of the globalization, and the way the Arab uprisings have dramatically altered the regional framework. Instead, Algeria tries to keep on with old solutions for new and more complex problems. Notes 1This date refers to the first day of the independence war against French colonial rule. In , in Baghdad, the Front became the Refusal Front and cut its diplomatic relations with Egypt at a time when the Camp David agreement were about to be signed. This term is still striking in the Arab world since it underlays the official stance of most Arab states not only against Israel but also against western interference in Arab affairs. Even if Algeria and Libya were longstanding competitors on the Sahelian scene, Algeria preferred the preservation of an authoritarian but familiar regime in its immediate vicinity to the uncertainties of an unknown leadership. The Algerian subsidised foodstuffs sold illicitly in north Mali have created a shadow economy that allows the poor region of Kidal to maintain a degree of food security. Despite promises to step down from power, internal speculations over the future power struggles over an eventual fourth term in the next presidential election have heightened concerns about the stability of the country. He came to prominence through the kidnapping of 32 tourists in the Sahara. After the release of the hostages he flew to northern Chad where he was captured by a rebel Chadian group. Today he is believed to be imprisoned in Algeria. See their article from See also Keenan He was one of the most active founders of MUJWA and was responsible for the kidnapping of three humanitarian workers in the Rabouni-Tindouf Sahrawi refugees camp Algeria in Early December , he created a new armed movement, Ansar al-Sharia, mainly composed of Azawad Arabs and Berabish like him from Timbuktu. He is also the brother in law of Mokhtar Belmokhtar. He is said to have been killed in March by Arabs of the Kunta tribe in the Gao region. Only three out of six chapters are readable. The other chapters are missing. It has been written after a meeting on 18 March between A. Droukdel and five Sahelian commanders. See Associated Press It has not yet been translated. The three groups were engaged in a sort of emulation at kidnapping and criminal activities. He already knew Iyad Ag Ghali who is likely to have rubbed in negotiations for the release of hostages.

4: Q&A: Hostage crisis in Algeria - BBC News

Thus, Algeria's borders became surrounded by a fence of crises (Tunisian revolution, a failing state in Libya, security problems coming from Mali, and then the political crisis with Morocco because of the Western Sahara dilemma).

The Algerian government planned and allocated 18 billion USD to complete a total of four thousand water desalination projects in the country between and It is further worth noting that all these projects are rural-based, thus targeting the 14 million citizens who are facing the problem of water shortage. Thedesalination plants were also aimed at supporting the oil companies in the country. This is a related project since oil energy is equally vital in the water desalination process. Apart from the desalination plants, the government has also embarked on building of the most modern Reverse Osmosis plants. These are expensive, but have a massive output rate, and their efficiency is in the production of clean water. The water produced under this method is readily used in areas that demand pure water, such as pharmaceutical industries. Conclusion The global water crisis is real. Measures have to be to identified and put in place before the matter gets out of hand for the future generation. Basic water needs of humanity should be recognized to prevent the idea off one class of people having the commodity in excess, while another class suffering due to an inadequate supply of water. Malaria, typhoid, and other water-related diseases should be equally controlled in all regions. Formal negotiations should be conducted to end water-related conflicts. This goes in line with the identification of basic water needs that should be met for the entire global population before other needs are put into consideration. There also ought to be the efficient methods through which water is put into use. This ranges from small gadgets, such as taps, to large irrigation machines. They all should ensure that water is not wasted during its use. In Algeria, most of the above recommendations will be applicable. Water preservation by way of prudent planning, administration, and technologies provides great expectations. The Algerian government has taken a major step in the fight against the water crisis by allocating USD 18 billion to fund 4, rural projects, and there is still much to be done. Among the recommendable approaches the government ought to target is the complete overhaul and replacement of the current water supply system. A system that will adequately serve water to the entire population of Algeria is still desired. There should also be proper water management systems to control water usage. The systems should efficiently determine the amount of water being channeled to every sector and region. This will enable the curbing of discrimination where the rich get access to the commodity leaving behind the poor individuals who are unable to afford it. It will also prevent the unnecessary and excessive waste of water. Basic water uses should be prioritized. It is not logical to serve industries with clean water while the rural population of Algeria is perishing from the diseases caused by the lack of clean water. Upon the building of the desalination plants, the government should go ahead and allocate funds for the improvement of the infrastructure. The targeted infrastructure should include pipes, reservoirs, and dams. This will ensure proper storage and distribution of water to the entire country.

5: Algerian War - Wikipedia

The Algerian Crisis marked the end of Algerian well being and the beginning of turmoil. Although there had been underlying issues since the Algerian Wars, Algeria's infrastructure finally caved in when in , when oil prices dropped 50 percent from the previous year.

And this small group acted alone and -- in attacking this industrial facility. So I think we can describe these guys as pretty much unilateral. Is that your understanding? But talking about core al-Qaida and sort of global jihad is a very American way to describe the reality. I think we have alternative way to represent that reality, especially in France. And for that reason, I would mention that all of the current situation is basically a very localized jihad. We have sort of solidarity. We have the core al-Qaida somewhere in Afghanistan and Pakistan but a concrete field agenda. But, you know, this was an operation that not an easy one to undertake. I mean, who else was involved? Was it simply that Belmokhtar had the -- and his group had the ability to undertake this action within Algeria? Or was there a broader network that was helping to support them? The French army joined the army of Mali in taking it back. And this particular crisis comes in context of a huge destabilization of a chunk of Africa, Northwest Africa that has suddenly presented a real challenge to the outside world. And so you see this region suddenly much larger than Afghanistan or some of the other -- or Somalia, you know, the other failed states that have contributed to the rise of extremism, have given havens to extremist groups. But it comes in context of something that the outside world is suddenly catching up with and saying huh, what happened? And what are the potential for this particular incident to be replicated over and over and over again? Paul, you heard Jean-Luc Marret earlier say in his judgment that we in the United States are sort of like too quick to put these events into some really easy to classify paradigm and talk about al-Qaida in very generalized way. Give us your sense of al-Qaida, this group that we -- this movement that we call al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb. What is your sense of it, how unified is it, and how should we see these isolated or separate events unfolding in Mali and Algeria right now? AQIM itself is a rebranded Algerian group that had its origins back in the awful bloodletting in Algeria that began in the early s. This raid is overseen by Mokhtar Belmokhtar, who is an Algerian. He fought Soviet forces in Afghanistan in the s, so he shares that attribute with other militants. Quran by day and Mr. So, you know, one -- in fact, one of our listeners is wondering whether the objective here might be to get ransom money, or is it ideological? That is to say a mixture of what is political and ideological and what is criminal. Yes, groups like this one that is headed by Belmokhtar have done both operations for money, for ransom and also claimed to be acting for political reasons. BP says it cannot confirm any reports of hostages being killed, released or escaping. Do you want to elaborate anymore on your view of this group allegedly headed by Belmokhtar and its relation to sort of the wider jihadi struggle? And -- but he has been recently marginalized. But military are not designed to act like that. Does this operation raise any sort of second thoughts about the wisdom of the way the French military acted in Mali with a very conventional military operation, including air strikes against those militants? Does this raise any questions about the wisdom of what has happened in Mali? I agree with that. On the French military operation, I would say that the whole thing was to stop AQIM for protecting the 6, expatriates we have in the South Mali, number one. And it was also to stop this sanctuarization sic from al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb in North Mali because when you have a city like Timbuktu, you have an access to banking and business structures, medical structures, communication, propaganda and proselytism, a whole bunch of things that could have helped them to crystallize a new land of jihad. The way the U. What options does the United States have here? Clearly, we can provide intelligence through drones. We can -- we have tremendous capabilities with our special forces as you as a military reporter knows better than any of us. Air power alone is not going to do it. So the challenges we face are of the same nature in a pretty tough terrain. This is truly a major escalation of tensions in North Africa. What do you see is the implications here for the energy sector for Algeria and for all of those countries in North Africa that depend so heavily on energy extraction? This is something that actually -- originally, when bin Laden declared war against the United States, he said that oil targets were off -- were not part of the battle because that would be part of the wealth of the coming caliphate.

Now, the reason for that is quite simple -- that this is something which is the lifeblood of the world economy. The attacks are spectacular. They draw attention, but also a strategy that at least the al-Qaida senior leadership had adopted and is one of bleeding the United States, bleeding their enemy. They probably do have grievances against a lot of people -- the French, possibly now us in the United States, but also the Algerian government. During the terrible violence in Algeria in the early to mids, when perhaps something like , Algerians lost their lives, that was pretty much confined to the populated north, and the oil and gas facilities in the remote southern parts of the country were left pretty much untouched. So I agree with David. This is a significant departure. Algeria is a sensitive point for -- sensitive place for the people of France. So I think the French opinion is pretty much aware that we could lose troops, especially because by culture, if I say, we prefer to be in the field. The only thing that could seriously change would be if we would have huge events in France as a consequence or domino effect of North Mali situation. You had the statement by Johnny Carson, as you point out, in June that backed away from whether al-Qaida in Maghreb was of major threat. And then after the attack on the U. Chris Stevens, there was a lot of noise out of the Pentagon about, wait a minute, al-Qaida of the Maghreb -- which is blamed for the attack, or a cell within the movement is blamed for the attack -- could be quite dangerous, and it could represent a greater threat across the region. Robin Wright is a journalist and joint fellow at the U. You can reach us at My guests here in the studio are Daveed Gartenstein-Ross. And on the phone are Paul Pillar, a non-resident senior fellow at the Center for Security Studies at Georgetown University and Jean-Luc Marret, who is a senior fellow at the Fondation pour la Recherche Strategique, which is a leading think tank on international security issues in France. I just want to read an email from Charles in Kalamazoo, Mich. We have a legal complication, given that the current government in Bamako, the capital of Mali, is a military junta that took power in a coup not long ago, led by an army captain, and Congress has imposed certain restraints on what kind of assistance we can provide there as far as anything that puts U. We have publics in each of those countries that have very low tolerance for that sort of thing happening. And then finally, what we in the United States and those in France and perhaps elsewhere are most looking for and that is for Africans -- neighboring African countries, to step to the plate. And that is still hoped for. So all of those reasons -- the politics in Bamako, the war-wariness and difficulties and the Africans putting an intervention force together -- account for the slowness in the international response. William, I understand you were deputy chief of mission in Algiers at one point. Up until about December And I also -- but I primarily wanted to say that this crisis was one of the true nightmares that folks like me face when we were in Algeria, anticipating the worst that could happen to U. The size of the country, which I think we tend to underestimate -- I mean, Algeria is now the largest country in Africa. This is something that we could see coming out more often. The problem with this region, as I found out when I was working in Washington on many of these issues 10 years ago, is that you have the Near East and North Africa bureau handling the Maghreb, and you have the African bureau handling the Sahel. But because of the things that Paul and Robin have said, this region does not get the attention, and therefore the oomph in terms of leadership that it needs to put it all together. You said that in your judgment, the government of Algeria let down its guard here. I mean, we had this French military operation in Mali continuing for several days, and there were a lot of warnings about the danger of retaliation, the anger of the militants. And yet, you know, one has to wonder whether BP took adequate security precautions in protecting its workers in Algeria. And I was actually listening to something on the BBC before tuning to your show from a BP security person in London saying that one of the problems is that although they -- and, believe me, we worked closely with BP and all other foreign oil company security folks at the embassy in Algiers. I mean, the Algerians do clamp down very heavily. But the point is these -- the size of the areas concerned are vast and easily penetrated by the folks who live in the region and know how to get around. Criminal activities happen all the time in these zones. We really appreciate your insight and experience. And basically, my observation is that these facilities have their security eroded. They were not paying attention. When we worked there, after losing people to terrorists, our contractor hired up not just the Algerian army, but also private security to take care of all the workers and fortified base camps. And I appreciate you listening to my comment.

6: Hostage Crisis In Algeria - Diane Rehm

Algeria, Africa's largest country and a major energy exporter, is in the throes of a budget crisis amid the global slump in oil prices.

Introduction One year has remained to the forthcoming presidential elections in Algeria, and the Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika is still the candidate of the "majority of political elites" in the country, as his supporters claim, those who are still nominate the same man for taking the fifth consecutive presidential mandate in spite of his severe illness which threw him on his wheelchair since five years ago. In contrast, the current Algerian political arena is unable to find an alternative consensus candidate, the case that raises many questions about the democratic future of a country with the characteristics of an entire continent. This article discusses the underlying causes behind the democratic deficit in Algeria, which political regime remains firmly in place despite all the waves of "democratic chaos" sweeping its regional sphere since or the so-called "Arab spring revolutions". So, we would like to ask the following questions: What prevents the political change in Algeria towards democracy? How did the political regime in Algeria prevent the arrival of democratic waves of change to the borders of Algeria? This article is divided into two parts, the first part provides a brief story of the historical path that democracy has taken in Algeria since independence, explaining the effective actors in the Algerian political regime, while the second part is trying to identify the most important factors that cause the continuation of the democratic deficit in Algeria until now, wondering about the future of democracy in this country rich in natural wealth, people capacities and great history.

A Brief Story of Democracy in Algeria Before we identify the causes of the democratic deficit in Algeria in general and the factors that caused the failure of the "Arab Spring" in the country in particular, it is better to give the reader a brief history of the democratic experiment in Algeria. Algeria was governed by Boumediene until his death in December , during his period, the country had a very good reputation on the international level, Algeria was a leading voice of the national liberation movements and an influential leader in the non-aligned movement in the Third World, and its diplomacy was characterized by unprecedented activity with its repeated successes in the mediation process among disputed parties. At the domestic level, Boumediene devoted national reforms of a socialist nature, such as the nationalization of fuel, the agricultural revolution that succeeded to some extent in pushing this young country economy forward, but its policies failed miserably to construct a state with strong institutions which its continuity not dependent on the presence and continuity of any leader in ruling as he used to say. Boumediene is also blamed on integrating some Algerian officers in the national military who had fought against the Algerian liberation revolution alongside with France and joined the revolution later which so-called "Lacoste promotion". He did not know in that time that this military group would shape the future of Algeria after him later. After the death of President Boumediene in , political influence of the military establishment was grew, this establishment brought the late Shadli Ben Jadid as a new president of Algeria, with marginalizing other political figures were more experience and famous than Ben Jadid like Abdelaziz Bouteflika, who was the Algerian foreign minister during the days of Boumediene and was close to him or Mr. Mohamed Saleh Yahiaoui, which was a very revolutionary charismatic personality. The days of Shadli Ben Jedid were characterized by numerous political and social disturbances, the most important were the events of "the Amazigh Spring" in , which the Amazigh demanded during it some political and social rights which were denied them during Boumediene days. The country also witnessed a growing wave of Islamic trends and movements, which influenced by The Muslim Brotherhood ideas in Egypt, the Islamic revolution ideas in Iran, the Wahhabi trend of Saudi Arabia, the jihadist ideas of Afghanistan and others. With the fall of the Soviet Union and the triumph of Western liberalism, there was no longer any justification for the ruling elite in Algeria to continue adopting the socialist system in economy and governance. The new international circumstances have led Algeria toward liberalism and democratic openness. Despite all the political and social problems that the country was experiencing at that time, but it did not shake the confidence of the Algerian ruling party FLN in itself, nor the confidence of ruling Generals from behind the curtain in opening the country over the political pluralism and allowing other

new formed parties to compete for power. In 1990, an Islamist-oriented political front called "The Islamic Salvation Front" FIS was able to defeat the ruling party in a legislative election that everyone saw as fair. At that time, President Shadli announced his acceptance with respect for the results of the fund. They pushed Shadli to resign and the tank came to the street to restore the situation to what it was before, that caused the failure of the first democratic experience in Algeria and plunging the country into a period of terrible violence and terrorism. The Algerian Generals sought refuge in the revolutionary leader Mohamed Boudiaf, who has enjoyed of revolutionary legitimacy and was well accepted by the Algerian political community. He was pushed to power, but Boudiaf did not rule for more than five months January-June to be assassinated while addressing the Algerian people in a live broadcast, and until now the circumstances of his assassination remain ambiguous. Many analysts say that the man was a victim of his attempts to restore power and put it in the hands of civilians rather than military. After this assassination, Algeria entered terrible years of randomly violence and terrorism throughout the 90s or what the Algerians know of the era of "black decade". At that time, Algeria was ruled by two successive presidents, namely Ali Kafi and Liamine Zeroual President Bouteflika started his era with the project of civil accord and national reconciliation, ending a decade of massacres and crimes that killed more than 100,000 Algerians, according to official statistics. Also, he made some generals close to him and promoted many military leaders to "the rank of General" so as to weakness this rank and break the monopoly of generals opposing him which enjoyed many powers alone. Bouteflika ended his third mandate in 2007, to re-run for a fourth mandate and win despite his severe illness. Since then, his eloquent speeches and media presence have disappeared due to illness, giving way to an old-new figure who runs the country behind the scenes, his brother Said Bouteflika. If we would like to shorten the nature of the Algerian political system in one term, the term oligarchy will seem to be the closest term to the content. The country is not driven by a single power but by a group of powers or balances or wings, so, the political decision is ultimately an outcome of the struggle and clash among these interests, a game in which each party has relied on an external support. France and the United States stand at the head of these supporters. One year before the next election, and the current president Abdelaziz Bouteflika is still a candidate for most of these forces, despite the regime figure out that Bouteflika is unable to perform his duties naturally because of his disease, and no one knows until now what the conflict of interests and wings within the Algerian regime will produce, especially after the cocaine issue. In 2011, the first waves of the so-called "Arab Spring" exploded in Tunisia, followed by a major crisis in Libya, in which the ruling regime fell. Libya became a failing state, exporting many security problems to its regional environment. However, despite this security-strained regional environment, the Algerian regime has managed to overcome the "chaos of the Arab Spring" and thereby maintain itself adapting to the status quo, and also was able to silence popular political and social demands. Therefore, many have asked the same question: Why did the "Arab Spring Wave" stop on the Algerian borders? And why Algeria continues to live a democratic deficit, despite all the human and material potential which possesses as a rich country. We argue here that the factors of the "Arab Spring" failure in Algeria and the reasons of the democratic deficit in the country are considered compound reasons and factors, some of them are related to the people, some of them to the political regime and some of them to the main external factors. In the following, we will explain all of these factors one by one. As for the democratic political culture of the Algerian people, we can say that is a very modern culture. This country has not seen the wave of democracy until the end of the last century. The Historical Memory of "The Black Decade" The painful memory of "the black decade" is still present in the collective imagination of the Algerian people. Human rights agencies have recorded more than 100,000 deaths, according to official statistics, and about 200,000 deaths, according to unofficial statistics. There are many shocking stories of bloody nights in many villages over Algeria, as in the case of "Ben Talha" village, where unknown gunmen have destroyed an entire village in few hours, leaving about 100 dead. With the outbreak of the "Arab Spring uprisings," the political regime deliberately broadcasted horrible scenes of that era on public television provoking widespread discontent among the Algerians who accused the regime of trying to terrorize the Algerians so that no one would dare to "rebel" again, and support for this "chaos movement" which called "Arab spring. Either we or bloody chaos. The Military Nature of the Algerian Regime The Algerian political regime is characterized by its military nature in essence. The Generals who took part in the coup were the ones

who ruled Algeria behind the scenes and made its presidents since that period. It is true, there are institutions of a civil state, democracy, and elections, but they are all formality and does not participate at all in the fateful decisions of the country. When we talk about the military establishment, we are talking about two main bodies: The competition between these two bodies and the sharing of interests among its major figures have shaped always the content of the decision in Algeria. Even the president himself is a product of the balance between these two bodies. However, although the current Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika was a product of these existing balances, as we have said before, the president has succeeded this time in taking power from this establishment to the presidency. One of the most famous statements of Bouteflika, when he came to power, was: We have already mentioned briefly the features of the wings struggle within the Algerian regime, which continues to this day, and has recently exploded because of the cocaine issue. The Spanish border police have informed the Algerian intelligence service and not the police that a huge quantity of cocaine kg will enter Algeria via the sea, it is coming from Brazil. The army has moved to confiscate it and impede the operation. This case revealed later the involvement of many political and military leaders and police leaders as well. As a result of the story, the military led by General Al-Gaid Al-Saleh took advantage of the case to strongly strike some influential figures, especially who have the ambition to be the next president of Algeria Like Abdulghani Al-Hamel the General Director of Police and keeping them away from the political game, because they can use this position later against its interests. So, this is the nature of the Algerian political regime, divided into wings struggling for power away from the will of people who never possess his sovereignty at all. The Weakness of Civil Society and its Containment by the Regime Civil society plays an important role in any process of democratic transition. Civil society plays the role of mediator between people and authority. It is formed by a group of voluntary organizations which have an independent will from the state institutions such as student unions, Worker syndicates, trade unions, free economic institutions and others. The largest part of these organizations in Algeria, which was created to express the voice of the Authority, it is funded by the Authority, because it is difficult in Algeria to establish a civic organization with an independent will and funding. With the approaching of any election date, these organizations support the candidate of regime, here, we can refer to the positions of Mr. The same is true of Mr. Ali Haddad, director-general of the Forum of Algerian Enterprise Heads, the largest gathering of Algerian businessmen in the country. The man strongly supports the presidential wing Which created him , and no one in Algeria does not know his close personal relationship with the brother of President Bouteflika. Meanwhile, the regime keeps other businessmen away, just because they have opposition voices like Mr. Therefore, the inability of the society to establish independent civil society organizations which are not contained by the Authority is an additional factor in the democratic deficit phenomenon that has been in place for decades. It is also a sign of the impossibility of a democratic change led by civil society figures in Algeria. This book is the most important theoretical contribution which related the problem of democratic deficit with oil wealth. The more the state - in the third world - possesses a great oil wealth, the more it gets suffered in its transition to democracy. It seems that this theory has a tremendous explanatory power with regard to the state of democracy in Algeria, as Algeria is one of the richest countries with natural resources, especially oil and natural gas. Since President Bouteflika came to power in , oil prices have continued to rise. Since , the world has known two major wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, which have caused an increase in the price of oil. Also, some International crises such as the Syrian war, Ukrainian war, Yemen war, and others effectively contributed to saving Bouteflika mandates later. So, the Algerian regime benefited from rent income to employ it in the so-called "buy social peace" policy. In addition to the policy of tax cuts on people, the Algerian government has spent large sums to contain the growing anger of people because of many social problems, as well as the limitation of the horizon of democracy and freedoms in the country. These include, for example, facilitating the extraction of bank loans for young people to open profitable projects or small economic institutions, or the like. This policy has proved its relative success, especially with the increase of "the Arab Spring waves" in Tunisia and Egypt and the war in Syria, but it is a long-term failed policy that will not absorb the discontent of people in all sectors. The government announced almost a year ago that it will be entering a stage of austerity, so we can say, it would not be in its favor at all. It is still a big controversy about

those Generals and causes of their inclusion by the previous President Houari Boumediene in the army on the pretext of benefiting from their military experience. Today, there is a list of influential names in the country takes its support from France, including politicians, civilians, Generals or ministers, and many of them personally benefit from their relationships with France, such as get facilities to buy expensive residences in Paris, or smuggling money or the like. Today, there is a talk about a "US wing" as a strong rival to the French wing inside the Algerian regime. Let us clarify this issue with two examples. The first example relates to General Toufik, whom Bouteflika removed from the arena, but his shadow remains strong. Many wonder how the man who ruled Algeria from behind the curtain for 25 years could disappear so easily, at the time when he named himself "Lord of Algeria"? Among what the website quoted, that the General Tawfik still working silently, he is making his home as a place for secret meetings. Also, the website said that the General Tawfik was able to gather a lot of information thanks to the penetrating of his intelligence establishment to many terrorist groups, which he transferred to the US intelligence in his visit to the USA in summer of The information said that there were possible terrorist attacks on the United States territory soon, but the US intelligence did not take this information seriously than, the September 11 tragedy was happening. Since then General Tawfik has become a very important man for the Americans. The case of the appointment of Mr. Ould Kaddour at the head of this company has caused a great deal of confusion among the Algerians. No one knows until now whether his appointment means that he did not any such mistake or reflects the US pressure to keep its ally there after the scandal involving their former ally Chakib Khelil?

7: Algeria | Crisis Group

For the past four years, Algeria has been torn by brutal political violence. The crisis has now spread to France, where Islamist groups have engaged in terrorist activities.

By the end of the week, when an uneasy calm had been restored, the dead numbered in the hundreds, with thousands wounded or in jail. Suddenly its political and economic future had been cast into question. What had gone wrong? There are numerous proximate causes. Labor strikes created an initial nucleus of social protest. A sharp decline in hydrocarbon revenues injected greater austerity into the prevailing environment of high unemployment and inflation, lack of housing, and squalid urban conditions. Drought and a devastating locust invasion resulted in food shortages and higher food prices. Deeper structural causes include the political bankruptcy of the ruling FLN party. Certainly one feature of the events in Algeria has been the failure of the country to feed itself through its own agricultural production and its increasing inability to cover the cost of food imports and food subsidies. This is ironic, since government policies dating back to the first years of independence from France have ostensibly emphasized self-sufficiency in food production. Now an increasing proportion of the population lives near the threshold of hunger, and this in turn engenders political and economic instability. More than 1 million Algerians died -- mostly peasants -- and over 2 million rural Algerians were uprooted and forced into detention camps to create free-fire zones in the countryside. Hundreds of villages were destroyed, cropland and forests were napalmed and burned, and livestock perished by the millions. The destruction of agrarian Algeria was compounded by the fact that many of the approximately 22, colonial farmers severely neglected their holdings during the war. At the time, while various factions struggled for control of the government, an interesting phenomenon occurred. Throughout the countryside, landless peasants who had formerly worked on the abandoned colonial farms as wage laborers occupied these farms and kept them in production. Remaining colonial agricultural holdings were nationalized and added to the self-managed sector. Peasant self-management, though, presented the new government with a major dilemma: This former colonial sector of approximately 2. Between and , the 22, self-managed farms were consolidated into approximately 2, large state farms. On these large units, the government controlled virtually all production and marketing decisions, and finances. These farms absorbed the vast majority of government funds accorded to agriculture. The rural sector, though, retained considerable ideological importance. The reform had two explicit goals: The reform outlawed exploitative forms of tenure and distributed land to landless and land-poor peasants from state lands and expropriated private holdings. Holdings of some 34, absentee landowners were to be entirely expropriated. By , when the reform had run its course, over 1. In the end, the agrarian revolution sector was remarkably like the self-managed sector. The major differences were in production-unit size and quality of land. Agrarian revolution cooperatives were much smaller than the self-managed farms -- averaging around hectares versus 1, hectares on the self-managed farms. In addition, agrarian revolution land was generally much poorer in quality. A second goal was complete self-sufficiency in cereal production by the year . The authorities reasoned that expanding the state agricultural sector would enable the government to expand the use of modern inputs and techniques and harness a new agricultural labor force. A greater sense of ownership would motivate beneficiaries of this reform to produce more than they had been under previous, less secure tenure arrangements. The agrarian revolution also had other, less explicit motives. It would also help raise rural incomes, thereby slowing peasant exodus from the countryside and expanding the market for industrial output. Government commitment to food security, though, faltered in , once skyrocketing world oil prices produced windfall revenues that could finance both food imports and industrialization. Food imports had reached dangerously high levels, urban consumers were complaining about empty shelves, and social and economic conditions in the countryside were rapidly deteriorating. By , the self-managed and agrarian revolution units had been completely merged and reorganized into some 3, state farms of roughly equal size known as domaines agricoles socialistes, comprising slightly over 2. An additional , hectares of former agrarian revolution land were privatized -- sold or leased to individual farmers or returned to their former owners. Since , the government has gradually been

converting the domaines agricoles socialistes into smaller autonomous units known as exploitations agricoles collectives EACs. This latest reform breaks dramatically with past approaches. Rather than being imposed from above, the new collectives are formed voluntarily by their members. EACs must have a minimum of three members and are not to exceed 2, hectares. The EACs lease land from the state, but individual collective members are allowed to sell their shares of the leases after five years. They are given complete autonomy in their operations. Although they can obtain loans from the government on very favorable terms, they must otherwise rely on their own initiative rather than on government support. Since , the government has also been extending assistance, mainly credit, to the private sector, which had received little or no assistance from previous post-colonial governments. It mainly comprises traditional dryland farmers who grow cereals on small landholdings. Their holdings are primarily located on marginal lands characterized by unfavorable slopes, poor soils and unreliable rainfall, but the private sector also includes modern entrepreneurs who produce market vegetables and other high-value crops on irrigated holdings. Tractor purchases, for example, increased from virtually none during the period to 1, in and 5, in And in exchange for putting previously undeveloped state land into production, homesteaders are granted property rights to the land. This program is expected eventually to subsume some , hectares. In , the government announced a comprehensive development plan to increase cultivated area, raise agricultural yields and mobilize water resources for irrigation. The plan also calls for mechanization, the introduction of high-yield seeds, and better cultivation techniques to increase crop yields. The plan, for example, called for the purchase of over 45, tractors and 4, combine-harvesters. The Crisis Worsens Since the government has been engaged in an all-out effort to increase food production through aggressively restructuring the state agricultural sector and embracing the large private sector. Have these initiatives been successful? These cereals are consumed primarily as bread and couscous. Cereals account for nearly two thirds of the daily caloric intake of the average Algerian, and more than 80 percent for the poorest urban classes. Average annual cereal production during the period was 10 percent less than that during the war years of Today, these imports have grown to over kilograms per person. A number of complex factors underlie this failure, including constraints of environment and climate, the continuing legacy of colonialism, and high demographic growth. In the plan, its percentage fell to 15 percent and in the plan, to only 11 percent. In the and plans, both of which supposedly give priority to agriculture, its share was less than 6 percent. Although more prosperous landowners have recently been able to modernize with government assistance, the majority of private-sector farmers still depend on animal traction and the traditional swing plow. Cereal yields are less than a third of those obtained in Turkey, and only about a seventh of those in France. Funding shortages also show up in pricing policies. Until relatively recently, prices paid to farmers for wheat, barley, and other staple foods were far below world market prices -- a World Bank study claims that they were only between one fifth and one half of what they would have been without government price fixing. Low crop prices, though, have greatly discouraged food production and helped encourage a massive exodus out of the countryside and into the cities. Without jobs, these rural refugees have become an idle and politically dangerous force. Funding shortages for agriculture have also meant extremely low wages for agricultural workers in the state sector -- much lower than industrial wages. Peasants in the state sector arrange to be paid for work days when they are engaged elsewhere. They illegally appropriate part of each cereal harvest for their own family needs. They rent state agricultural machinery to farmers in the private sector, and sell state-owned fertilizer and other inputs to these private farmers. They divert forage crops to large commercial stock-raisers or stock-raising relatives, and allow these stock-raisers to graze on fallow state lands. State sector peasants themselves are prohibited from owning flocks and herds, but they have nonetheless acquired livestock by the millions. In many cases, invading livestock have eaten a significant percentage of grain in surrounding wheat and barley fields. A total of over 2. Much of this land is believed to have been appropriated by leaders of the independence struggle. In early , the government announced it had expropriated 3 million hectares of this land for the land reform fund. By , the total had fallen to 1. It appears that farmers pressured local authorities to withdraw 1. The remaining , hectares disappeared from the private sector between and Large landholders bribed or coerced authorities to delete their holdings from the records -- this accounts for about , hectares. The remaining , hectares disappeared from the land reform fund through

various loopholes and sleights of hand. The amount of land that evaded land reform is twice as large as the amount included. Using the rule of thumb that ten hectares of dry land are needed to support a peasant family in Algeria, an estimated , to , additional landless families could have acquired viable holdings. Inclusion of this land in agrarian reform might have enabled Algeria to increase its cereal production significantly. To cover production shortfalls, the government has had to import wheat, barley, and other basic commodities at significantly higher prices than the low, subsidized consumer prices it charges to its citizens. The resulting substantial rises in food prices helped to precipitate the October riots. When rioting broke out in Algeria, food prices had already increased by some 40 percent since the start of . Such price increases would create vehement political protest in even the wealthiest countries. In Algeria, where a majority of the population lives precariously close to impoverishment, these price increases helped stretch social tensions to the breaking point. It was no coincidence that rioters waved empty couscous boxes in the streets, or that they replaced the Algerian national flag flying over a prominent government building with an empty wheat sack. The disturbances are ominous signs of the social chaos that may ultimately ensue in the absence of major changes in government policies. Endnotes [1] This article is drawn from research funded by a grant from the John D. Entelis and Philip Naylor, eds. CAPAM land usually was not considered to belong to the self-managed sector, and its deduction gives the oft-seen total of 2.

8: May crisis in France - Wikipedia

In addition to a looming succession crisis, Algeria faces multiple political, economic and social challenges. President Abdelaziz Bouteflika has ruled the country without contest since but has been gravely ill since a stroke in

These are external links and will open in a new window Close share panel The Algerian government says that in the course of a military operation to retake an Algerian gas plant 69 people died, including at least 39 hostages and 29 Islamist kidnappers. Three of the hostage-takers have been arrested. One Algerian security guard was killed as extremists launched their attack last Wednesday, but the number of deaths among Algerians is not yet clear. Gunmen with al-Qaeda links attacked the plant, which housed hundreds of foreign and Algerian workers, on 16 January. The complex is located at Tigantourine, near In Amenas deep in the Sahara desert. What we know Interactive timeline with satellite photos Some Algerian workers at the plant and foreigners escaped or were freed. The aim of the kidnappers was to "blow up the gas plant", Algerian Prime Minister Abdelmalek Sellal said. The militants killed a number of hostages before Algerian special forces launched a final assault on the plant on 19 January. The government has rejected the claim, saying the attack on the gas plant had been planned for more than two months. Here BBC News looks at how the crisis developed, who is involved and possible motives of the hostage-takers. How were the hostages taken? Heavily armed gunmen attacked two buses carrying foreign gas workers of the Tigantourine plant 3km 1. Six other people - two Britons, a Norwegian, two police officers and a security guard - were wounded. The front bus managed to travel on to In Amenas where the injured were treated, government officials said. The rear bus lost a wheel as it reversed back into the compound. Travelling in at least three vehicles, the militants then drove on to the actual installation, where they took hostages inside a wing of the living quarters. The militants were armed with rocket-propelled grenades and told the hostages they had mined the installation. How did the Algerian security forces respond? Troops backed by helicopters surrounded the site early on, with the government saying in public that it would not negotiate with the militants. On the first day of the siege, one of the militants, named as Abu al-Baraa, told al-Jazeera TV that soldiers had opened fire, injuring one of the hostages. At least one hostage reported hearing shots. On Thursday, the Algerian army bombarded the militants as they tried to move hostages in a convoy. Stephen McFaul, a hostage who survived the attack, was quoted by his brother as saying captives had been put on five four-wheel-drive vehicles, bound, gagged, and with explosives fastened to their necks. It is not known how many captives were in each jeep. It was unclear whether the vehicles had been struck by missiles fired from helicopters or by ground forces. In a claim that could not be verified on the ground, the militants said 35 hostages and 15 militants had been killed by helicopter fire. On Saturday, Algerian forces launched a raid to retake the facility after reports that the militants had killed a number of the captives and were planning to blow up the gas plant. The brother of Kenny Whiteside, one of the Britons killed during the siege, said the militants "had lined up four hostages, including Kenny, and executed them". What do we know of the foreign hostages? At least 37 foreigners have been killed, while some were freed or escaped. Five hostages remain unaccounted for and some of the dead are yet to be identified. Four survivors are being treated in hospital in Algiers, Philippine officials say Two Malaysians are missing, fate unknown Two Romanian citizens are confirmed dead, while three escaped An Austrian hostage was freed, the Austrian foreign minister said Why were there so many foreign nationals at the plant? Who are the hostage-takers? Algeria says the militants, thought to have travelled from northern Mali in all-terrain vehicles, came from several countries, including Canada, Mauritania, Egypt, Tunisia, Mali, Niger and Algeria itself. According to Algerian police, notorious Algerian militant Mokhtar Belmokhtar organised the attack. Convicted in absentia of terrorism in Algeria, Belmokhtar has been blamed for abductions and killings of both Algerians and foreigners stretching back a decade. It is not known if he actually took part in the attack on the gas plant. Algerian Prime Minister Abdelmalek Sellal said the attack on the ground is thought to have been led by an Algerian, Amine Benchenab, who was known to security forces and killed during the attack. Meanwhile Mauritanian news agencies who had been in contact with the militants, named Abdul Rahman al-Nigeri as another leader of the assault operation. Reports say al-Nigeri led the kidnappers into the

gas plant where he is believed to have been killed. Is there a link to Mali? There has been a flurry of demands issued by the hostage-takers, passed on through phone calls or media statements. They variously described their attack as a reaction to the French operation in Mali , where militants linked to AQIM are active, and a reaction to Algeria granting France permission to use its airspace. However, France only decided last week to intervene militarily in Mali. The militants also accused Algeria of shutting its border to Malian refugees and demanded the release of dozens of Islamists held in Algerian prisons. Ransom may also be a motive for the attack as Belmokhtar is said to have made millions of dollars out of hostages in the past. The Algerian government has rejected the Mali link, saying the assault on the gas facility had been planned for more than two months. Analysts believe the militants may have received inside help.

9: Algerian War | www.enganchecubano.com

The Algerian government says that in the course of a military operation to retake an Algerian gas plant 69 people died, including at least 39 hostages and 29 Islamist kidnappers. Three of the.

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