

Manifestations of Algerian political influence in the Maghreb countries between the 16th and 18th centuries

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Abstract:

This study aims to shed light on the position enjoyed by the rulers of Algeria during the Ottoman era, both in the Mediterranean region in general and in the Maghreb countries in particular. It seeks to clarify the circumstances and factors that granted Algeria, unlike its neighbors, an influential political role over the Tunisians, Tripolitans, Saadians, and Alaouites in Morocco. Among the most important factors that gave Algeria precedence over its Maghrebi neighbors were its strategic geographical location and its early integration into Ottoman rule in the region. In addition, Algeria played a pivotal role in confronting European campaigns against the Maghreb states, especially Spanish aggressions. Algeria also extended its influence through several means, the most notable of which were intervening in crises and power struggles within these states, serving as a refuge for many rulers seeking support to reclaim their thrones. Furthermore, Algeria brandished the threat of force and imposed tributes and compensations on anyone who threatened its interests in the region.

Keywords : Influence, Ottoman presence, The Maghreb conflict, Maghreb countries.

Introduction:

It is almost self-evident that any scholar examining the modern history of Algeria, beginning in the 16th century, will clearly notice the influence enjoyed by Algerian rulers. The changes experienced in the region had a significant impact on political balances. Algeria's integration into Ottoman rule and the expansion of its influence coincided with instability and intense struggles for power in neighboring Maghreb states. Algerian rulers exploited this situation to extend their authority and engage in conflicts with ruling dynasties in the region.

Consequently, Algeria sought to weaken these dynasties by launching military campaigns to subdue them, as well as supporting their opponents in exchange for political gains and financial compensations. At the same time, this period witnessed the intensification of European campaigns against Maghrebi coasts, in which Algeria played a prominent role in repelling and containing their threats. Algeria also held significant diplomatic weight in the region, mediating between many foreign states and Maghreb states to conclude treaties of peace and friendship.

What prompted us to address this topic is our desire to highlight the extent of Algerian influence in the Maghreb and its impact on regional affairs, raising a central problematic question: What were the manifestations of Algerian influence in the Maghreb? To what extent did this influence contribute to resolving regional crises and conflicts? And what gains did Algeria achieve from its interventions in Maghrebi affairs?

1 – The Beginnings of Algerian Influence in the Maghreb during the Ottoman Era:

From the early 16th century, the Maghreb region witnessed the emergence of a new regional power, represented by the Ottoman presence in Algeria. This contributed greatly to the expansion of Algerian influence, supported by several factors and means that were not available to other Maghrebi states—an issue that will be examined in this part of the study.

1.1 – Reasons and Factors Behind the Growth of Algerian Influence in the Maghreb Region:

The influence that Algeria enjoyed in the Maghreb during the Ottoman period was not a matter of chance nor did it emerge from nothing. Rather, it was the result of a combination of political and geographical factors that were uniquely available to Algeria and not to its Maghrebi contemporaries. These enabled it to establish dominance over its neighbors (Tunisia, Morocco, and Tripoli). The key factors can be summarized as follows:

- **Early integration of Algeria into the Ottoman Empire (1519):**

Algeria was the first of the Maghrebi states to formally join the Ottoman presence in the region, compared to Tunisia and Tripoli. At that time, the Mediterranean experienced intense activity from the Barbarossa brothers, Aruj and Khayr al-Din, in repelling European aggressions along the Maghrebi coasts. After the martyrdom of Aruj, the escalation of external threats, and the spread of internal revolts such as the Cherchell uprising and the rebellion of Ibn al-Qadi, Khayr al-Din supported by the notables of Algiers sought to confront these dangers. He found no better ally than the Ottoman Empire. This alliance was formalized in a letter sent to Sultan Selim I in 1519, through which Algeria officially joined the Ottoman state and received full support from it¹.

As for Tripoli (Tripoli of the West), it had fallen under Spanish occupation in 1510. Later, its rule passed to the Knights of Malta from 1530 until 1550, after the Spaniards ceded it to them². However, the authority of both the Spaniards and the Knights of Malta was only nominal, limited to the city itself. The situation worsened in 1548 as the Knights of Malta proved incapable of controlling both Tripoli and Malta simultaneously, which led them to concentrate their forces in Tripoli.

This situation did not last long, for in 1551 the Ottomans dispatched their fleet to besiege Tripoli under the command of Sinan Pasha Reis and Salah Bey, governor of Rhodes. The forces reached Tripoli on August 5, 1551, and launched their assault three days later. The Ottomans entered the city on August 14, 1551, after the Knights of Malta decided to surrender in exchange for being evacuated from the city³, as for Tunisia, by the mid-16th century it witnessed an intensification of the struggle along its coasts between the Spaniards and the Ottomans. At the same time, Raïs Dragut had established himself in Tripoli and began advancing toward Tunisia from the south, first seizing Gafsa in 1553 and then Kairouan in 1557.

In 1569, forces arriving from Algeria managed to expel the Hafsid sultan. However, the Spaniards reinstalled him for a period that did not exceed ten months. This came to an end with the arrival of the Ottoman fleet under the command of Sinan Pasha in 1574, marking the conclusion of both Spanish and Hafsid rule in Tunisia⁴, as for Ottoman policy in Morocco, it differed from that applied in the other Maghrebi states. The Ottoman Empire faced several difficulties in extending its influence there, the most important of which was the Sufi-jihadist movement led by the Sharifian Saadians, driven by the state of decline and disintegration that Morocco had experienced under the Wattasids.

For this reason, the Ottomans sought to change their strategy from direct domination to what came to be known as “silent penetration.” This, in turn, was divided into **informal military penetration**, which relied on the infiltration of Turkish elements into the military apparatus in ways that served Ottoman interests. The clearest example of this was the assassination of Mohammed al-Sheikh by his Turkish bodyguards⁵ what is meant by **formal military penetration** was the Ottoman control of naval military bases without direct confrontation, taking advantage of the weakness of Moroccan naval power. All of this occurred within the framework of the civilizational conflict and represented an Ottoman attempt to repel Iberian Christian attacks and to provide assistance to the Moriscos⁶.

– **The Strategic Geographical Position of Algeria in the countries of the Maghreb region:**

The geographical borders between the Maghrebi states did not exist in a concrete sense; rather, they were shaped more by the movement of populations across border regions than by the territorial control imposed by the political systems of the Maghrebi states. This was particularly evident in the case of Algeria, whose strategic position placed it at the center of the Maghreb. This location granted Algeria diversity in its political relations with the other Maghrebi states on the one hand, while on the other, it made the country a focal point for all regional powers competing for influence in the area. The vast geographical frontiers and the intermingling of tribes inhabiting these regions greatly contributed to Algeria’s ability to extend its influence over adjacent areas, exploiting this situation to distract its adversaries and pursue its expansionist policies in the region.

This, however, did not exclude repeated attempts to regulate and demarcate borders. An example of this was the agreements with Tunisia in **1614** and **1628** to define the frontier: everything west of Oued Serrat was placed under the authority of Algiers, while the areas east of the river fell under the jurisdiction of Tunis⁷, as for Morocco, under the Saadian state led by Moulay Mohammed al-Sheikh, it managed to impose its authority over most of the Rif region and eastern Morocco by the mid-16th century. This Saadian expansion brought them into direct contact with the Ottomans, who had succeeded in establishing their control over most of Algerian territory. This situation was regarded as a threat to the Christian presence in the region, particularly that of the Spaniards and Portuguese⁸.

This became evident in Mohammed al-Sheikh’s policy, as seen in his correspondence with the Pasha of Algiers, in which he proposed joint operations to liberate Oran and Mers-el-Kébir. However, this state of concord did not last long. When Abu Hassun sought refuge in Algiers and Mohammed al-Sheikh exploited the situation, he imposed a siege on Tlemcen in 1551 that lasted nineteen months. The standoff ended only when Hassan Pasha dispatched a military force under the command of Hassan Qurçu to confront the Saadian threat. The clash concluded with the defeat of the Saadians and the signing of the Treaty of the Moulouya, **whose** most important clause established the Moulouya River as the boundary between the two countries⁹.

The attacks launched by the Alaouites afterward against western Algeria in 1653, under the leadership of Moulay al-Sharif and his son Mohammed, caused major unrest. These disturbances intensified the following spring when Moulay Mohammed led renewed raids. The attacks provoked a tribal uprising, with tribes refusing to pay taxes to the Beylik after their properties had been plundered by the Alaouite prince.

This situation prompted Muharram Pasha to send a letter to Moulay Mohammed denouncing and warning against these aggressions. In response¹⁰, Moulay Mohammed pledged not to cross the Tafna River, which was established as the boundary between the two countries¹¹, the state of conflict between the two sides continued during the reign of Moulay Ismail, who began by exploiting Duquesne's campaign against Algiers and the Janissaries' revolt against Dey Hussein Pasha. He allied himself with Mohammed Bey of Tunis against Algeria and also launched a military campaign in 1691, led by his son Zidan, to discipline the Beni Amer tribes. In response, Dey Shaaban sent a military expedition that succeeded in defeating Moulay Ismail's forces. Consequently, Moulay Ismail was forced to seek the mediation of scholars and saints to persuade the Dey to accept a peace agreement. Among its most important clauses was Moulay Ismail's recognition of the Moulouya River as the boundary between Algeria and Morocco, along with a commitment to cease hostilities between the two sides¹².

The geographical borders between the Maghreb countries were not fixed, despite the agreements concluded to demarcate them, which we tried to focus on in terms of the clauses related to the distribution of control. This was mainly due to the expansionist tendency of the political regimes in the region, as the criterion of military superiority on the one hand, and the loyalty of local elements on the other, was decisive in shaping the geography of control and influence.

Algeria's efforts in liberating the Maghreb coasts from Spanish occupation:

Thanks to the superiority of the Algerian navy in the modern period and its domination of the Mediterranean Sea, it stood as a strong barrier against all European ambitions in the region. What we mentioned earlier illustrates Algeria's efforts to free the Maghreb countries from foreign domination, particularly Tripoli and Tunisia. Algeria managed to eliminate the presence of the Spaniards and, later, the Knights of Malta in Tripoli. The same applies to Tunisia, where it was able to end the Hafsid-Spanish presence. All of this is due to Algeria being considered the seat of Ottoman rule in the Maghreb region, and the first to join Ottoman authority, which explains the dependence of other countries on Algeria such as Tunisia, which only separated after the rebellion of 1590, after which it came under the rule of a Dey directly subordinate to the Sublime Porte¹³,

Tunisia was considered politically subordinate to Algeria, especially during the period of weakness it experienced since 1756. The Beys of Tunisia were compelled to offer valuable gifts to the rulers of Algeria and to host Algerian guests at the expense of the Tunisian treasury. Ali Pasha, in his will to his son Hammuda Pasha, likened Tunisia to a loaf of bread divided into four pieces: Algeria would take three pieces, while Tunisia was left with only one¹⁴. This is the same view expressed by Asma Maala, who considered the year 1756 a pivotal turning point in the nature of relations between the two countries, characterized by Algerian sovereignty over Tunisia and its control over various aspects of the state, particularly in political and economic matters¹⁵, this Algerian perception of Tunisia persisted until the final years of the Ottoman presence in Algeria. Evidence supporting this view can be found in the response of the Algerian envoy to Sultan Mahmud II, when the latter requested representatives from both regencies to explain the reasons behind the hostility between Algeria and Tunisia at the beginning of Hussein Dey's rule. The Algerian envoy replied: *"This is Tunisia, which we had taken previously, and its people became our subjects. We used to collect tribute from them every year, but then they disobeyed us, so we subdued them again, and we continue to subdue them and seize their lands."*

The Tunisians are our subjects just as the Greeks (Karyk) are your subjects; we take from the Tunisians just as you take from the Greeks.¹⁶

The Success of Algeria in Repelling European Campaigns on Its Coasts

During the 16th and 17th centuries, Algeria witnessed the peak of its supremacy and the growth of its stature. Through its navy, it was able to impose its authority over the western basin of the Mediterranean Sea¹⁷, both in peace and war, considering it an Islamic sea. This is clearly reflected in the fact that European states were compelled to pay large sums of money in exchange for the safety of their ships. This dominance was manifested in establishing control over the Mediterranean coasts, securing them from external threats, and enhancing Algeria's position and influence by providing protection to its neighbors, Tunisia and Tripoli, as well as by curtailing the role of European states in the Mediterranean and inflicting damage on their trade particularly Spain, whose coasts and ships were subjected to Algerian attacks. These actions were part of maritime jihad and the support provided to the Moriscos, through which Algerian sailors caused great suffering to the whole of Europe¹⁸, Algeria was able to establish itself as the strongest Maghreb country, due to the expansion of its political and military influence. The Europeans even called the city of Algiers "the city that cannot be conquered." It also laid the foundations for complex international relations based on securing its interests in accordance with changes in local and international conditions¹⁹. During this period, foreign states regarded concluding peace treaties with Algeria as an achievement in itself, in order to avoid the consequences of hostility with it. An example of this is the United States signing the Treaty of Peace and Friendship with Algeria in 1795, which American historians considered positive, as it guaranteed peace with Algeria and required its mediation with Hammuda Pasha, Bey of Tunis, and Muhammad Yusuf Karamanli, Bey of Tripoli, to conclude peace treaties with them under the guarantee of the Dey of Algiers²⁰.

1-2- Means and Tools of Algerian Influence in the Maghreb Countries

The Ottoman rulers of Algeria relied on several means and tools to expand their influence in the Maghreb countries, the most prominent of which were interference in the internal affairs of their neighbors, imposing taxes and tributes in return for any military or political assistance they provided, and even the use of force to intimidate those states and bring them under their control.

Interference in the Internal Affairs of the Maghreb Countries

The rulers of Algeria adopted a policy of interference in the internal affairs of the Maghreb countries in support of those who served their interests, whether at the request of the people of those countries or by personal decision. For example, Dey al-Hajj Muhammad (1671–1681) intervened to resolve the crisis of the Muradid court in Tunisia between the sons of Murad II, Muhammad and Ali, and their uncle al-Hafsi. The conflict between them lasted for several years, during which some scholars attempted to mediate reconciliation between the rival parties, but this was only successful after the intervention of the ruler of Algeria, who gathered the factions and arranged a power-sharing agreement. Likewise, Ali Pasha intervened in Tunisia in 1596 to annex what remained of the Hafsid territories to Ottoman rule in Algeria, after the Hafsid ruler took refuge in the fortress of Halq al-Wadi under Spanish authority²¹. Algeria then appointed Ramadan Bey, supported him with soldiers, and consolidated his administrative and military authority²², Dey Hassan Pasha of Algiers also requested Hammuda Pasha's intervention in Tripoli after Ali Burghul seized power and expelled the Karamanlis, who had

fled to Tunisia. This indeed took place, as a military expedition was dispatched from Tunis, which managed to defeat Ali Burghul and force him to flee to Egypt, thereby restoring power to the Karamanlis. Hassan Pasha then sent a message to Hammuda Pasha, thanking him for his efforts in returning Tripoli's rule to its rightful holders²³.

Imposing Tributes and Compensations after Every Assistance Provided by Algeria to the Rulers of the Maghreb Eyalets

Through its status and influence in the region, Algeria became the focal point for anyone seeking to consolidate his rule in the Maghreb provinces, for its hostility could bring nothing but calamities and instability. Thus, it was a refuge for rulers fleeing from the struggles for power in these provinces, hoping to regain authority and prevail over their rivals. However, such interventions were often carried out in service of Algeria's own interests, in return for privileges and financial revenues that supported the state treasury and covered the costs of these military campaigns. What occurred in Tunisia provides a clear illustration of the nature of these interventions and their benefit in extending Algeria's influence over its Maghrebi neighbors. For example, the Bey of Constantine imprisoned Bey Ismail after his defeat by Ali Pasha and his subsequent flight to Algeria. This greatly troubled the Bey of Tunis, especially after the Bey of Constantine sent an envoy to Tunis to congratulate him on his rival's flight. The Bey of Tunis then requested that Bey Ismail remain imprisoned in exchange for the Algerians receiving **100,000 piastres**. He also honored the visit of the customs agent with **9,000 riyals**, in addition to gifts sent to the Dey, his aides, and the Bey of Constantine²⁴.

Algeria worked to encourage family rivalries for power in Tunisia, serving its own interests. Yunus bin Ali Pasha requested support from the Bey of Constantine to seize control of Kairouan in exchange for **one hundred thousand riyals**. Hassan Bey stipulated that he receive the money before the campaign set out, and the two parties agreed that he would be paid **twenty-five thousand** upon reaching Tébéssa and the remainder upon arriving in Kairouan. However, after reaching Tébéssa and receiving the money, Hassan Bey turned back to Constantine (the reason for his withdrawal from the agreement is not mentioned)²⁵.

Hassan Bey of Constantine also set out with Muhammad Bey and Ali Bey to Tunisia to depose Ali Pasha from power. They managed to capture him and kill him in **1756**, after which Muhammad Bey bin Ali assumed rule in Tunisia. Hassan Bey seized all of Ali Pasha's properties, as Ibn al-Attar recounts: "*Muhammad Bey bin Ali took power in Tunis, while Hassan Bey of Constantine took possession of Ali Pasha's treasures, even stripping the women of their jewelry, and gathered wealth greater than that of kings, then returned to his land. But when he arrived, he fell ill with the sickness that ended his life and died.*"²⁶

Added to this were the military campaigns that Algeria launched against the rulers of Tunis if they refused to provide assistance to Algeria. After Ibrahim Pasha came to power with the support of the Ottoman Porte and the end of the Muradid dynasty, and after attempting to win the favor of the Algerians to consolidate his rule, relations between the two regencies changed. Algeria had sent two ships to bring wheat from Tunisia due to a famine that had struck the country, but Ibrahim Pasha sent only a small amount, excusing himself with travel obligations. This angered Algeria, which accused him of sending the wheat to the Christians while withholding it from the Muslims. Consequently, Algerian forces attacked Tunisia, while Ibrahim Pasha was occupied with his war against Tripoli, and in the end Ibrahim Pasha fell into the hands of the Algerians²⁷.

The Deys of Algiers also exploited their military superiority to exert pressure on the Beys of Tunis. They were not content with the money paid as compensation for military campaigns and the accompanying gifts, but went further to humiliate the Tunisian rulers and compel them to offer ceremonies of allegiance and obedience. This is exemplified in the negotiations between Dey Mustafa and Husayn bin Ali, when the notables of Tunis proposed paying **200,000 piastres** along with other gifts in exchange for the Algerians' complete withdrawal from Tunisia. However, he refused, and in 1705 the representatives of the Tunisian notables brought forth additional demands from the Dey, namely that the Bey of Tunis should personally come to receive the *qaftan of investiture* as a sign of obedience and submission to the Dey²⁸.

The relationship between Algeria and Tunisia during the period from **1756** to the beginning of the nineteenth century was that of a subordinate state under the dominance of the Dey of Algiers. The latter imposed on the sons of Husayn bin Ali in 1756 the demolition of the fortress of Kef and the payment of annual tributes. In **1781**, the Bey of Tunis paid **750,000 riyals**, of which the Dey received **200,000**, in addition to two shipments of oil designated for lighting mosques and the shrines of saints. As another form of control and subordination, up until **1807**, the Dey of Algiers would send livestock to the Bey of Tunis to be sold, with the proceeds sent back to him²⁹.

Brandishing Military Force against the Maghreb States in Case of Violations Threatening Algerian Influence

Relations with Morocco witnessed numerous crises, among them the clash that occurred after a trade deal was concluded between Dey Ibrahim Khoja of Algiers and the Moroccan Sultan Isma'il. Under the agreement, **500 captives** were to be sold to the latter at the rate of **150 dollars per captive**. Ibrahim Khoja sent a delegation to Morocco carrying **300 captives**, but Sultan Isma'il refused to pay the **45,000 dollars** due for them. In response to this breach, Ibrahim Khoja prepared a military campaign targeting **Taza in 1688**³⁰. The two armies met at Taza, where the Moroccan army was defeated, leading to a peace treaty between the two sides, with Algeria receiving **48 mules loaded with gold** along with goods valued at **200,000 thalers**³¹.

Dey Sha'ban himself marched toward Morocco to take revenge on its king, Mawlāy Isma'il al-Sharif, because of the Moroccans' insults toward the Algerians and their disrespectful treatment of them. The Dey left Algiers accompanied by more than **6,000 fighters**, who managed to defeat the Moroccan forces in their first confrontation. This alarmed Mawlāy Isma'il, who was forced to withdraw his troops and request peace with Dey Sha'ban³². The Dey of Algiers agreed on the condition that forces from both sides withdraw and that Mawlāy Isma'il send his eldest son to Algiers to present proposals before the *Diwan*. A peace treaty was eventually concluded between the two parties.

As for Tunisia, Dey Sha'ban sided with Ibn Shukr, the son-in-law of Muhammad Bey of Tunis, driven by a desire to avenge the attacks carried out by the Tunisians under Muhammad Bey's encouragement. The military conflict ended with Muhammad Bey's surrender after being besieged by Dey Sha'ban for more than **five months**. The Dey then returned victorious to Algiers after installing Ibn Shukr as Bey of Tunis, and securing more than **200,000 piastres**, in addition to a large number of European Christian slaves and various other gifts³³.

2- The Appeal of the Maghrebi Princes to Algeria as an Opportunity to Strengthen Its Influence

The political standing that Algeria enjoyed, along with its military strength, made it a main refuge for princes and rulers of the Maghrebi principalities who sought either to seize the throne or to reclaim it from those who had usurped it by force or deceit. This situation provided the Algerian rulers with a great opportunity to expand their influence in one country or another, as we shall see below:

2-1- The Tunisian Rulers' Refuge in Algeria

The Tunisian Regency experienced several wars and internal crises over the throne, particularly during the Muradid and Husainid periods. This led to the deterioration of social and economic conditions due to the division of the population in Tunisia over who was entitled to rule the country—unlike the system of government in Algeria which, though not entirely stable, witnessed conflicts only between individuals unrelated to one another. These circumstances in Tunisia were closely monitored by the Algerians, who waited for any opportune moment to intervene and impose control over Tunis. What facilitated this was the fact that rivalry among members of the Tunisian ruling families created a suitable environment for Algerian intervention, as the contenders sought the assistance of the rulers of Algiers against one another, despite the Ottoman state's attempts to bring about reconciliation between the warring parties, but without success³⁴.

After the death of Murad Bey of Tunis, power passed to his two sons, Muhammad and Ali. Muhammad, the eldest, had been commander of the army during his father's lifetime, and he initially agreed with his brother to share authority. However, discord soon arose between them due to the interference of ill-intentioned parties, especially as Muhammad sought to take full control of the government. Ali, unwilling to accept this, believed he had as much right to rule the country as his brother. The matter was then referred to the *Diwan*, which decided to hand authority to their uncle, Muhammad al-Hafsi³⁵.

Muhammad left for the city of Kef to persuade his allies to support him in regaining power. He then marched on Tunis, where he was acknowledged as ruler, forcing his uncle al-Hafsi to leave Tunis and confining his brother Ali to his palace. Ali, however, managed to escape to Constantine and later returned to Tunis with the support of the Hnānsha tribes, demanding power from his brother. Ali succeeded in defeating Muhammad in several clashes, and the wars between them continued despite the Sublime Porte appointing their uncle Muhammad al-Hafsi as Pasha of Tunis³⁶.

As conditions worsened, Muhammad Bey sought assistance from the Algerians. The ruler of Algiers did not delay in responding to his request, though it later became clear that Algeria's intervention was not in support of either brother, but rather aimed at reconciling "two factions of believers who had fought and continued to fight." A reconciliation was eventually reached between the two brothers and their uncle: Ali Bey remained in Tunis, Muhammad al-Hafsi was recognized as Pasha in Tunis in deference to the appearance of the Sultan's decree, while Muhammad stayed in Kairouan and the coastal regions, placing his son Ahmad under his brother's authority in his stead³⁷.

Although the Dey of Algiers did not gain any material benefit from this intervention, he affirmed Algeria's role and control over affairs in Tunis, as well as its ability to resolve dynastic conflicts over power there. Tunisia thus became a refuge for its rulers seeking Algerian support

to regain their authority or preserve their reign. However, this situation did not last long, and turmoil broke out again in the country.

This time the clash occurred between Ali Bey and Dey Ahmad Chelbi, particularly when Ali Bey attacked Tunis at the head of an army of **25,000 soldiers**, besieging the city for nine days. Ahmad Chelbi was forced to request help from Muhammad Bey, who agreed after Ahmad Chelbi promised to hand him power over the country³⁸. The conflict between the two brothers then intensified, prompting Algeria to intervene in support of Muhammad Bey and Ahmad Chelbi.

No sooner had Muhammad Bey sat on the throne than his *kahia* (chief minister), Ahmad ibn Chelbi, launched a new rebellion. Unable to quell this sedition at its outset, Muhammad had no choice but to forget his differences with his brother Ali and ally with him against the rebel. Once united, the two marched their armies against Ibn Chelbi, but he managed to defeat them, thereby strengthening his own position.

This situation further angered the Sublime Porte, which announced the deposition of the two Muradid brothers and the appointment of Dey Ahmad Chelbi as ruler³⁹, in recognition of his services. Despite mustering their forces, the two Muradid brothers were compelled to seek assistance from the Algerians. Ibrahim Khoja and the governor of Constantine, Abd al-Rahman, then advanced at the head of two armies to aid the Muradid Beys. These forces succeeded in seizing Kef and Béja, and Tunis itself was besieged for **eight months in 1685**. The city finally opened its gates in **1686**, and Ahmad Chelbi was killed while attempting to escape⁴⁰. The two brothers then shared power, though not for long, as Ali was soon killed following a mutiny by the soldiers, the way was then cleared for his brother to rule Tunis after the Algerians returned to their country laden with spoils. However, in **1694**, his successor and son-in-law, Muhammad ibn Shukr, rose in revolt against him. Ibn Shukr received support from Algeria and managed to defeat Muhammad Bey after the two forces met near Kef. Muhammad Bey fled to Tunis, pursued by Ibn Shukr and his Algerian allies⁴¹.

Muhammad Bey continued moving about within Tunisian territory, gathering troops for another confrontation. He eventually achieved victory over Ibn Shukr at the **Battle of Kairouan in 1695**, after which his authority was consolidated following a truce with the Algerians⁴². As for the Husainid Pashalik crisis, its beginnings date back to **1726**, when Husayn ibn Ali al-Turki removed his nephew from the position of heir apparent. He had originally appointed him to this post because he had no sons capable of assuming such responsibility. However, after marrying one of the Genoese captives, Husayn was blessed with two sons in his old age. When his son grew up and became capable, he appointed him as heir apparent instead.

This provoked Ali Pasha, who entered into a five-year conflict with his uncle. Despite Husayn ibn Ali's attempts to appease him by granting him the title of Pasha⁴⁴, Ali Pasha managed during his revolt to win over all those discontented with Husayn ibn Ali including some members of the ruling elite⁴³, Tunisian notables, and tribes such as the inhabitants of Jabal Waslat and the Awlād 'Ayyār⁴⁵. Realizing the danger of Ali Pasha's rebellion, Husayn ibn Ali prepared a campaign and marched to Jabal Waslat, supported by several tribes including the Drid, Awlād Sa'id, Sawwāsī, and Mathālith. The conflict between the two sides continued back and forth until the balance finally tilted in Husayn ibn Ali's favor, forcing Ali Pasha to seek refuge in Algiers⁴⁶.

The Dey, Abdi, refused to execute him as Husayn ibn Ali had wished, and instead preferred to keep him imprisoned in return for an annual tribute of **10,000 Venetian riyals**⁴⁷ paid by Husayn ibn Ali. Yet, in **1733**, Bey Husayn refused to pay the agreed sum, especially as Ibrahim Pasha was preoccupied with his war against the Spaniards. Husayn later attempted to pay **50,000 piastres**⁴⁸ in exchange for preventing support to his rival Ali Pasha. However, Ibrahim Pasha, due to his resentment toward Bey Husayn ibn Ali, rejected the offer and decided to release Ali Pasha and provide him with support to hasten his confrontation with his uncle⁴⁹.

In return, Ali Pasha pledged to become a vassal of Algeria and to provide an annual tribute of **200,000 écus**, along with **1,000 piastres** for each stage of the campaign, additional sums for the Dey and military commanders, as well as a quantity of wheat⁵⁰.

The Algerian military campaign against Tunis began in **1735**, when Bey Husayn ibn Ali marched out to confront it near Semmenjah, close to the Medjerda River. After skirmishes broke out between the two sides, several tribes defected to support Ali Pasha. The fighting intensified, and the balance tipped in Ali Pasha's favor, especially after Husayn ibn Ali was wounded and ordered his forces to withdraw as far as Kairouan⁵¹.

Kairouan was later besieged by Yunus ibn Ali Pasha, who stormed the city on **May 13, 1740**, captured Husayn Bey, and killed him with his own hand⁵², however, this situation in Tunisia changed with the emergence of a ruling class composed of influential families who were integrated into the state's administrative apparatus. This development led to the unification of the country economically and administratively, and to the mobilization of support to confront the Algerian forces in **August 1807**. Such support for the regime of Hammuda Pasha ultimately resulted in complete liberation and final emancipation from subordination to the rulers of Algiers⁵³.

2-2- The Intervention of the Rulers of Algiers in Tripoli

Tripoli was known for its subordination to the rulers of Algiers, despite the appointment of a new *Amir al-Umara* (Prince of Princes) over it, after which it eventually separated from Algiers. Haydar Pasha was appointed *Amir al-Umara* of both Tripoli and Tunis, followed later by the appointment of Hasan Pasha as *Amir al-Umara* of Tripoli, while Haydar Pasha remained *Amir al-Umara* of Tunis.

Samih Alter notes that this division was considered a grave mistake, since the Janissaries of Algiers regarded themselves as the ones responsible for bringing these regions under subjugation, and thus no one had the right to diminish their influence. Moreover, the phenomenon of selling the office of *Amir al-Umara* worsened matters, as the appointees sought primarily to recover the sums they had paid, rather than showing loyalty in service or devoting themselves to administering the affairs of their provinces⁵⁴.

Among the manifestations that demonstrate Algeria's great influence in the region was its determination to intervene on behalf of the Tripolitans following the campaign led by the commander of the Tunisian army, Murad Bey, in **1672**. Algeria responded by launching a campaign against Tunis to disperse and repel the Tunisian forces from pursuing this attack. However, when the campaign ended with a peace agreement and Murad Bey returned to Tunis after releasing all the Janissary captives, the Algerians were content with issuing a warning to the Tunisians, declaring that they would wage war against them if they renewed their campaign against Tripoli⁵⁵. During the Qaramanli period, corruption spread, foreign interventions multiplied, and the country was struck by calamities and disasters such as drought and plague.

These troubles were further exacerbated by the power struggle among the sons of Ali Pasha Hasan, Yusuf, and Ahmad especially after Ahmad was granted the position of *Agha of the Janissaries*. Yusuf, seeking to seize power, allied himself with tribal leaders and declared himself ruler once he was assured of their support. Disorder in the country deepened after he killed his brother Hasan⁵⁶.

Faced with the worsening situation, Ali Pasha attempted to reconcile his sons Ahmad and Yusuf by agreeing in 1790 to appoint Ahmad as Pasha and Yusuf as governor of Misrata. However, the refusal of the city's inhabitants prolonged the political crisis in the country⁵⁷, Ali Burghul, who had been expelled from Algiers in 1793 due to his notorious reputation, exploited these circumstances and traveled to Istanbul, where he requested authority over Tripoli and obtained a *firman* appointing him as governor of Tripoli⁵⁸. Ferroux notes that Ali Burghul went to Istanbul to conspire with his brother, the deputy of the Ottoman naval admiralty, against Ali Pasha al-Qaramanli in order to assume power in Tripoli. However, his ambition did not receive formal approval; the support he received was only implicit, with the condition that Ali Burghul rely on himself for this campaign, without any direct aid from Istanbul⁵⁹.

Once Ali Burghul seized power in Tripoli, Pasha Ali and his sons were forced to flee to Tunis, seeking support from Hammuda Pasha, who responded—particularly since Ali Burghul had occupied the island of Jerba⁶⁰.

Algeria's discontent with Ali Burghul's control over Tripoli is also evident, as Hassan Pasha sent a message to Hammuda Pasha ordering him to assist the Qaramanlis in regaining their rule. Ali Burghul's adventure came to an end when the Tunisian forces reached Tripoli, forcing him to flee to Egypt⁶¹. The Qaramanli family thus regained power despite the decline that marked their rule and the resentment and discontent of their subjects.

This was made possible thanks to the Tunisian intervention led by Hammuda Pasha, who managed to secure several gains from this campaign. First, he guaranteed Tunisia's safety by restoring the Qaramanlis to power in Tripoli, thereby binding the city to his favor. In addition, his actions won the approval of the authorities in Algiers, as they were satisfied with his moves against Ali Burghul, who posed a threat to Algerian influence in the region.

With the fall of Ali Burghul, his attempts to sow discord between Algeria and Tunisia also ended particularly his efforts to incite the nomadic Tunisian Bedouins to create unrest, and to stir up Algerian merchants against the Bey of Tunis in order to spread strife between the two countries⁶².

3-3 Algerian Influence in Morocco

At the beginning of the 16th century, the region witnessed major changes in the ruling political systems. In Morocco, this period was marked by the increasing influence of the Saadian dynasty and the consolidation of its power, while the Ottomans in Algeria managed to take control of the country's affairs. This reality laid the foundation for unstable relations between the two states, alternating between peace and war, driven by the desire for domination and influence⁶³. This situation was especially defined by the repeated Saadian attacks on western Algeria, which provoked the Algerians—particularly after they had reclaimed Tlemcen from Saadian control. As a result, they worked to support opponents of Saadian rule, such as establishing contact with Mawlāy 'Ammar and Abu Hassun, who both enjoyed considerable influence in northern and eastern Morocco.

After the Saadians stripped Mawlāy ‘Ammar of his emirate in **1550**, Commander Safa sent him a letter promising to restore his authority and install him in Fez after eliminating Muhammad al-Sheikh. Abu Hassun, for his part, mobilized his forces against Muhammad al-Sheikh. Yet, despite the bravery of Abu Hassun and his son in the battle, their valor was not enough to secure victory. The confrontation ended with Abu Hassun’s death and the flight of his son.

As Carvajal recounts:

“...Muhammad al-Sheikh personally led the battle, fighting relentlessly, and succeeded in crushing his enemy, who suffered heavy losses on the battlefield among the wounded and the dead... During the combat, in which Abu Hassun and his son fought valiantly, Abu Hassun was struck by a fatal blow that ended his life... Muhammad, the son of Abu Hassun, fled, seeking refuge behind the mountains.⁶⁴”, After this great victory achieved by Muhammad al-Sheikh, he proceeded to Fez. However, the taxation policy he implemented in the city heavily burdened its inhabitants. In addition, his execution of more than **two hundred** prominent landowners and the confiscation of all their properties further inflamed the people’s resentment against him. This forced him to transfer his seat of power to Marrakesh, where he appointed deputies to govern the remaining regions. Once established in Marrakesh, he decided to personally lead a military campaign to discipline the Berbers of the Atlas Mountains—but he died during this campaign⁶⁵.

It is noted that despite Muhammad al-Sheikh’s conflict with the Turks, he chose some of them as his personal guards, bringing them close to him such as Ṣāliḥ Kahia and his men. This enabled them to remain near him and seize the opportunity of his presence in the Deren Mountain of the high Atlas to assassinate him, after which they carried his head to Tlemcen and then to Istanbul, thus putting an end to one of the most prominent Saadian rulers, known for his allegiance to the Spaniards, his provocations against western Algeria particularly Tlemcen and his refusal of any rapprochement with the Ottomans in Algiers⁶⁶. The assassination of Muhammad al-Sheikh on **October 23, 1557** is considered a turning point in the history of the nascent Saadian state and its relations with the Ottomans. His death prevented him from concluding an alliance with Spain to launch military campaigns against the Ottoman presence in North Africa. It also made the Saadian rulers realize the danger of the Ottoman ambition to annex Morocco, as it was the closest region to Spanish and Portuguese influence. Consequently, Mawlāy ‘Abd Allāh, who assumed power after the assassination of his father, worked to strengthen ties and build firm relations with the Spaniards and the Portuguese in order to counter Ottoman ambitions in the region⁶⁷.

The conflict between the two sides continued after the death of ‘Abd Allāh al-Ghālib and the accession of his son, Muhammad al-Mutawakkil, to power. The Algerians supported Mawlāy ‘Abd al-Malik against his nephew al-Mutawakkil, after the latter’s uncles, ‘Abd al-Malik and Ahmad, fled to Algiers seeking assistance particularly as Spain was preoccupied with the instability that Western Europe was experiencing. Mawlāy ‘Abd al-Malik was able to take advantage of the military support provided by Algeria under the leadership of Ramadan Pasha to achieve a major victory over al-Mutawakkil at the **Battle of al-Ruqqān**, through which he secured rule over Morocco and turned to consolidating his authority, while containing the threat of al-Mutawakkil, who made desperate attempts to reclaim his throne by fighting twenty-four battles in just two years, all of which ended in failure⁶⁸.

Although Morocco never officially joined the Ottoman state—unlike the other Maghrebi provinces—and despite the ongoing conflict between the two sides, the continuous struggle with Algeria over influence and control remained a defining feature. This was particularly evident in Algeria's encouragement of opponents of the ruling regime in Morocco during both the Saadian and 'Alawite periods, and its adoption of what came to be known as the "silent penetration" strategy to advance its interests, especially through the infiltration of Turkish elements into the Moroccan governing apparatus.

4- Algerian Influence through the Weight of Its Diplomacy in the Maghreb country

The western basin of the Mediterranean experienced a series of geopolitical changes, foremost among them the emergence of the Maghrebi regencies as regional powers independent of the Ottoman state, alongside the intensification of the conflict between the Spanish monarchy and other major Crusader powers, and the entry of the United States of America onto the scene as a great military power seeking a foothold in the Mediterranean basin.

4-1- The Diplomatic Role of Algiers in the Maghreb Region

Before the Ottoman presence, Spain represented the greatest threat to the Maghrebi countries. With time, however, the situation changed, and all Spanish campaigns in the region ended in failure—particularly those of **1783** and **1784**. Confronted with the strength of the Algerian navy and convinced of the impossibility of victory, Spain leaned toward peace, attempting to improve its diplomatic relations with the Maghrebi states in order to secure its commercial interests and relieve the pressure caused by its disputes with other European powers.

These treaties were intended both to reduce its losses and to strengthen its influence in the region at the expense of other European countries. Since Algeria at that time was the dominant power in the Mediterranean, Spain worked diligently to secure peace with it and to exploit its influence as a mediator with other Maghrebi states. In **1785**, Spain sent its envoys to Algiers Count d'Expilly and Admiral Massaredo through the mediation of the French consul de Kersey. Negotiations continued for a full year, which, according to the U.S. commissioner in Madrid, reflected the strength of Algeria's position after the failure of all Spanish campaigns.

The negotiations concluded with the signing of a peace treaty between the two sides on **June 14, 1786**, in which they agreed to **twenty-five articles**, covering political, economic, and security matters⁶⁹. Spain also saw an opportunity to improve its relations with the Maghrebi states, as the political circumstances it was facing due to its conflicts with other European powers placed it before the necessity of ending the ongoing disputes with the Maghreb. After succeeding in signing a peace treaty with Algiers, Spain sought to exploit its relations with Algiers to conclude peace with Tunis.

Yahia Bouaziz notes that the Spaniards sought to use Algiers as a mediator to achieve reconciliation with Tunis, which was the last state to make peace with Spain in **1792**, seven years after the treaty with Algiers. Correspondence between Spanish and Algerian leaders reveals Spain's persistence and insistence on pressing Dey Muhammad 'Uthman Pasha, as well as some of his ministers such as the *wakil al-harj* Hasan and the *khaznadar* Sidi Ali Burghul to exert their utmost efforts to secure peace with Tunis⁷⁰.

In one of his letters, Hasan, the *wakil al-harj* in Algiers, wrote to the Spanish Prime Minister, Count de Floridablanca, in response to his request for mediation with Tunis:

“As you are aware, we have continued with the matter of Tunis which you, your servant Count d’Expilly, entrusted to us, and we remain engaged in it until, God willing, it is brought to completion in the manner you desire and approve.”

Two other letters from Minister Floridablanca to *wakil al-harj* Hasan and *khaznadar* Sidi Ali, dated **April 25, 1786**, further confirmed the reconciliation efforts being undertaken by Count d’Expilly between Spain and Tunis. In them, he expressed his gratitude for their efforts to achieve peace, wished them success in their mission, and regretted the difficulties that had hindered the conclusion of the treaty⁷¹,

Algiers also represented the diplomatic weight of the Ottoman Empire in the region, as its relations with the Empire varied between following Ottoman policy on the one hand, and safeguarding its own interests on the other interests which often did not align with Ottoman directives. During the *Beylerbey* period, Algiers was considered the main driver of Ottoman policy in the western Mediterranean basin, entrusted with protecting the Maghreb and securing its interests. This situation changed, however, with the transformation of the Maghrebi countries into pashaliks, which became a source of tension in relations with the Ottomans from the 16th century until the French occupation of Algiers⁷².

By the end of the 17th century, Algiers, through its diplomacy, was able to assert to the Europeans that the Maghreb constituted a politically and militarily integrated region into which European states could not interfere. This position was clearly expressed in a strongly worded letter that Dey Sha‘bān addressed to King Louis XIV of France, condemning the intervention of the French consul in Tunisia’s internal unrest and France’s support for certain factions with weapons and mercenaries. He threatened to regard such interference in Tunisia as tantamount to a declaration of war on Algiers. France, in turn, clarified that this stance did not represent the French crown but was merely the personal action of the consul⁷³.

The major and minor Western states were fully aware of the extent of Algerian influence in the Maghreb region, and therefore its mediation was welcomed in the political disputes and conflicts that arose from time to time between them and those states. For this reason, the English consul Hudson sought to draw closer to the Dey of Algiers in order to obtain economic privileges. He was considered the sole trader during the period between **1720–1728**, and he exploited his influence, favoritism, and the gifts he offered to the Pasha of Algiers to request his intervention with the Pasha of Tripoli for the release of his brother. His request was successful, as his brother was released and sent back to Algiers⁷⁴.

Algiers also played a decisive role in the conclusion of the Treaty of Friendship between Tripoli and the United States, after the latter requested the mediation of the Dey of Algiers, who corresponded with the Pasha of Tripoli on the matter. Although the Pasha of Tripoli initially refused to sign the treaty because of the small amount offered **\$40,000**, compared to what America paid Algiers (**\$642,500**) and what it paid Tunis (**\$107,000**) the agreement was eventually signed after negotiator Richard O’Brien added a ship with consular gifts, along with naval ammunition, fabrics, and wooden planks⁷⁵.

As cited by Chtioui, quoting the records of the U.S. Congress, one of the letters mentioned that the Pasha of Tripoli sought to use the Dey of Algiers as a mediator between himself and the

United States, which was imposing a naval blockade on Tripoli. This clearly illustrates the diplomatic weight Algiers enjoyed during this period and its role in resolving disputes between the Maghrebi states and their adversaries⁷⁶.

From what has been discussed above, we observe the influence and political weight that Algeria enjoyed during this period. Every foreign state that sought a foothold in the western Mediterranean and wished to secure its political and commercial interests hastened to seek Algeria's approval. European states had reached the conviction that achieving their aims through military force was impossible. Beyond that, they even sought Algeria's mediation to conclude peace with the Maghrebi states, fully aware of the authority Algeria's voice carried in the courts of their rulers.

Conclusion

In light of our study entitled "*Aspects of Algerian Influence in the Maghreb in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*", we can draw a set of conclusions, which can be summarized as follows:

- Algeria was a destination for the rulers of the Maghrebi states to consolidate or restore their power. This contributed to enriching the state treasury through the money and taxes paid by these rulers on the one hand, and to subjecting their regimes to Algerian authority in line with its interests on the other—exploiting their need for Algeria's support and their compulsion to submit to its dictates in order to achieve their ambitions for power.
- Many Maghrebi and European states offered concessions and gifts to Algeria in hopes of winning its favor and safeguarding their interests, recognizing its strength and position in the region, and realizing that any conflict with it would have a direct impact on their political and economic interests.
- Algeria's strength and influence in the region made it the focus of attention for Maghrebi and European states alike, particularly because of its ability to mediate between countries, resolve disputes, and broker peace treaties between conflicting parties.
- Several factors contributed to Algeria's enhanced status and its recognition as the Ottoman center of power in the region. Chief among these were its precedence in joining Ottoman rule compared to the other Maghrebi states, its strategic location, and the relative stability of its political system, which was spared the dynastic struggles over power that plagued the other Maghrebi countries. These factors had a profound impact on subjecting those states to Algeria's authority and dependence.
- To impose its dominance over the Maghrebi states, Algeria adopted various means and methods which collectively brought those states under its will. Among the most important of these was the threat of military force and campaigns, used against anyone who threatened its influence or refused to offer ceremonies of loyalty and submission. These acts of allegiance were primarily expressed through the payment of annual taxes and the offering of tributes and gifts as signs of subordination to the rulers of Algiers. This was clearly manifested in the rivalry among the rulers of those states to win Algeria's favor as a way to consolidate their own rule.

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