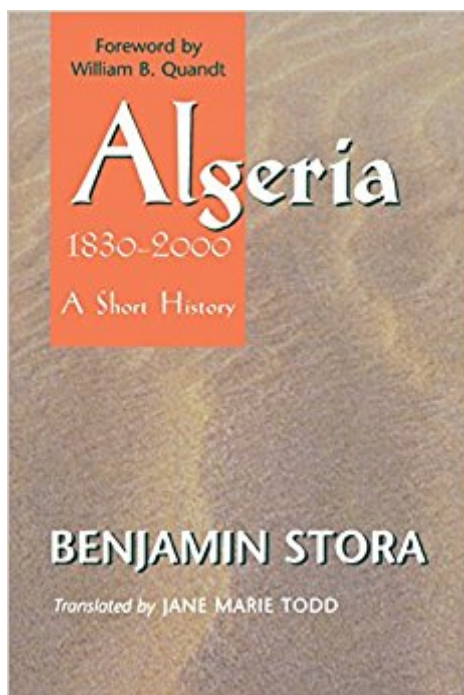


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# Algeria, 1830-2000: A Short History



## Synopsis

A particularly vicious and bloody civil war has racked Algeria for a decade. Amnesty International notes that since 1992, in a population of 28 million, 80,000 people have been reported killed, and the actual total is almost certainly higher. This terrible war overshadows Algeria's long and complex history and its prominence on the world economic stage—second in size among African nations, Algeria has the longest Mediterranean coastline and contains the world's fifth-largest natural gas reserves. *Algeria, 1830-2000* is a comprehensive narrative history of the country. Benjamin Stora, widely recognized as the leading expert on Algeria, presents the story of this turbulent area from the start of formal French colonialism in the early nineteenth century, through the prolonged war for independence in the latter 1950s, to the internal strife of the present day. This book adapts and updates three short volumes published originally in French by La Découverte. For this English edition, Stora has written a new introductory chapter on Algeria's colonial period (1830-1954) and has revised the final section to bring the volume up to date.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Benjamin Stora is perhaps France's leading historian of Algeria. . . His book. . . encompasses the whole narrative of modern Algeria, from the first landings of the conquering French, through their ignominious departure and on to Algeria's present agony."—*The Economist*, September 2001 "Stora has written a new introductory chapter on Algeria's colonial period (1830-1954) and revised the final section with up-to-date information, making this book a clear, detailed, rigorously factual, and

up-to-date account of this troubled nation from 1830 down to the present day."â•The Bookwatch, October 2001"As one of France's leading historians of Algeria, and more broadly of French decolonization, Stora is well equipped to tell the story of these two terrible conflicts and of the thirty-year period that separates them, when the country was a one-party state struggling to create a post-colonial identity."â•Roger Hardy. International Affairs, January 2002"This book translates three of Stora's published works into one concise, scholarly, and welcome survey. . . . Accessible to the nonspecialist. . . . Highly recommended for all levels."â•Choice, February 2002, Vol. 39, No. 6"There is a wealth of reliable and useful historical information, including detailed treatments of the country's politics, economics, society, and foreign relations. Readers will get a good, straightforward account of the war for independence and the recent civil war, along with a broader feel for Algeria generally."â•David Mednicoff, University of Massachusetts. African Studies Review, December 2002, Volume 45, Number 3"This is a remarkable book: simultaneously a clear, simple account of modern Algerian history that will be accessible to newcomers to Algerian affairs, and a subtle, sophisticated interpretation of recent events that will provoke and satisfy those who know the country well. Algeria's complex and tortured history has long seemed to be a challenge to capture and convey; Stora's masterful account makes it seem easy."â•Lisa Anderson, Dean of the School of International and Public Affairs, Columbia University"Benjamin Stora's scholarly and readable text fills a major gap in English language literature about modern Algeria. This sensitive and detailed analysis of the past half century of turbulence in Algeria provides a wealth of information about the dynamics of Algerian society. Its reader will gain a rare perspective on the interplay of forces behind Algeria's current tragedy."â•Richard W. Murphy, Council on Foreign Relations"Benjamin Stora has based his lean-bodied analysis of Algerian history. . . on a lifetime of engaged scholarship. . . Stora has written an unusually compelling book. . . He has passionately sought an undeluded understanding of the past. He notes that the proliferation of Algerian newspapers and publishers in the early 1990s led to Algerians becoming 'subjects of history and not just subjects of a regime'. His book, while destined to be contentious, largely succeeds in vindicating this honorable definition of the historian's enterprise."â•Diana Wylie, Boston University, African Studies Center

Text: English (translation) Original Language: French --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Excellent accessible treatment of its topic.

The cliché "never judge a book by its cover" is what I should have had in mind as soon as I noticed that by the time I finished reading the introduction, Chapter 1 immediately was set in 1954, when Algeria began its fight for independence as a French colony. Yes, you read that correctly: years 1830-1953 are covered in 27 pages. Apparently, Algeria didn't really exist before 1830, when France began conquering it, tossing the ruling Turks out on their turbans. And what happened after wasn't that important, either. That's not to say that (French) historian Benjamin Stora doesn't outline the causes behind the drive towards independence, he just seems more interested in giving us an idea on how Algeria as it is today, a country broiled in the violence of a religio-political civil war, has come to be. In this area the book is a fantastic study, but as intimated, ignoring the core of the Algerian people, customs and politics post conquer leaves much to be desired and is symptomatic of how modern historians are towards the formerly conquered.

Algeria 1830-2000: A Short History directly addresses the history and root causes of the deadly, long-term civil war that has killed at least 80,000 people out of this nation of 28 million. Written with painstaking detail about the 1954-1962 Algerian civil war and the nation's history since its independence, Algeria 1830-2000 features college-level narration and analysis supplemented by tables, a very convenient acronym list, a 26-page chronology, and an index. Benjamin Stora (Professor of History at the University of Paris, Saint Denis) has written a new introductory chapter on Algeria's colonial period (1830-1954) and revised the final section with up-to-date information, making Algeria 1830-2000 a clear, detailed, rigorously factual, and up-to-date account of this troubled nation from 1830 down to the present day.

As an introduction to Algerian history from 1830 to 2000 this book is very disappointing. Although the Description does say that the book 'adapts and updates three short volumes' it also says that the history is 'comprehensive'. I was more than surprised, then, to reach 1954 on page 27 of the 240 text pages. The book also fizzles out somewhere during the civil war, in about 1992. After that I get the impression of a hastily written conclusion. Therefore the book should be read as a history of Algeria from 1954 to about 1992. And for its coverage of this history I give the two stars. There is reasonable analysis of the '54 to '92 period given that the book is quite small. The statistics on demographics, industry and agriculture are well presented. The coverage of the many French, European and Algerian groups jostling for power before and during the independence war is good. The motivations of the various political and terror groups during the same period is well covered, as is the consequent turmoil in France. The book speeds up quite a bit to cover the period between the

independence and civil wars and the period of the civil war itself, and is less satisfying in consequence. However, I never got over feeling cheated by the title, and the editing of the book left a lot to be desired. When a book written by a French academic on Algeria begins with 'If Americans have any image at all of Algeria...' it is somewhat jarring, even granting that this forward is written by an American. The 'adaptation of three short volumes' is more than obvious when you read the introductory chapter to the war of independence (from p27) because it restates, as if for the first time, much of what has concluded the previous background chapter. Similarly, near the end of the book the grammatical tense suddenly changes from past to present mid chapter (p226). Throughout the book there are many presumptions of knowledge (such as the "'fly-whisk attack" on the French consul' on page 3, which is not explained), characters participate in the action before they are introduced, there are jolts of deja-vu for the reader (p47 has 'Public opinion balked at the extension of military service to twenty-eight months' and p48 has 'the length of military service was extended to nearly thirty months'), there is English useage which does not quite read as English due to transliteration problems or idiomatic useages, and there are strange statements such as 'The next day his funeral occasioned truly brutal ratonnades (Arab-bashings), which caused several Muslim casualties'. Finally, the exclamation marks sometimes appended to statistics which the author finds surprising (see p65) remind me of canned laughter on television soaps. The book was useful, but its presumption prior knowledge of its topics makes it unsuitable as an introduction to Algerian history. The book is a cobbling together of different pieces and it needs more editing to help readability. Finally, again, the title is at best misleading, at worst simply dishonest.

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