



# ALGERIA: A SUCCESSION CRISIS ON THE HORIZON

A WIKISTRAT CROWDSOURCED SIMULATION



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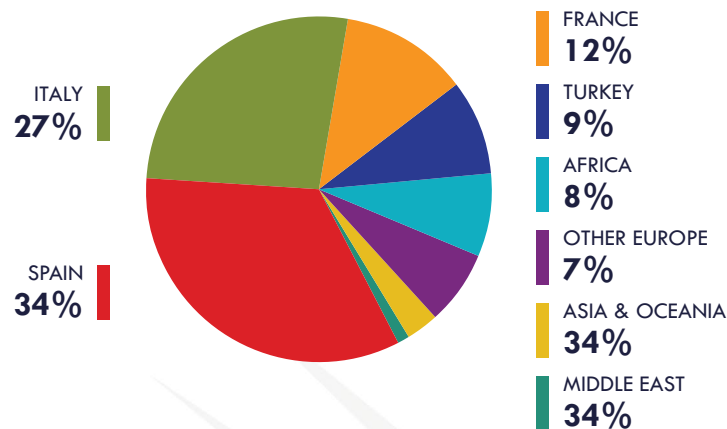
## ALGERIA: A SUCCESSION CRISIS ON THE HORIZON

Away from media attention, a situation that could undermine North Africa's stability is developing in Algeria. The country, which is considered a crucial bulwark against the spread of ISIS in the region, and one of Europe's top energy exporters, is facing a potential succession crisis resulting from the possible incapacitation of President Abdelaziz Bouteflika.

Exploring the potential implications of Bouteflika's incapacitation was a main topic explored by the 40 security and energy experts from around the world who participated in a crowd-based analytic exercise conducted by Wikistrat early in August.

According to Wikistrat experts, President Abdelaziz Bouteflika's deteriorating health could easily throw one of North Africa's key actors into a new cycle of violence and instability. This will have a direct impact not only on the country, but also on Europe, which imports 15 percent of its natural gas from Algeria, with Spain importing 34 percent and Italy 27 percent. In addition, if the Algerian energy supply is cut, European clients will be forced to reach out to Russia, limiting the EU and the U.S.'s maneuvers over issues such as Ukraine.

### ALGERIA'S NATURAL GAS EXPORTS BY DESTINATION, 2013



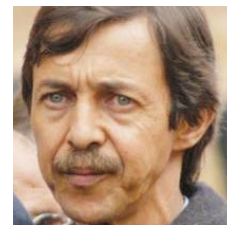
Source: EIA

### ABOUT US

Wikistrat is the world's first crowdsourced consultancy. It leverages a global network of subject-matter experts via a patent-pending "Collaborative Competition" methodology to provide a variety of analytic services. Scenario generation, policy planning, risk assessment and red-teaming exercises are conducted by Wikistrat on a real-time, interactive online platform.

## WHAT COULD HAPPEN ONCE BOUTEFLIKA IS GONE?

Wikistrat's experts argue that **the most likely succession scenario** would see Saïd Bouteflika, the president's brother, filling the role of President, assisted by oligarch Ali Haddad. Haddad has recently begun to take a more visible role in politics, and has used his fortune to influence political power.



**Saïd Bouteflika**

Source: [The Apricity](#)

Our analysts expect Saïd's succession to be relatively stable, **safeguarding Algerian security interests in the short term**. It is also unlikely that his immediate ascension to the presidency will put energy production at risk, assuming Algeria's security forces remain loyal to him and respond quickly to any public protests.

Whatever the likelihood, our analysts emphasize that a military coup d'état scenario must be seriously considered. If such a scenario does unfold, our analysts estimate that it will have minimal impact on Algerian energy production since coup leaders will seek to protect this critical source of income (97 percent of Algeria's export revenues and more than 60 percent of its budget resources are from energy).

## AN "ALGERIAN SPRING"?

While our analysts estimate that a military coup d'état would have a low impact on Algeria's security and energy interests, they are worried that the disillusionment with the current political system could lead to an **"Algerian Spring"** exploiting President Abdelaziz Bouteflika's incapacitation to initiate demonstrations.

Such an uprising will begin with secular opposition parties such as the Worker's Party, the Berber Rally for Culture and Democracy, the Algerian Popular Movement and the Party of Algerian Renewal. While they cannot draw masses of supporters, they can provide a rallying point for the disaffected, and will be joined by the moderate Islamist "Movement for National Reform."

Eventually the Green Algerian Alliance – the Movement of Society for Peace ( Hamas), the Islamic Renaissance Movement and the Movement for National Reform – will join the demonstrations, bringing non-secular society to the streets. This uneasy coalition of secular and non-secular forces will co-exist rather than cooperate, but they will represent such a breadth of civil society that a draconian response would be dangerous.

While our experts consider such a scenario to be unlikely, as there is **little evidence of political organization** to support popular demonstrations, the impact of a populist uprising on the Algerian oil and gas industry would be prodigious. They would serve as high profile targets for Islamic extremists wishing to destabilize the situation, as shown in the 2013 attack on the Tigantourine gas facility near In Amenas.

## WOULD ISLAMIC EXTREMISTS USE PRESIDENT BOUTEFLIKA'S INCAPACITATION TO TARGET ALGERIA?

Our analysts argue that the memory of the 1990s civil war means **Algerians are unlikely to support Islamic extremists or embrace violent demonstrations**. A strong sense of nationhood and secular leadership makes support for an "Islamic Caliphate" improbable.

**The most likely emergence of a destabilizing Islamist extremist threat would be after political reform or economic dislocation**. It will start with suicide bombers in urban areas along the Mediterranean coast, as well as targeting of business and political leaders for assassination, followed by more organized attacks against gas and oil facilities. The final stages will see armed incursions, most likely along the border with Mali and Niger and in the east from Libya. If these attacks are supported by domestic sympathizers, it could overstretch Algerian forces and lead to

chaos, similar to that was seen in Libya.

Damage to political institutions and reliance on military/security forces will feed into the hands of extremist organizations. As the political situation becomes more unstable, these organizations will increase their attacks. Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), ISIS in Libya, Ansar Dine in Mali, Boko Haram in Nigeria and Al-Murabitoun in the Pan-Sahel all pose a threat to Algeria. While both the Armed Islamic Group and the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat have been overtaken by AQIM, their supporters inside Algeria represent a ready reserve should extremism infiltrate the country.

**This scenario is highly unlikely.** Algeria has the largest security force in the region, which will be a formidable adversary for any extremist organizations. The Algerian military also has experience successfully fighting an Islamist threat. Finally, the Algerian people will almost certainly vehemently oppose any Islamist extremist threat from inside or outside their borders.

## STRATEGIC INSIGHTS

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- The U.S. should support gradual political reform within the current system to diminish the likelihood of a potentially disruptive popular uprising, and encourage the government to maintain a dialogue with moderate Islamist groups to ensure they are not radicalized due to isolation. Such efforts should involve expanding the official U.S. presence in Algeria and providing economic assistance.
- The U.S. military should strengthen its ties with Algerian military officers by increasing joint training and visits of Algerian officials to the U.S.
- In case of an “Algerian Spring” scenario or the rise of an Islamist extremist threat, Western allies should guarantee the security of Algeria’s energy sector against attack or disruption to dissuade protestors or extremists from targeting the production capacity and transport infrastructure. This should be done through direct contact with local officials.
- The U.S. should vigorously support the development and training of effective counter-insurgency capabilities in the Algerian security sector.
- The Algerian security forces are well-situated to secure the gas and oil infrastructure during extended periods of threat, as demonstrated during the civil war of the 1990s.

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