

**University of Szeged Faculty of Art
Graduate School of Philosophy of History
Modern Doctorate Programme**

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**The first decade of independent Algeria and the Hungarian relation,
1962–1971**

Theses of dissertation

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I. Brief historiographical review

The history of Algeria is one of the main research areas of the Graduate School of Philosophy of History at University of Szeged, which strongly contributes to the exploration of the Arabic- Hungarian relations. The current thesis presents the first decade of the independent Algeria and the Hungarian- Algerian relations from 1962 to 1971. The current research explores the diplomatic, political, economic, technological and cultural relations between the two countries.

The two dates mentioned in the title of the thesis frame the topic of the research, providing the starting and end point. Both dates are of major importance in the life of Algeria. The country became independent in 1962, the Treaty of Evian closed the 132-year-old French colonial past. Algeria fought its independence via an eight-year-long war of independence, which radically changed the life of the country. Not only did it achieve national and economic independence, but it also created an independent, really unique domestic politics. It was the socialism, commonly known as the ‘social option’, which respected the local relations, the Arabic specifics. Its theory was created thanks to the Tripoli Programme, and its practical realisation to Ben Bella, the first freely elected president of Algeria. We chose 1971 as the end point of the thesis, which is significant in terms of the relation of Algeria and Hungary. On the one hand, Pál Losonczi, the president of the Boards of Appeal of the Hungarian People’s Republic visited Algeria in 1971, during which numerous significant treaties were born between the two members. On the other hand, the process of nationalisation finished finally by 1971 in Algeria. All the companies belonging to foreign countries got in the hand of the Algerian government, hereby the French dominance was definitely over.

The history of Algeria was presented in the first structural unit of the thesis, more specifically the wars of independence, creating the ‘socialist option’, the years following the (bloodless) coup of 1965, and an almost recurring coup. The second structural unit presents the manifold and far-reaching relation network of Hungary and independent Algeria between 1962 and 1971, including even a diplomat scandal with a positive outcome.

II. Choice and significance of the topic

The Graduate School of Philosophy of History at University of Szeged has serious traditions in terms of the exploration of the interaction between the Mediterranean and Hungary, and several dissertations have been already written within the area of this research. The current area of research is strongly connected to this, which is a work of major importance of its kind in domestic and foreign relations as well. The novelty of the current research is the fact that it intends to present the unexplored historical relations of Hungary.

In my dissertation I was looking for the answer to the questions how the manifold and colourful relation network had developed between Hungary and the independent Algeria, whose memory is a positive flashback for a certain minority of the Algerian and Hungarian inhabitants even after 60 years. I intended to show how difficult was the development of the diplomatic relations between the two countries, what Algeria rebuilt by Hungarian experts is like, what had almost led to a diplomatic scandal and ended the diplomatic relations and what the people of the two countries had given to each other. Besides, I wanted to provide information on international events too, highlighting regional problems, such as the dual border dispute of Algeria with Morocco and Tunisia.

III. Methods and resources of research

Several resources from archives – Hungarian, French and English- were used, presented, analysed and assessed for my thesis. I did some research in the *Hungarian National Archives* in Budapest (I could have a glance into administrative and secret documents), *Science Po Archives of Domestic Affairs* in Paris and the *Diplomatic Archives* in Courneuve (France). Thanks to the analytical reports of the Hungarian Embassy of Algeria and the French Embassy of Algeria, the development, deepening and extension of the Hungarian- Algerian relations can be tracked day by day. Besides the reports and memoirs of the embassies, the documents of Foreign Affairs of the Hungarian Socialist Labour Party is worth consideration, which provide detailed and specific description of that particular era. During my research in France I could have an access to memoirs and correspondences of several French diplomats who had worked in either the colonial or the independent Algeria. It is important to highlight the fact that a separate archives unit can be found for the Hungarian- Algerian relations in the Diplomatic Archives, which significantly contributed to writing my current thesis.

The works of *Benjamin Stora* presenting the outcome of the eight-year-long war in Algeria must be highlighted, who is one of the authors analysing the history of the country on a long-term perspective. The Algerian historian is a university professor; his main area of research is the Algerian war, and the current area of Maghreb. The ideology of the era examined is presented by the work of *Idris Cox: Socialist ideas in Africa*. However we must add the fact that the findings need explanations and updating sometimes as the literature was published in 1968. However, it is a unique book of its kind as it was published exactly in the year of the era in question.

Regarding the Hungarian literature of the topic, the works of *István Lengyel* helped, who writes about the history of Algeria in details until 1980s. The works of *László Nagy J.* helped a lot too with my research, who does research not only on the independent Algeria but also the war of independent and the years before that. Despite the author's personal Algerian experience, he presents the events of the 1960s in his volumes objectively, in Hungarian-Algerian relations as well. The author's volumes which present Hungarian-Arabic and Hungarian- Algerian relations are used in the thesis in many cases. The viewpoint and foreign affairs of the Hungarian government of the period is presented in details by the book of *Frigyes Puja: Magyar Külpolitika*. The

book places Hungary objectively in the international life, and analysis the significance of some Hungarians' foreign affair measures, besides their reasons and backgrounds.

This current research highlights the autobiographies of politicians like *Charles de Gaulle*, thanks to them the history of Algeria can be known and better understood from the point of view of the French as well. But the work of *Ferhát Abbász* provides a more detailed description of situation, domestic conflicts and the reflection of Algeria of the period. We must also highlight the autobiographies of *Ahmed Ben Bella*, which can be accessed electronically too. His ideas can be easily followed, coherent, but subjective, consequently this work must be handled with sensible criticism. However it is clearly shown what personal and political difficulties the Algerian president had to encounter in the nascent state.

Népszabadság is of major importance among the daily papers and weeklies, which stated the official viewpoint of the Hungarian leadership. Reports of international news agencies often appeared too in the newspaper (*Magyar Távirati Iroda – MTI-Hungarian Telegram Office*), or Algerian road reports from the pens of Hungarian journalists. The feasibility of the daily paper is restricted by the fact that it presents the ideology and mentality of the given period. Among the foreign newspapers and daily papers the *El Moudjahid* contributed to a better understanding and getting to know the Algerian events of 1962, and the exploring the events of the area of Maghreb. *L'Annuaire de L'Afrique du Nord* chronicle, which is also accessible via internet, provides a detailed description not only of Algeria but also of the events in North-Africa in the 1960s. The daily papers and newspapers used are important since they inform us the mechanism of mass propaganda of the period.

IV. Results of research

The aim of the current dissertation is to present how Algeria became independent and the first decade of its independence, moreover to provide an overall and complex description of its relations with Hungary between 1962 and 1971. I intended to present with this research the struggles of Argentina for its independence, the development of diplomatic relations between the two countries, the Maghreb country rebuilt by experts and the cause of a diplomatic scandal that nearly happened, and what these two countries had given to each other. Besides, I wanted to provide information on regional events, like the North-African border disputes, namely between Morocco and Algeria, and Tunisia and Algeria. The questions raised in the introduction were answered in the dissertation, justified certain hypotheses, moreover it provided significant novelties as well.

Before starting the research, it could be prognosticated that the development of the Hungarian-Algerian relations had encountered difficulties for more reasons at the beginning of the 1960s. This difficulty did not stem from only the international environment. It was definitely a novelty and courage from the Hungarian leadership that they set up a diplomatic representation and created contact with a nascent state, outside Europe, having completely different traditions, culture and features.

During my research, the building of the Algerian Olympic Stadium, designed and executed by Hungarian experts was a complete novelty. Ben Belle asked his Hungarian partners to build a stadium in Argentina, copying the Népstadion in Budapest. It is interesting as the Bugarian designers tried to sabotage the Hungarian tenders and to 'hide' it from the Algerian jury. However the Hungarian leadership realised the cheating in time and managed to win in this situation. Besides this vast construction procedure, the resources from the archives give information about the fact that several other constructions can be connected to Hungarian experts (hospitals, housing estates, schools). The architecture of Argentina preserves the significant role of Hungary in rebuilding and restoring the country.

During writing the current dissertation, the used resources from the archives provide information about a completely new event, namely a Hungarian diplomat's scandal. A new ambassador was delegated in Algeria in 1968 by the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, called Elek Tóth. An international conference was organised at the same time, in which communist parties participated. Budapest hosted

this event. The Algerian PAGES Party appeared here, which operated illegally besides FLN. The Algerian leadership considered it an offence and open provocation. It can be stated based on an analysis 60 years after the conflict that Algeria – minister Buteflika – did not take over the credentials of the Hungarian ambassador to set an example. The crisis became so deep between the two countries that the diplomatic relation was on stake. However, after a while the Algerian government realised the delicacy of the situation. They did not apologise from Hungary though, but they did not object to the person of Zoltán Zsigmond, the successor of Elek Tóth.

It can be clearly seen from the explored and analysed resources that there was not only cooperation between the two countries having completely different features. The ‘diplomat scandal’ in 1969 may have evolved due to these differences.

Beyond the questions raised in the introduction, and the answers given in the dissertation the reader can get informed about the fact what the international atmosphere was like in the examined period, what global and regional events determined the relation network between the two countries. Consequently, the Algerian- Moroccan and Algerian- Tunisian border dispute was presented in details and some of the Middle-East conflict. Both conflicts stem from the colonial era. The borders, determined by the colonial French, prevailed over the historical borders. Besides, economic and geopolitical interest lay in the background. Presenting the two conflicts is considered to be a novelty, since comparatively little literature deals with it, especially with the Algerian- Tunisian dispute.

My further aims with the thesis are to extend it in time, with the presidency of Huári Bumedié until 1978, focusing more on the Algerian reactions on international events (such as oil crisis, Arabic-Israeli wars). The difficulty of the research of the latter topic lies in the fact that the relevant resources are not always available for the public due to the specific and delicate topic.

The current dissertation has achieved its set goals, and it provided answers with several explored resources not only to the questions raised previously, but it contains novelties which had not been commonly known before.

V. Topic relevant publications of the author

Nagy Georgina: *Nemzetépítés „internacionalista támogatással” – magyar-algériai párt- és államközi kapcsolatok az 1960-as években.* In: *Mediterrán Világ* 27-28, 2014. 77-87.

Nagy Georgina: *La naissance des États dans le territoire maghrébin: «la guerre des sables» entre le Maroc et l'Algérie.* In: *Études sur la région Méditerranéenne*, 2014. 111-121.

Nagy Georgina: *Les débuts des relations entre la Hongrie et l'Algérie indépendante.* In: *Études sur la région Méditerranéenne*, 2013. 75-80.

Nagy Georgina: *Magyarország és a független Algéria kapcsolatainak kezdetei.* In: *Mediterrán Világ* 24, 2012. 81-86.

Nagy Georgina: *Nemzetállamok kialakulása a Maghreb térségben. A marokkói-algériai „homokháború”.* In: *Mediterrán Világ* 23, 2012. 129-136.

Nagy Georgina: *Változások szele, változó érdekek a Maghreb térségben.* In: *Comitatus*, 2011. 87-97.

The entire list of my publications can be seen in *Magyar Tudományos Művek Tára*.

VI. Lectures of the author related to the topic

Nemzetépítés „internacionalista támogatással” – a magyar-algériai pártkapcsolatok az 1960-as években (2013, Pécs)

Magyarország és a független Algéria kapcsolatai 1962-1971 (2013, Szeged)

Magyarország és a független Algéria kapcsolatainak kezdetei 1962-1963 (2012, Szeged)

Nemzetállamok kialakulása a Maghreb térségben: Az 1962-es „homokháború” (2012, Veszprém)

Marokkó a Maghreb térségben (2011, Szeged)