

Conclusion



So far in this module, we have been focused exclusively on learning about the history of Algeria over a one-hundred-year time frame – or about three generations. We'll return to Algeria in a moment. But before we do, think about yourself for a moment. You can think about your identity (or identities), your values, your desires for the future, and your understandings of what's relevant from the past to who you are today.

Now think back one hundred years – or about three generations – to how members of your family or your community understood themselves then differently from yourself today. Imagine for a second how each generation's experiences shaped the next generation. There are some immense differences, right? Maybe different ideas about religion, race and gender? Different political aspirations or goals? Different forms of community bonding? There are probably some similarities too, right? Perhaps some shared allegiances or values?



Chess players in Biskra, Algeria, ca. 1920



Street scene in the Algerian quarter of Algiers, 1904

OK, now think ahead one hundred years – or about three generations. Can you even imagine what members of your family or community might imagine about their identity, values, or goals for the future, or understandings of the past might be? Whatever you imagine,

you'll probably be wrong, just like people one hundred years ago could hardly have imagined some of your values and ways of thinking today!

Even within a single period of time – the past, present, or future – people in the same family or community may not agree on some pretty basic things. They might love or cherish one another, but that does not mean that they see eye-to-eye on everything! Just like the Algerians who debated their past and future in the 1930s, diversity of belief and experience is part of what makes life in any moment so complex!

OK, so now let's go back to Algeria.

Remember when we started these lessons? Many of us at that time did not know much about the history of Algeria. But most of us had some ideas about the general history of colonialism, whether from high school history or elsewhere. But those earlier ideas may have been shaped by some sense that there were basically two sides to the history of colonialism: the colonized and the colonizers. Of course, many legal systems of colonialism did make such distinctions. Over time, those legal and social hierarchies came to permeate pretty much all aspects of people's lives. But when we start to look closer at how people experienced colonialism, how they felt as a result of those experiences, and how those feelings shaped their identities and hopes for the future, we have seen some surprising differences among Algerian people. As colonizers and colonized responded to one another over these three generations, people's ideas about themselves and their hopes for their futures changed too.



Djamaa el Djedid, or "New Mosque" in Algiers, 1922

In 1830, Algerians were not united in their attitudes about French rule. And in 1930, Algerians were still not united about French rule. But just think about how much had changed in the meantime! The violence and dispossession of the early

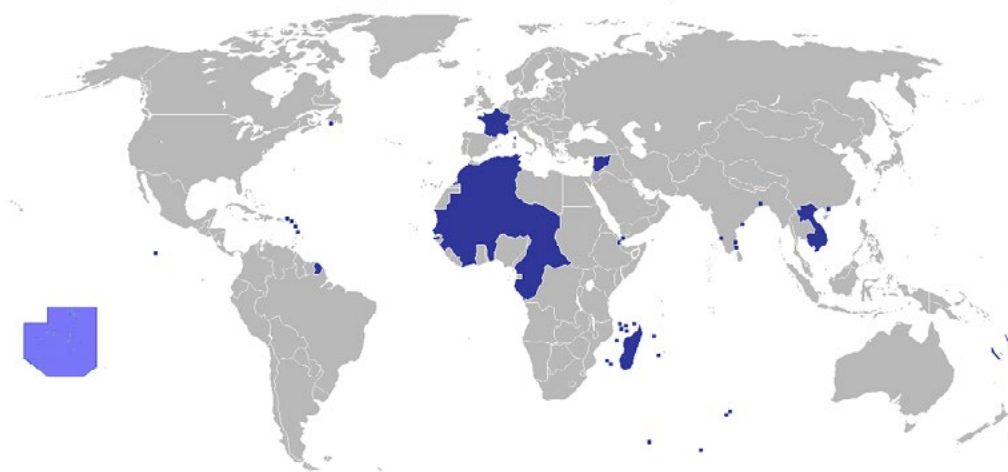
years. The intensification of the regulation of daily life by the 1870s and 1880s and the experience of alienation among those trying (and sometimes failing!) to live in between the two worlds. The opportunities offered by the possibility of contributing to World War I... and then the mixed messages, and disappointments with so little change after the war was over. Across each of these, Algerians experienced, were impacted by, and responded to colonialism.

Before we're done, let's just stop and reflect on how much more complex the story of colonialism must have been. Beyond Algeria, France alone claimed dozens of colonies across the Africa, Asia, the Americas, and Oceania. Britain claimed even more. By the 1910s much of the earth, including thousands of cultures and millions of communities, fell under some form of colonial rule. In each of these places, people's experiences were just as diverse as we saw in Algeria, and also changed over time. Parents passed on values and identities to their children, but those children also developed new ideas and goals based on their own experiences. When you think about it, we have just scratched the surface in our study of three generations of Algerian colonial history. That means that while we often learn about colonialism using a single definition, colonialism around the world must have been far more complex and diverse than any one of us can ever fully comprehend on our own.

Looking at Algeria from 1830 to 1930 – as we have done together – gives us some sense of what it must have felt like to have experienced these changes, and how those experiences changed over time. As you prepare to write your final assignment for these lessons, just imagine how many other stories there remain to be told!



Harbor in Algiers by moonlight, ca. 1899



Map of the French empire, c. 1919-1939

Image Citations

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