

### **China-Africa Reading Guide: Algeria**

Algeria is one of the most important countries in China's engagement with Africa in many regards, although English-language documentation and analysis on the relationship is currently scarce. Chinese laborers in Algeria number as among the highest in Africa, standing at roughly 60,000 people in 2017. Chinese firms win a large proportion of Algeria's numerous public construction projects (securing around 80% of the contracts in recent years), and Algeria also serves as China's largest export market for domestically-produced vehicles. Yet not all is smooth sailing in this seemingly advantageous relationship. China has received criticism for labor issues in its Algerian-based companies, and problems include lack of employment for Algerian laborers as well as low pay. There have also been several issues with corruption and poor management on Chinese-led projects.

The following articles assess the various aspects of the Sino-Algerian relationship. Some scholarship takes a broad, bird's-eye view of Sino-Algerian trade, with an emphasis on the infrastructure industry (e.g., Calabrese, 2017; and Pairault, 2017a). Other research focuses on the burgeoning export and manufacturing market for Chinese cars in Algeria, analyzing the structure and potential trajectory for this developing industry (e.g. Pairault, 2017b; and Liste, Kolster and Matondo-Fundani, 2012). A growing body of research discusses the negative consequences of Chinese economic involvement in Algeria, touching upon such issues as corruption, labor issues and the obstruction of local economic growth (see Souiah, 2011; and Massoud, 2012). Other research discusses future risks to Sino-Algerian economic relations from a Chinese perspective (Wang, 2007; and Weng, 2017). Possible paths for remedying these problems include research on methods for future Sino-Algerian cooperation as well as manners in which Algeria can and has asserted autonomy in its interactions with China (Ghanem-Yazbeck and Benaballah, 2016; and Pairault, 2014). One standalone article by Thierry Pairault, the most prominent scholar on Sino-Algerian economic relations, is included due to its unique view on China's future path in its economic involvement in Algeria (Pairault, 2013).

1. Adel, Abderrezak, Thierry Pairault and Fatiha Talahite (ed.) , *La Chine en Algérie : Approches socio-économiques*, MA Éditions – ESKA, 2017, 186 p.

This book offers eight papers that, first, appraise the available data on the nature of economic exchanges, the technicality of imported products, the number of Chinese companies attending. It then discusses the integration of Chinese companies (special economic zone, automotive sector), and finally describes the practices of smuggling, the potential role of machines in the food processing sector and the organization of a construction site).

2. Calabrese, John, “Sino-Algerian Relations: On a Path to Realizing Their Full Potential?” Middle East Institute, October 31, 2017.  
<https://www.mei.edu/publications/sino-algerian-relations-path-realizing-their-full-potential>.

Calabrese’s article takes a broad look at Sino-Algerian relations, beginning with historic ties between the two nations and eventually turning to recent trends in bilateral trade, FDI, infrastructure and labor. His research concludes with analysis on future problems in the Sino-Algerian relationship, particularly in regards to Algerian political instability.

3. Ghanem-Yazbeck, Dalia and Lina Benaballah, “The China Syndrome,” Carnegie Middle East Center, November 18, 2016. <https://carnegie-mec.org/diwan/66145>

This piece covers the rapid growth of Sino-Algerian economic relations in recent years before turning to problems that this relationship has caused in Algeria, particularly in regards to labor issues. Policy recommendations are provided for the Algerian government in order to ameliorate the situation.

4. Haddad-Fonda, Kyle. “An Illusory Alliance: Revolutionary Legitimacy and Sino-Algerian Relations, 1958–1962.” *The Journal of North African Studies* 19, no. 3 (May 27, 2014): 338–57.

This article examines Sino-Algerian relations around the moment that the two countries established diplomatic relations. By emphasizing how the FLN and the CCP each profited from this relationship, Haddad-Fonda argues that other historians have over-emphasized the role of Chinese military assistance to the FLN.

5. Hayoun, Massoud, “Strange Bedfellows: China’s Middle Eastern Inroads,” *Journal of World Affairs*, 175.5 (2013): 89-96.  
<http://web.a.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=1&sid=50eca369-ef40-44e4-a7dd-8810410415ff%40sessionmgr4009>

Hayoun discusses the role of Chinese economic involvement in North Africa through a political lens and focuses on negative aspects of the relationship. He emphasizes Chinese lack of cultural sensitivity to Muslim countries such as Algeria, its economic dominance over homegrown Algerian firms, and its role in the perpetuation of large prestige construction projects at the expense of social services.

6. Liste, Janvier, Jacob Kolster and Nono Matondo-Fundani, "Chinese investments and employment creation in Algeria and Egypt," The African Development Bank Economic Brief, 2012,  
<https://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Publications/Brochure%20China%20Anglais.pdf>

This AFDB brief provides a brief overview of Chinese involvement in Algeria, from historical relations to the central role of infrastructure in China's initial economic involvement with Algeria. The brief then discusses the recent development of a Chinese automobile industry in Algeria. Although several car factories were planned for construction in Algeria, political issues halted further development in the light of corruption and fraud charges.

7. Mira, Rachid, Thierry Pairault and Fatiha Talahite, "L'insertion des constructeurs chinois dans la filière automobile en Algérie," *Maghreb - Machrek*, 2017/3, n° 233-234, p. 113-130.

This paper provides an appraisal of the integration of Chinese car-manufacturers into the automotive sector in Algeria.

8. Pairault, Thierry, "Booming Sino-Maghreb Economic Relations: Incentives for a New European Partnership," in *China-Africa Relations: Governance, Peace and Security*, Institute for Peace and Security Studies/Institute of African Studies, 2013,  
<https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-00881405/document>

Pairault's chapter first analyzes the structure of the economic relationship between North African countries and China, summarizing FDI, exports and imports and more aspects of trade. He then compares Chinese engagement in North Africa to traditional European involvement, postulates future developments in China's African interactions (such as the abandonment of the non-interference policy), and competition that European nations may face when trading with North African countries.

9. Pairault, Thierry, and Fatiha Talahite (ed.), *Chine-Algérie : Une relation singulière en Afrique*, Paris, Riveneuve Éditions, 2014, 256 p.

This book offers thirteen papers summarizing, among other things, Sino-Algerian economic and military relations, dealing with the various forms of Chinese presence (large publicly-owned companies, petty traders and contract workers). It also tries to put this presence in an African perspective.

10. Pairault, Thierry, "China's Economic Presence in Africa, *CCJ Occasional Papers*, n°1, 2015, 16 p., <https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-01116295/document>

Pairault's article provides a thorough overview of recent Sino-Algerian economic relations, discussing trade statistics and specific industries of involvement, such as construction. He also discusses the underlying conditions (such as Algeria's poor infrastructure) that led to these close economic relations, as well as the unique characteristics of the Chinese-Algerian relationship in contrast to other African nations.

11. Pairault, Thierry, "Developmental States: How Algeria makes the best of China to promote its development," Peoples' Friendship University of Russia, October 2014.

Pairault takes a unique stand on Chinese firms' economic involvement in Algeria, arguing that Algeria has considerable agency in its relationship with China and limits Chinese involvement in areas that do not benefit Algerian interests. He lists examples such as Chinese involvement in the automobile industry as well as labor requirements for Algerian hires and the government's subsequent decision to contract local companies for a specific upcoming public works project.

12. Pairault, Thierry, "La Chine au Maghreb: de l'esprit de Bandung à l'esprit du capitalisme," *Revue de la régulation*, Maison des Sciences de l'Homme: Paris Nord, Spring 2017, <https://journals.openedition.org/regulation/12230#tocto1n6>

In this analysis of China's patterns of interaction with Africa from the 1960s to the present day, Pairault looks at the Algerian-Chinese car manufacturing industry as an example. He discusses the entrance of Jiangling Motors Corporation into Algeria and the company's failed attempts to produce its products locally through a special economic zone. Pairault summarizes that Chinese cars are now only commercially sold in Algeria, not produced in the country, due to disagreements over management of a potential SEZ.

13. Pairault, Thierry, "La Chine dans la mondialisation : l'insertion de la filière automobile chinoise en Algérie et au Maroc," *Revue internationale des économistes de langue française*, 2(2), 2017, p. 133-150.  
<https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-01695880/document>

Pairault shows that the partnerships signed by Chinese companies in the Algerian and Moroccan automotive sectors are less a manifestation of their integration than a modality of the globalization of traditional car manufacturers through their Chinese partners - not to say their Chinese subsidiaries.

14. Pairault, Thierry, "Le consortium CITIC-CRCC et l'autoroute Est-Ouest," ACE Working Paper, 2017, 28 p. <https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-01620638/document>

This research note by Pairault aims to shed light on the personality and behaviour of large Chinese publicly-owned companies operating in Africa. The perspective he draws from it offers an image that is somewhat different from the usual clichés and helps to nuance the

interpretation that can be given to the behaviour of these companies. In particular here the Chinese consortium to which part of the construction of the East-West motorway has been entrusted.

15. Souiah, Farida, "L'Algérie made by China," *Le Maghreb dans la Mondialisation*, 116 (2011), <https://journals.openedition.org/mediterranee/5468>

Souiah's article discusses the negative consequences of Chinese firms' involvement in Algeria's infrastructure sector on local labor, including low employment rates, poor working conditions and lack of cultural connection on the part of Chinese workers. Additionally, the article details Chinese firm construction scandals in Algeria, such as backlogged projects, unpaid salaries and corruption charges. These negative results have caused the Algerian government's relations with China to slightly sour, and to place hiring local firms for public projects on the national agenda.

16. Wang Youyong, 中国与阿尔及利亚的能源合作, Shanghai International Studies University, Scientific Research Institute, March 2007  
<http://www.mesi.shisu.edu.cn/upload/article/9b/d2/d6d3b24a456d957a3ccb5b85622f/a83a6665-30bf-4ef2-a440-fe13fb9e6853.pdf>

Wang's article provides rare details of Chinese-Algerian cooperation in the oil industry. The author lists the various joint venture projects currently underway in Algeria, and points out the advantages of the relationship as well as the potential challenges. In regards to positive aspects, he notes that the two countries have very strong government relations due to historical ties, that the economic situation is improving in Algeria, and that the Algerian government is refining legislation regarding oil that will increase investment in oil and gas and increase international cooperation. Challenges include the closeness of Algeria with traditional European partners, increasing American investment in Algerian gas and oil, and the instability of the Algerian's oil sector in being the dominant source of economic growth.

17. Weng, Yanyun, 中资企业在阿尔及利亚跨经营的政治风险研究, Beijing Foreign Culture and Language University, 2017.  
[http://kns.cnki.net/KCMS/detail/detail.aspx?dbcode=CMFD&dbname=CMFD201702&filename=1017170715.nh&uid=WEEvREcwSIJHSlRa1Fhb09jSnU2YXVlcjczMWd3bllKWE5GekNtRDdzOD0=\\$9A4hF\\_YAuvQ5obgVAqNKPCYcEjKensW4IQMowwHtwkF4VYPoHbKxJw!!&v=MjA5MzlnVnkYyNkdiSy9IdGJOcXBFYIBJUjhlWDFMdxhZUZdEaDFUM3FUclDNMUZyQ1VSTEtIWmVkcZpM2hVci8=](http://kns.cnki.net/KCMS/detail/detail.aspx?dbcode=CMFD&dbname=CMFD201702&filename=1017170715.nh&uid=WEEvREcwSIJHSlRa1Fhb09jSnU2YXVlcjczMWd3bllKWE5GekNtRDdzOD0=$9A4hF_YAuvQ5obgVAqNKPCYcEjKensW4IQMowwHtwkF4VYPoHbKxJw!!&v=MjA5MzlnVnkYyNkdiSy9IdGJOcXBFYIBJUjhlWDFMdxhZUZdEaDFUM3FUclDNMUZyQ1VSTEtIWmVkcZpM2hVci8=)

In spite of Algeria being one of the most important destinations for Chinese enterprises to conduct overseas operations, as well as serving as a prominent component of China's "going-out" initiative and of the Belt and Road Initiative, the country is also a hotbed for political instability. Weng believes that this situation is a threat to Chinese companies currently operating in Algeria, and analyzes political risk in Algeria through various lenses. His conclusion makes policy recommendations to ameliorate the situation, such as establishing an improved outside investment insurance system, establishing a political

risk evaluation and early warning mechanism for Chinese firms in Algeria, as well as strengthening Chinese soft power to improve its international image.

18. Zou, Dongxin. "Researching PRC History in the National Archives of Algeria and Morocco." *The PRC History Review* 2, No. 3 (June 2017): 24-26.

In this methodological essay, Zou reflects on her experience researching Sino-Algerian relations (and in particular Chinese medical missions to Algeria during the Cold War) in the national archives of Algeria and Morocco. Zou's essay provides important insights into the transregional methodologies that Africa-China historians employ in their work. Zou is in the process of transforming her dissertation, "Socialist Medicine and Maoist Humanitarianism: Chinese Medical Missions to Algeria, 1963-1984" (Columbia, 2019) into a manuscript, and once it is available this publication will be of great interest to scholars studying Algeria-PRC relations.