



NORTH AFRICA

Officer Block 2 and Enlisted Block 3

An Introduction to the North Africa Region

CENTER FOR ADVANCED OPERATIONAL CULTURE LEARNING

Regional, Culture, and Language Familiarization (RCLF) Program

711 South Street • Bldg. 711
Quantico, VA 22192
Phone (703)432-1504 • email: caocladmin@usmc.mil

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Introduction

One must distinguish between the study of regions, countries, and cultures. Chapters 1 through 6 in this document introduce a region and provide some information about its countries and their relationships. They do not introduce a culture or cultures. Those chapters simply provide knowledge about the region and the environment in which people with different cultures live.

Regions and states do not have a single culture; instead they have multiple, diverse cultures. Cultures are not necessarily bound by national borders. There may be multiple cultures in a single state, while people sharing a single culture may live in more than one state.

The case study in Chapter 7 is about one specific culture in the region. Building upon the information provided in chapters 1 through 6, Chapter 7 introduces one of the many cultures in the North Africa region, using concepts discussed in the Operational Culture General document.

Why This Region is Relevant to You as a Marine

The Marine Corps' involvement in North Africa dates back to the First Barbary war, specifically the battle of Derna in 1805, which is reflected in our Hymn "To the Shores of Tripoli."

Security challenges in North Africa are a continuing concern to the United States. These security issues pose serious threats to regional stability and U.S. national interests. These threats, in turn, place operational demands on U.S. Africa Command (U.S. AFRICOM).¹

The region is known for its decades-long, politically-motivated armed conflicts. An unfortunate example of this is the long-simmering border dispute between Sudan and South Sudan: this conflict created massive human suffering, and sent thousands of refugees into neighboring countries. Instability in these two countries has also required massive amounts of humanitarian assistance, and necessitated the intervention of peacekeepers from the United Nations.

Between 2010 and 2011, the civil uprisings that ended authoritarian rule in several countries of North Africa (collectively known as the "**Arab Spring**" movement) yielded weak governments whose revamped security forces were incapable of countering terrorism and other regional threats. As a result,



AFRICOM logo

many North African countries became a haven for violent extremist activities, transnational crime, and irregular migration. The U.S. has helped train and arm security forces in Ethiopia, Kenya, Sierra Leone, and other African nations to counter the threat from North African extremist groups.²

The “Arab Spring” refers to the civil uprisings that started in December 2010 and swept across the Middle East and North Africa.

In response to the 2012 terrorist attack on the American Consulate in Benghazi, Libya,³ the Marine Corps created a new expeditionary unit, Special-Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force Crisis Response Africa (SPMAGTF-CR-AF). This task force is comprised of Marines and sailors stationed at Morón Air Base in Spain and Naval Air Station Sigonella in Italy. SPMAGTF-CR-AF is prepared to conduct limited, rapid crisis response to security issues within the Mediterranean and African area of responsibility (AOR).⁴



Marines in Operation Odyssey Dawn (Source: Photo by Lance Cpl. Michael S. Lockett; Marine Corps Photos)

Marines have participated in several U.S. military operations and exercises in the region:

- African Lion: An annually scheduled, bilateral U.S.- and Moroccan-sponsored exercise that involves various types of training, including peacekeeping operations and intelligence capacity building.⁵ The exercise is intended to improve mutual understanding of each nation's tactics, techniques, and procedures.⁶
- Operation Odyssey Dawn 2011:⁷ It was U.S. participation to a multilateral military effort aimed to impose a no-fly zone and protect civilians in Libya following the uprising in 2011.⁸

Geographic Overview

Why a Geographic Overview Matters to You as a Marine

Geographic features include physical and biological factors tied to location, topography, climate, soil, environmental hazards, flora, and fauna. These features influence human and social characteristics such as beliefs, behaviors, social organization, economy, and politics, to name a few. This is not to say that geography determines how people and societies behave, but rather that it has varying effects on what they believe and do.

The locations of rivers, mountains, deserts, and coasts have great influence on where people live, what crops can be raised, and what modes of transportation are suitable.

Climate and weather influence how people dress, work, and earn a living. Natural disasters like hurricanes, flooding, and earthquakes can devastate a region, and dislocate a great number of people.

North Africa Global Location

North Africa is the northern-most region of the African continent, with the Sahara Desert separating it from Sub-Saharan Africa. North Africa is connected to Asia by the Isthmus of Suez, and is bordered by the Atlantic Ocean to the west, the Mediterranean Sea to the north, and the Red Sea to the east.

Countries

Geopolitically, the following eight countries are included in this region:

- Algeria
- Egypt
- Libya
- Morocco
- Tunisia
- Western Sahara
- Sudan⁹
- South Sudan

Egypt connects North Africa with Eurasia through the Sinai Peninsula. The Sinai is important for regional security because of its location, and because tourism on the peninsula accounts for nearly

one-third of Egypt's total tourism revenue¹⁰ (which will be discussed later). Also, for the purposes of this course, South Sudan is included in the North Africa region.

Countries – Sub-regions

North Africa is often divided into sub-regions: The Maghreb is the western sub-region that includes Morocco/Western Sahara, Tunisia, Algeria, and Libya.¹¹ Egypt and Sudan are referred to as the Nile Valley.



Map of the North Africa region (Source: CAOCL)

Topography – Major Features

North Africa has three main geographic features: the Sahara, the Atlas Mountains in the west, and the Nile River and the Nile Delta in the east. The great diversity of terrain, from high mountain peaks to arid elevated plains, can significantly affect the planning and execution of all Marine military operations.

The Sahara

The Sahara, which means “The Great Desert” in Arabic, is the largest and hottest desert in the world.¹² It covers approximately 9.1 million square kilometers (3.5 million square miles). The Sahara is bounded by the Atlantic Ocean on the west, the Red Sea on the east, the Atlas Mountains and the Mediterranean Sea on the north, and the Sahel region in the south.¹³ This desert covers much of Western Sahara,

Algeria, Libya, Egypt, the southern portions of Morocco and Tunisia, and the northern half of Sudan.¹⁴ The United States, including Alaska and Hawaii, is only slightly larger, at about 9.8 million square kilometers (3.7 million square miles).¹⁵

The Sahara Terrain Features

The Sahara landscape is defined by *ergs*, huge sand dunes; the *hammada*, a rocky plateau without soil or sand; and the *reg*, areas largely comprised of coarse gravel.¹⁶ With the exception of the Nile, there are no permanent streams flowing through the Sahara.

Water essential for drinking and agriculture comes from regular watercourses called **wadis**, streams, oases, and aquifers. Many of these water sources have served for centuries as stopping points for trans-Saharan herders and trade caravans.¹⁷

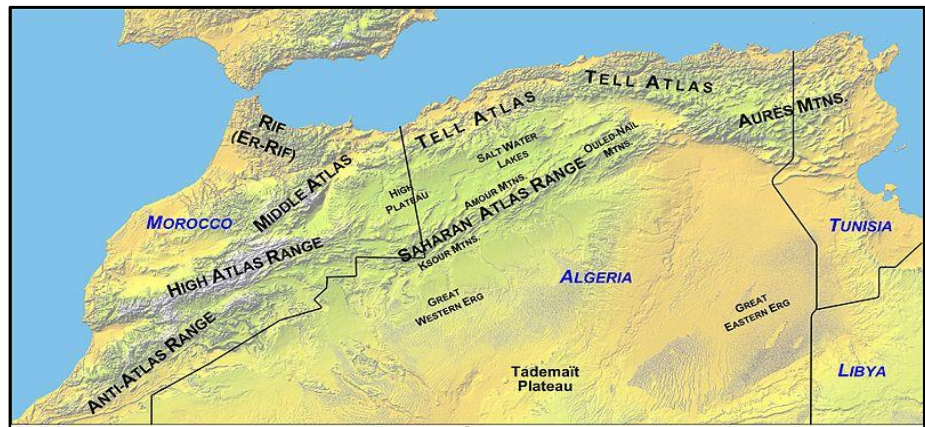
Wadis are areas that flow only after rainfalls but are usually dry.



Reg area in North Africa (Source: photo by Ji-Elle; Wikimedia)

The Atlas Mountains

The Atlas Mountains are a complex system of ridges, plateaus, and basins stretching for 2,000 kilometers (1,200 miles) across much of Morocco, northern Algeria, and Tunisia.¹⁸ The Atlas range is an extension of the Alps mountain range of Southern Europe.¹⁹ These mountains in North Africa peak at 14,000 feet. As the range recedes to the south and east, a steppe landscape is formed before ending at the Sahara Desert.



The Atlas Mountains in North Africa (Source: Wikimedia)

Topography and Culture

Topography and varied climatic zones of North Africa have left an impact on cultures in the region, and account for some of the variations in them. For instance, the harsh and unforgiving nature of the Sahara Desert forced certain groups to become nomadic and seminomadic, and adapt certain clothing

(such as the Tuareg, who will be discussed in detail later). Other groups that relied on agriculture for sustenance settled closer to sources of water, such as the Nile; for these groups, the ebb and flow of the Nile contributed to variations in culture.

Rivers

The Nile River

The Nile, known as the longest river in the world, and the most complex river system in the North Africa region. It flows northward from its major source, Lake Victoria in east central Africa, running about 6,695 kilometers (4,160 miles) before draining into the Mediterranean Sea.

The White Nile originates near the equator, runs through Uganda and into Sudan, joins the Blue Nile at Khartoum, and confluence the Nile that travels through Egypt and from there to the sea.

The Nile Valley and the Nile Delta are considered one of the most fertile areas in the world.²⁰ The Nile is the region's largest and most complex river system; historically, the Nile has been Egypt's main thoroughfare for trade and commerce.

Water Scarcity

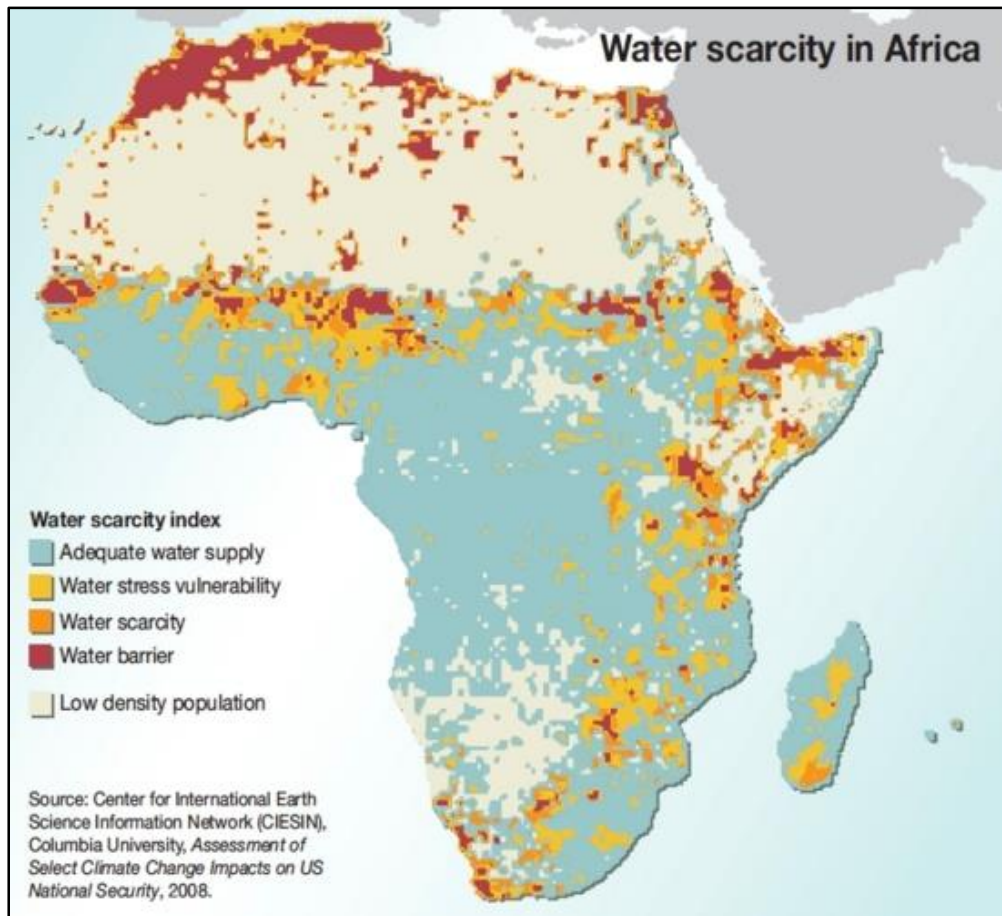
Aside from the Nile River, North Africa is one of the most water scarce regions in the world; it annually exhausts most of its water resources from rainfall, small rivers, and underground water. Farmers working near the banks of the Nile depend on rich silt brought down the river during the annual flood season.

The thirst of people, crops, and livestock living elsewhere in North Africa is quenched by rainfall during the short rainy seasons in February and April. As for the arid southern parts of the region, people depend on ever-decreasing well water, because these areas are devoid of a major river system.²¹

Furthermore, seasonal adjustments brought about by global climate change affect water quantity and quality, which, in turn, affect food availability and access. Such conditions decrease food security, and increase the vulnerability of poor rural farmers.²²



The Nile River (Source: Wikimedia)



Map of water scarcity in Africa (Source: GRID ARENDAL)

Climate and Weather

North Africa is one of the most arid regions in the world. Inland, North African countries have semi-arid and arid desert climates, and experience extremely hot summers and cold winters and modest rainfall (100 to 400 mm [3.9 to 15.7 inches] per year).²³

The Sahara's Heat

The Sahara is the world's largest hot desert, with average temperature of 86°F (30°C). During the hottest months temperatures can exceed 122°F (50°C).²⁴ Temperatures can also fall below freezing in the winter. A single daily temperature variation of 32.9°F to 99.5°F (-0.5°C to 37.5°C) has been recorded.²⁵

The heat and lack of water in North Africa are chief reasons why many people choose to live in the mountains along the coastline (like the Berbers) or become nomadic (like the Bedouins).²⁶

Mediterranean Coastal North Africa

Bordered on the north by the Mediterranean Sea, coastal North Africa has a Mediterranean climate, with warm dry summers and mild wet winters, and sufficient rainfall of 400 to 600 millimeters (15.7-23.6 inches) per year.²⁷ Mild weather and consistently sunny days makes the coastal areas in North

Africa a major tourism destination.²⁸ Temperatures in the Atlas Mountains can drop below freezing, and the peaks of the Atlas are covered in snow throughout most of the year.²⁹

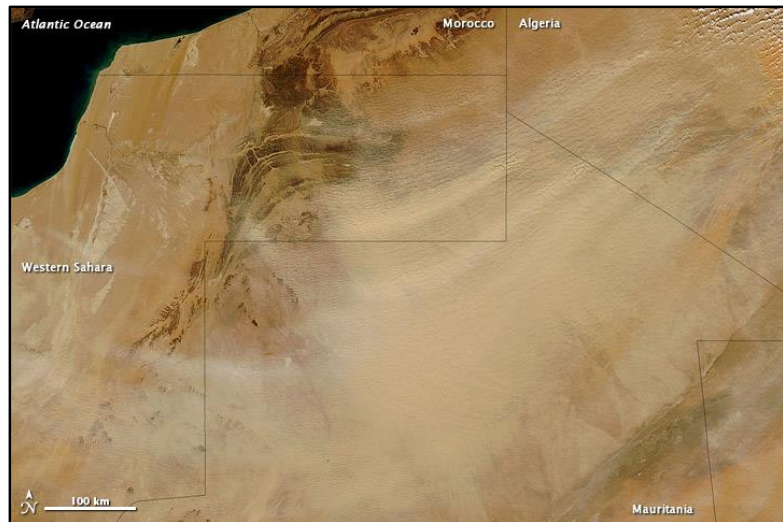


Map of Mediterranean North Africa (Source: USGS)

Winds

There are two major wind phenomena that greatly affect North Africa: the *sirocco* and the *khamaseen*. The *sirocco* is a Mediterranean wind that comes from the Sahara. It causes hot, dusty, dry conditions along the northern coast of Africa.

A *sirocco* will frequently create storms in the Mediterranean Sea. These winds can reach hurricane-like speed that greatly impact weather across the region. They sometimes turn into powerful sandstorms if they pick up enough sand and dust.³⁰ There are different names for *sirocco* in North Africa. For example, it is known as *ghibli* in Libya.³¹ Similar aggressive, hot, dry, and dusty winds known as the *khamaseen* occur in Egypt and Sudan.³²



Sahara Desert dust storm in North Africa (Source: NASA)

Environmental Hazards

North Africa faces many environmental problems. Earthquakes, drought, storms, and floods are the most common natural disasters in the region.³³

Among all of these hazards, drought and floods are the most extreme: they threaten lives and damage economies. Drought and water scarcity in rural areas have forced many people to migrate into cities. This has increased urbanization and placed a strain on municipal infrastructures.³⁴

Desertification has also been a huge destructive force in North Africa. Desertification is caused by climatic changes and destructive land use. According to the United Nations (UN) Conference on Desertification held in Tunisia in 2006, it is projected that by 2020, desertification could force up to 60 million people to migrate from Sub-Saharan Africa to North Africa and Europe.³⁵

Historical Overview

Why History Matters to You as a Marine

History provides knowledge of how people, institutions, and states in a region evolved into what they are today. It also provides insights into people's collective memory about their group and others. In other words, history not only shapes a region's current affairs, but also tells us something about the historical roots of the individual and group identities of its inhabitants.

History does not predict how groups, institutions, and states in a region may behave in the future. Instead, it provides insights into what is possible and probable.

Historical Overview

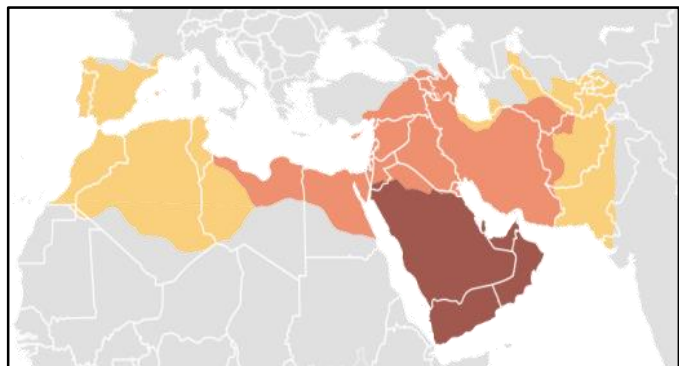
Your knowledge of North African history will help you better understand why the people think and view themselves as they do today.

Due to its geographic location on the Mediterranean, which provides easy access from Europe and the Middle East, North Africa's historical development was shaped by many of the leading civilizations in world history, such as the Egyptians, Phoenicians, Romans, Byzantines, and a Germanic tribe called the Vandals just to name a few. All these invaders left their imprint to some extent on the indigenous populations.

Arab Conquest

In 639 AD, Arab forces invaded Egypt. By 642 AD, the Arabs had expelled the Byzantine rulers, taken control, and founded the city of Cairo.³⁶ They eventually migrated south and westward, spreading Islamic and Arab culture throughout the region.

The inhabitants of North Africa at the time of the Arab invasion were Berbers, Jews, and Christians. Some converted to Islam, while others continued to co-exist by paying a



Map of the expansion of the Islamic Caliphate (Source: Wikimedia)

special tax. Some of these religious groups still have faith communities in North Africa today.

The Arabs began to impose heavier taxes known as *jizya* on non-Muslims under the notion of *dhimmi*. *Dhimmi* is a status of ‘protected people,’ where non-Muslims were allowed to practice their faith upon paying higher taxes.³⁷ Moreover, non-Muslims or *dhimmis*, under the Arab-Islamic rule, did not have equal rights under the law, as they were excluded from some civic privileges and periodically were persecuted.³⁸

Jizya is an Islamic system where non-Muslims, specifically *ahl al-kitab* “people of the book,” Christian, Jews, and Zoroastrians, were tolerated, protected, and allowed to practice their faith under Islamic rule upon paying special taxes. There were not allowed to serve in the military.

When the Arabs expanded westward from Egypt to North Africa, some Berbers became Muslim, others resisted, and some turned to Christianity. However, Berbers, as a group, have maintained a strong ethnic identity to this day.³⁹ Known for their riding and fighting skills, Berbers became the backbone of Arab armies.⁴⁰ They played a major role in spreading Islam throughout the North Africa region.⁴¹

The Ottoman Conquest

Following the Mamluks’ rule of Egypt and Syria, which lasted from 1250 until 1517,⁴² the Ottomans conquered Egypt in 1517.⁴³ Shortly afterward, the Ottomans expanded to the Maghreb. Unlike Tunisia, Algeria, and Libya, Morocco remained largely independent of the Ottoman Turkish rule.⁴⁴

The roots of the Ottoman Empire could be traced back to the Turkish-speaking tribes who entered the Arab lands in the tenth century, establishing themselves in Baghdad and Anatolia.⁴⁵

About three hundred years after the Ottoman conquest, European colonialism replaced Turkish domination as European countries took over North Africa from the Ottoman Empire.⁴⁶

By 1830, Europe initiated its colonial expansion in the region, which started with the French occupation of Algiers. North Africa was then divided into four political entities. Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya were all semi-autonomous states that fell under the Ottomans’ religious authority. As mentioned earlier, the exception to this was Morocco, which was a sovereign country under the Alawi/Alaouite Dynasty.⁴⁷

Alawi/Alaouite Dynasty (1631-present): the name Alawi is derived from Ali ibn Abi-Talib, Prophet Mohammed’s cousin and son-in-law. Established in 1631, the Alawi/Alaouite Dynasty, claims lineage from Prophet Mohammed through the line of his daughter Fatima and her husband Ali bin Abi-Talib. This lineage provided the Dynasty potent religious legitimacy to govern throughout the years. The current Moroccan royal family is the descendent of the Alaouite Dynasty.

European Colonialism

Much of North Africa was colonized by European powers during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The British took control of Egypt (for its strategic location) and Sudan in the 1880s, and retained control until the first half of the twentieth century.

France moved into Algeria and Tunisia in the 1800s. Neither country received independence until the twentieth century.

The Italians took over Libya in the early twentieth century,⁴⁸ and after World War II it came under Allied administration that lasted until 1954.

Morocco evaded colonial rule until 1912, when Spain took control of the north and France claimed the eastern, western, and southern portions of the country.⁴⁹ Eventually, Morocco gained independence in 1956.

Spain and France also claimed ownership of the area now called Western Sahara. Once they relinquished their claim on Western Sahara, Morocco seized control and the area remains in conflict today.

Egypt since Independence

In 1922 Egypt gained its conditional independence from the British – and Sultan Fuad I became the king⁵⁰ of Egypt – with British troops remaining in Egypt to protect its interests in the area.⁵¹

In 1936 Fuad's son, Farouk, succeeded his father as king of Egypt. Later, in 1952, **King Farouk** was ousted by a military coup. The following year, leaders of the military coup announced that the country would henceforth be known as the Republic of Egypt.

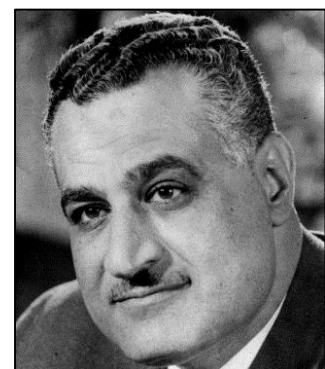
Gamal Abdel Nasser became prime minister of Egypt in 1954; in 1956, Nasser became president.⁵²

King Farouk I (11 February 1920—18 March 1965) was the tenth ruler of Egypt to ascend to the throne from the Muhammad Ali Dynasty. He rose to the throne when his father, Fuad I, died in 1936. Farouk was overthrown in the Egyptian Revolution of 1952, and he abdicated the throne to his infant son, Fuad II, who ruled less than a year before Egypt became a republic.

Gamal Abdel Nasser was the second president of Egypt serving from 1956 until his death in 1970. Along with Muhammed Naguib, he formed the Free Officers' Movement and led the Egyptian Revolution of 1952, which removed King Farouk I, heralding a new period of nationalist policies and profound advancement of Arab Nationalism. Nasser is often seen as a pivotal political figure in Arab history.

In 1956, Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal, a move that prompted a British-French-Israeli invasion. These invasion forces were eventually withdrawn at the insistence of the United Nations and United States.⁵³

Nasser was well-regarded for his vision of pan-Arabism, also referred to as Nasserism, which won a great following and popularity in the Arab World during the 1950's and 1960's.⁵⁴



Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser (Source: Wikimedia)

Pan-Arabism is an ideology that emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and peaked during the presidency of Gamal Abdul Nasser. Nasser's implementation of domestic and foreign policies in favor of pan-Arabism offered Egypt a prominent role in the Middle East during the 1950s and 1960s. The ideology promotes cultural, political, and economic unity of Arabic-speaking countries of the Middle East. This includes countries of North Africa and West Asia, stretching from the Atlantic Ocean to the Arabian Sea. This area is commonly known as the "Arab World." Pan-Arabism opposes Western influence in the region and advocates for the empowerment of Arab countries either through economic or political alliances. Throughout its evolution, pan-Arabism was either secular or socialist-leaning, depending on the leader of the time.

Following Nasser's death in 1970, his Vice-President Anwar al-Sadat became president.⁵⁵ Sadat had grown up among average Egyptian villagers. He was among the first students to attend the new military college established by the British. Upon graduating from the academy, the government posted Sadat to a distant outpost. There he met Gamal Abdel Nasser, beginning a long political association which eventually led to the Egyptian presidency. At this outpost, Sadat, Nasser, and other young officers formed a revolutionary group destined to overthrow British rule.

Sadat worked closely with Nasser and eventually succeeded him as president. Sadat proved his leadership abilities when he offered the Israelis a peace treaty in exchange for the return of the Sinai lands occupied during the Six Day War.

Sadat initiated his most important diplomatic ploy in a speech to Egyptian parliament in 1977, when he affirmed the desire to negotiate a peace agreement with the Israelis anywhere, including the Israeli parliament. Sadat's speech to the Israeli Knesset gave new momentum to the peace talks that would eventually culminate in the 1978 Camp David Accords and a final bilateral peace treaty in 1979.



Menachem Begin, Jimmy Carter, and Anwar Sadat in Camp David (Source: Wikimedia)

Sadat was awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace for his efforts to reach a peace treaty with Israel in 1979, but was assassinated in 1981 by religious extremists.

Following Sadat's assassination, a national referendum approved Hosni Mubarak as the president of Egypt.⁵⁶ Mubarak served as president from 1981 to 2011.

It was during Mubarak's rule that Egypt returned to the Arab League in 1989, and became a significant ally to the United States in the Persian Gulf War and, more recently, in the global war on terror.

Mubarak extended Egypt's Emergency Law, which had gone into effect when his predecessor, Anwar al-Sadat, was assassinated. Mubarak ruled Egypt for almost 30 years under emergency law, giving the state powers of arrest, to restrict basic rights, and to imprison and hold indefinitely virtually anyone for any reason.

In 2004, Mubarak pursued aggressive economic reform. As a result, Egypt's gross domestic product (GDP) increased between the years 2005-2008. Although Egypt's economy was flourishing, it did not trickle down to the average Egyptian citizen: by 2011, about 25 percent of Egyptians were living below poverty line. Economic disparity between the classes contributed to widespread public discontent.⁵⁷

Uprising in Egypt

Pressured by domestic unrest and mass protests in Cairo and other cities, Mubarak resigned from office on 11 February 2011.⁵⁸

After Mubarak's secession, the Egyptian military stepped in to restore order until elections could be held for a new parliament and president in 2012.

Following Mubarak's 30-year rule, elected on 30 June 2012 with 51.7 percent of the vote, Mohamed Morsi became Egypt's first democratically-elected president. Morsi's presidency was marred by constant political unrest after he issued a constitutional declaration that granted himself extensive powers, barred the judiciary from questioning his authority, and thwarted any effort to dissolve the constituent assembly and the upper house of parliament.



Anti-Mubarak protests in Egypt (Source: Wikimedia)

Additionally, Morsi pushed forward a controversial constitutional measure that would entrench Islamic laws, giving enormous power to the **Muslim Brotherhood** and other Islamist political parties while neglecting to tackle mounting economic problems.

On 3 July 2013, the Egyptian army, led by General Abdel Fatah al-Sisi, toppled Morsi. The military promptly installed an interim civilian government headed by **Adly Mansour**, suspended the constitution, and called for new presidential elections.⁵⁹

After Mansour's resignation, General al-Sisi ran for the presidency. In May 2014 he was elected president of Egypt, earning 96 percent of the vote.⁶⁰ The elections' outcome was highly criticized by many international observation missions, arguing that the figures have been exaggerated and did not reflect the actual turnout. Regardless, al-Sisi's supporters insisted that the elections were fairly conducted.

Muslim Brotherhood: The Arab world's oldest, most influential, and one of the largest Islamic movements. It is the largest political opposition organization in many Arab states, and was founded in Egypt in 1928 as a Pan-Islamic religious, political, and social movement by the Islamic scholar Hassan al-Banna.

Adly Mansour: The chief judge of the Supreme Constitutional Court, Mansour was appointed to the court by Morsi's predecessor, Hosni Mubarak, and was elevated to the chief justice post only two days before the Islamist leader was deposed.

Colonization of Sudan

Beginning in 1899, the United Kingdom and Egypt governed all of present-day Sudan,⁶¹ although the northern and southern regions of Sudan were administered as separate colonies. Northern Sudan historically had closer ties with Egypt because it was Arab-speaking and Muslim; southern Sudan's predominantly sub-Saharan African population spoke a variety of indigenous languages and held religious beliefs that were a mix of Christianity and animism.

Sudan since Independence

In 1956, Sudan received its independence.⁶² Soon after independence and its peaceful separation from Egypt, Sudan became embroiled in an on-and-off civil war pitting the Arab Muslim rulers of Khartoum in the north against the Africans, mostly Christians and animist, who were seeking their own country in the South.

A succession of dysfunctional parliamentary governments and military regimes has ruled Sudan since its independence. However, General Gaafar Nimirie, who was Sudan's president from 1969-1985, was the first to adopt *sharia law* in 1983. Non-Muslim groups and southerners living in the north were also subjected to the provisions of *sharia law*.

A second civil war erupted in 1983 when southern soldiers revolted instead of following orders transferring them to the north. Following widespread unrest, General Nimirie was toppled in a coup by a group of officers in 1985. Thereafter a transitional military council ruled the country.

Sudan's new civilian government was headed by Prime Minister Al-Sadiq al-Mahdi, who was elected in April 1986. There were attempts to negotiate peace with the south. However, any plans to exclude the south from Islamic law were not acceptable by Arab supremacists.

In 1989, an army faction led by Colonel Omar al-Bashir ousted the coalition government of al-Mahdi in a military coup. Al-Bashir ruled the country with an iron fist: he dissolved the parliament and banned political parties.⁶³ Bashir's government also committed itself to the Islamic cause, which maximized the north-south divide and conflict.



President of Sudan Omar Al-Bashir (Source: Wikimedia)

Al-Bashir sided with Saddam Hussein during the first Gulf War, hosted Osama bin Laden through the 1990s, and was suspected, along with the Iranian government, of providing finance and support to al-Qaeda for the 1998 U.S. Embassy bombings in Tanzania and Kenya.⁶⁴

Al-Bashir faces two international warrants issued by the International Criminal Court in The Hague on charges related to the conflict in Darfur, where thousands of people were either killed or displaced because of the fighting between the Sudanese government and rebel forces. The charges against Al-Bashir are for genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity.⁶⁵

Sharia: Which means ‘path’ in Arabic, is the moral code and religious law of Islam that deals with many topics, including crime, politics, and economics, as well as personal and familial matters such as, hygiene, diet, prayer and fasting. Sharia is derived mainly from two sources: the Qur’an, which is only Holy Scripture of Islam, and the Sunna, which is the sayings, practices and teachings of the prophet Mohammed.

South Sudan’s Independence

On 9 January 2005, the Government of Sudan (GOS) and the **Sudan People’s Liberation Movement/Army** signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement to end two decades of civil war. The agreement granted the southern Sudan region the right to self-determination after a six-month interim period. On 9 January 2011, the people of the southern Sudan region voted overwhelmingly (98.8 percent) for independence. As a result, the southern region of Sudan was renamed South Sudan.⁶⁶

Despite the outcome of the independence vote, many issues remain unresolved between Sudan and South Sudan. Oil and border demarcation remain the two pressing issues blocking the path toward true peace.



Map of Sudan and South Sudan (Source: CIA)

The Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) is a political party in the southern Sudan region which originated as a rebel movement, with a military wing known as the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA).

Tunisia since Independence

Tunisia has navigated a moderate course with minimum struggle since gaining independence from France in 1956. **Habib Bourguiba** was the first post-independence prime minister. In 1957, Tunisia became a republic and Bourguiba the first president. His successor, **Zine El Abidine Bin Ali**, took over in a bloodless palace coup in 1987, and continued to maintain close relations with the West, particularly France.⁶⁷

Habib Bourguiba was the first president of the Republic of Tunisia. He governed from 1957 (when Tunisia won its independence from France) to 1987. Bourguiba outlawed polygamy, legalized divorce, and instituted a policy of equal rights for women.⁶⁸

Zine El Abdine Bin Ali became president of Tunisia when, in 1987, he overthrew Habib Bourguiba in a bloodless coup. He remained president until January 2011, when protests throughout Tunisia forced him to flee to Saudi Arabia.

Tunisia, the Birthplace of the “Arab Spring”

On 18 December 2012, high prices, unemployment, political oppression, and poor living conditions triggered a wave of demonstrations and unrest across Tunisia against Bin Ali’s government.⁶⁹

The Tunisian revolution was sparked on 17 December 2010, when Mohamed Bouazizi, a 26-year-old street vendor, decided to protest the unwarranted confiscation of his pushcart by the police by setting himself on fire.⁷⁰

Bouazizi’s protest suicide precipitated a national revolt that ultimately ended President Bin Ali’s 23-year rule, and sparked the beginning of what is now called the “**Arab Spring**”—a domino-like series of civil revolts occurring in Egypt, Libya, and other parts of the Middle East and North Africa.



Image collage of the 2011 civil uprising across the Middle East (Source: Wikimedia)

The “**Arab Spring**” refers to the pro-democracy uprisings that began in December 2010 and swept across the Middle East and North Africa

Tunisia after the “Arab Spring”

Following Bin Ali’s ousting, a state of emergency was declared and the Constitutional Court affirmed Fouad Mebazaa as interim president.⁷¹ In the 2011 Constituent Assembly elections, the Islamist Ennahda Party won by close majority.⁷² The Constituent Assembly then elected President Moncef Marzouki to the office in December 2011.⁷³

Secular Tunisians now worry that the Islamist Ennahda Party will push forward a conservative Islamist agenda, particularly after they proposed a constitution that would reduce women’s rights. On the other hand, there is a concern over the growing threat of radical Islamists in the country.⁷⁴

Libya since Independence

Libya, a former colony of Italy, was the first country granted independence in 1951 through the United Nations after World War II.

Libya's monarch, King Idris Al-Sanusi, a man perceived by many as nationalist and pro-Western, ruled until 1969, when an army captain, **Muammar al-Qaddafi**, seized control of the government in a military coup.



Qaddafi quickly took control of Libya's vast oil fields from European and American companies, instituted what he called "Islamic socialism,"⁷⁵ and promoted himself to colonel.

Libyans celebrate declaration of liberation (Source: DIPNOTE, U.S. Department of State official blog)

Qaddafi's rule was quirky but absolute, with his principles outlined in his so-called "Green Book."⁷⁶ Qaddafi rule became more eccentric as he sought to imitate the type of Arab nationalism and socialism defined by the leadership of Egypt's late president, Gamal Abdel Nasser.

Muammar al-Qaddafi was the head of state of Libya from 1969 until 2012. He came to power during a bloodless military coup. He imposed a system of Islamic values and sought to unite all Arab countries under a single banner, and to reinvigorate the Arab League. He at times used violence to quell revolution and uprising. He was believed to be a major financier of terrorists and African revolutionaries around the continent. In 2003, he announced he had a weapons of mass destruction (WMD), and eventually allowed the United Nations to observe and dismantle these weapons. This followed Qaddafi's public condemnation of the 11 September 2001 attacks, a move intended to improve his relations with the West. In 2011, Libya's civil unrest led to his removal from power. He was later captured and killed by the hands of Libyan rebels and militias while attempting to flee the country.

Libyan Sponsorship of Terrorism

In December of 1979 Libya was listed by the U.S. as a state sponsor of terrorism. By 1981, Libya had become a leading state sponsor of terrorism. In the same year, Libya fired at a U.S. aircraft that passed into the Gulf of Sidra, which Qaddafi had claimed as Libyan territorial water.⁷⁷ The incident prompted Navy Tomcats, defending Freedom of Navigation exercise, to shoot down two Soviet-built Libyan fighters defending Qaddafi's so called "Line of Death" in the Gulf of Sidra.⁷⁸

In 1986, following the Libyan terrorist bombing of a Berlin nightclub⁷⁹ that targeted American servicemen, U.S. warplanes launched Operation El Dorado Canyon, which successfully hit five Libyan targets,⁸⁰ allegedly killing Qaddafi's adopted daughter, among others.⁸¹

Two years later, on 21 December 1988, a New York-bound passenger plane, Pan Am Flight 103, was destroyed by a terrorist bomb over Lockerbie, Scotland, killing all 259 people aboard.⁸² Intelligence operatives from Libya eventually became the prime suspects in the Pan Am downing. Soon after, Libya was diplomatically and economically isolated by the world community.

A decade after the Pan Am bombing, Qaddafi handed over two Libyan intelligence agents for trial. He also paid \$10 million to every family that lost a loved one in the terror attack. By 2003, in an attempt to normalize relations with the U.S., Qaddafi publicly abandoned his weapons of mass destruction (WMD) programs.⁸³

Uprising in Libya

In February 2011, nationwide political violence erupted following the Libyan government's brutal crackdown of civilian protests against Qaddafi.⁸⁴ The rebel opposition forces quickly seized control of Benghazi, a large part of eastern Libya; the rebels also claimed several key areas in the western part of the country.⁸⁵

In order to protect civilians against Qaddafi's counter-insurgency troops (a military force comprised of intelligence operatives, uniformed security services, and African mercenaries), the UN Security Council authorized the use of military force to restore peace to Libya. The UN also declared the skies over Libya "a no-fly zone." Following the passage of the UN resolution, on 19 March 2011, the United States launched Operation Odyssey Dawn in Libya.⁸⁶

By 5 March 2011, Libyan opposition forces announced the formation of the National Transitional Council (NTC) as Libya's sole representative.⁸⁷ Six months later, the UN General Assembly accredited an interim government envoy as Libya's sole representative.

Libyan rebels captured and killed Qaddafi on 16 September 2011, marking an end to his 42 years in power. A few days later, the NTC officially declared Libya liberated, moved to Tripoli, and formed a transitional government.⁸⁸

First Free Election in 60 years

In August 2012, the NTC handed over power to Libya's newly elected parliament, the General National Congress. This body was democratically chosen in Libya's first free national election in six decades. Subsequently, in October 2012, the General National Congress appointed a prime minister, Ali Zidan, who formed an interim government tasked with preparing the ground for a new constitution and fresh parliamentary elections in 2013.

The biggest issue facing the new government is rebel groups that have refused to disarm, thereby creating continued instability.⁸⁹ (This matter will be discussed later in Chapter 6, Regional Security Issues.)

Algeria since Independence

Algeria's eight-year long, brutal guerrilla war of independence (granted in 1962) from nearly a century and a half of French colonial rule resulted in single-party rule by the Front de Liberation Nationale or **National Liberation Front (FLN)**, which had led the fight for national autonomy. After electing three presidents in a row, FLN's rule became even more absolute and socialist.

When oil prices crashed in the 1980s, the Algerian economy also crashed. As a result, hundreds of thousands took to the streets in the "Black October" demonstrations.⁹⁰ Consequently, millions of

Arab Algerians began to back the **Front Islamique du Salut or Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) party**. FIS' goal was transforming Algeria into an Islamic state governed by *sharia* law.⁹¹

The Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN) was the main revolutionary body that fought and won Algeria's independence from France in 1962. After winning independence, the FLN continued as Algeria's main political body. In 1988, due to enormous unpopularity and ineffectiveness, the FLN amended Algeria's constitution to allow rival political parties to exist. Soon after, FLN lost control of the government to the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS). The military arm of the FLN, which had been synonymous with the national army, saw the FIS's gains in the government as unacceptable and took back control of the government in the 1990s.⁹²

The Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) is an officially exiled political party in Algeria. The party supports the establishment of an Islamist state in Algeria governed by *sharia* law (Islamic law). In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the FIS became the leading opposition party to the National Liberation Front (FLN). When the FIS gained a majority of parliamentary seats in the 1991 election, the military arm of the FLN took over the government in a coup, imprisoned the leaders of the FIS, and outlawed the party. In the 1990's, FIS was instrumental in creating the Islamic Salvation Army, a guerilla organization that launched several attacks on the government.⁹³

Cancelled Elections Lead to Algerian Civil War

Under popular pressure, the government was forced to call multi-party elections in 1991. When the FIS won the first round, the army stepped in and cancelled the elections, heralding a bloody civil war in which about 200,000 people were killed.⁹⁴

Algeria's military government outlawed religious parties and allowed elections in 1995. Later in 1999, **Abdelaziz Bouteflika**, a Westernized former foreign minister, emerged as the army's favored candidate. He won election unopposed when all rivals, protesting fraud, dropped out.⁹⁵



Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika (Source: Wikimedia)

Abdelaziz Bouteflika has been the president of Algeria since 1999. He ran as an independent candidate, although he has ties to the Algerian National Liberation Front, and he was supported by the military. Bouteflika was elected with 71 percent of the popular vote (knowing that all other candidates pulled out from these elections), and was reelected in 2004 with 85 percent of the vote. In 2006, he appointed a new prime minister, who passed an amendment that allowed Bouteflika to run again.⁹⁶ In the 2014 election, the 77-year-old Bouteflika won another term as president with an alleged 81.53 percent of the vote.⁹⁷ Bouteflika's critics and opponents argued that the elections were fraud and the turnout figures were inflated.

Algeria Moves toward Peace under Bouteflika

Bouteflika gained popular support promoting amnesty for Islamists; this prompted many rebels to give up their arms.⁹⁸ He was re-elected overwhelmingly in 2004, and went on to promote a charter for peace and national reconciliation to provide comprehensive amnesty for combatants on both the government and guerilla sides. The amnesty measure was adopted nearly unanimously by referendum.

Bouteflika initially denied Berber demands for cultural recognition, but later granted them these rights. Rising oil prices helped bring economic stability to Algeria. Meanwhile, Bouteflika contemplated a constitutional change that would grant him another term in office. Although political violence has generally decreased in Algeria, the country has been shaken by several terrorist attacks carried out by **al-Qaeda in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)**.⁹⁹

al-Qaeda in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) is an Algeria-based Salafi-jihadist group. It originally formed in 1998 as the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), a faction of the Armed Islamic Group, which was the largest and most active terrorist group in Algeria. The GSPC was renamed in January 2007, after the group officially joined al-Qaeda in September 2006.¹⁰⁰

Morocco since Independence

Morocco was the first non-European state in the world to recognize the U.S as an independent nation in 1777. Morocco was a French protectorate. However, preoccupied with Algeria's struggle for independence, France ended its protectorate in 1956, and permitted Morocco to become independent with hardly a struggle.

Morocco's independence from France enabled Sultan Mohammed to return from exile and become the Moroccan king in 1957.¹⁰¹ Following the death of King Mohammed in 1961, his son King Hassan II became the king. The Moroccan monarchy claims an Alaouite descent from the Prophet Mohammed and his cousin Ali.

King Mohammed V of Morocco: his full name is Sidi Mohammed bin Yusuf, born in August 10, 1909, and died February 26, 1961. He was the Sultan of Morocco from 1927-1957. He was exiled from 1953-1955. Upon his return following Morocco's independence, he established a constitutional monarchy and became the king from 1957 to 1961.

The Moroccan monarchy has traditionally had close relations with the West, but its human rights record is less than stellar. During King Hassan II's 39-year reign, dissenters were arrested or simply disappeared. Torture in police stations and secret prisons was routine. Human rights activists, anti-monarchists, those wanting independence for Western Sahara, and radical Islamists alike, were frequently jailed, exiled, or murdered by the King's security forces. There were occasional demonstrations and urban riots, but all were brutally put down. Two attempted military coups failed and the plotters were imprisoned or executed.¹⁰²

In the early 1990s, responding to pressure from international human rights groups, Hassan's regime changed course and appointed commissions to investigate abuses. Monetary compensation was paid to many victims of this abuse. Hassan's son, Mohammed VI, accelerated the process after he succeeded to the throne in 1999, going so far as to publicly apologize for the repressive tactics of his forebearers.¹⁰³

The government of Morocco is evolving from an absolute monarchy into a constitutional monarchy. Freedom of expression and of the press, as well as fair trials and meaningful elections, seem to be within reach. The country has also adopted a new family code, the so-called *muddawana*, which gives more rights to women.

Morocco's Territorial Disputes

The status of Western Sahara remains unresolved. Morocco annexed the territory in 1975, and a guerrilla war promptly erupted between indigenous pro-independence forces supported by Algeria and the Moroccans. The fighting ended in 1991 under the terms of a UN-brokered ceasefire that continues to be monitored by the United Nations Mission for a Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO).

Morocco is also in a dispute with Spain over the sovereignty of Melilla and Ceuta (small enclaves on the Mediterranean coast surrounded by Morocco and administered by Spain).¹⁰⁴

Morocco has been an ally to NATO and Washington in its war on terror, particularly after its role in cracking down on suspected Islamic militants who were behind the deadly suicide bombings in Casablanca in 2003 that targeted Western and Jewish interests.¹⁰⁵

Western Sahara since Independence

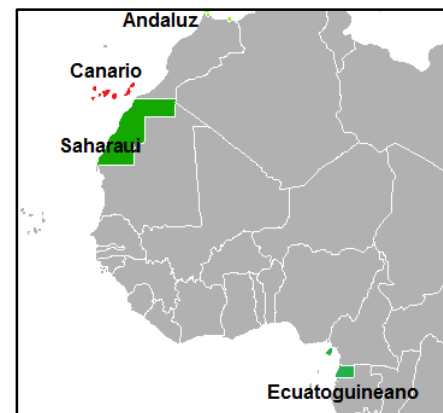
Morocco's King Hassan effectively replaced Spain as the ruler of Western Sahara in 1975 when he sent 300,000¹⁰⁶ unarmed volunteers marching across the border in the Green March to claim the phosphate-rich country.

When Mauritania abandoned its claim on Western Sahara, Morocco's only rival for the territory was the independence-seeking, Algerian-backed Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia el-Hamra and Rio de Oro (POLISARIO).

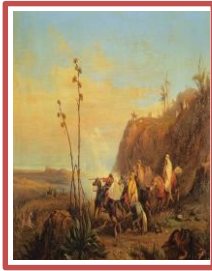
Morocco consolidated its control over the western three quarters of the territory by building a series of fortifications called the Berm, which separates the independence-seeking Sahrawi population.

A UN-supervised ceasefire has been in place in Western Sahara since 1991.¹⁰⁷ UN-sponsored talks between Morocco and the POLISARIO Front in 2008 did not yield a positive outcome. Morocco offered to grant autonomy to people in the disputed territory, while insisting that it continue to keep Western Sahara under its sovereignty; this offer was refused by the POLISARIO, who demanded complete independence.¹⁰⁸

In November 2010, clashes erupted between Moroccan security forces and protesters near the capital of Western Sahara Laayoune, killing several people.¹⁰⁹ Consequently, the once close U.S.-Moroccan relationship suffered a rift when the U.S. decided to back calls for the UN to monitor human rights in Western Sahara. This resulted in Morocco's cancellation of the annual war game AFRICAN LION joint military exercises, and U.S. troops were ordered to redeploy from Morocco.¹¹⁰



Western Sahara Map (Source: Wikimedia)



Arab Conquest of Egypt and next year Libya

European Colonialism:
French Occupation of Algeria and Tunisia and British Occupation of Egypt and Sudan



The end of the European colonial era. North Africa countries gain independence



Anwar Al-Sadat of Egypt signs the peace treaty with Israel

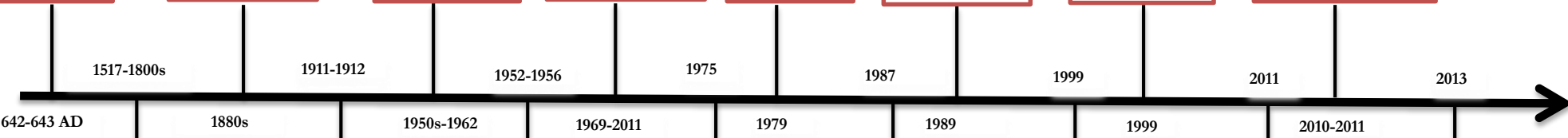


The beginning of the **civil unrest**, also known as Arab Spring and Arab Awakening, which started in Tunisia in Dec 2010 and unfolded across the North Africa countries. The revolutions toppled the regimes in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya and prompted other countries to initiate constitutional reform.

Col Muammar Gaddafi seize power through a military coup

Omar Al-Bashir took power of Sudan through a military coup

Abdelaziz Bouteflika became president of Algeria



Ottoman Empire rule started with Egypt and then spread throughout North Africa except Morocco

European Colonialism: Italy took control of Libya and Morocco becomes a French protectorate; meanwhile, Spain controlled its coastal protectorate

The formation of the **Free Officers' Movement** in Egypt, military coup overthrowing the monarchy and establishing the Republic of Egypt. Gamal Abdel Nasser becomes Prime Minister and in 1956 becomes the **president** the same year he nationalizes the Suez Canal. He was a nationalist figure and he started an era of pan-Arabism which is often dubbed Nasserism

Morocco annexed Western Sahara when King Hassan II ordered a Green March of over 300 thousand Moroccans into the territory.

Zien El-Abidine Bin Ali took over power of Tunisia from President Habib Bourguiba in a bloodless palace coup

The **formation of AQIM in Algeria** which was originally formed as the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) and then renamed as AQIM in 2007

South Sudan became independent country

The **Muslim Brotherhood** rule in Egypt was overthrown by civil unrest and with the help of the Egyptian military led by Gen Abdul Fattah Al-Sisi



People and Society

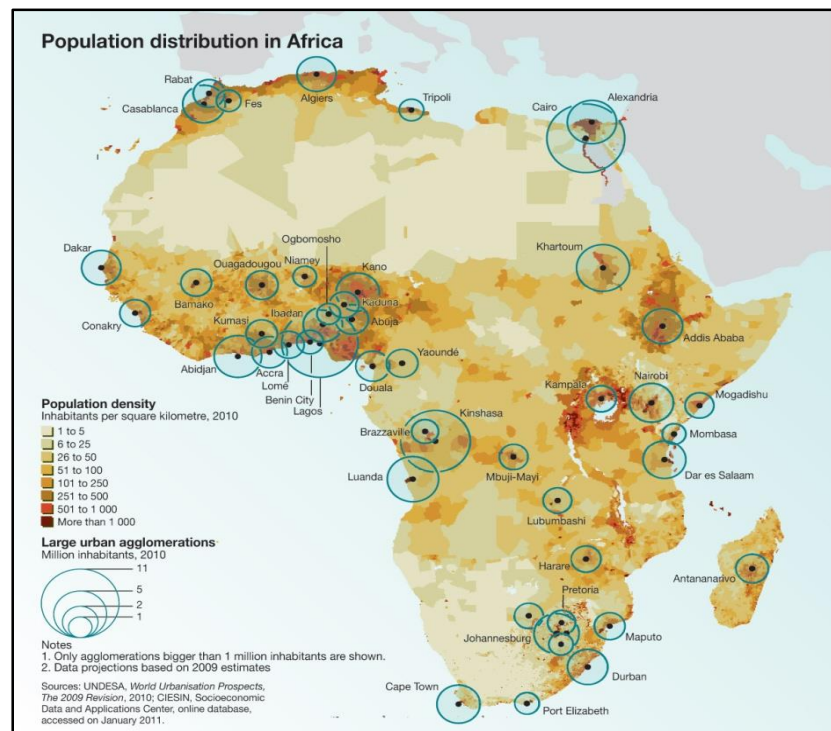
Why People and Society Matters to You as a Marine

Missions across the range of military operations require Marines to understand, and work with, foreign populations. Knowing the people in the region, including their ethnicities, languages, and religions, as well as the way they live in social entities, enables Marines to create a mental picture of the human dimension of the region.

Population

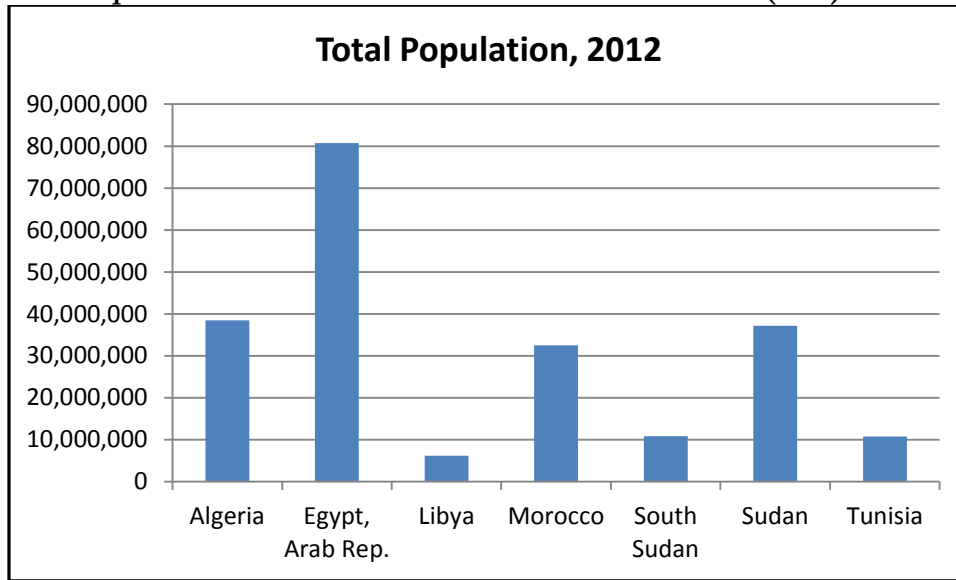
The countries of North Africa have a combined population of about 217 million people (2012);¹¹¹ this is about a third less than the population of the United States.¹¹² Although the region is nearly as large as the U.S., much of it is harsh desert. As North Africa's population rapidly increases and its people flock from rural areas to cities, water and housing shortages are becoming acute.¹¹³ North Africa is considered one of the most urbanized regions in Africa.¹¹⁴

Note: The following charts were created from data derived from the World Bank, which does not account for Western Sahara as an independent nation. Accordingly, the population of Western Sahara is incorporated within Morocco's numbers in the chart below.



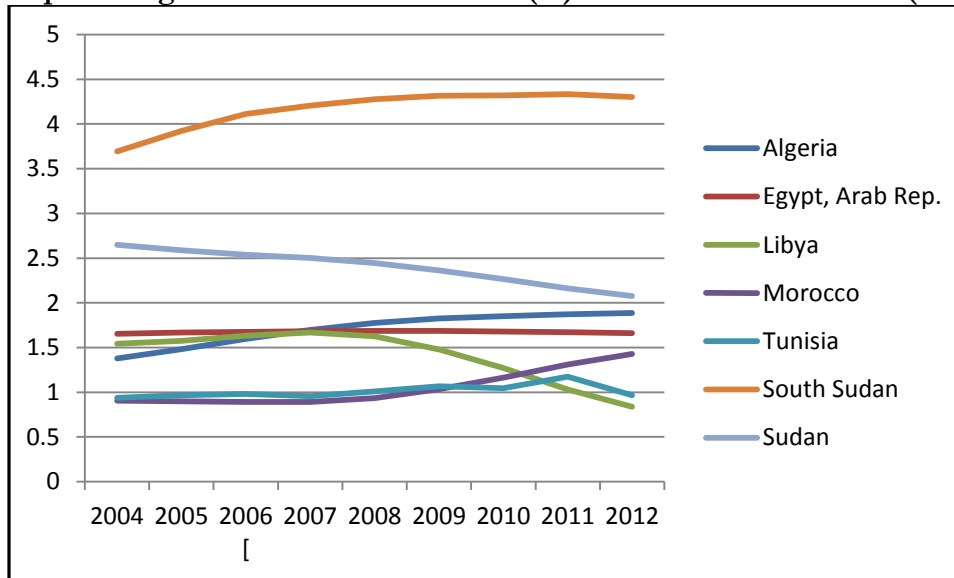
Map of population distribution in Africa (Source: GRID ARENDAL)

Total Population for North Africa – World Bank Indicators (2012)



Note: According to the CIA World Factbook the total population for the Western Sahara is about half a million.

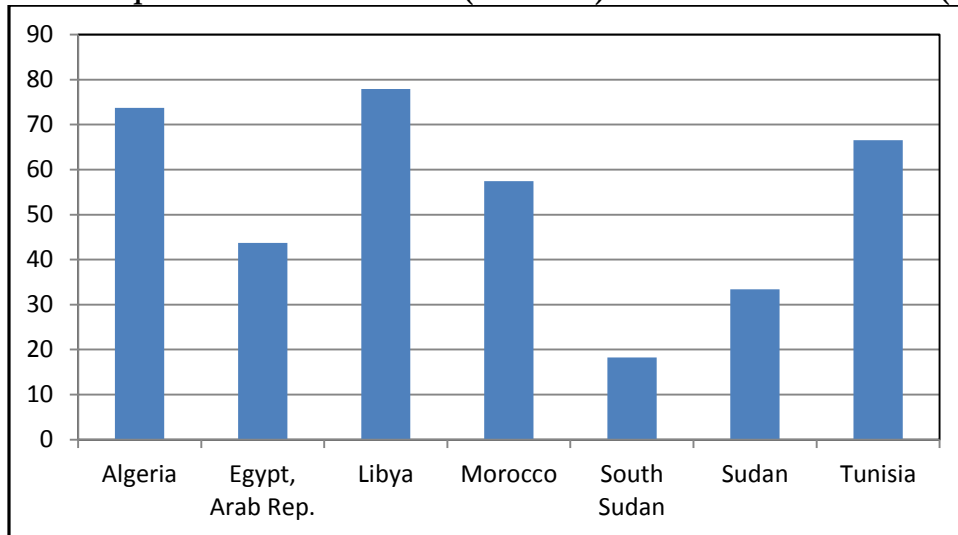
Population growth rate for North Africa (%) – World Bank Indicators (2012)



Note: According to the CIA World Factbook the population growth rate for the Western Sahara is 2.89 percent.

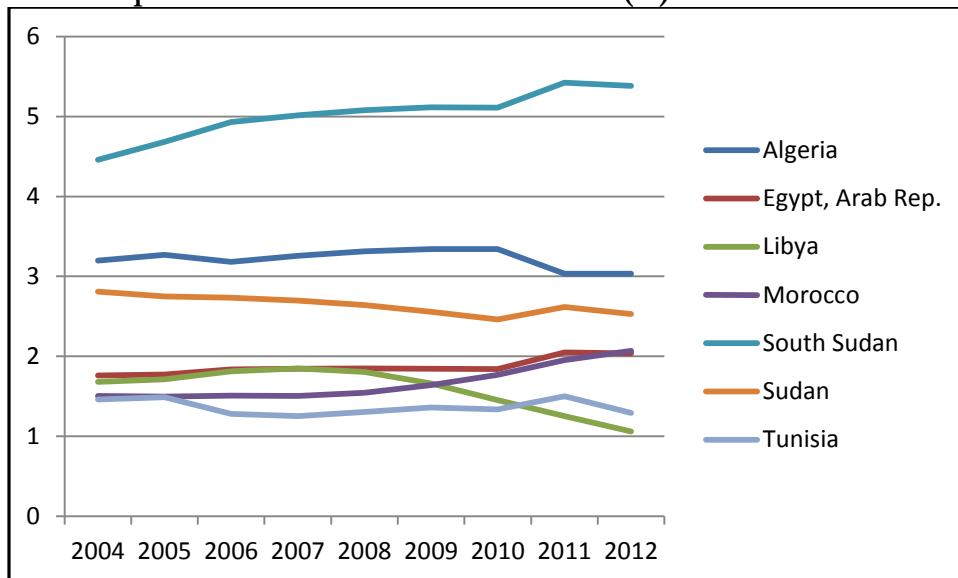
As indicated by the diagram above, population growth varies between the countries in North Africa. South Sudan has the highest rate of growth, and Libya and Tunisia the lowest. Evidence is inconclusive, but events surrounding the Arab Spring uprisings in 2011 are generally blamed for population decreases in Libya and Tunisia.

Urban Population for North Africa (% of total) – World Bank Indicators (2012)



Note: According to the CIA World Factbook the urban population for Western Sahara is at 82 percent of the total Western Sahara population (2011).

Urban Population Growth rate for North Africa (%) – World Bank Indicators (2012)



Note: According to the CIA World Factbook, urban population growth rate for the Western Sahara is 3.49 percent (2010).

The figure above shows the urbanization percentage of the countries in North Africa. The countries of the Arabian Maghreb (Tunisia, Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya) have a higher percentage of urban population due to population density in the northern coastal cities rather than the southern arid areas.

As for Egypt, Sudan, and South Sudan, there is less urbanization, and more people reside in rural areas. Agriculture in the rural areas is one of the reasons for this. With the exceptions of Tunisia and Libya where the urbanization growth is dipping, the overall urban populations are increasing in all North African countries – especially South Sudan.

Throughout North Africa, the availability of water has always determined where and how people live. Fifty percent of North Africans live in coastal areas;¹¹⁵ in Egypt, the population density reaches 500 to 1,000 people per square kilometer, mostly along the Nile Delta.¹¹⁶

Today, Egypt is the most densely populated country in the North African region and the Arab world;¹¹⁷ it is also the third most populous country in Africa.¹¹⁸ Drought and jobs draw farmers and herdsmen from Egypt's rural villages to urban areas. Cairo and Alexandria, Egypt's two biggest cities, have a combined population of about 15.5 million.¹¹⁹

Seven out of ten Algerians,¹²⁰ and nearly two-thirds of all Tunisians live in coastal cities.¹²¹

In Libya, one of the most sparsely populated nations in the world, 90 percent of the population lives near the country's northern Mediterranean coastline; they occupy less than 10 percent of the country's total land.¹²²

The population of Morocco is concentrated in the northern part of the country, west of the Atlas Mountain range. Sixty percent of all Moroccans live in six major urban centers:¹²³ the port cities of Casablanca, Agadir, and Tangier; Rabat, the capital; and in the historic cities of Fez and Marrakesh.¹²⁴

Very few people inhabit the northern third of Sudan;¹²⁵ however, the greater Khartoum area is the most densely populated area with a population of 5.2 million people.¹²⁶

In South Sudan, the total population is about 11.5 million, with an urbanization rate of only 18 percent (which means 82 percent of South Sudanese live in rural areas).¹²⁷ Moreover, there is a noticeable disparity in population numbers between South Sudanese states, with Jonglei being the most populous (with about sixteen percent of the country's total population) and Western Bahr El Ghazal the least populous (with only four percent of the total population).¹²⁸

In Western Sahara, the population is estimated at around half a million people.¹²⁹ However, approximately 90,000 Sahrawi refugees, fleeing years of political instability, have settled in refugee camps near Tindouf, in southern Algeria.¹³⁰ Military hostilities in Western Sahara in 1979 initiated the first major refugee movements, following Morocco's virtual annexation of the former Spanish colony.¹³¹ Today, nearly a half million people, including Moroccan soldiers and their families,¹³² live in Western Sahara's desert flatlands. Roughly half the population of this disputed territory (237,000) resides in the city of El Aaiun (*Laayoune*).¹³³

Ethnic Groups

In parts of North Africa, ethnicity and kinship influence politics, personal loyalties, population distribution of the region, and instigates conflicts. Throughout North Africa, people have strong loyalties to their extended family. Concentrations of members of an ethnic group often create a climate of ethnic favoritism.

North Africans view ethnic favoritism and nepotism differently than Americans do. Government officials are often expected to take care of their kinsmen with jobs or special favors, often at the exclusion of other ethnic groups. This causes animosity and has frequently precipitated insurgencies led by groups excluded from receiving basic government services.

Except for South Sudan -- where the majority of the population is non-Arab, African Dinka, and Nuer -- North Africa's population is more uniform than the population of any other African region. Although minority populations exist in all eight North African nations, most people living in this region are comprised of Arabs, Berber, or a mixture of the two groups.

The Arabs

According to the Oxford dictionary, “an Arab is a member of the Semitic people, originally from the Arabian Peninsula and neighboring territories,” who migrated and spread in what is known today as the Middle East and North Africa.¹³⁴

Today, Arabs are distinguished as a group that shares one language and close cultures. A majority of Arabs are Muslims, although there are non-Muslims who speak Arabic and share the similar culture.¹³⁵

Arabs can be Caucasians, like people from the Levant, or Black Africans, such as the Sudanese. The definition adopted by the Arab League for an Arab “is a person whose language is Arabic, who lives in an Arabic speaking country, who is in sympathy with the aspirations of the Arabic speaking peoples.”¹³⁶



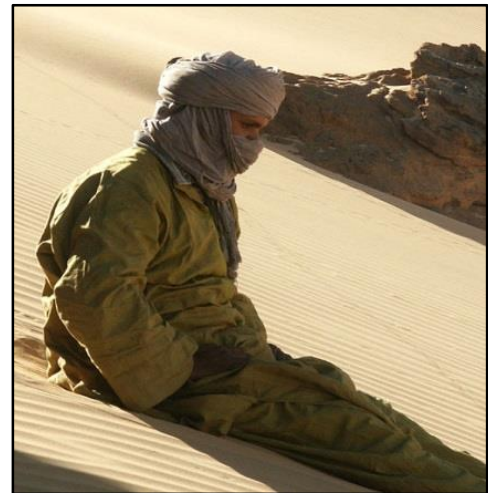
Notable historical Arab figures (Source: Wikimedia)

The Berbers

The Berbers, a culturally distinct people indigenous to North Africa, have lived for thousands of years in communities from the Siwa Oasis in Egypt's western desert to the Atlantic Ocean.¹³⁷

Berbers live in Morocco, Algeria, and, to a lesser extent, Libya and Tunisia.¹³⁸ Many Berbers call themselves *Amazigh*, which means “free man or the free born,”¹³⁹ they speak a language called *Tamazight*.

With the Arab Islamic conquest into North Africa, Berbers were introduced to Islam as well as to significant cultural change.¹⁴⁰ Centuries of exposure to the politically dominant Arab culture has lessened the Berber's own culture, language, and tribal laws.¹⁴¹ Many urban Berbers have adopted Arab customs and speak Arabic; however, this is not so much the case for rural Berbers.¹⁴²



A Tuareg Berber (Source: Wikimedia)

The Tuareg tribes living in the Sahara are of seminomadic people of Berber origin who speak *Tamasheq*.¹⁴³ They once controlled the caravan trade routes across the Sahara.¹⁴⁴

Tuareg are often called “the people of the veil” or the “the blue people of the Sahara,” in reference to the distinguished blue veil and turban worn by the Tuareg men, which is a statement of their identity and culture.¹⁴⁵

The Tuareg Berbers live in southern Algeria and Southwest Libya. However, beyond North Africa, Tuareg also live in Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, and Nigeria.¹⁴⁶ Tuareg culture will be further discussed in detail in the Chapter 7 Case Study.

Egyptian and Sudanese Ethnic Groups

Egyptians are a relatively homogenous ethnic mix who have evolved over thousands of years.¹⁴⁷ They are comprised of Egyptian Arabs (around than 98 percent), Africans, Turks, Romans, Greeks, and descendants of European crusaders.¹⁴⁸ Other minorities such as Berber nomads populate the Siwa Oasis in the western parts of the country, while *Nubians* cluster in southern Egypt around Aswan.¹⁴⁹ A small minority of *Beja* reside in the eastern desert east of Aswan, between the Nile River and the Red sea.¹⁵⁰



Egyptian women (Source: Wikimedia)

In Sudan, the majority of Sudanese people are Arab-speaking Muslims divided into numerous tribal groups. The *Beja* live near the Red Sea and are ethnically similar to Egyptian *Beja*.¹⁵¹ Other Sudanese groups include the *Fur*, *Zaghawa*, and *Masalit*, who live in Darfur in western Sudan.¹⁵² The *Nubians* inhabit the northern parts of Sudan and are an extension to *Nubians* of Egypt.¹⁵³ In South Sudan, the non-Arab, Christian and animist Dinka, and Nuer are the dominant groups.¹⁵⁴

Ethnic-based Conflicts – Darfur

North Africa has experienced a significant number of ethnic conflicts, many of which are ongoing. Recent or past impacts of these conflicts remain fresh in the minds of ethnic groups who have been most negatively affected. Marines should be aware of recent or ongoing conflicts in the region, because they could have a direct operational impact to units deployed to the area.

Darfur, which means the land of the ethnic group *Fur*, is in western Sudan, and has been embroiled in armed conflict over land, water, and grazing rights.¹⁵⁵ This dispute has pitted nomadic Arabs against farmers from the *Fur*, *Massaleit*, and *Zaghawa* communities. In 2003, two non-Arab groups, the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), accused the government of Sudan of neglecting the region, and took up arms against the government.¹⁵⁶



Map of Darfur (Source: Wikimedia)

The government in Khartoum launched a military attack on Darfur and supported the *Janjaweed* to put down the insurgency.¹⁵⁷ The killing of 400,000 people, the displacement of 2,500,000 refugees from their homes,¹⁵⁸ and the rape of countless women precipitated world-wide scrutiny and protest.¹⁵⁹

In July 2007, the U.N. Security Council voted to send about 26,000 peacekeepers to Darfur to protect civilians.¹⁶⁰ In recent years, violence in Darfur has decreased, but tensions have increased between the *Berti* and the *Zaghawa* groups over land ownership.¹⁶¹

The Janjaweed is a paramilitary group composed of nomadic Arabic-speaking tribes who live in Darfur, western Sudan, and eastern Chad. In the Darfur conflict, they are funded by the Sudanese government against the JEM and SLM. The name “Janjaweed” is thought to mean “man with a gun on a horse.”¹⁶²

Abyei Conflict

The disputed Abyei area -- which covers desert, farmland, and oil fields -- is located along the ill-defined borders between Sudan and South Sudan, and has been an area of contention in the Sudans for over 50 years.¹⁶³



Map of Abyei (Source: Wikimedia)

Disagreement over the use of grazing lands in Abyei is the root of tensions between the Arab *Misseriya* in Sudan and the African *Ngok Dinka* in South Sudan. Abyei has always been the homeland of the *Ngok Dinka*, which is a tribal group with close ethnic, cultural, and linguistic ties to the *Dinka* ethnic group of South Sudan. On the other end, the Arab *Misseriya* is a group of herders with strong ties to the northern nomadic Arab tribes of Sudan who travel seasonally to Abyei to trade goods and graze their cattle. Sporadic rainfall and industrial farming in Sudan’s Southern Kordofan region have exacerbated tensions between these two groups, causing the *Misseriya* to rely more on important pastures in Abyei.¹⁶⁴ The dispute area also happens to be rich in petroleum. Eager for the potential oil revenue, North and South Sudan took sides in the conflict.¹⁶⁵

Sudan and South Sudan signed a peace agreement in 2005 to end two decades of civil war. The agreement granted South Sudan the right to hold a referendum that resulted in South Sudan becoming independent on 9 July 2011. The agreement also granted Abyei the right to hold a final status referendum on whether to be part of Sudan or South Sudan. This referendum was supposed to have occurred concurrently with South Sudan’s referendum; however, the referendum never took place.¹⁶⁶

Religion

The major religion of North Africa is Islam.¹⁶⁷ The vast majority of North Africans are Sunni Muslim; the remaining people are either Jewish or Christian, but mostly Christian (especially in Egypt).¹⁶⁸

Egypt's Copts constitute 10 percent of the population.¹⁶⁹ These people endured increased animosity from militant Muslims during Hosni Mubarak’s era, and continue to be targeted since the 2011 civil uprisings.¹⁷⁰

Jewish communities have existed for centuries in North Africa. However, in the last century many Jews were forced to leave. Much of this diaspora settled in Israel or Europe.¹⁷¹

North Africa also has a small minority of the Baha’i faith followers.¹⁷²

“**Sunni Islam:** accounts for over 75% of the world's Muslim population. The name comes from *Abi Al-Sunna wal Jamma’a* which means “people of the Sunna and the community.” It recognizes Abu Bakr as the first caliph after Mohammed. Sunni has four schools of Islamic doctrine and law - Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi’i, and Hanbali - which uniquely interpret the *Hadith*, or recorded oral traditions of Mohammed. A Sunni Muslim may elect to follow any one of these schools, as all are considered equally valid.”¹⁷³

Country	Adherents
Algeria	Sunni Muslim (state religion); 99%; Christian and Jewish, 1%
Libya	Sunni Muslim, 96%; Christians, 2.7%; Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, and other, 1.3%
Morocco	Muslim 99% (official); Christian, 1%; Jewish, about 6,000 people
Tunisia	Muslim, 99%; Christian, Jewish, and other, 1%
Egypt	Muslim (mostly Sunni) 90%; Coptic and other Christians, 10%
Sudan	Sunni Muslim; small Christian minority
South Sudan	Animist; Christian
Western Sahara	Muslim

Source: CIA Factbook¹⁷⁴

Islam

Understanding the main concepts and practices of Islam will assist you in understanding the culture and practices of North Africans.

Founded in the early seventh century in the Arabian Peninsula by Muhammad ibn Abdullah, Islam is believed to be the third of the monotheistic Abrahamic faiths. Islam teaches that there is one God, “Allah,” and Mohammed is his messenger – the final, the ‘seal’, of all religious prophets, starting with Abraham.¹⁷⁵ The name “Islam” is derived from the word meaning “submission,” and obedience to God is a primary theme in this religion.¹⁷⁶

The Qur'an is the central book (scripture) of Islam. Muslims believe that the Qur'an is the final divine revelation of God, as revealed to Prophet Mohammed by the angel Gabriel over a period of 23 years.¹⁷⁷ Along with the Sunna, the Qur'an provides spiritual and practical guidelines (*sharia* or Islamic law) for leading a Muslim way of life.¹⁷⁸



Muslims' holy book the Qur'an (Source: Wikimedia)

Mohammed ibn Abdullah ibn Abd al-Muttalib ibn Hashim, (AD 570-632)¹⁷⁹

Qur'an (English pronunciation): *al-qur'ān*, literally meaning "the recitation." The Qur'an contains 114 chapters, which are known as *surah* in Arabic. Also, the Qur'an is sectioned into 30 equal parts known as *ju'uz*, which makes it easier for Muslims to read the Qur'an over the course of a month.

Sunna the word Sunna means path or habitual practice in Arabic, the conduct and the way of life of Muslims based on the sayings, teachings, and practices of the prophet of Islam Mohammed.¹⁸⁰

Hadith: record of the collection of traditions containing sayings of the prophet of Islam Mohammed.

There are two major sects in Islam: Sunni Islam, which accounts for over 75 percent of all Muslims; and Shi'a Islam, which comprises 10-20 percent of all Muslims, followed by other minor sects that include Druze, Ismaili, and Alawite.¹⁸¹

Both Sunni and Shi'a sects agree on the fundamentals of their common faith, but each sect fervently believes that its own path is the truest approach to the divine.¹⁸² Both primary sects of Islam "split over religio-political leadership dispute about the rightful successor of Mohammed," following his death.¹⁸³

Sufism and *Salafism* are the two most significant Islamic movements in North Africa; they emphasize different aspects of Muslim doctrine and practices.¹⁸⁴

The Muslim faith is based on the five *Pillars of Islam*:

The testimony of one's Faith (*shahada*)

Prayer (*salat*) five times a day

Giving Alms (*zakat*)

Fasting during Ramadan (*sawm*)

A pilgrimage to Mecca (*hajj*)¹⁸⁵

Shi'a: the name is shortened from the historical name *Shi'a-t-Ali*, which means the followers of Ali Ibn Abitalib or the party of Ali Ibn Abitalib.¹⁸⁶ Shi'a Muslims believe Mohammed's cousin and son-in-law, Ali Ibn Abdi Talib, was the only divinely ordained *Imam* (religious leader), while the Sunni Muslims maintain the first three successive 'Rashidun' caliphs after Mohammed were also legitimate authority.¹⁸⁷

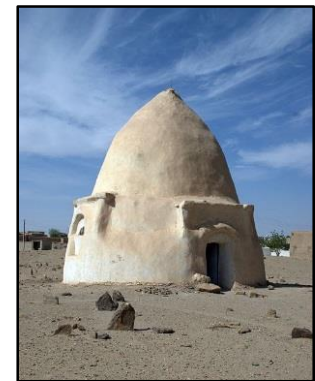
Shahada: saying “there is no God but Allah, and Mohammed is his messenger”

Zakat requires giving 2.5% of savings (wealth) to the poor.

TIP: Be mindful in the presence of Muslims during Ramadan: do not eat, drink, or smoke in the presence of Muslims; nor should you offer Muslims these things at this time of fasting. Be aware that Muslim workers are sometimes less productive during Ramadan, so do not plan a large project during this time.

Islamic Religious Movements: Sufism

The word Sufism or *Tasawwuf* derives from "*suḥ*" which refers to the woolen clothes the *Sufis* wear to show their devotion to a mystic life.¹⁸⁸ Sufism is not a branch or sect of Islam; rather, it's the inward-looking and mystical aspect or dimension¹⁸⁹ of Islam that exists in both Sunni and Shi'a sects.¹⁹⁰ A member of these groups is called *darwish* or *darwish*, which means someone who gives up earthly issues to seek a personal relationship with *Allah* (God).¹⁹¹



Sufi Wali Tomb in Sudan
(Source: Wikimedia)

The Sufism movement developed in the late eighth century AD,¹⁹² and it focuses on the esoteric and hidden meanings of the Qur'anic revelations, as opposed to the literal interpretation.¹⁹³ Sufism is centered on the personal and emotional religious experiences of the individual.¹⁹⁴ Historically, Sufism is organized into a number of different brotherhoods or mystical orders,¹⁹⁵ known as *turuq*/*tariqah*, which literally means path.¹⁹⁶ Each order or *tariqah* has its own religious rituals, and saintly and hereditary leadership structure.¹⁹⁷ The leader of each order is known as the sheikh or *pir*, supposedly a descendent of the Prophet Mohammed. Sufi sheikhs and saints are believed to possess *barakah* (“blessing” or “charisma”).¹⁹⁸ The Sufi sheikhs’ positions are usually hereditary and passed from father to son.¹⁹⁹

Sufism mixes mainstream rituals of Islam such as prayers with other spiritual practices. It aims at a mystical union of the individual Muslim believer with God through lengthy prayer while performing physical and spiritual movements. One of the most popular Sufi rituals is called *ḥikr* or *dhikr* (“remembrance” of the divine) where chanting and praising of God’s attributes take place while dancing. This dancing is performed by whirling dervishes. This is significant because according to Sufis *dhikr* is often deemed more important than the sharia.²⁰⁰ For all these reasons, Sufis have historically quarreled with other Muslims, particularly *Salafists*, who place greater emphases on sharia.²⁰¹

Some of the well-known orders are the *Mevlevi* order of whirling dervishes founded by Rumi in the 13th century,²⁰² and the *Rifa'i* order. It is worth mentioning that in 2005 the UNESCO declared the *Mevlevi sema* or whirling ceremony a World Intangible Culture Heritage. Also, honoring Rumi’s 800th birthday, the UNESCO declared 2007 the Year of *Mevlana* and Tolerance. Sufism is divided into hundreds of different orders, or *turuq* across the Islamic world.²⁰³ Some of the dominant orders or *turuq* in the region are: the *Tijaniyah*, *Mirghaniyah* in Sudan, *Sanusiyyah* in Libya, and *Aḥmadiyah* and *Badhamiyah* in Egypt.²⁰⁴

Islamic Religious Movements: Salafism

Salafism and the term **Salafi** or **Salafist** is derived from the Arabic word *Salaf* or *al-Salaf as-salib* which refers to the Islamic “pious predecessors” or “forefathers,” “ancestors, specifically of Mohammed’s time”—who are considered by the movement examples to be followed by Muslims. Salafism, therefore, seeks to restore Islamic practices in the way they existed at the time of Mohammed and the early three generations of his followers.²⁰⁵

In contrast with Sufism’s mystical, cryptic approach which exists in both Islamic sects (Sunni and Shi’a), the Salafi movement is an ultra-conservative movement within Sunni Islam only that embraces puritanical religious interpretations and views. Salafism believes that Muslims drifted away from the core principles of Islam set by the Prophet Mohammed and Islam’s early followers; therefore the movement seeks to purify society by encouraging believers to return to these principles. Salafism stresses the importance of the principle of *tawhid* (the oneness of God)²⁰⁶ and follows an apparent meaning and strict interpretation of the Qur’an and the Sunna and Hadith. It views the Qur’an and Hadith as the essential sources of Muslim beliefs and practices and regards *al-Salaf as-salib* as the guiding instrument to understand Islam and purify society.²⁰⁷ Salafists also believe every decision made in daily life should be supported by religious precepts.²⁰⁸ Salafism rejects *ijtihad* (independent legal reasoning), *ijma’u* (consensus), and *taqlid* of *madhib* (school of jurisprudence)²⁰⁹ in Islam and any form of traditional or moderate teaching and man-made laws, and instead embraces a literal interpretation and application of sharia.²¹⁰ This directly contradicts the Sufism perspective of a mystical union between the believer and Allah.

Roots of Salafism emerged at first as an intellectual movement led by Mohammed Abduh, an educator; Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, a political activists; and Rashid Rida Islamic scholar, at Al-Azhar University in Egypt in mid to late nineteenth century. The movement intended to create social and political reform through preaching *da’awa* and education where it acknowledged and admired Western technologies and advancements. However, Salafism evolved over the years and strayed away from its original reformist seeds planted by Al-Afghani, Abduh and Rida. At some point segments of the movement merged with the *Wahhabi*’ doctrine of the Arabian Peninsula under the reign of King Faisal of Saudi Arabia (born 1906- died 1975) during the 1960s. *Wahhabism* was founded by Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1703-1792) in the eighteenth century and was adopted by the early leaders of Saudi Arabia.²¹¹ Like Salafism, Wahhabism emphasizes the principle of *tawhid* (monotheism) and seeks to purify Muslim society of any Western influence and *bid’a* (innovations). It is worth noting that Wahhabis identify themselves as *mumabidun* (monotheist or Unitarians) and consider the term Wahhabi to be derogatory and a form of *shirk*, idolatry (polytheism).²¹²

Experts in the field have divided Salafism into three groups: the purist ‘Quietist Salafists,’ who dismiss politics, do not oppose rulers, and focus on non-violence preaching or *da’awa*, (a primary activity of the Wahhabis in Saudi Arabia). Meanwhile, the ‘Activists Salafists’ are involved in politics and participate in modern political processes and elections. The Muslim Brotherhood and its branches are within this second group. The third group is the ‘Jihadi Salafists,’²¹³ represented by terrorist organizations such as Boko Haram, al-Qaeda, and the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) also known as the Islamic State in Iraq and Levant (ISIL).

Overall, Salafism rejects Western (European-American) modes of thought, values and social organization, particularly the concept of a secular state, elections, and democracy. Many Salafists

however embrace science and technology, but stress that they must be used in conjunction with Islamic values. They insist that sharia (Islamic Law) is the solution to social problems.²¹⁴ The Taliban, Boko Haram, al-Qaeda, and more recently ISIS networks exemplify the *jibadi Salafism* doctrine.²¹⁵

The difference in theological and political views was the catalyst behind countless attacks in different parts of the region by Salafist Jihadist groups. They destroyed tombs and shrines of Sufis saints in Libya,²¹⁶ Egypt,²¹⁷ and Tunisia.²¹⁸ In Sudan, there have been violent clashes between the Salafi *Ansar al-Sunnah* and Sufis, during the Sufis celebration of Mohammed's birthday. Salafis consider these practices to be a form of idolatry.²¹⁹

Christianity

The strategic location of North Africa, especially Egypt and its proximity to the Levant and Israel where Christianity started, helped significantly in the spread of Christianity during the first century A.D.

It is believed that the Christian communities in North Africa are among the first in the world.²²⁰ Christianity flourished in North Africa until the seventh century A.D, when Islam arrived in the region.²²¹

In the nineteenth century, the colonization of Africa by European powers²²² introduced western missionaries to the region who, through proselytization, created a Christian resurgence.²²³ During the colonial period, the British sponsored Protestant missions; the French and Portuguese sponsored Catholic missions.²²⁴ Western missionaries were popular in the Sahel because they tolerated local beliefs and customs.

Today, African Christian groups maintain strong ties to Europe and the Americas; many native Africans serve in Christian clergy and leadership positions. Schools and education programs established by foreign missionaries contributed to the spread of Christianity in Africa.²²⁵ Because Christians believe that it is important to be able to read the Bible, mission schools have taught French or English. In some cases, missionaries have developed written forms of native languages to make religious books more accessible to native users.²²⁶

Animism

Animism is the second-largest religion practiced in North Africa. Animists believe that the universe contains three worlds: the past, present, and future.²²⁷ These are parallel worlds that cross each other. Animists or "traditional believers" tend to seek harmony between these worlds.

There are no animist holy texts, nor official places of worship. Instead, the rituals are considered part of their ethnic identity. Each ethnic group has its own creation story, creator-god, spirits, and rituals.

Beliefs in witchcraft, sorcery, and magic are evident in this region. Though specific rituals and beliefs vary across tribes, the Mai-Mai movement depicts a society rooted in animism. Child soldiers recruited into the Mai-Mai militia believed that they could repel bullets after being anointed with protective water by a witch doctor. Mai-Mai fighters also believed that other projectiles fired at them would turn into water.

Animism is a communitarian concept meaning that when the community suffers or benefits from the consequences of one person's actions. The ancestors are also believed to be participants in the present world and can also pass on good or evil to the community. Elements of the rituals practiced have influenced Islam and Christianity in this region.

“Because traditional religions permeate all the departments of life, there is no formal distinction between the sacred and the secular, between religious and non-religious, between the spiritual and the material areas of life...Where the individual is, there is his religion, for he is a religious being. It is this that makes Africans so religious: religion is in their whole system of being...What people do is motivated by what they believe, and what they believe springs from what they do and experience. So then, belief and action in African traditional society cannot be separated: they belong to a single whole.”²²⁸

Religious Holidays

Families and local communities celebrate religious holidays. The largest religious event is **Ramadan**. Eid al-Fitr follows and marks the end of Ramadan. Muslims gather early in the morning in outdoor locations or mosques to perform Eid prayer. This consists of a sermon followed by a short congregational prayer. After the Eid prayer, Muslims scatter to visit family and friends, give gifts which is called *Eidia*, especially to children, and make phone calls to distant relatives to give well-wishes for the holiday.

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. It is time for self-control by abstaining from food, drink, smoking, and sexual relations from dawn to sunset.

Eid al-Adha is the other main holiday, which takes place over three days and celebrates what Muslims believe as the sacrifice of the Prophet Abraham's son Ismail.

Friday is the Muslim holy day when *Jumu'ah* prayers take place. Muslims pray in congregation in **Masjids or Jami'e (mosques)**.²²⁹ Mosques are sacred places; in some countries, non-Muslims are not allowed to enter a mosque.

In North Africa, Christians and Jews freely celebrate their religious holidays, however there is no public celebration or acknowledgement in these celebration in most of the North African countries.

Masjids or Jami'e (mosques) are Muslim places of worship and prayer. If you are permitted to visit a mosque, women must cover their head and men and women should wear modest dress. You are required to remove your shoes upon entering the mosque. Do not walk in front of someone who is praying inside the mosque because some Muslims feel this implies that you would prefer them to bow down before you than to God.

Christian holidays celebrated in the North Africa are:

- Christmas
- Easter

TIP: Military personnel in North Africa do not work on most major holidays in the host nation, especially those that observe national independence or Islamic religious events. You should be aware of the celebrations in your operating area, and plan training and operations accordingly.

Languages

Except for South Sudan, where the official language is English, Arabic is the official language of Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Sudan, Tunisia, and Western Sahara. A variation of Arabic dialects is spoken in each country. Egyptian Arabic is widely understood due to Egypt's strong media influence in the region through their popular films, music, TV programs, and other media.

Inhabitants of the Maghreb speak *Darja*. This form of Arabic frequently uses French, Spanish, Italian, Berber's *Tamazight* words, and -- more recently English. Despite these diverse linguistic influences, *Darja* strictly applies Arabic grammatical rules.²³⁰

The Sudanese speak Arabic, as well as several Nubian dialects; Ta Bedawie; Nilotic dialect; NiloHamitic;²³¹ and a multitude of minor Sudanese languages. It is estimated that there is about 100 distinct indigenous languages spoken in Sudan.

Arabic

Be aware that there is a significant difference between written, formal Arabic-influenced by the Qur'an, and spoken North African vernacular.

Hassaniya Arabic in North Africa originated from the arrival of the Bedouin tribe Banu Hassan during their expansion movements. This dialect is spoken by a few Bedouin tribes and other minorities in parts of Morocco, Algeria, and Western Sahara.²³² The ancient Berber (*Amazigh*) language, the *Tamazight*, also has presence in northern Africa, particularly in Morocco, Algeria, and -- to lesser extent -- in Tunisia and Libya.²³³ Following a referendum in 2011, the *Tamazight* language became official in Morocco.²³⁴

TIP: Recognizing the languages spoken in North Africa will assist you in determining the right interpreter for the mission. Verify the dialect spoken in the area of operation before hiring an interpreter.

French is Common

Due to colonialism and Europe's proximity, many European languages are spoken in the region. In Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia, French is the common formal language used for business, diplomacy, education, and government. However, in Algeria, the strong movement towards "Arabization" resulted in the declining usage of French, particularly in education and media broadcasting.²³⁵

In northern Morocco, Spanish is heard occasionally,²³⁶ and Italian is still spoken in the big cities in Libya, especially among the older generation.²³⁷

English Language

English is taught in schools across the region; as a result, younger North Africans are often able to speak at least some English. In Egypt, Marines can expect most educated and upper class Egyptians to be fluent in English.

In contrast, because of the Islamic movement in Sudan, English is being phased out of the curriculum in most Sudanese public schools. Although it is still used in Sudan, it is not as widely spoken as it was 20 years ago.

While English is the official language of South Sudan, about 150 indigenous African languages are spoken there too,²³⁸ such as Dinka and Nuer.

Vignette: Language as Symbolic Signaling

In parts of North Africa, native speakers of Arabic make a conscious effort to speak French with authorities or foreigners, in order to indicate their education and credibility. Even if that person's knowledge of French is clearly deficient, he/she will use it whenever possible, dropping words of it into their Arabic, or switching back into it if the other speaker uses Arabic—even if that fluent Arabic speaker is a foreigner who knows no French.

In these cases, it is not the subject of the communication that drives use of French; rather, the North African person is signaling status, outlook, and, to an extent, group membership. If a Marine knows this, he might be able to accord his North African counterpart the status and treatment that would make him positively inclined to the Marine.

This would be particularly true for Marine interactions with Tunisian (or Algerian) military officers, for example. While one might be inclined to study Tunisian Arabic before an exchange visit with the Tunisian military, by using that dialect with a Tunisian officer, a Marine might in fact communicate what would appear to be an assumption that the Tunisian was uneducated or uncultured. The Marine might also communicate that he himself was uneducated, and unworthy of the Tunisian's time. So in this case, learning some French, and using it with military counterparts from an Arabic-speaking country, would be an appropriate verbal symbol of the Marine's status, education, and the positive value he/she puts on working with the Tunisian military.²³⁹

Family Structure

Many marriages in North Africa are arranged by the bride and groom's parents. Families and matchmakers continue to bring together most North African couples. However, more urbanized, middle-class, young people are now meeting their own partners at work, at play, and at school; in these instances, couples simply ask their respective parents to bless the union.

Urbanization, smaller families, financial and economic issues, and the growing social trend of marrying later in life, have all contributed to some drastic changes in traditional North African home life.

Nuclear families now outnumber extended families living in the same household. However, kinship ties remain strong. In Egypt, for example, extended families not only gather together frequently; if they live in the same city, they often live in the same apartment building.

Multi-generational families in Libya and Sudan continue to live near the home of the family's patriarch.

Bedouins, on the other hand, who live in the Libyan Desert and in Egypt's western desert, camp in groups comprised of relatives related to the father. A large central tent belonging to the family patriarch and his unmarried children is surrounded by tents housing his married sons and their families.

The Tuareg, a non-Bedouin desert people of Berber origin, live in goatskin or palm fiber tents. Tuareg women are solely responsible for maintaining the tent that shelters their family.²⁴⁰ In this society, which centers on the mother's lineage, men are considered to be guests in the homes of their wives.



Tuareg family (Source: Wikimedia)

The traditional nomadic Sahrawi women of Western Sahara also rule the tents and play a major role in the tribal education of their children.²⁴¹ They manage their communities during the frequent absences of their men (who go off to trade or fight) and are consulted on all major community decisions.

Family – Divorce

Divorce is quite common in the Muslim countries of North Africa, but Tunisia is the only country in the region where both sexes receive equal treatment under the law.²⁴²

In the past, many North African men were not required to go through secular legal proceedings and could simply have an Islamic official send a letter of repudiation to their spouse. Even today, most women can petition the courts for divorce only under very limited circumstances.

In general, women in North Africa avoid initiating divorce proceedings unless it is extremely necessary; this is because divorced women are stigmatized.²⁴³

Cultural Norms and Rituals: Marriage

The cultural norms of North Africa are a blend of Arab Berber, European colonial, and other cultures. Local traditions have fused with foreign ones, and old customs have mixed with modern ways to make North Africa's culture truly dynamic. According to Islamic law, *mahr* [ma-her], is usually paid to the bride by the groom at the time of marriage.²⁴⁴

Although wedding traditions vary from country to country, painting henna on the bride's hands is common across North Africa. In Sudan, married women maintain henna designs in their hands and feet; this distinguishes them from single women. North African wedding rituals include pre- and post-wedding celebrations and dinners that can last for weeks.

Mahr is a dowry or a gift from the groom to the bride at the time of marriage in Islam. It is paid in order to confer honor and a respect to the bride, and to show that the groom has a serious desire to marry her.

TIP: If you happen to be in Moroccan Atlas Mountains and have time available in September, you might want to check out the *Imilchil Moussem* festival. It will offer you an insight into Berber folkways and marriage rituals.

Once a year, people living in the Atlas Mountains of Morocco undertake a pilgrimage to the village of Imilchil for the celebration (or *moussem*) of its patron saint, Imilchil.

The Imilchil Moussem takes place in September and is held in a massive *souk* (marketplace) where, in addition to the religious festivities, 30,000 or more Berbers gather to sell and trade their possessions. The *moussem* is also the occasion of a unique engagement fair, which is believed to have been started when officials during the colonial era insisted that Berbers assemble once a year to register births, deaths, and marriages.

After Morocco claimed independence, the tourist office encouraged the continuation of the festival. Contrary to popular belief, very few of the engagements here are prearranged. The unmarried women arrive in ceremonial garb and they spend time flirting and getting to know the available men during the festivities and dances. Many of them already know each other. Near the end of the *moussem*, the engagement ceremonies begin and several new marriages are arranged simultaneously.

This ceremony has, in more recent times, received a lot of tourist attention, which has detracted from the ceremony's authenticity.

Initiation Rites and Rites of Passage

North African rites of passage go beyond the typical birthday parties, sweet sixteen, and Bar Mitzvahs. A significant rite of passage for every Muslim is the pilgrimage to Mecca. Muslims are urged to make the pilgrimage to the holy places of Mecca and Medina, located in Saudi Arabia. Both the departure and return are celebrated; a returned pilgrim is addressed as *Hajji*, meaning someone who has performed the sacred pilgrimage. Respect and status are communicated in many ways in the region, therefore the title hajji reflects a sign of respect.



A Muslim U.S. Marine in Mecca (Source: Photo by Cpl. Kenneth Jasik; DIVIDS)

Circumcision as a Rite of Passage

Male circumcision is a religious requirement for both Muslims and Jews across North Africa. The age at circumcision varies from country to country and region to region. The event may be celebrated by a large party with hundreds of guests.

In urban areas of Egypt, Morocco, and Tunisia, members of the upper and middle classes are adopting the Western traditions of early circumcision shortly after birth, followed by a small party.

The practice of female circumcision still occurs in some areas of the Sudan and Egypt. It is generally not practiced in the rest of North Africa, except in few pockets of Bedouins living in Libya.

Muslims in this region mistakenly believe that the Qur'an mandates Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). This practice is not an Islamic one, but an African tradition that originated in Egypt and dates back several thousands of years with the intention to inhibit promiscuity and ensure virginity.²⁴⁵

Both Coptic Christians and Muslims in Egypt circumcise their girls and it is usually done before their first menstrual cycle. According to a 2005 study by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 96 percent of Egyptian women aged 15-45 who had never been married reported that they had been circumcised.²⁴⁶ FGM continues in Egypt, in spite of the Grand Mufti's pronouncement that it is prohibited by Islamic law.²⁴⁷

Tuareg Rites of Passage

At the age of puberty, a Tuareg boy enters the realm of manhood when he wears the blue head covering given to him by his father. After this, he is no longer considered a boy, though he probably will not marry until he is close to thirty years old.

Dress and symbols

Few generalizations can be made about North African women and dress. Some women are fully covered, while others do not abide by Islamic norms regarding modesty. In North Africa, Muslim norms of modesty are reflected in both men's and women's clothing, which generally covers the body and legs. Many older men will also wear hats, such as the red Moroccan fez.



Young Tuareg Man wearing the blue turban (Source: Wikimedia)

Today, most urban men in North Africa wear Western-style clothing. Business people, bankers, and diplomats tend to dress in the latest fashions. Women, both in the city and in rural areas, usually dress conservatively in clothes that cover the majority of the body. Many women wear veils, *hijabs*, and head scarves. Class and status are sometimes apparent by the quality of the fabric. The Tuareg people are easily identifiable by their indigo blue robes and male head coverings.

Family-Migration and Remittances

Since the early 1980s, the number of North Africans who migrate to other countries in search of work has dramatically increased. The four million Moroccans, Algerians, and Tunisians working in Western

Europe regularly send home remittances totaling billions of dollars.²⁴⁸ The billions remitted annually by Egyptian workers in the Gulf States constitute one of Egypt's largest sources of foreign currency.²⁴⁹

This cash infusion enables families to pay for food, clothing, and home improvements. The absence of husbands in everyday decision-making has made wives more assertive. The migration of young men has displaced the burden of caring for the elderly onto fewer shoulders. In short, the impact of migration and money on North African family dynamics is significant and growing.

Kinship Networks

In North Africa, it is not as important what you do for living, but who you are and who you know that gets results. North Africans take comfort in being part of large extended families; they turn to each other for help in finding a spouse and caring for needy or elderly relatives. Their social lives revolve around visits to other family members, who readily offer warm hospitality and food.

Extended families cooperate economically. In fact, it is not only expected but considered a privilege to hire relatives or to recommend them to business colleagues. Nepotism is not viewed with as much disdain as it is in the United States. It is known as *wasta*. In fact, family loyalty is valued more than any other social responsibility.

Economic support from kinfolk is not always based on money transfers; Libya's nomadic Bedouins deliberately arrange marriages between distant kin who live far apart (as opposed to the region-wide preference for first cousin marriages.) This ensures that if drought should strike an area where a family group has encamped with their herd, in-laws will extend a welcome invitation to water and graze the animals in a wetter area.

Gender

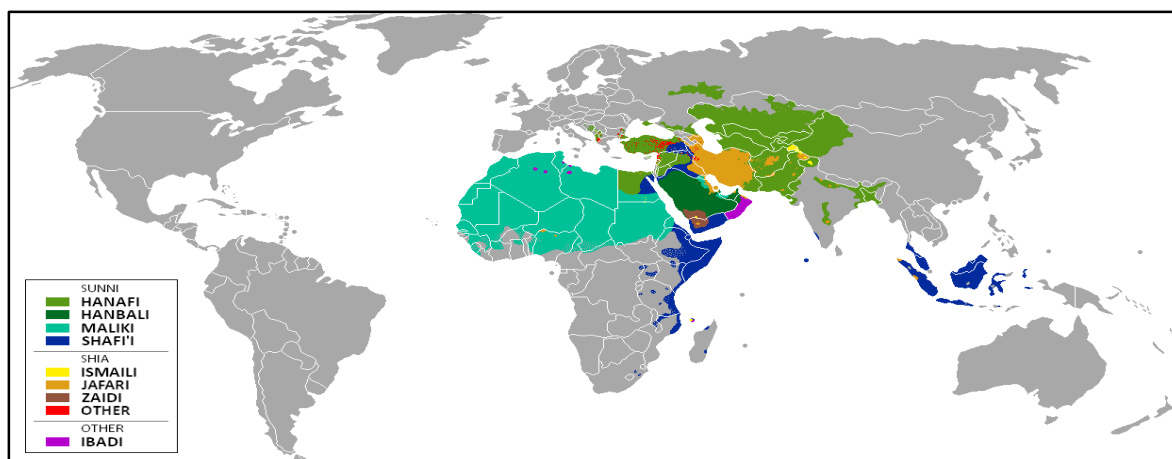
Traditional Male, Female Roles

Most interpretations of the Qur'an do not preclude Muslim women from working outside the home (albeit with their husband's permission); in most instances, women also have the right to own and dispose of property as they wish, and to obtain an education.

In many areas of North Africa, however, local cultural attitudes prevail. Men are expected to be breadwinners and a wife's employment in publicly visible job is seen as a sign of his failure to support his family. As a result, many women tend to leave the workforce soon after marriage, particularly after the birth of their first child.

Religion, Law and Gender Equality

Many North African countries have a mixed legal system. In that system, family and inheritance law follow Islamic law, while other legal codes (such as international trade and criminal law) may be based on European models.



The distribution of the predominant Islamic school of law (madhhab) followed in majority-Muslim countries and regions (Source: Wikimedia)

North African family law has historically been based on the *Maliki school of fiqh/religious law* (school of jurisprudence), which is the tradition of legal interpretation of Islamic *sharia*.²⁵⁰ This *fiqh* tends to give women fairly more rights, especially regarding divorce, than other Islamic schools of law. However, Egypt follows more than one school of *fiqh*: while *Maliki* is prominent in Upper Egypt, *Hanafi* and *Shafi'i* also exist in other parts of the country.²⁵¹

Some of women's rights in North Africa, according to the particular school of *fiqh*:

- Men may marry up to four women, but the first wife may have the right to divorce if her husband takes a second wife.
- Women also have the right to divorce which is called (*Isma*) on the basis of abandonment or the failure of the husband to consummate the marriage.²⁵²
- As with most Islamic legal systems, women inherit half as much as their male relatives.
- Men have the right to divorce their wives for any reason or for no reason simply by uttering the word for divorce, *Talaq*, three times; a wife has the right to request divorce only in a court of law where she has to provide a proof of particular claims.²⁵³

Algerian family law, based heavily on Islamic codes, requires that every woman have a male guardian.

The decision to divorce remains a husband's privilege, except in limited cases. Even after these laws were revised in the early 2000s, women remain legally disadvantaged. Men retain custody of their children, and they have the right to marry as many as four wives.

Women may not travel abroad without their husband's permission.

Algeria passed legislation to increase women's representation in parliament; in the May 2013 Algerian elections, women won almost a third of parliamentary seats.²⁵⁴

Like nearly all other Muslim women in the North Africa, Egyptian women do not enjoy the same marital, divorce, and child custody rights as men. For instance, only Egyptian men have the right to pass on Egyptian nationality to their children.

Although Libyan men and women are guaranteed equal treatment under the law, family law decisions are still influenced by traditional practices.²⁵⁵

In 2005, the Moroccan parliament passed legislation that affirmed the country's commitment to gender equity. Moroccan women can now pass their nationality on to children who have non-Moroccan fathers. Furthermore, a minimum of 10 percent of the seats in the Moroccan parliament are reserved for female delegates.²⁵⁶

Tunisia stands out among North Africa's Muslim nations, as the government has promoted gender equity for decades. Tunisian women may initiate divorce; polygamous marriages are prohibited.²⁵⁷

While many countries in the region are revising their legal codes in order to conform more closely to international standards of gender equality, the process has been slow and uneven.

Domestic Violence and Human Rights Abuses

Domestic violence against women is a serious concern in North Africa. There are few laws that deal with domestic violence, and women are reluctant to bring charges against their husbands for spousal domestic abuse.²⁵⁸ Indeed, many North Africans believe that wife beating is explicitly permitted by Islamic law.

It has been reported that one-third of Egyptian women have been assaulted by their husbands.²⁵⁹ **Honor-killing** is estimated to be in the hundreds every year in Egypt.²⁶⁰

Honor-killing: Premarital sex is strictly forbidden. A girl who loses her virginity outside of marriage brings great shame to her family's reputation which might lead to a family member killing her. This is NOT a religious practice; an honor killing in every country of North Africa is considered murder.

Moreover, Human Rights Watch estimates that thousands of girls from Morocco's rural areas, start working as early as eight years of age. Girls perform this work in order to help their families financially. However, young housekeepers often encounter physical and verbal violence, and many must work seven days a week. Additionally, these underage workers are often poorly paid and are seldom encouraged to attend school.²⁶¹

Gender Based Social Network

With the exception of some young, university-educated urbanites, most North African men and women live parallel social lives. Even at wedding feasts, men and women almost always sit apart. The world of women is home-centered, while men congregate in public places.

Women tend to socialize with other female relatives and friends in each other's houses or apartments, eating and chatting while they knit, embroider, or dance to traditional Arab music.

In Morocco, women meet in public bathhouses (*Hamam*), but men and women go at different times of the day. The *Hamam* is a very important part of Moroccan culture and life. Men, women, and children visit their local *Hamam* at least once a week, spend a few hours there with their friends, and cleanse their bodies until their skin glows.²⁶²

Men socialize with their male relatives, friends, and former classmates in neighborhood streets, shops, and restaurants. Many business deals are cemented in the convivial, steamy atmosphere of public baths.

Men also join athletic clubs and teams, especially in urban areas. In the evenings, they gather at cafes to play cards and smoke water pipes. Moroccan men often go to movie theaters; few theatres are open to women.²⁶³ Urban professionals also network by joining a national association.

In all North African countries, syndicates of teachers, doctors, lawyers, and agricultural officials lobby on behalf of their members.

Status: Religious Affiliations

Millions of North African men belong to religious organization known as Sufi brotherhoods. In Egypt, it is estimated that out of the country's 90 million population, there are 15 million Sufi members who belong to a Sufi brotherhood.²⁶⁴

Sufi brotherhoods provide men with social and business contacts that can enhance their status in the community. *Sharifs*, Libyan tribesmen who claim direct descent from the Prophet Mohammed, are esteemed as holy men and enjoy high status in Muslim society. The Moroccan royal family similarly claims descent from the Prophet.

Healthcare

Healthcare is available to most people in the region to varying degrees. Factors such as the nature of the illness, the availability of facilities, and confidence in the type of doctor, determines whether a family may choose medical professionals or a traditional healer.

Healthcare services vary throughout North Africa, but most medical services and hospitals are adequate, especially in urban areas. However, the quality of healthcare often lags behind western standards, particularly in rural areas.²⁶⁵ Additionally, systematic corruption, both small and large, in the healthcare system aggravates the situation. People often opt to pay a bribe in order to receive health care. This is mainly due to the low wages of both doctors and nurses²⁶⁶

Most countries in North Africa have both a public system, usually financed by the government and run by the ministry of health in that country, and a private system, financed by private insurance policies and out-of-pocket.²⁶⁷ However, the fragmented and crippled coverage has resulted in the growth of private financing healthcare.²⁶⁸

Egypt has a very complex healthcare system, as public health entities, NGO and faith-based charities, as well as the private health facilities, make it possible for larger coverage and accessibility to health service. Despite the existence of a universal coverage mandated by the government, 50% of the total health expenditure comes from out-of-pocket at the point of service.²⁶⁹

Libya has an efficient, comprehensive, and free healthcare coverage to all citizens through numerous public health entities and hospitals. In addition, private health care is also available, albeit to a lesser extent.²⁷⁰

Morocco faces the problem of inadequate healthcare staff, from doctors to nurses, as many of the qualified medical professionals who graduate from Moroccan schools immigrate to Europe for better job opportunities.²⁷¹ Moreover, a lack of up-to-date medical equipment and cutting-edge medicine has undermined the quality of Moroccan healthcare. Only 30 percent of Morocco’s 33 million people have health insurance coverage.²⁷²

Conversely, Algeria’s health sector is well-staffed and the government provides free medical care to children, the elderly, and people with low incomes. The Algerian system was introduced in the 70s,²⁷³ however only 80 percent of its population has access to health services.²⁷⁴

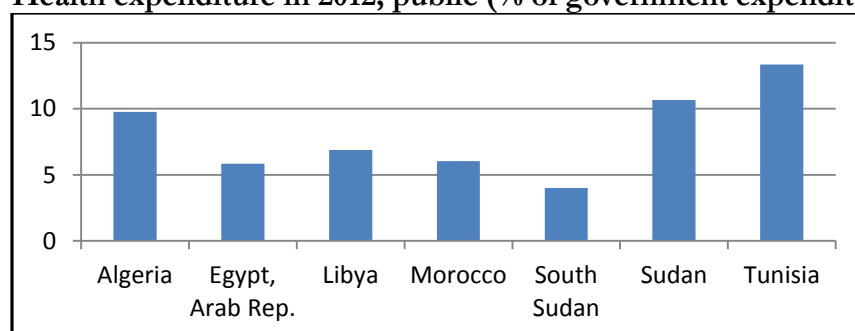
Healthcare systems in Sudan include a public healthcare system, a semi-public system funded by health insurance), and a private healthcare system. However, internal conflicts, international trade sanctions, and erratic oil revenues have had a significant financial impact on all three systems.²⁷⁵

Tunisia’s health system operates with modest resources, but it is considered efficient, effective, and has one of the best health systems in North Africa.²⁷⁶ The Tunisian government is working to reform its publically-available health insurance system so that it includes standard coverage for basic health services.²⁷⁷ About 90 percent of Tunisia’s citizens have access to health insurance and services, which is a higher rate of coverage than Morocco and Algeria.²⁷⁸ However, the quality and availability of Tunisian health services varies, depending on patient income and whether the care is delivered in an urban or rural part of the country.²⁷⁹

The fact that not everyone in North Africa has access to basic health services was a key trigger for the Arab Spring uprisings that swept the region in 2011. Moreover, the continued instability and conflict in the region has sent many migrants into neighboring counties, thereby burdening the health systems of countries that have accepted these refugees.²⁸⁰

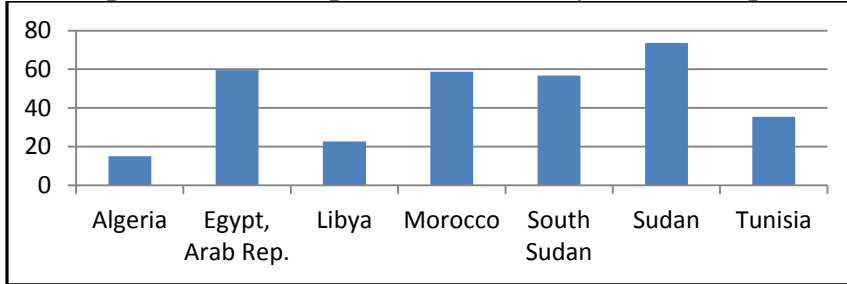
Rural clinics are few and far between, and often the numbers of medical professionals and available hospital beds are limited, even in cities. People living in rural areas still depend heavily on midwives, healers, and traditional medicine; they also may not have access to professionally trained personnel.²⁸¹ Also, women make up the larger part of the medical professionals, since a majority of North African women prefer women to be treated by their own gender, particularly for health issues specific to females.²⁸²

Health expenditure in 2012, public (% of government expenditure), World Bank (2014)



Note: Expenditures for healthcare delivered in the Western Sahara are included within the data for Morocco.

Out-of-pocket health expenditure in 2012 (% of total expenditure on health), World Bank



Note: Expenditures for healthcare delivered in the Western Sahara are included within the data for Morocco.

Education

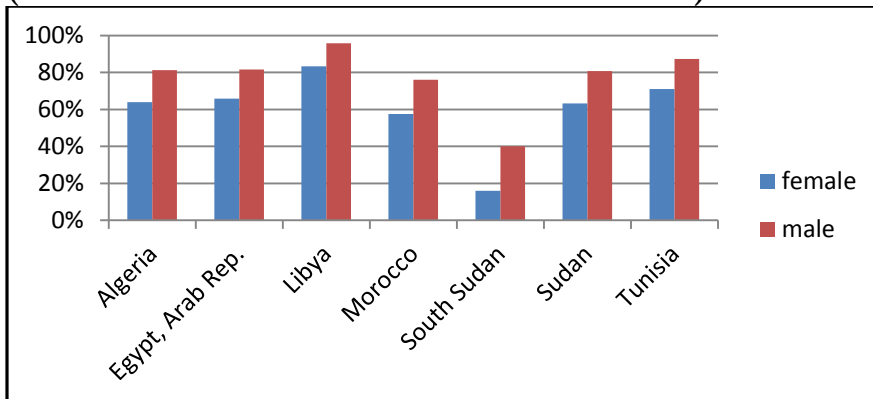
The North African countries are doing a better job educating their children. Education is now largely free and compulsory through the 9th or 12th grades. High-scoring graduates are eligible to go on to college, at little or no personal expense.

Education is available to most people in the region to varying degrees, and it has reached far more North Africans than 50 years ago. However, because of cultural bias, girls may have less access to public education, particularly in rural areas. The quality of higher education in North Africa is improving, and literacy is also increasing. Among your counterparts, it is safe to assume they have at least some education and, possibly, a college or graduate degree.

While children have always been highly valued in Arab society, traditionally only boys were educated in order to thrive in the world outside the family. Girls were expected to prepare themselves for life as homemakers. Now, in most North African countries, girls remain in school almost as long as boys. The literacy gap between the sexes is also narrowing, while the rate of literacy is increasing dramatically for both genders.

While South Sudan’s 27 percent literacy rate is one of worst in the world,²⁸³ Libya leads the region with the highest literacy rate, 89 percent, with Tunisia, Egypt, and Algeria are not far behind.²⁸⁴

Literacy rate difference between male and female in North Africa (Source: CIA Factbook) (Western Sahara’s data is included within Morocco).



Higher Education

Higher education is flourishing in the region. In Algeria, there are more than 30 colleges, including state-funded institutes for technical, agricultural, vocational, and teacher training.

Egyptian high school students with good grades can enroll in a university, and there are plenty available.

Higher education has been expanding dramatically in Libya. This is the product of a government initiative to offer Libyan citizens the technical expertise to replace foreign medical doctors and engineers.

The United States, through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), offers support to the education sector in the region through programs that enhance primary and higher education programs.²⁸⁵ However, youth unemployment remains high in the region, and has been one of the main triggers for ongoing civil revolts. This is basically due to the weak quality of learning, the lack of the technical skills within the education system, a lack of employment initiatives, and a scarcity of planning programs that meet the needs and demands of today's workforce.²⁸⁶

Many challenges face the education system in this region. In South Sudan, for instance, about a million children are still not in school, especially in poor rural areas. Overcrowded and inadequate classrooms also bring down the quality of education in South Sudan.²⁸⁷

Status: Education

Education is highly valued in North Africa. Even low-income Egyptian families try to provide their children as much education as possible, since knowledge is thought to be the key to upward mobility. Also, the inability to speak French brands a Tunisian or Moroccan as lower class. However, well-spoken French is no longer a mark of social prestige in Algeria.

Government and Politics

Why Government and Politics Matter to You as a Marine

Most people live in states governed by formal and informal institutions. Marines need to know how power and authority are distributed in the state by studying the formal and informal structures of governments in the region. In addition, Marines need to understand how people, groups, and institutions exercise power and authority, in other words, what comprises politics in the states.

Political Systems

The ethnic and cultural diversity of the region has helped to sharpen the region's political systems and national identities.

The newest country in the region is South Sudan, which gained its independence in 2011.

A majority of the countries in North Africa gained independence in the 1950s and early 1960s. However, except for South Sudan, most current nation-states were created by colonial rulers in the nineteenth century.²⁸⁸

Following independence, most North African states were ruled by autocratic regimes governed by one political party or ruling family. Examples of these autocratic regimes are Libya, Egypt, and Tunisia. The region is also known for states dominated for decades by military rule; these include Egypt, Libya, and Sudan. Most of these military regimes seized power through coups.

All of these repressive regimes imposed tight restrictions on freedom of speech, press freedoms, and political rights. Many of these governments harshly treated Islamic political movements²⁸⁹ and Western-leaning progressives.

The tight grip on power by most of the region's governments ignited a social and civil movement in 2011, which started in Tunisia. Protesters who rose up in the "Arab Spring" called for regime change, political freedom, and equal rights.

With the exception of Morocco, which is a **constitutional monarchy**, all the other North African countries are republics. Defined simply, a republic is a "representative democracy in which the people's elected representatives vote on legislation."²⁹⁰ However, the term "elected representative democracy" does not necessary mean that the political systems in these countries are democratic. For

decades, until the 2011 uprisings, most of these countries were burdened with aging corrupt regimes. What followed after the “Arab Spring,” unfortunately, was civil unrest, political upheaval, and economic chaos.

A constitutional monarchy is system of government in which a monarch is guided by a constitution whereby his/her rights, duties, and responsibilities are spelled out in written law or by custom.

Following the 2011 “Arab Spring,” autocratic regimes in Egypt, Libya, and Tunisia were replaced with Islamic-leaning parties. In Egypt, however, the Muslims Brotherhood ruling party was overthrown in July of 2013 with the help of the Egyptian military.²⁹¹

The countries of North Africa have incrementally tiered government, starting at the top with the national leadership, and descending to the towns and villages. Typically, there are three tiers, with states or provinces at the top, county-like districts in the middle, and town or village councils at the bottom.

Each tier of these sub-national governments usually has both appointed and elected officials, giving them at least a semblance of local democracy. However, each tier is usually presided over by an appointed governor or mayor who owes his job to higher-ups in the national government.

Nationalism

The concept of nationalism refers to the feeling of national kinship and belonging based on shared values, culture, and beliefs and usually translates to an identity.²⁹² Although there have been several social and political events in North Africa that led to the development of a number of nationalistic movements, Arab nationalism remains the most prominent.

The main factor that binds North African countries and the Arab world in general is their perceived Arab identity, which is mainly built upon their shared Arabic language, and secondarily to the overwhelming preponderance of Islam as the primary religious force.

Islam as a bonding aspect in North African countries exists via two primary facets: Arabic is the language of the Qur’an (the holy book of Islam), and the Prophet Mohammed was an Arab. This makes the two identities (ethnicity and religion) intertwined. While there have always been non-Muslim minorities in the Arab world, their culture has often been determined by the tribal and Islamic way of life.

One of the earliest accepted rallying points of Arab nationalism was the Arab revolt encouraged by Britain and France against the Ottoman Empire instigated during World War I.

Later, a general and stronger sense of identity and nationalism emerged under colonial rule following World War II. This eventually led to independence for most of the Arab countries during the 1950s and early 1960s, and extended beyond that period during Gamal Abdel Nasser’s pan-Arab popular nationalism wave.²⁹³

However it must be understood that prior to, and concurrent with, the rise of Arab nationalism, many sub-state, ethnic, sect, and tribal loyalties also competed with the wave of Arab nationalism and -- later

-- with the Islamic identity wave.²⁹⁴ An example of persistent tribal loyalty that overshadows national identity (despite decades of authoritarian rule) is Libya's tribal conflict following the fall of Muammar al-Qaddafi.²⁹⁵

Another aspect of North Africa history that gives this region an identity distinct from the rest of the Arab world is the long and pervasive legacy of French colonialism.²⁹⁶ This is particularly true of the Maghreb, a region that stretches from Morocco to Libya, and has always been perceived as different – not quite Arab, and not quite African.²⁹⁷

Overall, the region's Arab nationalism, or national identity, has been historically contested by other non-Arab ethnicities and cultures which pre-existed the Arab conquest. This is especially true of the Berber identity, which is defined by language and culture. Although many Berber chose to assimilate under the Arabization wave, the vast majority maintained their own cultures traditions, and language, such as the Amazigh and Tuareg, who will be discussed later.



Algeria Soccer team 2014 (Source: Wikimedia)

The conflict of North and South Sudan offers another example of people with a strong ethnic identity resisting Arab influences: Sudan has always maintained an Arab and Muslim identity, as opposed to South Sudan's African Christian identity. These opposing identities eventually led to the latter's independence from North Sudan in 2011.

There are other supporting factors that nourish the Arab national identity, such as soccer. A good example is Algeria's participation in the 2014 World Cup games played in Brazil, which generated a sense of pride and Arab patriotism across the entire region.

Rule of Law

At one time, most North Africans saw the police and the legal system as no more than a tool of their autocratic overseers.²⁹⁸ However, countries that experienced the so-called "Arab Spring" are currently undergoing institutional and constitutional reforms aimed at meeting popular demands for change, freedom, justice, and government accountability.

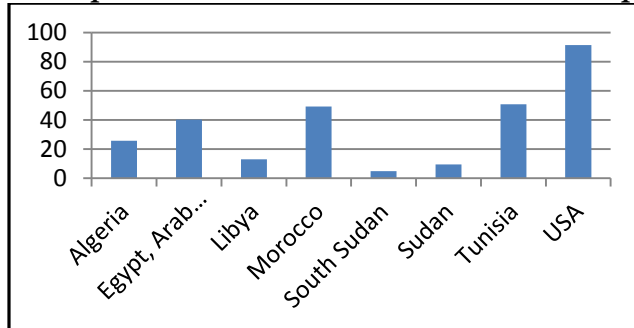
Although some of the 2011 uprisings created instability and disorder, these civil uprisings placed almost all of the countries in the region on a path to building efficient and accountable government systems. This is evident especially in Tunisia.²⁹⁹

In Egypt, following the uprisings, the state of the country's rule of law was questioned by international human rights organizations, due to the behavior of interim military rulers. Military courts were trying civilians, prisoners were reportedly tortured, and detained female protesters were subjected to "virginity tests" without legal grounds.³⁰⁰ These incidents, incidentally, were no different from the way former Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak's regime had handled civilian protesters. Mubarak was subsequently put on trial for committing the same crimes as the interim military rulers.

Meanwhile, rule of law in post-revolutionary Libya is facing serious challenges from increased criminal activity, unsecured borders, drug and weapons smuggling, and illegal migration. The Libyan

government has no control over many areas, which have fall into the hands of armed groups affiliated with various tribes.³⁰¹

The following is a rule of law indicator in the region in comparison to the United States. Zero corresponds to the lowest rank and 100 corresponds to the highest rank.



Rule of Law indicator for North Africa vs U.S., 2012 (Source: World Bank) (Western Sahara is included within Morocco's data)

Note: Rule of Law is generally assessed across multiple categories, from government transparency and corruption to fundamental rights, order and security, and civil and criminal justice.

Countries in the region that did not have a civil uprising, such as Morocco, initiated constitutional reforms to quell public discontent. Morocco witnessed tangible improvement as a result of making the government more open and accountable.³⁰²

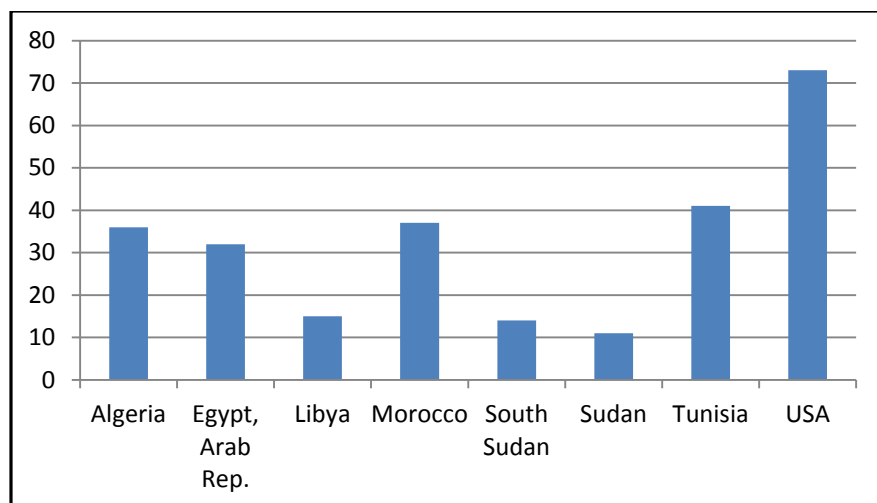
One of the most prominent and revolutionary aspects of Morocco's reformed constitution is the embracing of the Berber culture as an essential part of the Moroccan social fabric, and the recognition of *Tamazight*, the Berber language as an official language.³⁰³

Corruption

Corruption and injustice are entrenched in the political culture of the region's countries; they are among the major instigators of the 2011 civil uprisings. It will probably take some time to see the complete elimination of these two endemic issues, nor will North Africa enjoy true rule of law in the near future.³⁰⁴

The 2013 Transparency International Perception of Corruption Index ranks countries and territories based on how corrupt a country's public sector is perceived to be. A score below 50 indicates a serious corruption problem.

The following chart is the corruption indicator of countries in the region, compared to the United States. According to the chart, Libya, Sudan, and South Sudan are the most corrupt states. Tunisia is the least corrupt among the region's countries. However, the other remaining countries in the region all present higher-than-average corruption indexes.



North Africa Corruption Perception Index (Scores range from 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean) (Source: Transparency International, 2013)

Freedom of Press

Autocratic regimes in North Africa at one time used strict media control to hold on to power, restrict the flow of information, and to manipulate and influence public perception.³⁰⁵ However, following the civil uprisings of 2011, a sizable amount of freedom was granted to journalists and the press.

What made press freedoms more attainable was the free flow of information through social media platforms, which in fact was one of the critical tools used by protesters across the Middle East to mobilize people in joining the wave of this civil uprising.

Although the 2011 civil uprisings brought about the long-awaited change in the region, it created instability and chaos. Journalists were among the groups that were targeted by the violence of armed militias and non-state actors in place such as in Libya.³⁰⁶

Meanwhile, in Egypt and after the ousting of Mubarak, the Muslim Brotherhood movement headed by President Mohammed Morsi took power and started controlling the state-owned media by implementing the movement's own ideologies and agenda.³⁰⁷ Moreover, the 'new constitution,' that was drafted under the rule of the Muslim Brotherhood, did not guarantee freedom of expression or the independence of state-owned media. This was a time when physical attacks against journalists continued to be an issue.³⁰⁸

Following the overthrow of Morsi by the Egyptian army, led by General Abdul Fatah al-Sisi, in July 2013, journalists, including Arabs and foreigners, perceived to be pro-Muslim Brotherhood or even sympathetic to them, were targeted, banned, harassed, and jailed.³⁰⁹

Economic Overview

Why Economics and Infrastructure Matters to You as a Marine

The goods and services that people exchange, the infrastructure that people use to move them, and the formal and informal structures that make exchange possible, all play critical roles in survival. A thorough understanding of a region is impossible without knowledge of its economy. This is because the region's political, social, and cultural trends both reflect and shape economic developments and trends.

Nature of Economic Systems

Due to its natural resources and its proximity to European markets, most North African economies rely on global trade and have major trading partners from other regions. Increases in the North African population have created a labor pool that exceeds the number of available jobs. This scarcity of work has triggered a migration from rural areas to cities, and the movement of North Africans to Europe. In addition, a large informal economy exists throughout the region.

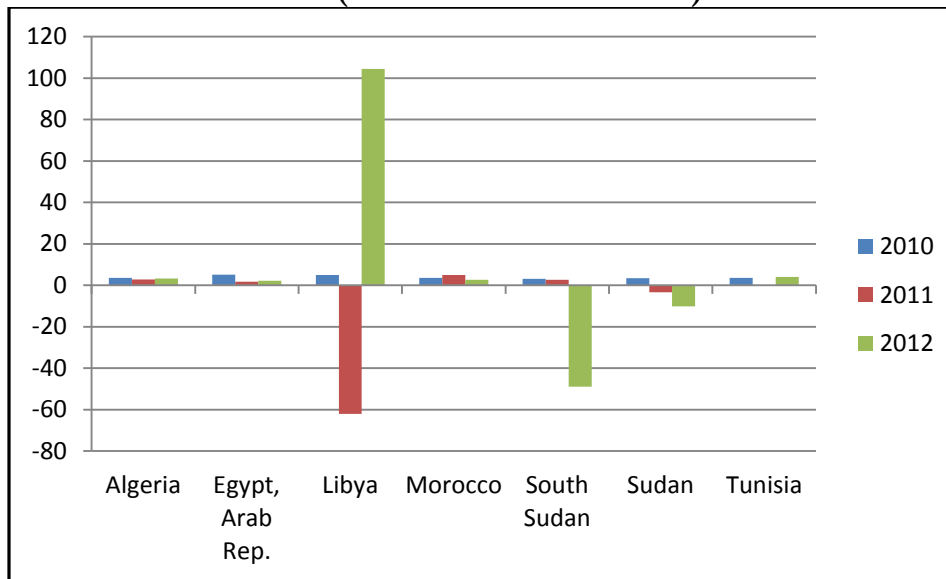
The Effect of Political Upheaval on Economics in North Africa

The 2010-11 civil uprising created a challenging economic situation for Egypt and Tunisia. The rioting in Morocco and Algeria also created growing economic uncertainty. Morocco is facing tough economic decisions, and Libya's greatest challenge in the near-term is the effective management of natural resources and wealth.³¹⁰

Sudan's economy sank into recession following the independence of South Sudan in 2011. The split effectively ended the flow of hard currency to Sudan from South Sudanese oil exports, which had previously accounted for 75% of pre-independence oil output.³¹¹ The following chart shows the gross domestic product (GDP) growth in the region in recent years.

There is a substantial contrast in Libya's GDP between 2011 and 2012 after the civil uprising. This is mainly due to the fact that Libya's economy is structured primarily around the energy sector, which generates about 95% of export earnings, 80% of GDP, and 99% of government income.³¹²

GDP Growth 2010-2012 (Source: World Bank Data)



Natural Resources

The countries of North Africa have a variety of natural resources. Oil and, increasingly, natural gas have been the biggest booms to some North African economies, particularly Libya and Algeria. Egypt, a modest producer of oil, relies on oil output to generate export revenues. While Tunisia's small supply of oil helps offset portions of its petroleum imports. Libya's oil exports make it one of the strongest economies in Africa, contributing about 95% of export earnings, and 60% of public sector earnings.³¹³

Oil and Hydrocarbons

Algeria's hydrocarbons sector is the economic backbone of that country, accounting for roughly 60% of budget revenues and over 95% of export earnings. Sustained high oil prices for many years, along with policy reforms, helped Algeria to decrease its debt and build up foreign exchange reserves.³¹⁴ With no major oil and gas resources of their own, Morocco and Western Sahara, and, to some extent, Tunisia, have had to adjust to energy price increases from their neighbors.

Sudan's oil production and exports have become significant since October 2000. However, after the secession of South Sudan, North Sudan lost 75% of its oil production revenues, and, therefore, its status as oil producer.³¹⁵ Sudan owns a pipeline and refineries that process oil from South Sudan on its way to foreign markets.³¹⁶ Almost immediately after South Sudan gained its independence, the two countries were on the brink of war over oil transport fees owed to North Sudan. In 2013, the two countries reached a deal for exporting oil.³¹⁷

Agriculture

Although all North African countries import much of their food, agriculture remains an important sector of their economies, both for domestic consumption and for export. The number of people employed in agriculture varies by country.

Farmers constitute about 44 percent of the workforce in Morocco, 50 percent in Western Sahara, 32 percent in Egypt, 14 percent in Algeria, and 17 percent in Libya.³¹⁸

The region's principal crops are wheat, barley oats, citrus fruits, wine grapes, olives, tobacco, and dates.

Large numbers of livestock are raised in Algeria; this country is also an important producer of cork.³¹⁹ Agriculture

contributes less to the country's economy compared to mining or manufacturing.³²⁰



Egypt farms (Source: Wikimedia)

Most farms in Egypt are small and labor-intensive. The largest crop is cotton, a major export product, which is directly responsible for putting more than a million Egyptians to work in the textile sector.³²¹ Egypt also produces rice, corn, wheat, beans, tomatoes, sugarcane, citrus fruits, and dates. Cattle, water buffalo, sheep, and goats, Egypt also has a relatively well-developed fishing industry.³²²

In the rainy sections of northeast Morocco, barley, wheat, and other cereal grains can be grown without irrigation. On the Atlantic coast, olives, citrus fruits, and wine grapes are grown, largely with water supplied by artesian wells. Morocco also produces hashish, much of which is shipped to Western Europe. (About 70% of the hashish purchased in Europe comes from Morocco.)³²³ Agriculture contributes 15% to Morocco's GDP.³²⁴ Livestock, cork, cabinet wood, and building materials are also large Moroccan money-makers. Many people working in Morocco's maritime industry make a living as fishermen.³²⁵



Farming in north Sudan (Source: Wikimedia)

In Sudan, over 80% of the Sudanese work force is employed in the agriculture sector. The leading export crops are cotton, sesame, peanuts, and sugar. Sudan supplies much of the total world production of **Gum Arabic**. Fish is also an important dietary staple.³²⁶ Western Sahara's agricultural economy grows vegetables and fruits (notably dates), and raises goats, camels, and sheep. Coastal fishing also contributes to the economy of the Western Sahara.³²⁷ The coastal waters along the Western Sahara are known to be some of the richest fishing grounds in the world.

Gum Arabic is a natural and edible gum taken from acacia trees. It is used as an emulsifier to prevent sugar from crystallizing in fizzy drinks, as a thickener in confectionery products, and as a binder for drugs, cosmetics, and the glue behind postage stamps. Gum arabic is in high demand in many countries.

Industry

All North African countries actively exploit agricultural and natural resources to support manufacturing industries. Egypt has developed a large textile industry to process cotton, while Morocco produces leather goods from its livestock. Algeria and Tunisia refine and bottle olive oil, and Western Sahara (an area occupied largely by Morocco) has developed a huge phosphate mining industry.³²⁸ Despite this, much of the labor force throughout North Africa is underutilized and unemployed. Throughout most of the region, there still exists a large gap between rich and poor.

Suez Canal

Egypt controls the 163 km (101 mile) Suez Canal. The unique geographic location of the Suez Canal, connecting the Mediterranean Sea with the Red Sea, makes it a critical facilitator of international navigation and world trade. Many large ships (sometimes called “Suez-Max” ships) are specifically designed to pass through the Suez Canal.³²⁹



Sailors aboard U.S. Navy ship look at Egypt as they transit Suez Canal
(Source: Marine Corps Photos)

Tourism

Tourism has become an increasingly important economic industry in North Africa. Morocco and Tunisia are popular destinations, while Egypt and its Sinai Peninsula, for the most part, have always been a significant attraction. However, instability and political changes in Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt since 2010 have negatively impacted the tourism industry.

Political instability in Egypt and Tunisia have caused these countries to lose half of their tourism revenue; while Algeria, Libya, and Morocco have also become increasingly less attractive to travelers.³³⁰

The Tuareg of southern Morocco and Western Sahara are using their nomadic heritage as a major tourist draw. Tourists pay to visit “traditional” nomadic communities, which offer camel rides and other traditional experiences. This process helps the Tuareg preserve their cultural identity, while enabling them to retain economic independence from their governing areas.³³¹

Remittances

North African economies depend on the remittances of emigrated workers. When North Africans immigrate to Europe, they typically send a portion of their earnings back to their families at home. Many families subsist on this income. Remittances to Morocco are significant: in 2007, remittances reached over \$5 billion, making Morocco the fourth most significant remittance receiver in the world. The same year, Algeria received \$2.1 billion, and Tunisia received \$1.7 billion.³³²

Informal Economy

The informal economy is not limited to unregistered street vendors and tiny businesses that form the backbone of the marketplace in North Africa; they are casual or self-employed workers in industries as diverse as retail and construction.

The International Labor Organization (ILO) estimates that roughly 48 percent of the non-agricultural workforce in North Africa is employed in informal businesses. Women represent 43 percent of this group.³³³

The informal economy is a source of livelihood for the urban poor, who lack education and skills, many of whom come from the countryside. Precluded from enjoying basic rights and benefits of the formal economy, some workers are subjected to hazardous working conditions, and most lack employment and security guarantees.

The Black Market

The black market is an economic driver in some areas of North Africa, principally Sudan and Algeria. Today, with chronic youth unemployment reaching 27 percent, many young men become involved in the illegal sale of goods.³³⁴

The black market enables many Algerians to buy goods that they could not otherwise afford, or even find, in the poorly stocked stores. Those who trade in illicit goods run the risk of encounters with street gangs or with police officers, who routinely confiscate goods or demand bribes.

Patronage Networks

Patronage networks are a system of social relations with clear economic and political benefits (known as *wasta*). A patron extends public services, security and resources (such as wells, roads and medical centers) to his or her clients. In return, the client pays a fee or proffers support that helps legitimize the patron's elevated position.³³⁵

It was reported that more than half of Tunisia's commercial elites once had a personal relationship with former Tunisian president Zine El Abdine Bin Ali (1989-2011) through an extractive network known as "The Family."

In Egypt, a network was established through business connections with former President Hosni Mubarak's son Jamal Mubarak.

The *Mazken*, in Morocco constitutes a structured system of influence around the ruling monarchy's economic preferences and interests. Businessmen working with both the public and private sectors are part of this network.

In Libya, the family of Muammar al-Qaddafi directly appropriated oil income. In Algeria, rent-seeking strategies are also centered on the capture of hydrocarbon wealth by *le Pouvoir*, an opaque body of generals and politically-connected businessmen.³³⁶

TIP: Marines operating in the region are unlikely to be affected by this system of patronage primarily because they are outsiders. However, they may be exposed to situations where this system is in open display. Due to the sensitive nature of the topic, Marines are advised not to get involved in conversations about corruption with local military personnel or other people you encounter. Marines should be aware that there is a distinction between activities that are considered illegal (i.e. corruption) and those that are part of the patronage process.

Infrastructure

Land Transportation

Aggressive driving is the rule of the road in North Africa. The streets can be bad and the drivers worse. Urban motorways along the Nile and near the Mediterranean are congested and dangerous. Traffic law enforcement is spotty to non-existent. Throughout the region, buses and taxis have high accident rates, and driving one's own car is equally risky.

Travel by car within North Africa's major urban areas can be dangerous. Cars often must share the road with motorcycles, bicycles, pedestrians, donkey, and even camels. Drivers ignore lane markers-- if there are any-- and the frequent traffic jams can last for hours. Some of the newer highways provide excellent cross-country travel, but many narrow and winding rural byways are risky to navigate.

TIP: It is not uncommon for a taxi driver to pick up additional passengers en route, so expect to share the cab unless you expressly request to be the only passenger. (However, you may be expected to pay more for the solo taxi ride.)

Rules of the Road

There is little traffic law enforcement in North Africa, although the police and military in many countries often set up roadblocks for ID checks. Foreigners generally do not experience serious problems. However, North African police are known to hassle and detain local citizens with little provocation.

By North African standards, Egyptian roads are well-designed and well-maintained, but they are so crowded with poor drivers that the country's traffic fatality rate is one of the highest in the world.³³⁷ Sudan's roads are often merely dusty, unpaved tracks. In 2011, over 4,200 people were killed in traffic accidents in Morocco, a 12 percent increase from the prior year.³³⁸

Driving and Weather Conditions

Driving can be particularly hazardous during the winter rainy season, and, in the desert, sandstorms are a constant threat. Carjacking by bandits posing as police at phony checkpoints has been on the rise in Algeria.³³⁹



Map of Trans-Africa highways (Source: Rex Parry; Wikimedia)

Americans will discover a few pleasant surprises operating a vehicle in North Africa:

- Drivers in all countries drive on the right
- Gasoline is cheap
- Taxis and buses are generally safe

Public Transportation

All countries have bus service in and between cities, except Western Sahara. Inter-city transport by bus or long-distance taxis (called *louages*³⁴⁰ in the Maghreb) is generally not recommended. While government-run bus lines do connect towns and cities throughout the region, the service is generally unreliable, coaches are overcrowded, breakdowns are frequent, and accidents are common. As an alternative to dangerous urban streets, Cairo and Tunisia have well-patronized metro systems that opened in the 1980s with up-to-date subway cars and modern stations.

Railroads

Most North African countries inherited railroads that date from the colonial era. However, maintaining track and rolling stock can be a problem, much less modernizing and expanding a railway system while trying to keep pace with growing demand. Egypt leads the way in railroading with mostly standard gauge track. Libya has allowed its few rail lines to deteriorate and currently has no operating railroads. Sudan has many miles of track, but much of it is unusable, except for a line that connects Khartoum to Port Sudan on the Red Sea.

Algerian railroads connecting the coastal cities are largely used by freight carriers hauling ore from the interior. There are plans to reopen rail links – severed in the 1980s – between Tunisia and Morocco.³⁴¹

Morocco is modernizing a rail system that connects its largest cities. The Moroccan government also intends to enhance railroad infrastructure that facilitates the movement of phosphates out of Western Sahara.

Tunisia is also modernizing its rail system, which primarily serves the phosphate industry, in order to have it accommodate increased passenger traffic.

Western Sahara has the longest conveyor belt system in the world.³⁴² It spans over 60 miles and connects phosphate mines in the interior to coastal seaports.³⁴³

Water Transportation

Transportation by water is reliable where it is available. Nile steamers link riverside Egyptian communities with each other, as they do for the towns in Sudan on either side of Khartoum. The Nile is the only navigable river in North Africa. Public transport on the Mediterranean is safe and reliable, but mostly limited to cruise ships and ferries linking North Africa with European countries.

Sudan has a coastline on the Red Sea. Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, and Algeria all have a coastline facing the Mediterranean. Morocco



Nile Cruise ship (Source: CIA)

straddles the Strait of Gibraltar, and is the only country among the RCLF-designated North Africa region that has coastlines on the Mediterranean Sea and the North Atlantic Ocean.

Air Transport

Except for Western Sahara, all the countries of North Africa have national airlines with domestic and international routes. All have at least one modern international airport that can accommodate large, long-haul jet aircraft.

Fuel and Power

Except in Sudan, 95% or more of North African homes have electricity, with more homes in isolated villages gaining access to electricity every year through rural electrification projects.

Sudan has the greatest electrification challenges. In impoverished Sudan, only 35% of households have access to this basic modern utility.³⁴⁴ Residential electric service throughout the region generally matches the European standard of 220 or 230 volts at 50 Hz. Libya, however, also has a 127-volt, 50-Hz service.

In all countries except Libya, the two-pin, Euro plug will fit electric outlets.

Oil and gas are fuels most commonly used to generate electrical power.

Only along the Nile is there significant hydropower generation, which accounts for a fifth of Egypt's electricity and almost half of Sudan's electric supply.³⁴⁵

Water as a Major Resource

The Nile, whose annual floods deposit rich silt on farms along its shore, has been the main source of water for Egypt for millennia. However, completion of the Aswan High Dam in 1970 denied water to many inland areas of Egypt. In the meantime, Egypt's population continues to grow at a rate of 1.5 million per year (roughly the entire current population of Kuwait),³⁴⁶ while the quantity of water available from the Nile remains fixed.

Desertification, particularly in the southern reaches of the Nile, causes civil strife in Sudan. It is considered one of the primary causes of the Darfur conflict: desertification forced many herdsmen to move into agricultural areas in search of grazing land, leading to a conflict over scarce water with settled farmers. A third of Sudanese do not have access to clean water.

Libya's Great Man Made River

Libya, with no year-round rivers at all and a third of its people lacking reliably clean drinking water, is using its oil wealth to tap into ancient underground aquifers beneath the Saharan south. This water is then piped north to population centers along the Mediterranean. Libya's Great Man-Made River is the world's largest engineering project.³⁴⁷ Eighty-ton sections of 12-foot diameter pipe will carry seventeen billion gallons of water a day to the coast, enough to supply New York City with its daily water usage a dozen times over (New York City residents consumes 1.1 billion gallon per day.)³⁴⁸

Fresh Water Scarcity

Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, and Western Sahara all suffer a shortage of drinkable water. This shortage is due to desertification, limited rainwater, and ground-water pollution generated by waste dumped from poorly-regulated industries, improper treatment of municipal wastewater, and the runoff of agricultural fertilizers and pesticides.

The Maghreb countries have joined a cooperative effort to solve their fresh water woes. One answer may be desalinization of water from the Mediterranean. One drawback to this option is the increased pollution of coastal waters stemming from the use of oil and gas needed to power the desalinization process. In Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco almost eight in ten people have access to drinkable water.³⁴⁹

Communications

In recent years, cell phones, satellite television feeds, and the Internet have revolutionized North African communications. Digital communications have facilitated historic changes in these countries, and are transforming social traditions. Fast fiber-optic cable has largely replaced a majority of crumbling, copper-wire telecommunications networks in North Africa. However, governments routinely take control of these information systems to stifle freedom of expression.



Rooftops in Algiers covered with satellite dishes
(Source: CIA Factbook)

Cellular Phones

Almost all but the very poor can own a cell phone. Throughout North Africa, people can be seen on almost any street corner chatting away or snapping photos. Cellular service helps offset the lack of land line services in many parts of the region.

Cell phones have increased individual privacy because few governments in this region have surveillance technology sophisticated enough to monitor digital communications.

North Africa's mobile telecommunications sector is making a significant contribution to society and national economies. In 2011, mobile telephone industry contributed \$34.1 billion to the regional economy, which amounts to 4.9% of GDP.

In 2012, Tunisia, Sudan, Algeria, Morocco, and Egypt gained between \$1.75 - \$4 billion in mobile revenue. In addition, mobile services employed more than 630,000 full-time employees in 2011; the cellular telecommunications industry is projected to employ more than four million North Africans by 2025.

By the end of 2015, North Africa was expected to have more mobile-only Internet users than North America. Compared to the U.S., in 2012 Sudan had 45.32% Internet browsing by phone, compared to 7.9% in of American users.³⁵⁰

All North African countries use the internationally-accepted *Groupe Spécial Mobile* (GSM) standard for cellular communications. Competing cell phone carriers now offer 3G (third generation) mobile broadband service, which seems destined to rapidly become the standard throughout the region.³⁵¹

Internet

North African governments have intensively promoted the public use of the Internet. The cost to access the Web, though small, has excluded some users, but millions of people in North Africa now actively use the Internet.

It is believed that the Internet and its social media tools were effectively utilized for political mobilization during the civil uprising that swept North Africa in 2011. As an Egyptian activist explained it, “We use Facebook to schedule the protests, Twitter to coordinate, and YouTube to tell the World.”³⁵²



Sign during 2011 civil uprising Arab Spring for Facebook movement (Source: Government Printing Office)

Advanced telephone access and the availability of Wi-Fi is increasing Internet use throughout the region. For a small fee, the Web can be accessed at Internet cafes in almost all major cities, and home computer ownership is rapidly expanding. Egypt, Morocco, Sudan, Algeria, and Tunisia were among the top 10 Internet countries in Africa in 2012.³⁵³ Web access in South Sudan is limited to major cities.³⁵⁴

Television

Satellite television has brought internationally-flavored news and entertainment to North African countries that were once dependent on local newspaper and government-owned broadcasting stations. Egypt is a leader in providing content, such as movies, songs, and other entertainment, for its fellow North African countries.

Throughout North Africa, broadcast media includes national networks and a mix of government and private stations. Television and radio users in all the North African countries have the ability to enjoy programming from the Arab Satellite Communications Organization (Arabsat) and other satellite service providers.

Mass Media

Frequently, the media that you encounter – print, radio, television, the internet – is owned and controlled by the government. Journalists and citizens have been sent to jail for publishing information the government finds objectionable. Most North African governments fear independent journalists. They routinely ignore guarantees of press freedom in their constitutions, and use a variety of methods to control the content of mass media and the Internet.

Regional Security Issues

Why Regional Security Issues Matter to You as a Marine

A thorough understanding of a region is difficult without an account of its most significant security challenges. These challenges tend to affect not only relations between states in the region but also the behavior of its people and the choices they make. Regional security issues encompass a host of topics ranging from wars between states, to insurgencies, to organized crime, to weak institutions, to systemic corruption. Some of them involve violence, while others weaken states and societies and have the potential to turn low level conflicts into violent confrontations.

Introduction

This section discusses the regional issues with security implications facing the North Africa region. The security issues of North Africa are the result of the region's internal and external problems. The internal problems range from dysfunctional institutions and widespread corruption, to ethnic and economic problems which led to the mass civil uprisings that have swept the region since 2010. These internal problems are intertwined with external problems that are transnational in nature, such as armed groups, terrorist groups, illegal migration, and other criminal activities. In March 2013, U.S. Army General Carter F. Ham, formerly of U.S. AFRICOM, observed that "The flow of fighters and weapons from Libya to violent extremist organizations in northern Mali serves as one example of how political instability in one nation can have a profound effect across a broad region."³⁵⁵

U.S. AFRICOM, in coordination with interagency and international and African partners, continues to strengthen and build defense capabilities, respond to crisis, and assist in deterring and defeating transnational security threats to promote regional stability and protect U.S. national interests in the region.³⁵⁶ These security objectives are achieved through focused and sustained engagement and partnerships with African nations and regional and international organizations.³⁵⁷

This section identifies eight broad regional issues:

- Security challenges after the "Arab Spring"
- Post Qaddafi challenges
- Rise of marginalized groups
- The increasing power of terrorist networks
- Irregular migration
- Youth unemployment
- Territorial disputes

- Conflict-prone areas

Security Challenges after the Civil Uprisings

The most significant events in the recent history of North Africa are the civil uprisings. Collectively these uprisings are referred to as the “Arab Spring” or the “Arab Awakening.” These uprisings, which started with the Tunisian “Jasmine Revolution,” reshaped the North African political landscape and continue to affect countries across the region.

The self-immolation of **Mohammed Bouazizi**, a fruit vendor in Tunisia, precipitated a wave of civil uprisings. This led to political change across the region and the greater Middle East that toppled autocratic and aging regimes in Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt.³⁵⁸ However these uprisings left these countries in an ongoing state of chaos.

The main triggers of the “Arab Spring” uprisings were more social than political: People’s growing frustration led to mass protests against epidemic corruption, high rates of poverty and unemployment, lack of free elections and freedom of speech, and violations of political and human rights (or as people called it ‘lack of dignity’), to name a few.

These political transitions are very important to the future of these countries and to the region, and have had significant implications for regional security.

Today, in the wake of the “Arab Spring,” North Africa suffers from weak governments, crumbling economies, and porous borders.

Mohammed Bouazizi was a 26-year-old fruit vendor who set himself on fire on 17 December 2010 in protest at his treatment by the local authorities. His act became a catalyst for the Tunisian civil uprising also known as the “Jasmine Revolution,” and the wider so-called “Arab Spring.” Public outrage over Bouazizi’s death incited demonstrations and riots throughout Tunisia, a manifestation of broader discontent with social and political dysfunction within the country. The public’s anger prompted then-President Zine El Abdine Ben Ali to step down on 14 January 2011, after 23 years in power. The success of the Tunisian protests soon after inspired protests in several other Arab and non-Arab countries.³⁵⁹

Post-Qaddafi Challenges

Since the 2011 fall of former Libyan President Muammar al-Qaddafi, hundreds of militias have assumed the role of Libya’s *de facto* national police and army.³⁶⁰ These groups fought in the eight-month revolution that toppled Colonel Qaddafi; now, they have become a government unto themselves.

Most of these militias are geographically-oriented and identify with specific neighborhoods rather than specific ethnicity. But one example is the Misrata Brigade or the Misrata Union of Revolutionaries, which is based in the central city of Misrata. The Misrata Brigade encompasses more than 200 registered militias or what is known as revolutionary brigades and other ‘unregulated brigades’ under its umbrella.³⁶¹

However, there are other militias that are Islamist in nature and follow a radical ideology. A good example of this is “Ansar Al-Sharia in Libya,” which emerged officially in 2012 and is based in Benghazi.³⁶² Thought to be a local front for al-Qaeda, the group calls for the implementation of strict sharia law and is believed to be behind the September 2012 attacks in Benghazi that led to the burning of the U.S. consulate and the killing of U.S. ambassador to Libya Christopher Stevens.³⁶³

Though these militias were part of the efforts to oust Qaddafi, they have now become a “significant threat to the country’s security.”³⁶⁴

Libya's National Transitional Council (NTC) and post-Qaddafi governments have failed to bring these armed militias under state control. There are reports of rival militia clashes and revenge killings, as well as looting and robbery by gunmen against civilian residents.³⁶⁵

One of the most serious security threats in the region is the uncontrolled Libyan weapons that have been smuggled out of the country and sold on the black market and to militant groups in the Sahel region, south of the Sahara. The proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW) and other weaponry,³⁶⁶ such as portable surface-to-air missiles and the shoulder-fired missiles known as MANPADS (man-portable air defense systems), has become an alarming problem.³⁶⁷

Internally, Libya’s fighters refuse to put down their arms; instead, they use their arms as a negotiating tool in order to gain more influence and future benefits.³⁶⁸

As a broader and more regional dimension, Libya’s unsecured borders have helped create smuggling routes for these arms where they have found their way into the hands of different terrorist groups in the region. There are also reports that these weapons have crossed the Egyptian border to *‘Harakat Al-Muqawama Al-Islamiyya,’* or the ‘Islamic Resistance Movement (HAMAS) fighters operating in the Palestinian Gaza Strip.³⁶⁹

Libyan weapons are said to have been acquired by al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) through their links to drug dealers and gunrunners.³⁷⁰ Furthermore, according to experts in the field, there is a high possibility that these uncontrolled weapons could be smuggled to as far as Eastern Africa and end up in the hands of Al-Shabab, a terrorist group in Somalia, where the situation in the Horn of Africa has already deteriorated.³⁷¹

Rise of Marginalized Groups

Another pressing issue is the rise of historically marginalized groups in the rural areas, such as the ethnic Tuareg Berber in North Africa, and the Bedouin of the Sinai Peninsula. These groups have long-standing grievances against the former regimes, and now want to be fully included in the new political processes of their respective nations.

Tuareg

Tuareg are a seminomadic people descended from the Berbers who are indigenous to North Africa. Tuareg live in the Saharan parts of Niger and Mali, and in smaller communities in southwestern Libya, southeastern Algeria, northern Burkina Faso, and northern Nigeria.³⁷² The nature of their grievances relate mainly to under-representation in governments and militaries, societal shunning, and high rates of poverty.³⁷³

Tuareg started migrating to Libya for economic reasons following Mali and Niger's independence in 1960. Libya attracted more Tuareg in the 1980s when the Libyan President Muammar al-Qaddafi started recruiting them to join his pan-African Islamic Legion, which was to serve as the military cornerstone for his vision of united Muslim states in North Africa.³⁷⁴

Following several failed military campaigns, the Islamic Legion was disbanded and the Tuareg were eventually blended into the Libyan army under special brigades.³⁷⁵

When Qaddafi's rule was threatened by the 2011 Libyan uprising, he offered Tuareg rebels aid and shelter, and recruited them as mercenary fighters.³⁷⁶

After the fall of the regime, the Tuareg rebels returned to Mali with weapons looted from Libya – along with significant combat experience.³⁷⁷

In October 2011, a coalition of political factions, including the Tuareg from Libya, merged to create the Mouvement National pour la Liberation de l'Azawad (MNLA); the MNLA was to serve as a political military platform to continue their fight for independence from Mali.³⁷⁸ Simultaneously, a group of officers in the Malian government led a military *coup d'état* on March 21, 2012.³⁷⁹

MNLA-led fighters took advantage of the ensuing chaos to seize control of all of the major northern towns, subsequently declaring the secession of the region as the independent country of Azawad.³⁸⁰ In May of the same year, MNLA and the Ansar Al Din Islamic rebel group agreed to merge forces and establish an Islamic state. However, Ansar Al Din, backed by AQIM, soon after turned against MNLA and seized control of the territory.³⁸¹ This prompted French intervention to restore governance in Mali. U.S. AFRICOM has also provided support to the French and African-led international support mission to Mali.

Mouvement National pour la Liberation de l'Azawad (MNLA) (English Translation: National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad) is an apolitical and military organization based in Azawad, northern Mali.

Bedouin of the Sinai Peninsula

The chronic grievances of the Bedouin of the Sinai Peninsula resurfaced after the 2011 “Arab Spring.” The Egyptian Bedouins and Egypt authorities have disagreed for years over how to develop and govern the Sinai Peninsula.

Due to its strategic location, the Sinai Peninsula plays a major role in maintaining stability in the region. Essential to this stability is an amiable relationship between the Egyptian government and the local Bedouin population. The Bedouins' knowledge of the terrain and topography of the Sinai Peninsula gives them the upper hand in navigating the area and moving across the mountainous border with Israel.

The main complaint by the Bedouin is that they feel disregarded as part of modern Egyptian society, as many do not hold national identification cards and are more loyal to their tribal chiefs than the state. They do not have access to clean water or proper healthcare and they lack economic incentives

in their region, which force some of them to engage in illegal activities such as the trafficking of drugs, human beings, goods, and weapons -- within the Sinai Peninsula and across the border with Gaza.³⁸²

In recent years, Bedouins have increasingly trafficked African migrants into Israel; this situation eventually soured diplomatic ties between Israel and Egypt. Deteriorating relations between the two countries prompted Egypt to adopt a zero-tolerance policy for migrants transiting the country's borders, a decision that resulted in strong condemnation from international human rights organizations.³⁸³

The Increasing Power of Terrorist Network

The persistent threat of terrorism and radical Islamist movements represented by Al Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)³⁸⁴ remains one of the top U.S. concerns in the region. Furthermore, recent civil uprisings have emboldened many local terrorist groups to openly promote their militant ideologies.

For al-Qaeda, this rise in local militancy fulfills a vision of establishing a larger foothold in Africa. Al-Qaeda's expansion into North Africa, the Sahel, and West Africa was made easier by the collapse of security in the region, especially in Libya, as well as the availability of uncontrolled weaponry. In addition, Al Qaida has capitalized on the grievances of some marginalized groups.³⁸⁵

Since the fall of the Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in 2011, Egypt has witnessed an expansion of criminal activities and Salafist terrorist groups, as more al-Qaeda-linked jihadist groups have formed in the Sinai Peninsula.

Al-Qaeda in the Sinai Peninsula and its affiliate groups, Ansar al Jihad, the Mujahedeen Shura Council, and Jund al Sharia, have all emerged since the "Arab Spring." These groups carried out several attacks against Egyptian forces, border points, and the pipeline carrying Egyptian gas to Israel.³⁸⁶

In 2011, a terrorist attack on the border with Israel killed eight people. Meanwhile, on January 2012, the *Al Tawhid wal Jihad* group abducted 25 Chinese workers and used them as a ransom to free 5 individuals previously accused of attacks against tourism sites in 2004 and 2006.³⁸⁷ Following that, several abductions have taken place against Egyptian forces by the Bedouins and militant groups.³⁸⁸

AQIM is an Algeria-based Salafi Muslim-jihadist group and is a U.S.-designated Foreign Terrorist Organization operating in North Africa's Sahara and Sahel. The group originated from the **Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC)** in 1998. The GSPC was renamed in January 2007 after the group officially joined al-Qaeda in September 2006.³⁸⁹

The Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) is a faction of the Armed Islamic Group, which was the largest and most active terrorist group in Algeria.

According to the United States Military Academy's Combating Terrorism Center (CTC) at West Point, NY, the objective of AQIM is to free North Africa from secular governments, replace it with Islamic *sharia* Law,³⁹⁰ and to rid the region from Western influence, particularly from the French and Americans.³⁹¹

AQIM uses common terrorist tactics, such as guerrilla-style ambushes, mortar, rocket, improvised explosive device (IED) attacks, assassinations, and suicide bombings of military, government, and civilian targets.³⁹²

AQIM has mainly operated in the northern coastal area of Algeria. However, Algeria's successful counterterrorism campaign forced AQIM into the Sahel and desert regions of southern Algeria, northern Mali, Mauritania, and Niger.³⁹³

The group raises money through kidnapping for ransom, extortion, and donations from its sympathizers. They also trade in arms, migrants, narcotics, and cigarettes.³⁹⁴

AQIM operatives are responsible for several kidnapping operations in the Sahara which targeted aid workers, diplomats, tourists, and expatriate employees of multinational corporations.³⁹⁵ It was reported that AQIM has collected over the last decade an estimated \$155 million from ransom money paid for the release of Western hostages.³⁹⁶

In 2012, AQIM exploited the instability following the *coup d'état* in Mali and worked – at least initially -- with the MNLA and Ansar al Din to help ethnic Tuareg in northern Mali gain independence in Kidal, Gao, and Timbuktu.³⁹⁷ Subsequently, the Islamist militant group Ansar al-Din, backed by AQIM, turned against the MNLA and captured these three major cities. Occupation of these cities was important, not just because of their historic significance to Muslims, but because it fulfilled AQIM's vow to create of an Islamic state in Mali ruled by *sharia* law.³⁹⁸

Previous to that, the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJWA), which is an AQIM splinter group,³⁹⁹ had already been formed in 2011, and was operating in Algeria and Mali. Its leaders are involved in drug trafficking in the Sahel and southern Algeria. In 2012, both AQIM and MUJWA took advantage of political chaos in northern Mali, but the international community played a pivotal role in halting their advance.⁴⁰⁰

The Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa: Arabic name: Jama'at at Tawhid wal Jihad fi Garbi Afriqqiya.

AQIM leader Abdulmalek Droukdel was added to the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Specially Designated Nationals List on 4 December 2007.⁴⁰¹

Another one of AQIM's senior leaders in the Sahel region, Yahya Abu Hammam (AKA Jemal Oukacha), was added to the Specially Designated Nationals List⁴⁰² on 14 February 2013.⁴⁰³ On 3 June 2013, the U.S. Department of State's Rewards for Justice Program announced rewards of up to \$3 million each for information leading to the location of the leaders of AQIM and MUJWA.⁴⁰⁴

Following the announcement and formation of the terrorist group the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria/Levant (ISIS or ISIL), AQIM leadership witnessed internal divisions over allegiances to the new group.⁴⁰⁵

Consisting mainly of Algerian commanders and members within AQIM, in September 2014, an AQIM splinter group called "Jund Al Khalifa fi Ard Al Jazayer" (which means "Soldiers of the Caliph in the Algeria land"), under the leadership of a former AQIM central region commander, formally

announced its formation and pledged allegiance to ISIS and its self-declared Caliph Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi.⁴⁰⁶ This leader's name is Khalid Abu Suleimane, an Algerian whose real name is Gouri Abdelmalek.⁴⁰⁷

“Jound Al Khalifa fi Ard Al Jazayer” is another group to splinter from AQIM, after Mokhtar Belmokhtar, an Algerian AQIM senior leader, announced his group “Al-Mua’qi’oon Biddam,” meaning “Those who Sign in Blood,” on December 2012.⁴⁰⁸ AQIM is but one of the several militias and terrorist groups operating in North Africa; the region has been one of the main suppliers of young jihadists for ISIS.⁴⁰⁹

In order to combat and dismantle terrorist groups in North Africa, the nations of Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia have become partners with the U.S. as charter members of the Trans-Sahara Counter Terrorism Partnership (TSCTP).⁴¹⁰

Irregular Migration⁴¹¹

Irregular migration has been debated extensively in both Europe and the United States in recent years. The common perception is that irregular migration negatively impacts host communities by weakening the rule of law, leading to labor exploitation, increasing poverty (by taking jobs away from native workers or adding to the number of poor in a country), and putting pressure on public services.⁴¹²

Migrants in North Africa usually pay hundreds of dollars to smugglers, who tend to be either nomads or influential clans in the area who are most familiar with the terrain.⁴¹³ These smugglers generally operate through small networks of corrupt local police, border officials, and intermediaries who can connect them with employers in Europe.⁴¹⁴

Since the 1990s, thousands of North Africans have attempted to cross the Mediterranean to reach Spain and Italy. In 2008, it was estimated that 65,000-120,000 sub-Saharan Africans were entering the Maghreb yearly, mostly through Libya.⁴¹⁵ However, since 2011 (in the wake of civil unrest in North Africa), large numbers of North Africans, Sub-Saharanans, and other nationalities have been streaming into Europe, mainly through Italy and Spain.

The fragmentation of the Libyan state and lack of border security, particularly exacerbated the migration problem. The European Union's border protection agency, **Frontex**, revealed that as many as 2,500 illegal immigrants a week were entering Europe in 2011.⁴¹⁶ Furthermore, Frontex announced that in the first three months of 2011, 33,000 people entered Europe illegally, with 22,600 coming through Italy.⁴¹⁷

Most of the migrants fleeing North Africa are trying to escape conflicts in their countries and to pursue employment in Europe.⁴¹⁸ Frontex estimates that in 2013, 40,000 illegal border crossings were made from North Africa into Europe through Italy and Spain and that among the three top nationalities using that route were Syrians, Eritreans, and Somalis.⁴¹⁹ Many of these illegal immigrants drowned or missing while crossing the Mediterranean due to capsized boats,⁴²⁰ or damage in the vessel deliberately done by the smugglers themselves in order to initiate a reactive rescuer mission by European authorities.⁴²¹

The International Organization for Migration reports that more than 3,000 migrants have died in 2014 trying to cross the Mediterranean; this is double the numbers from 2011, making Europe the most

dangerous destination for irregular migrants.⁴²² Also, more than 112,000 irregular migrants were identified and detected by Italian authorities during the first eight months of 2014, which is three times more than the estimated numbers from 2013.⁴²³

Frontex: The European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union. Its headquarters is located in Warsaw, Poland.

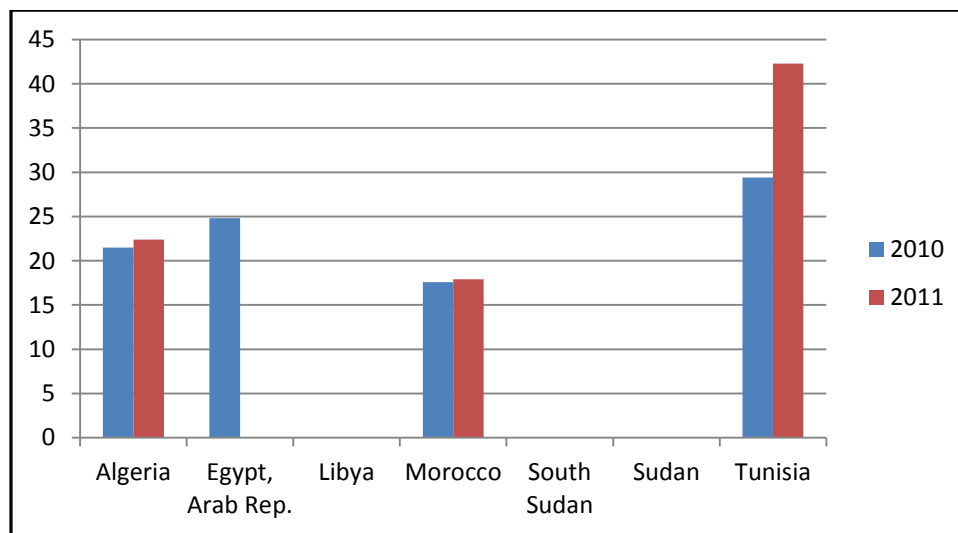
To tackle this problem, in 2011, the Italian government signed an agreement with the Tunisian National Transitional Council to continue previous agreements of cross-country efforts to counter irregular migration.⁴²⁴

Youth Unemployment

The unemployment rate in North Africa and the Middle East is among the highest in the world, with about one in four without jobs.⁴²⁵ This high rate is a result of extremely high youth unemployment (ages: 15-24 according to the World Bank). The most recent statistics available at the time of this writing indicate that it reached 26.5 and 27.9 percent in 2011.⁴²⁶ The high number of unemployed people is only part of the problem. Many existing jobs are low-quality, low-paying, insecure, and violate many basic labor standards.⁴²⁷

Most analysts have indicated that the civil uprisings or the 2011 “Arab Spring” were sparked by a crisis in youth employment. (The episode that sparked the Tunisian revolution – the self-immolation of a young man, fruit vendor, frustrated because he was ill-treated by the police-- is a clear example why the assumptions of these analysts may be valid.) Although the Tunisian economy was growing at a healthy moderate pace, it was unable to generate jobs to match the growth in youth population.⁴²⁸

Algeria also has a very large youth population (70 percent of the people living in the country is under the age of 30) and suffers from high unemployment.⁴²⁹ The high number of unemployed or underemployed young men increases the likelihood of their involvement in crimes and violence. It also makes young people receptive to extremist ideologies, thereby also making them easier to recruit by terrorist groups.⁴³⁰



Unemployment among youth, age 15-24 (Source: World Bank)

Although there are no available data for Libya, Sudan, or South Sudan, and only 2010 data for Egypt, this graph indicates that unemployment among youth was exacerbated by the 2011 civil uprisings.

Territorial Disputes

Some of these territorial disputes are based on ethnic tensions which have been discussed and highlighted in previous sections. Although such disputes are considered internal problems, most of these issues are chronic and intertwined; they create an ongoing state of overall instability in the region.

Sudan/South Sudan Border Demarcation Dispute

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) of 2005 that ended two decades of civil war in Sudan stipulated the demarcation of the border between North and South Sudan, and granted South Sudan independence. South Sudan gained its independence on 9 July 2011. Yet the ill-defined border issues remained unresolved.⁴³¹

A series of agreements were signed between the two countries to resolve the issue, but the Abyei area, which was left unresolved, remains one of the most contentious. The disagreement stems from the definition of the phrase “residents of the Abyei area.” Semi-nomadic Arab Misseriya travel through Abyei seasonally, while the African Ngok Dinka permanently reside in Abyei. This dispute remains a cause of tensions between the two groups.⁴³² This border region was the site of a series of clashes in the first half of 2012, when South Sudan invaded Hejlj, leading to widespread international condemnation.⁴³³

Abyei stalemate

As highlighted in previous sections, Abyei⁴³⁴ remains one of the most contentious areas between Sudan and South Sudan. Competition for resources, particularly oil, plays a major role in the dispute.

The Abyei Protocol grants Abyei special administrative status and guarantees the “residents” of Abyei a referendum to decide if they want to be part of Sudan or South Sudan. The referendum was to have been conducted simultaneously with South Sudan’s independence referendum in January 2011, but it did not take place. Disagreement arose regarding the composition of the Abyei Referendum Commission created to manage the process and make crucial decisions such as establishing the criteria for residency status.⁴³⁵ (Details on both groups are discussed in previous chapters).

Abyei became a major battleground in the Sudanese civil war, displacing tens of thousands of inhabitants, mostly Dinka Ngok.⁴³⁶ In 2011, a series of clashes erupted between “armed elements associated with Arab nomads and local police” that caused villages to be burned and the killing of more than 100 people.⁴³⁷

Border disputes occur between Sudan and South Sudan mainly because the border land is rich in oil reserves, fertile land for agriculture, and grazing areas crucial to transhumant and pastoralist groups.

Transhumant: it is the seasonal movement of people and the transfer of their livestock between grazing lands and fixed summers and winters.

The border between Sudan and South Sudan remains contested, and ongoing tensions could possibly lead to a war between the two countries. If a cross-border conflict were to occur between these two countries, it would destabilize this already vulnerable region.

The Stalemate in Western Sahara⁴³⁸

The status of Western Sahara remains unresolved. Morocco annexed the territory in 1975, and a guerrilla war with Algerian-backed pro-independence forces was brought to a stalemate in 1991 when a United Nations (UN) supervised ceasefire was put in place. Since then, several UN efforts have failed to break the political deadlock. The territorial dispute has sent thousands of Western Saharans refugees to semi-permanent camps in Algeria.

The political challenge in Western Sahara is further exacerbated by reports that AQIM has infiltrated POLISARIO refugee camps in Tindouf, Algeria. The apparent presence of AQIM threatens the security of not just Western Sahara, but also Mauritania, Morocco, and Algeria.⁴³⁹

The disputes over territories in Sudan and Morocco continue to trigger violent clashes between the groups living in the area; the clashes increase human suffering and displace thousands of civilians from both areas.

Marines could be deployed to this region to conduct Humanitarian Assistance/ Disaster Relief (HA/DR) missions.

Conflict-prone Area

Darfur

As highlighted earlier in previous sections, Darfur, a France-sized region in Western Sudan, has been embroiled in an armed conflict over land, water, and grazing rights between the Arab Baggara nomads (who take their livestock south in search for water), and the farmers from the *Fur*, *Massaleit*, and *Zaghawa* communities who reside in Darfur. This simmering conflict erupted into bloodshed most recently in 2003.

As a result, the Janjaweed paramilitary groups, recruited from among the Baggara and supported by the government of Khartoum, directed bloody attacks against black African groups from the *Fur*, *Massaleit*, and *Zaghawa*. The slaughter of 300,000 people, the rape of women, and the displacement of 2.7 million people from their homes has promoted worldwide protests which led to the formation of the United Nations-African Union peacekeeping force (UNAMID).

Peacekeepers from UNAMID have been in Darfur since January 2008.⁴⁴⁰ Although violence has subsided since 2004, a new surge of clashes erupted in early 2013, forcing an additional 250,000 people to become internally displaced, and some 30,000 refugees to cross the border into neighboring Chad.⁴⁴¹

There is a high possibility that a Marine could be deployed to this region to conduct a Humanitarian Assistance/ Disaster Relief mission (HA/DR).

Case Study: The Culture of Tuareg ‘Kel Tamasheq’ in North Africa and Sahel

The case study in this chapter introduces a culture from the North Africa region, using the concepts introduced in the Operational Culture General (OCG) document (see attached document).

Introduction

The Tuareg, or *Kel Tamasheq* or *Tamacheq* (meaning “the speakers of *tamasheq*,” which is their language⁴⁴²) are seminomadic Berbers⁴⁴³ who live in the Saharan parts of Niger and Mali. Small groups of Tuareg are also found in southwestern Libya, southeastern Algeria, northern Burkina Faso, and northern Nigeria.⁴⁴⁴

The Tuareg, often referred to as light-skinned Berber, are an ethnic and cultural minority in all the nations where they reside.

Although the Tuareg live within national boundaries inherited from the colonial era, the Tuareg identity is linked to an imagined stateless nation called “Azawad”. The Azawad is comprised of Tuareg-populated territory in the Sahara and the Sahel which transcends national borders. Azawad territory is mainly in northern Mali, northern Niger, and southern Algeria.⁴⁴⁵ Tuareg are divided into confederations that span a range of five mountains, constituting the corners of a virtual parallelogram across these countries.



Tuareg from Algeria wearing the classical indigo turban (Source: Wikimedia)



Areas where significant number of Tuareg live (Source: Wikimedia)

While there are no accurate figures for the Tuareg population, official agencies estimate their numbers to be around 1.5 million.⁴⁴⁶ However, the Tuareg believe there are close to three million Tuareg, collectively, in all countries where they reside.⁴⁴⁷

The Tuareg language, typically referred to as Tamasheq, is closely related to regional dialects such as the Tamaheq, Tamacheq, and Temajeq. However, Tuareg living in cities are also fluent in the local lingua franca (i.e. French, Bambara, Hausa, or Arabic).⁴⁴⁸

Physical Geography

The Tuareg live in the arid and semi-arid zones of the Sahara and the Sahel, which experience very limited rainfall and have little vegetation cover. The majority of the rain comes during the rainy season which runs between May and September.⁴⁴⁹

The water scarcity and dryness of the region makes it difficult to grow crops without regulated irrigation systems, therefore the areas are primarily used for herding livestock. Thus, nomadic and semi-nomadic lifestyles are well-suited to the region as the ability to be highly mobile in the search for water is essential.



Nomadic Tuareg (Source: Wikimedia)

Further complicating the issue is the dry season's *harmattan winds*, or the *khamseen* (*khamṣīn*), which is a hot, dry, dusty windstorm that blows south from the Sahara Desert, producing a fine dust that reduces visibility and causes overcast skies. This sandy windstorm causes problems for livestock and agriculture, and contributes to desertification⁴⁵⁰ as the winds cause soil erosion, particularly on overgrazed land.⁴⁵¹

Despite the unforgiving nature of this environment, the Tuareg demonstrate variation in their response to these climatic changes: some maintain their seminomadic pastoralist lifestyle, others opt to become sedentary farmers, and other groups favor migration to new countries.

During the rainy season, the Tuareg move frequently in search of the greenest pastures for their livestock. During the dry season they move further afield to find water, but prefer to stay in the locality of their home territory.

Sedentary Tuareg villages have become more common in the region as a result of reduced pasture areas caused by shorter rainy seasons and longer droughts.⁴⁵² This acceptance of a less nomadic lifestyle is a good example of the Tuareg's ability to adapt to an imposed environment change. However, these newly sedentary groups usually abandon their villages during the harshest months of the dry season when water becomes scarce.

Land Ownership and Access to Wells

Due to their nomadic and semi-nomadic lifestyle, the land where semi-nomadic Tuareg has established a village is "owned" by whoever lives in it.

Although there is no need to purchase land, the building materials for tents and houses must be bought. However, these organic and peaceful agreements have been disrupted by arising disputes over the use of oases. Also rights to natural resources such as uranium, which was discovered and mined by the government on the Tuareg's traditional grazing lands, has lately become an issue, especially in Niger.⁴⁵³

Wells and access to water were traditionally the rights of whoever dug them. Traditionally, "ownership" of a well is passed down to generations. As for the use of a well, Tuareg understand that anyone is welcome to draw water so long as there is sufficient water for everyone. However, during water scarcities, only the clan of the well-owner is allowed to draw water. Moreover, if the water

scarcity worsens, only the well-owner's extended family can draw water. During an extreme drought, only the owner and his immediate family can draw water from the well.⁴⁵⁴

Changes in Tuareg life: Teshumara

Climate change and harsh droughts have forced the Tuareg to adapt a new way of life. This change was reflected in every aspect of Tuareg life from economics to social relationships and to politics.⁴⁵⁵ This new era in the life of the Tuareg has produced the term *Teshumara*, which is how the Tuareg refer to the new social and cultural way of life that was shaped during the late 1960s-1990s. The term is the Tuareg's derivative of the French word *chômage*, which means "unemployment."⁴⁵⁶ As you may notice, the meaning of the word confirms the economic aspect that originated this term.⁴⁵⁷

As it became more difficult for the Tuareg to sustain a living from pastoral nomadism, migration to new countries increased substantially.

The beginning of the 1960s witnessed a wave of many Tuareg youth migrating for economic reasons to Algeria and Libya.⁴⁵⁸ Tuareg refer to these emigrants as *Ishumar* (*sing. ashamor*), which means "unemployed."

The significant increase in the number of people looking for jobs outside the pastoral realm⁴⁵⁹ and outside *Tamasheq*-speaking areas transformed the *Teshumara* from simply an economic way of life to its own culture.⁴⁶⁰ In fact the term went through several modifications and now refers to the trans-regional mobility of former pastoralists Tuareg residing in the borderlands of regions once occupied by them.

As the migrants integrated into their new host societies, they became sedentary, married, built houses and reduced their border crossings to annual family visits. In their new countries, *Ishumar* migrants were considered irresponsible due to their continuous cross-regional mobility; however, marriage and bearing children changed their social status, and made them respectable *Ishumars*.⁴⁶¹

Diet

The Tuareg diet consists of non-meat protein and relies heavily on grains. They mainly consume milk, millet porridge, grains, wheat, and rice. Meat is a delicacy eaten on special occasions, such as holidays and rites of passage.⁴⁶²

Eghajira, a very sweet, thick millet-based beverage -- often mixed with goat's cheese and dates -- is consumed on special occasions as well.⁴⁶³

When Tuareg cannot find fresh dairy products, they substitute milk with powdered milk, and butter with olive or peanut oil.

The consumption of pork and alcohol is uncommon, due to their deeply held Islamic beliefs.

As change touched Tuareg life, it also changed their diet: the Tuareg gradually adopted fruits and vegetables into their diet when they emigrated to Algeria and Libya.

A central part of the Tuareg social life is the afternoon tea ceremony, where three cups of mint tea must be drunk at each sitting. The first cup is said to be “as harsh as death,” the second “as sweet as life,” and the third “as light as love.” All three must be served “hotter than hell.”⁴⁶⁴

The Economy of the Culture

The Tuareg economic mainstay is nomadic pastoralism, supported by agriculture and trade.⁴⁶⁵

Historically, Tuareg managed trans-Saharan trade routes, and the trading of gold, ivory, salt, and slaves.⁴⁶⁶ However, trading hubs such as Djenne, Gao, and Timbuktu collapsed in the sixteenth century following the development of the European maritime trade, which weakened the trans-Saharan commercial routes.⁴⁶⁷ Tuareg people subsequently took up nomadic pastoralism and limited scale agriculture as alternative means of livelihood.⁴⁶⁸

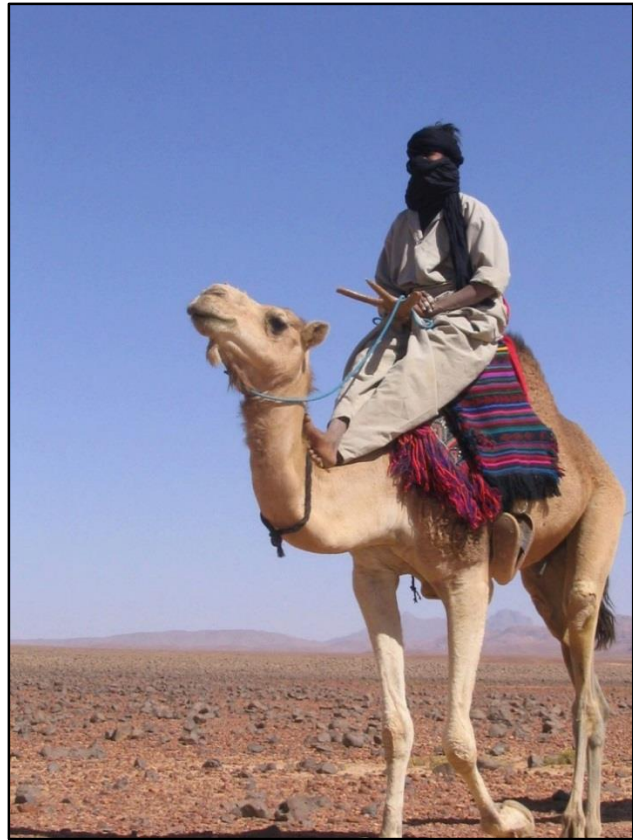
Tuareg have always maintained a reciprocal relationship with their neighbors who were sedentary farmers. They enjoyed mutually beneficial trading relationships where they bartered animal products and food crops.

In the postcolonial era, drought, conflict, and reduced rainfall have devastated the Tuareg herds; subsequently, there are fewer animals to provide milk and meat. This limited their ability to barter and trade for goods. Therefore, some Tuareg groups opted to settle into small villages in an attempt to live off of subsistence agriculture, growing traditional coarse grains like millet and sorghum.

Most Tuareg now combine livestock herding, oasis gardening, itinerant trading, and migrant labor.⁴⁶⁹ Others produce arts and crafts for the tourist trade, or work as security guards in the towns.

As for the informal economy, Tuareg’s way of life, knowledge of the terrain, and desert-survival skills, helped turn them into an active and powerful smuggling network in the region. Furthermore, their smuggling of illicit goods, drugs, illegal immigrants, hostages and most recently weapon from Libya brought them in close contact with terrorist groups operating in the region such as al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).

In the past, many *Ishumars* smuggled goods from Algeria and Libya, and sold them for *Communauté Financière Africaine (CFA) Francs* in Mali and Niger. They brought back the CFA Francs to Algeria, which suffered from a shortage in foreign currency at the time. CFA Francs were in high demand and were exchanged in the black market, which doubled the profits the *Ishumars* received from smuggling.⁴⁷⁰



Tuareg man (Source: Wikimedia)

CFA Francs is the name of two currencies used in Africa which are guaranteed by the French treasury. The two CFA Franc currencies are the West Africa CFA Franc and the Central Africa CFA Franc.

Social Structure

Clans and Class

Tuareg social and political structure is both diverse and intertwined, as they cluster into multiple interrelated social and political groupings which are often called confederations. This social-political system can be described as a hierarchy and the clan (*tensit*) is considered the basic social structure, which is also divided into social classes or caste.

Caste identity is based on five social categories: the noble (*imushagh*) or the noble warriors; the religious expert (*ineslemen*); the vassal (*imghad*); the craftsman (*inadan*), also referred to as “blacksmith”; and the laborers or slaves (*Iklan*).⁴⁷¹ Although slavery was formally abolished in French West Africa in 1905, and Tamasheq slaves were gradually emancipated since the 1940s, these classes and social classification continue to have an impact on Tuareg society.

There are various groups inside and outside Tuareg society who are divided between those who want to abolish either the hierarchical relationships, the clans, or both; and others, who want to maintain the status quo, and reinforce the different roles and classifications. Moreover, the previously held notions of work, class, and gender meant that noble women were not to engage in manual work.

The *Kel Adagh* Tuareg of Mali tried to live up to these perceived noble values, but as many persons of both noble and nomadic origins are now impoverished, formerly noble women are now forced to work and perform hard physical labor. To the Tuareg, this is considered both humiliating and physically challenging for the women involved.⁴⁷² On the other hand, educated Tuareg who went to universities and got prestigious jobs in government or international organizations, now claim a new form of elite status.⁴⁷³

The noble: they are racially described as white-skinned, and distinguish themselves by a culture of honor and shame called *temushaghaor* meaning “the way of the *imushagh*,” which is common among the Mediterranean cultures.⁴⁷⁴

The religious experts (*ineslemen*): a status of a group of free or noble Tuareg, also racially described as white-skinned and who specialize in religious affairs.⁴⁷⁵

Vessal (*imghad*): this group consists of free, white-skinned Tuareg who are not considered noble but who try to live according to the *temushaghaor* “the noble way of the life,” It is believed that they are referred to as vassals, because historically they were often described as dependent on the nobles for protection and rearing their cattle, although this claim may actually not be true.⁴⁷⁶

Craftsman (*inadan*): they are racially classified as “black” but free, and they are generally referred to as blacksmith. They enjoyed certain freedom that the “slaves,” who are also black but not free, did not. This group did not adhere to the *temushaghaor* or the “noble way of life.”⁴⁷⁷

Slaves (*iklan*): this group is divided into several subgroups which were racially categorized as “black.”⁴⁷⁸

Marriage

In the Tuareg culture, marriage and bringing up children is equated to leading a useful life.⁴⁷⁹ Furthermore, women are not accepted as full members of society until they marry and bear children.

Most Tuareg are traditionally monogamous, and many women have shown their opposition to polygyny by divorcing their husbands. Although Islam accepts polygyny, the practice was limited to religious members of the society, the *ineslemen*. Today, however, in some groups, polygyny is becoming more common among wealthy men especially if their wives are generally dependent on them, or do not have the means to oppose a husband’s additional marriages.⁴⁸⁰



Tuareg woman (Source: Wikimedia)

Gender Relations

The Tuareg is both a patrilineal and matrilineal society; however, the majority of the clans are matrilineal as descent is traced from the mother. Also, property, wealth and, often, political power are passed down through the maternal line.

In Tuareg pastoral communities, the women own the tent and the household items; these are things that she traditionally receives as gifts from her mother and female relatives during her wedding. The husband is her tenant, and he becomes homeless in the event of divorce.

In urban Tuareg societies, the man will build or rent a house before moving his wife into the home. The opposite is true of Tuareg living the pastoral life: the wife is the husband’s tenant; she becomes homeless when the marriage is dissolved.

Women in the Tuareg society often own or control land and production. They enjoy a considerable measure of freedom in their involvement in public life and politics, which is considered exceptional in the Muslim world. Women often share power with men and occupy some powerful roles in society (often alongside men). Tuareg women are, therefore, a powerful constituency within Tuareg communities.⁴⁸¹

Female virginity is not highly prized among the Tuareg, and female sexual conduct does not affect a family’s honor. These attitudes differ significantly from attitudes in much of the Muslim and Arab world. Extra-marital affairs are only considered shameful for an unmarried woman if she becomes pregnant.⁴⁸² Although virginity is still not related to honor, recently, many men individually reject potential wives for what they view as “loose” sexual conduct or “knowledge of too much men.”⁴⁸³

The traditional Tuareg view of female beauty encouraged female fattening, as a portly female body was the standard of beauty and sexual attractiveness. However, this practice is diminishing due to food shortages and lifestyle challenges associated with obesity. Like everything else, standards of beauty and sexual attractiveness have also changed due to the influence of Western standards.⁴⁸⁴

Political Structure

Traditionally, Tuareg are loyal to their individual clan, as this type of political and social organization suits their mobile nomadic lifestyle. A supreme chief has a legal authority, but little power today.

Beyond the clan, identity and loyalty is tied to the larger Tuareg population. Concepts of national identity or patriotism are yet to be adopted by most Tuareg: a vast majority of Tuareg do not identify themselves as citizens of any country.

Politically, the Tuareg are grouped into autonomous federations, which are broadly divided into northern and southern groups.⁴⁸⁵

As colonialism was winding down in this region during the 1950s, the Tuareg aspired for an independent state, called Azawad. The proposed state of Azawad would have been comprised of Tuareg-populated territory in northern Mali, northern Niger, southern Algeria, and southern Libya. However, the Tuareg community have never mobilized, as a whole, to achieve independent nationhood.

Revenge as a Motive for Rebellion and Mobilization

In order to understand the first Tuareg rebellion, one must understand the concept of *egha* (revenge), and its relevance to the Tuareg culture.

Revenge is a rough translation of the more complicated Tuareg concept of *egha*. *Egha* is closely connected to two other important concepts in Tuareg society: *eshik*, meaning “honor,” and *takaraket*, meaning “shame.” To the Tuareg, *egha* is considered a debt one incurs against those who have stained one’s honor, and who have thus caused one a great deal of shame. The contracted *egha* can be either individual or on the collective level of the entire clan. Only those perceived to be of equal status can stain one’s honor: i.e. the free and noble. The contracted debt of *egha* remains unresolved until the attack on one’s honor is countered, and can only be repaid or settled through violence or revenge. Therefore, *egha* is of critical importance as a motive for resistance and in mobilizing Tuareg communities.

An excellent example of the *egha* concept is the story of Alla ag Albachir, a notorious rebel, who led the Kel Adagh Tuareg in their resistance against the French colonial conquest in Mali.

Alla ag Albachir was captured and decapitated by the *goumiers* – the native police force loyal to the French authority- in July 1954. His head was put on public display. This story surrounding his treatment at the hands of the French was widely known within all Tuareg communities.

Alla ag Albachir’s son, Elledi, who was only seven years old when his father was killed, later started the first Tuareg rebellion in 1960s, which came to be known as *alfellaga*. Elledi took up arms to avenge his father’s death. He soon became the rebellion’s most prestigious and charismatic leader.

Understanding these cultural concepts reveals how the Tuareg understood these events. From the Tuareg perspective, Alla was repaying the Kel Adagh honor debt towards the French because they defeated the clan and colonized their lands. The French Army violated Alla's body, and in doing so damaged his honor, the honor of his whole clan, and the honor of all Kel Adagh Tuareg. Therefore, Alla's son Ellidi became committed to revenge as well.⁴⁸⁶

Post-Independence Tuareg Rebellions

French colonial policies in Mali and Niger favored the southern farming regions, and disrupted the mutually beneficial, reciprocal trade relations between the different ethnic groups in the northern regions.

When Mali and Niger became independent from France in 1960, national leaders and civil servants were drawn from these southern farming populations. Postcolonial rulers were drawn from the Bambara region in Mali and the Zarma-Songhai region in Niger; the northern, predominantly Tuareg regions of Mali and Niger were consequently sidelined and economically marginalized.

Over time, unaddressed and growing grievances held by the Tuareg in Mali precipitated three rebellions: the first in 1962–64, the second in 1990–96, and the most recent in 2007.⁴⁸⁷ The key actors, and the claims for which they fought, are common to all three rebellions.

There have been two Tuareg rebellions in Niger: the first from 1990 to 1995; the second in 2007.

The 1990-1995 Tuareg rebellion happened in Niger and Mali and was centered on achieving independence and establishing their own nation.

The 2007 rebellion centered on two grievances: the belief by Tuareg (who lived in the northern part of the country) that they received almost no benefits from a government (whose capital was in the south). The Tuareg's second grievance was their belief that much of the money earned in their region – mostly from uranium exports – went directly to the south.⁴⁸⁸

The Tuareg of Niger also sought a restriction on the expansion of the uranium mines; this was aimed to protect their nomadic way of life. A peace agreement was finally signed between the Nigerian government and Tuareg rebels in 2009.

Thousands of Tuareg mercenaries who had served in the Libyan army in support of the Qaddafi regime during the 2011 insurgency⁴⁸⁹ eventually returned to Mali and established the **Mouvement National pour la Liberation de l'Azawad (MNLA)**. Simultaneously, a group of officers in the Malian government led a military *coup d'etat* against the Malian government on March 21, 2012.⁴⁹⁰

MNLA took advantage of the ensuing chaos by seizing control of the major northern towns, and declaring the region occupied by MNLA forces as "the independent country of Azawad."⁴⁹¹ No country in the international community recognized Azawad as an independent nation.

Mouvement National pour la Liberation de l'Azawad (MNLA): The English translation for the MNLA is, the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad.

In May 2012, MNLA and Ansar al Din agreed to merge forces and transform the territory that they controlled into an Islamic state.⁴⁹² However, this pact was short-lived. Ansar al Din and its ally, AQIM, turned against the MNLA. The AQIM-led rebels soon captured three cities that are spiritually significant to Muslims: Timbuktu, Gao, and Kidal.

The international community played a pivotal role in halting the advance of the Islamist militants. In June 2013, the government of Mali signed a peace agreement with Tuareg nationalist rebels to pave the way for the elections that were held a month later.⁴⁹³

“Ansar Al Din” means Defenders of the Faith; it is an Islamist militant group believed to have links to al-Qaeda with the al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb formed at the end of 2011 by Iyad Ag Ghali,⁴⁹⁴ a former Tuareg rebel leader often described as a pragmatic opportunist.⁴⁹⁵

Libya’s Role in the Militarization of the Tuareg

Beginning in the 1960s, many young Tuareg men moved to Libya to work as wage laborers in the oil industry or as mercenary soldiers in Muammar al-Qaddafi’s army.⁴⁹⁶ While some Tuareg were incorporated into the regular Libyan military forces, others were inducted into the Libyan-sponsored “Islamic Legion” of militants who were dispatched to Lebanon, Chad, and Sudan, where they acquired considerable combat experience.

The dissolution of the Islamic Legion in the late 1980s, and the end of multiple conflicts involving Libyan forces, saw the return of young male Tuareg to their home areas throughout North Africa. However, many of the migrants who settled in Libya were issued identity cards, thereby adding a new component to their identity, namely citizenship and political integration into Libya.⁴⁹⁷

More recently, the Libyan civil uprising (also known as the “Arab Spring”) inspired a revolution in Libya in 2011: young Tuareg men were recruited from northern Mali and Niger into pro-Qaddafi forces in the first months of the uprising. Libyan rebels fighting against Qaddafi’s regime reported that these Tuareg fighters had a vested interest in preserving Qaddafi’s power structure because of their heavy reliance on the Libyan economy.⁴⁹⁸ This highlights the complicated and intertwined nature of these ethnic-political conflicts in the region, and how they can spill over and transform from a local national conflict into a regional one.



Tuareg armed militia (Source: Wikimedia)

Belief System

Belief, Behavior and Practices

Tuareg are predominantly Muslim, but are not regarded as strict observers of Islamic custom. Their religious practices display syncretism⁴⁹⁹ and pluralism. Also, elements of pre-Islamic influences persist in some rituals, such as spirit possession, exorcism, and non-Qur'anic healing (mediumship, divination,

and herbalism).⁵⁰⁰ Tuareg hold deep belief in spirits, which they consider mostly evil. These spirits are thought to inhabit isolated, deserted places, and are believed to inflict illnesses.

Qur'anic scholars (*ineslemen* or *marabouts*), play an important role in the Tuareg belief system. They are noble men and considered "people of God," and are believed to possess special powers of benediction (*al baraka*). *Marabouts* also perform important Islamic rituals, such as marrying couples and participating in the "name day" celebration held one week following a child's birth.⁵⁰¹

A major part of the Tuareg belief system is *Al hima* (meaning "sacred"), a Tuareg concept that refers to a protected area or preserved place. This includes tombs as well as other spaces of cultural or religious significance, such as shrines.

Chiefs, healing specialists, and Qur'anic scholars protect *al hima* spaces.⁵⁰² Tuareg's cultural beliefs and rituals discourage certain persons from entering *al hima* spaces, or restrict their activities inside them. Such persons include youths, persons of ambiguous status (e.g. artisans), and those of low prestige (e.g. former slaves). *Al hima* spaces are threatened with destruction, whether intended or unintended, by local residents, tourists, government officials, and soldiers who break taboos within these spaces. Dangers to *al hima* are not limited to secularists and non-Muslims, but include fellow Muslims, like the Arab invaders of the past, and the AQIM militants of present-day.

Music and Festivals

Ichumar (also called *tichumaren* in some regions), is a type of guitar-based music popular among young Tuareg in Niger and Mali. This music was originally composed and performed by Tuareg rebels, but has since been taken up by bands with a "rock-style." They perform at rites of passage, urban and cultural festivals, holidays, and political rallies.

Ichumar music was originally highly political (and somewhat forbidden) because it criticized colonial and postcolonial domination, and warned of threats to the Tuareg's cultural survival. Currently, these songs address broader themes, but some lyrics continue to commemorate ideals and heroes from the history of the Tuareg rebellion.⁵⁰³ Additionally, Tuareg host parties called *Zabutten* (from the Arabic word *Zabu*, meaning "pride"). These are regular events staged at the houses of young women. While women sing at these events, men are expected to serve food, tea, sugar, and tobacco.⁵⁰⁴

Another significant Tuareg event is the *Cure Salee* festival ("Festival of the Nomads"), which is an annual gathering of Tuareg and Wodaabe people in the northern Niger town of Ingal. It occurs in the last two weeks of September, and marks the end of the rainy season. Thousands of people from Niger and neighboring countries such as Nigeria, Benin, Algeria, and Libya congregate for this three-day festival. This event has



Tuareg band at a music festival (Source: Wikimedia)

been taking place for hundreds of years, but civil unrest and AQIM activity in the region has hampered these festivities.⁵⁰⁵

Traditional Dress as an Expression of Cultural Values

Tuareg are often referred to as the “People of the Veil” or the “Blue people of the Sahara.”⁵⁰⁶ This name is derived from the deep blue, indigo-dyed garments that they wear. The name also stems from the fact that perspiration will sometimes transfer dye from these garments to a wearer’s skin.

The cultural values of modesty and reserve are expressed in Tuareg dress and bodily conduct: men almost always wear a face-veil, and women always wear a head scarf.⁵⁰⁷ The Tuareg use of head dress is unique; men wear veils instead of the women, and many men will not remove the veil in front of strangers.⁵⁰⁸



Tuareg men wearing their traditional indigo head turbans
(Source: Wikimedia)

Tuareg men start wearing the famous blue head cover and veil when they enter manhood, roughly around the age of puberty. Wearing a veil indicates a man’s readiness to marry and establish a family. A formal veiling process is performed by the religious noble men in a special ritual.

The fabric that veils the mouth is called *eghewid*; it can indicate the wealth and prestige of the owner. *Eghewid* is considered the main symbol of expressing male honor, pride, and dignity.⁵⁰⁹ It is believed that the veil covering of the mouth and nose is to demonstrate respect to chiefs, elderlies and in-laws.⁵¹⁰ Moreover, the mouth of a Tuareg man is considered a private part, and a man preserves his honor by reducing the visibility of his face. This is why they veil the mouth, especially in the presence of a female.

Most women who migrated to the Maghreb maintained their customary dress: a *pagne* and a *tasirnest* (*melhafa* in Arabic), a long veil wrapped around the body, knotted on the shoulders, with the end forming a loosely draped headscarf while their face remained unveiled. Women who had migrated to coastal West Africa adopted the local dress fashion of *boubous* and headscarves.⁵¹¹

Conclusion

In identifying several dimensions of the Tuareg culture, this case study highlights the concepts of identity, holism, change, variation, mobilization, and reciprocity in this particular North African community.

This case study has shown that the marginalization of Tuareg in the countries they inhabit have led to their mobilization and rebellion against the governments.

Tuareg, who refer to themselves as *Kel Tamasheq*, identify themselves as one big group that extends across several national borders. Most of these people do not consider themselves citizens of any specific nation.

The Tuareg consider the area that they occupy, “Azawad,” to be the equivalent of an independent country. Over the years, there have been several unsuccessful attempts by the Tuareg to secede. The Tuareg will very likely continue to aspire for the independence of their homeland of “Azawad.”

Holism is demonstrated through the effect of environmental and political changes on the economic activities of the Tuareg. The arid environment where they live caused most of the Tuareg to become pastoralist.

Changes in the environment, such as desertification, droughts in the 1970s and 1980s, and political unrest, killed a majority of Tuareg livestock. However, the Tuareg demonstrated variation in their response to these changes; some maintained their pastoralist lifestyle; others opted to become sedentary.

Harsh changes in the environment also restructured their social relations after large numbers of Tuareg migrated to other countries to find work. Migration eventually changed from being a component of economic necessity to a culture unto itself.

Finally, reciprocity is evident in the Tuareg community because pastoralists Tuareg have always bartered animal products with food crops from their neighbors, the sedentary farmers.

You might have noticed that the case study does not include all, or even many, of the concepts discussed in the Operational Culture General document. This is only natural: a comprehensive body of literature devoted to the study of a single culture is rare. In fact, Marines are frequently called upon to operate in areas where current information on local culture is scarce.

The OCG and the chapters in this document were designed to help you learn more about your assigned region. We are offering you the skills and concepts that will help you to operate more effectively in complex cross-cultural situations in any part of the globe, particularly when information is scarce or rapidly changing.

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