

## Essay on Polish-Algerian Relations

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Perseverance and resistance are at the heart of the Algerian and Polish experiences. Following the 1830-31 uprising, Polish émigrés were among those who came to Algerian shores. The Polish national poet Cyprian Norwid celebrated the Algerian revolutionary Emir Abdelkader for saving Syrian Christians from certain death in his poem “Do Emira Abd el Kadera w Damaszku”, writing: “Accept then, Sir, a distant tribute / You, who are like a shield of God.” Yet more recently, both Algerians and Poles fought against the fascism of the Nazi regime during the Second World War. Our nations’ national anthems echo the sentiment that our two countries will endure so long as our people struggle on. Both our hymns resound with the resoluteness of our two peoples: “Poland has not yet perished, / So long as we still live” and “That we are in revolt, whether to live or to die, / We are determined that Algeria should live”. Life is at the core of the spirit of these songs; and despite the tragedy and sufferings of our two lands at the hands of foreign occupations and depravities, we have both embraced life and looked to a new day. Now, more than ever, Poland and Algeria have an opportunity to seek a brighter future. In the spirit of our shared continual persistence and determination, both our nations should pursue the many opportunities by which we can cooperate to strengthen our homelands and the bonds of friendship between them. In particular, Poland and Algeria can build even stronger cultural, political, and economic cooperation for each other’s mutual benefit. With Poland poised to take on a larger role in the EU with its growing economy and political clout, and with Algeria being one of the largest economies in Africa and having the continent’s highest human development index ranking, the two countries have much to gain from cooperation and there are the numerous avenues for such a strengthening of ties.

For two countries with such rich and traditional cultural heritages, it is sad how little citizens of each country know about the other. To this end, cultural and educational exchanges are an excellent way to start bringing closer and binding together the two nations. These sorts of programs have been highly successful between many countries, and Poland and Algeria could both benefit from such activities. A very public and visible way to promote cultural exchange is through organized art exhibitions, film festivals, and cultural events. Both Poland and Algeria have a number of film festivals and coordinating to have a dedicated edition of the festival for films of the other country — a panorama of Polish and Algerian films — would be an excellent way to highlight the other country's culture as expressed in film. These festival activities, alongside art exhibitions and visits by artists, could take place in concurrence with an annual "Algeria-Poland Cultural Week". Beyond having sport team exchanges, which would be an excellent way to get exposure for each country, having a friendly football match between the Polish and Algerian national teams during Algeria-Poland Cultural Week would especially gain public awareness amongst the two nations, especially if such a match became an annual event. Sister city programs have been a popular way at also building connections between different places around the world; and while cities in Algeria and Poland both have sister cities elsewhere, neither have places paired with the other. Using these cultural and sports activities and the annual Algeria-Poland Cultural Week alongside other events could be a good way to promote the pairing of Algerian cities with Polish ones. These sister cities would then serve as a foundation for even greater and sustained contact. Academic partnerships between universities for research collaboration and student exchanges would also help to deepen cultural and intellectual ties. A 2018 trip by Algerian astronomers to Poland, under the auspices of the Sirius Astronomy Association, was extremely beneficial to the participants who had great enthusiasm for Poland shows the possibility of such

exchanges. More and similar visits, in both directions, would be immensely helpful in strengthening relations. Student scholarships would especially promote building lasting relations between Algeria and Poland, with new generations of students having been exposed to and lived in the other country. Language learning initiatives with corresponding scholarships for Polish students to visit Algeria for Arabic instruction and Algerians studying Polish, can help to make educational exchange deeper. Beyond coordinating and launching new scholarships, academic exchange can happen through already existing programs like Erasmus Plus. However, both Algeria and Poland could do more to raise awareness about the opportunities available, especially through the usage of social media like the Polish Embassy's Facebook page which has eleven thousand followers. Finally, because of Poland and Algeria's deep history and heritage, tourism between the two countries should be promoted more vigorously. With Algeria already making efforts to improve its tourism industry and increase visitors, partnering with Poland on tourism promotion, perhaps through holding bilateral tourism conferences, is yet another way to bring the two countries together.

The tourism industry is only one component of the economic cooperation that Poland and Algeria could work to strengthen. There are numerous sectors of mutual interest such as in agriculture, energy, and in technology. Algeria is already the largest recipient of Polish agricultural goods in Africa, however there is room for even further growth as Algeria is a major importer of its food supplies. Poland as well may take advantage of investments in Algeria's growing agricultural sector especially in the country's south. While currently Algeria's major exports to Poland are chemicals like ammonia and hydrogen as well as raw materials like calcium phosphates, increasing exports to Poland should be a priority of the Algerian government and could present investment opportunities for Polish companies. Algeria is already a major producer of

hydrocarbons, like petroleum and natural gas. With the world moving away from carbon energy sources, there is a major opportunity for Algeria to transition to renewables, especially solar. This transition is another opening in the Algerian economy for Polish investments, and future green energy exports could also benefit Poland as it seeks to achieve its climate goals. However, the sector in which economic collaboration could be most rigorous is in technology. Poland has witnessed extraordinary growth in its technology sector, while sadly this is an area where Algeria has lagged behind. Cooperation and investment in the technology sector would be hugely beneficial to Algeria, while at the same time presenting great business potentials and increasing Polish visibility. Furthermore, Poland has undertaken a number of initiatives to help Poles develop their digital skills and be prepared for greater involvement in technology enterprises. The Polish experience in facilitating and encouraging growth in Poland's IT sector could be immensely educational for Algeria as it tries to move its own technology infrastructure forward. Sharing best practices and lessons learned, conducting training, and enhancing assistance in this area would significantly enhance relations between Poland and Algeria and offer benefits and opportunities to both sides. Further, because of Algeria's high development and educational level, large youth population, and bilingualism with French, large swaths of the labor force are well positioned to participate in this growing section.

One of the ways in which the Polish economy has greatly benefitted in recent years is in what has been described as a "reverse brain-drain" with large numbers of Poles, who have worked abroad, coming back to Poland. Their education, experiences, and skills from time spent elsewhere are all helping to benefit Poland in innumerable ways. Algeria, like Poland, has large parts of its population living abroad, especially in France. Reversing this trend, as Poland is doing successfully, is essential to helping Algeria grow and develop. Cooperation between our

governments on this issue, in understanding how policy actions have helped to reverse the emigration trend in Poland, and in working to implement similar policies in Algeria is a major area for the two countries to cooperate. In other political and diplomatic ways as well, there are a large number of possibilities. Joint efforts on global challenges like climate change and trans-Mediterranean migration and human trafficking can help to bring both sides together. Algeria's position as one of the largest and most politically significant players in Africa and the Arab world and Poland's as a critical EU nation with ever-growing clout, means that cooperation would be greatly advantageous for both countries on critical issues facing Africa, the Arab and Mediterranean regions, and the EU; and both countries can also help bolster each other in international organizations and forums. High level governmental visits, potentially even at the presidential level can help to advance the suggestions above and also serve to strengthen Polish-Algerian ties and the visibility of each country among the citizens of the other. Finally, both Poland and Algeria should look to other countries that have successfully developed and enhanced their bilateral ties to look for evermore ways to intensify the bond between the two countries.

Culturally, economically, and politically, there are many ways in which Poland and Algeria can move closer together and develop deeper relations. Poland's recent experiences in terms of economic growth and social development and its standing in the European Union can help Algeria to navigate its transition to being more open to and engaged with the world economy and in the strengthening of its international position. Sharing a history of struggle and perseverance, having overcome foreign invasions and war, celebrating life and looking to the future, Poland and Algeria have much in common and by which the two countries can continue to encourage ongoing efforts while also fostering deeper ties of respect, cooperation, and friendship.