# The French Decision to Invade Algeria (1830)

> "I have no doubt that we shall be able to raise a great monument to our country's glory on the coast of Africa."
>
> Alexis de Tocqueville, Second Letter on Algeria (1837)

**What immediate pretext did France cite for war?**
The April 1827 fly-whisk incident *(le coup d'éventail)*. During a stormy audience over France's unpaid grain debts from the 1790s, Ḥusayn Dey of Algiers struck the French consul, Pierre Deval, with his fly-whisk. Paris demanded apologies and guarantees; when none came, it instituted a naval blockade (1827–1830) and made the affront the official casus belli. The government framed the war as redress for an insult to French honor and a response to treaty violations and commercial injuries. From the start, however, the "insult" functioned as public cover for a project long discussed inside French officialdom.

**Beyond the pretext, what underlying motives drove the decision?**

- **Accumulated grievances:** periodic corsairing, captive-taking, and unresolved commercial claims from earlier decades. Even though piracy had declined by 1830, officials continued to cite it to sustain a narrative of chronic insecurity.
- **Strategic continuity:** Napoleonic-era schemes to occupy Algiers had circulated since 1808; staff studies and charts existed in French archives, lowering the bureaucratic threshold for action.
- **Domestic politics:** Charles X faced a hostile Chamber and eroding legitimacy. Ministers judged an expedition likely to rally opinion, mute parliamentary opposition, and stabilize the throne through a swift, demonstrable success. The court also gave the venture a confessional gloss—presenting it as service "to the benefit of Christendom"—which played well with royalist constituencies.

In short, Algiers promised a manageable external victory at a moment of internal fragility.

**What alternatives were tried before invasion, and why did they fail?**
Polignac, the foreign minister, explored outsourcing coercion to Mehmed (Muhammad) Ali of Egypt in 1829: Cairo would subdue Algiers in exchange for compensations in Tripoli or Tunis, letting France avoid the costs and complications of occupation. Mehmed Ali initially entertained the idea, then balked—the rewards on offer did not justify the risk. British mediation was also available but unattractive to a ministry seeking demonstrable military success. When the Dey fired on a French envoy in 1829 and the blockade continued to drain resources without compelling a settlement, hardliners argued that diplomacy had run its course.

**How did ministers justify the expedition to parliament and the public?**
Navy Minister Baron d'Haussez and allies advanced a layered case:

- **Honor and security:** punish the Dey's "insults," end attacks on commerce, and prevent any return to ransom and tribute.

- **Utility:** the blockade (1827–1830) was costly and ineffective; a decisive blow would be cheaper than indefinite containment.
- **Civilizing mission:** eliminate the "triple scourge" of piracy, enslavement, and tribute by bringing European order to the coast.

The rhetoric emphasized necessity and uplift; privately, the same ministers expected substantial political dividends from a quick victory.

**What did the opposition argue, and on what grounds?**

Liberals and skeptics—prominently Alexandre de Laborde—mounted a comprehensive critique:

- **Political diversion:** the war was a "politique de diversion" to smother domestic liberties; a triumph abroad would be used to discipline opposition at home.
- **Illegality and bad faith:** France had escalated a commercial dispute into war without a formal rupture with the Ottoman suzerain. Laborde's line—"The Dey makes a claim, we rob him; he complains, we insult him; he gets angry, we kill him"—captured the charge that Paris engineered the crisis.
- **Cost and risk:** disease, landing hazards, and supply problems could turn a punitive raid into a fiasco reminiscent of Napoleonic overreach.
- **Britain's reaction:** London might block a permanent occupation, forcing France to evacuate after spilling blood and wasting treasure.
- **Alternatives untried:** ministers had spurned negotiations likely to succeed precisely because a diplomatic success lacked the domestic impact of a military one.

Their bottom line: the war was "neither just nor useful," and reckless for a regime already in crisis.

**Did the government plan to keep Algeria? Why the ambiguity?**

Deliberate vagueness was policy. Pressed in a closed Chamber sitting, d'Haussez said it was "not the moment" to decide Algeria's future. Polignac publicly hedged that any settlement would be coordinated with the powers—language aimed at calming Britain—while privately signaling that France should retain what it seized. General de Bourmont, commanding the expedition, hinted at colonization or at least a client arrangement. Ambiguity had two functions: preserve cabinet unity before the landing, and dampen foreign alarm long enough to secure a fait accompli.

**How did the operation unfold, and what were the immediate results?**

The armada sailed in June 1830; the main landing occurred at Sidi Ferruch (June 14). After the Battle of Staouëli (June 19) and a steady advance, Algiers capitulated on **July 5, 1830**. The convention compelled the Dey's abdication and transferred control of fortifications and the treasury; France pledged protections to the city's inhabitants while installing military administration. Militarily, the campaign achieved its objectives quickly with limited losses—precisely the outcome ministers had promised.

**Why did a foreign victory help topple the regime that launched it?**

Flush with news of success, Charles X issued the **July Ordinances** on **July 25, 1830**, dissolving the Chamber, narrowing the franchise, and muzzling the press. The move detonated the **"Three Glorious Days" (July 27–29)**. Paris rose; the army faltered; Charles abdicated on **August 2,**

**1830**. Thus the triumph designed to consolidate the Bourbon Restoration accelerated its end. The expedition delivered on the battlefield but failed as regime strategy.

**What did Louis-Philippe's July Monarchy decide about Algeria, and why?**
The new government initially explored limiting or reversing the occupation—holding Algiers as leverage or evacuating after punitive satisfaction. Public enthusiasm for the victory, the sunk-cost logic of garrisons on the ground, and the absence of immediate great-power coercion pushed policy toward retention. By **1834**, France formalized coastal control under a Governor-General and began pushing inland. The justifications—honor, security, commerce, "civilization"—were repurposed to defend an expanding, open-ended commitment.

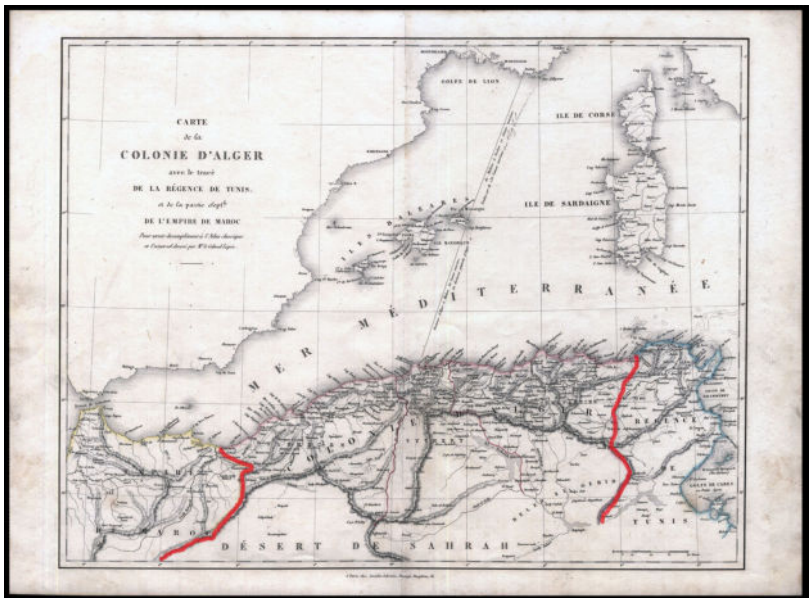
**What is the longer legacy of the 1830 decision?**
A punitive raid became a 130-year settler project: France annexed Algeria in 1848 as three departments (Alger, Oran, Constantine) and encouraged mass European settlement. State-backed land seizures and public works reshaped the economy while a dual legal order persisted (indigénat for Muslims; Crémieux Decree granting Jews citizenship). By the mid-20th century, integrationists claimed "Algérie française" was France itself, a claim renewed in 1958. The 1954–1962 war reversed it: the Évian Accords opened the way to an independent Arab Algeria, and nearly a million European settlers *(pieds-noirs)* departed.

**Timeline**

- **Decades prior to 1830:** Long friction over Barbary corsairs (much reduced by the 1820s) and France's unpaid grain debt to the Bacri–Busnach house, angering Dey Husayn.
- **1808:** Napoleon's surveyor Captain Boutin secretly maps Algiers' defenses and identifies **Sidi Ferruch** as the ideal landing site.
- **April 1827: Fly-Whisk Incident** — Dey Husayn strikes French consul Pierre Deval; Charles X seizes the insult as casus belli.
- **1827–1830: French naval blockade** of Algiers; costly and largely ineffective.
- **Late 1827:** War Minister Clermont-Tonnerre drafts a landing plan (initially shelved amid other crises).
- **1829:** Paris grows frustrated; Polignac briefly explores an Egyptian proxy war with **Mehmet Ali** (floated, then withdrawn).
- **Late 1829:** Dey fires on a French envoy; Charles X and Polignac settle on **direct intervention** to vindicate honor and distract from domestic unrest.
- **January 1830:** Charles X hints publicly at force; liberal press suspects a political diversion.
- **Early 1830:** Quiet **military preparations**; Boutin's plan revived; General **Louis de**

**Bourmont** takes command.

- **March 2, 1830: Speech from the Throne** announces the expedition as reparation for insult, cloaked in a civilizational idiom.
- **March 16, 1830: Closed-door session**: Navy Minister d'Haussez lays out the case; evasive on annexation.
- **March 18, 1830: Deputies vote credits** despite mistrusting Polignac.
- **April–May 1830:** Pamphlet war — **Laborde** attacks the venture; royalist rebuttals defend it. Bourmont hints at a colony, alarming Britain.
- **May 25, 1830: French flotilla sails** (≈34,000 troops, 100+ warships).
- **June 1830: Landing at Sidi Ferruch**; a storm nearly wrecks the fleet; campaign proceeds.
- **July 5, 1830: Fall of Algiers**; treasury seized.
- **Late July 1830: July Revolution** in Paris (July 27–29) topples Charles X just after news of victory arrives.
- **August 1830: Louis-Philippe** becomes king; initial doubts about keeping Algiers.
- **Late 1830:** Debate ends with a decision to **retain** the conquest under the July Monarchy.
- **1834: Formal annexation** of the coast and expansion inland — a punitive expedition becomes a long-term colonial project.



## Rapport au Roi sur Alger

by Aimé-Marie-Gaspard Clermont-Tonnerre (Minister and Secretary of State for War)
Paris, October 14, 1827

Your Majesty, France is now at war with Algiers. The key question is: how can this conflict be brought to a close in a way that benefits France and enhances her honor? That is what we must consider.

### The King's Right and the Reasons for the Expedition

Sire,

You have undertaken against Algiers a just war—and you have undertaken it alone. The interests of your country, and your own glory, must therefore alone define the limits of the satisfaction you will demand.

Providence has permitted that Your Majesty should be so brazenly provoked, through the person of your consul, by the most perfidious of enemies to the Christian name.[1] Perhaps it is not without some higher design that Providence thus calls upon the son of Saint Louis to avenge at once religion, humanity, and your own affronts. Indeed, in what circumstances more favorable to Your Majesty's designs could this struggle have arisen?

Europe is at peace. Yet the time that has passed since the Restoration returned happiness to France has also prepared elements of conflagration that might suddenly ignite from one end of Europe to the other.[2] It was therefore fitting for Your Majesty to have a pretext to organize an army, and here you find the most just of motives.

England may have looked upon these preparations with jealousy and sought to obstruct Your Majesty in this great enterprise. But the state of that power is now such that it is compelled to wish for repose above all else.

The restless and volatile spirit of our nation requires, from time to time, some extraordinary circumstance to occupy imaginations that are too ardent. Moreover, it may not be useless to remind France that military glory has outlived the Revolution, and that the legitimate monarchy does not merely shield the country from foreign invasions but also knows how to make our banners fly in distant lands.

Could fortune have offered a more favorable opportunity, since it concerns delivering Europe from the humiliating vexations it has endured for three centuries at the hands of a mere handful of brigands?

Finally, Sire, I would add that it is generally desirable for such events—events that give new strength to governments and offer peoples a sometimes salutary nourishment for their spirit—to

coincide with times of political fermentation. If Your Majesty undertakes the expedition to Algiers today, it will be concluded at a moment when the King might deem it appropriate to exercise his prerogative to renew the Chamber of Deputies.[3]

Everything, then, seems to align in urging Your Majesty not to delay any longer in taking a decision that, one day perhaps, You might wish in vain to revisit.

But it may be objected: either the King seeks merely to avenge himself upon these pirates by destroying their lair—in which case, are the costs and risks of such an expedition truly proportionate to such an outcome? Or the King's intention is to seize the state of Algiers to establish French power in Africa—yet would not Europe oppose this? Indeed, does it not even have the right to do so under the most recent treaty concerning Turkish affairs?[4]

**Advantages of the expedition, assuming it is only to punish the Algerians**

Let us first consider the initial hypothesis: even if the King's sole purpose were to punish the Algerians by destroying their city, that result alone would suffice to justify the expedition.

I set aside the vast treasures said to be accumulated in the Dey's palace, estimated at more than 150 million. He will find it impossible to remove them from the hazards of a siege. He cannot transport them by sea because of the blockade; he cannot move them overland without risking their plunder by his own subjects; and any attempt to spirit them away would provoke a revolt among his militia, threatening even his own life.

One may object that this sum is surely exaggerated. I grant it, and I go further: I eliminate it entirely from my reckoning. I maintain that the glory reflected upon the King, the strength such an expedition would lend to his government, the renown of succeeding where Charles V failed,[5] the gratitude of Christendom for the destruction of its most implacable enemies, and the advantage of having a new army seasoned in war against the Turks in a climate akin to that of the Orient—all these benefits, even if they stood alone, would outweigh any savings from forgoing the extraordinary expenses of the campaign.

**If the King does not stop at destroying Algiers**

But if the King's ambition extends further—to take Algiers, to establish and fortify himself there, and to found French power in the Dey's dominions, the finest region of Africa—what would be the consequences of such a decision? What advantages and instruments of power would France derive? And how would Europe regard such an enterprise?

Before answering, one must first address the question of principle: does Europe have the right to oppose the conquest?

**If the King seeks conquest, Europe has no right to oppose it**

I ask: when the King is at war with Algiers, alone against the Dey after suffering the most

egregious provocations, does he not, by the laws of war, have the right to despoil his enemy? And does any power have the right to intervene and dictate how he may use his conquest?

Did France or Europe ever demand an accounting from England for the power it gained by destroying Tippoo Sahib and annexing his vast dominions?[6] Did they call Russia to account for her conquests in Persia, or for the provinces she added to her immense empire whenever she defeated an Asian power? Finally, do Russia or France question England on her daily acquisitions in India at the expense of the Burmese empire?[7] No, of course not.

I contend, therefore, that no power on earth has the right to dictate to the King of France the use he shall make of his victory over the Dey of Algiers, should Providence grant it to him, nor to prescribe the compensation to which he is entitled—compensation that, after all, serves the interest of all Europe as much as that of France itself.

But it will be said: Algiers is part of the Ottoman Empire, and at this very moment, a treaty has been concluded in which Russia, England, and France have agreed not to make any conquests should war break out with the Ottoman Porte as a result of decisions taken concerning Greece. Sire, this would be an error: Algiers is not truly part of the Ottoman Empire; the Dey is no subject of the Sultan.[8]

**Algiers is not part of the Ottoman Empire**

It is true that in the 15th century, Algiers was governed by a pasha sent from Constantinople. But from the early 16th century, the Grand Seigneur consented to allow supreme authority to be exercised by a dey elected unanimously by the Turkish militia. The dey, however, was assisted by a divan or council, where real power resided, while the Porte continued to dispatch a pasha. This pasha, though devoid of effective authority, nevertheless managed—through intrigue and greed—to hinder the government's actions.

In 1710, Baba-Ali Dey, a man of great energy and skill, succeeded in expelling the pasha and obtained from the Porte the union of the pasha's title with the dignity and functions of the dey.[9] Since that time, the deys have progressively abolished the authority of the divan and have become the absolute heads of an elective monarchy.

In summary, today the dey is little more than a grand vassal to the Sultan—so independent that our treaties with the Porte stipulate, in France's favor, the right to make war on Algiers without the Porte regarding itself as provoked or obliged to intervene.[10]

**The Treaties Recognize Our Right to Wage War on Algiers**

We may therefore rightly assert that the war with Algiers—commenced before any hostilities with Turkey—is a matter entirely apart, and its results, whatever they may be, bear no relation to the treaty concluded among the three powers.

And should it happen that the allied powers, under the pressures of war, come to abandon their mutual pledge of non-aggrandizement, France—having taken the initiative—will already have secured an increment of power that places her in a stronger position: either to moderate her claims, or to press them further, as circumstances may dictate.

**The Advantage of Conquest—Should War Arise with Turkey**

Power often breeds power. Moreover, Sire, one must not shrink from contemplating in full the consequences of Europe's current state—a continent which, perhaps, requires war to shield itself from revolution. It seems unlikely that a conflict with the Ottoman Porte would not escalate into a total war.

**Probabilities in This Regard**

The Sultan is a man of formidable character. A pupil of Baraïctar, he has carried out that reformer's ambitious plan: he has overturned Turkey's ancient military institutions in an attempt to replace them with those of Europe. He will wish to put his new system to the test, though it remains fragile, and above all, he will refuse to abase himself before Christians.[11]

All signs suggest that a true crusade is on the verge of erupting—or rather, that it has already begun—despite the perfidy of those who, though Christian, secretly abet the followers of Mahomet. If this struggle escalates fully, the three powers will inevitably be drawn into a mutual enlargement of their dominions. At that moment, France and Europe alike will face the question of Russian expansion—a question, Sire, that France must view differently than the other powers.

**France Should Not Fear Russian Expansion**

What, after all, is France's ultimate aim? To secure, at last and for good, the Rhine as her frontier and the crest of the Alps as her shield. But how can she achieve this except through an alliance with Russia and a war against Prussia and Austria, aided by England?

For France, alliance with Russia is a cornerstone of her strategy, just as alliance with France is a keystone of Russian policy. Each stands at the rear of the other's natural enemies. Thus, France need not fear Russian expansion absolutely, for it is plainly linked to her own prospective gains.

It is true that publicists cast Russia's growth as a danger to Europe. But when would such expansion become a genuine threat? Only if it came at Europe's expense. France's interest lies in preventing Russian advances within Europe, but she has no equal reason to dread an enlargement toward Asia. On the contrary: such an extension would saddle Russia with so vast an empire that it might fracture into two or more parts, drawing her attention away from Europe and channeling her energies toward areas adverse to British interests alone.

Thus, without probing this great question too deeply, and confining ourselves to what concerns our immediate purpose, it is clear that, in the interest of France's future, the King would act with political wisdom if he seized upon the favorable circumstances provided by Providence—and

England's present disarray—to conquer Algiers and to establish French power in Africa.

**But what benefit would France derive from such an establishment, and what certainty would she have of retaining it?**

**The advantages of the conquest itself**

The state of Algiers stretches east to west, from Cape Lidhie (near Oujda) to Cape Roux, near La Calle and the Bastion de France, covering some 250 leagues of coastline.[12] Though it lacks major ports suited for large fleets, it possesses several excellent roadsteads whose control would be of great strategic value.

A vast portion of this territory consists of plains of prodigious fertility. In the mountains lie forests of fir and oak suitable for naval construction. Rich deposits of iron and lead are already being exploited, their products of remarkable quality. Mountains of salt and beds of nitrate are abundant, often found at the surface. Along the coast, saltworks of exceptional richness thrive.

The climate is healthy, akin to that of Spain: winters are virtually unknown, and the summer heat, at least on the coast, is never excessive. The population is under two million, though the land could sustain ten million. Most of the fertile lands belong to the dey and the ruling Turks.

**Potential Gains**

The advantages of such a conquest are self-evident. The King could distribute lands and estates to those he seeks to reward and enrich; he could establish true military colonies and direct there the surplus of France's population. The territory is capable of producing not only immense quantities of high-quality wheat but also colonial crops in abundance. Sugarcane grows well; a variety of indigo already exists and could be improved or replaced by Indian indigo.

The native population, lacking civilization and industry, has long groaned under a harsh yoke. They will fear us if we are strong, respect us if we are just, and prove useful if we know how to establish with them relations that bring them both advantage and security.

**The conquest could be easily maintained**

This picture, stripped of all embellishment, suffices to show the immense benefit France might derive from such a conquest. But some will ask: can France hold it?

I answer: if a wretched people like the Algerians have held it for centuries against Europe, and if repeated expeditions against them over 300 years have come to nothing, surely it is reasonable to believe that French arms could secure it.

Consider the country's situation: it lacks internal communications and offers few landing points. With troops stationed there, fortifications could be built cheaply, yet forcing them would require resources no European power—not even England—could readily marshal. Algiers lies only four

days' sail from France's coasts. It is therefore easy to believe that such a possession, with its defenses and internal administration properly organized, could never be wrested away so long as France remains France.

Thus, the King's right is absolute, and the expedition to Algiers—whatever course of action His Majesty may, in His wisdom, decide to pursue thereafter—will be of use to France and bring glory to the Crown. Yet this question, which I have touched on only briefly because it lies indirectly within my ministry's remit, is ultimately secondary. More pressing considerations should impel Your Majesty to undertake the expedition.

**The war can only be concluded by a land expedition**

For how, Sire, could Your Majesty otherwise bring this war with the Dey to an end if it has been demonstrated that maritime means alone are powerless to compel the Algerians to grant the King just reparations?

This is a truth now universally acknowledged—affirmed by both Your Majesty's consul in Algiers and the general commanding Your naval station. And should Your Majesty desire further proof, a glance back at the many naval expeditions against Algiers, all without lasting result, will suffice.

**Naval force alone is powerless against Algiers**

Consider Monsieur de Beaufort's expedition in 1684, Monsieur d'Estrées' in 1686, and the Spanish assaults of 1783 (with 65 vessels) and 1784 (with 116 vessels, including 9 ships of the line and 15 frigates).

True, Duquesne in 1688 and Lord Exmouth in 1816 achieved greater immediate success.[13] But it must not be forgotten that these outcomes were due to very particular circumstances.

Duquesne, for example, brought before Algiers the first vessels equipped with mortars and explosive shells—an innovation of Renaud's design. With the harbor poorly armed, he inflicted enough damage on the city to trigger internal revolts that cost several deys their lives, until finally a leader emerged who agreed to capitulate.[14]

As for Lord Exmouth, his success—whose ultimate results proved null for both Britain and Christendom—was achieved only because he managed, under cover of negotiations, to push his fleet to the entrance of the harbor and unleash a devastating bombardment before the city's defensive batteries could respond. Some even suspected that he had bribed the harbor master, who stubbornly refused to fire until the Dey himself arrived to give the order.

Yet after ten hours of fierce combat, in which Exmouth's forces sustained heavy losses, he was forced to withdraw hastily to avoid the collision of two burning frigates drifting out of the harbor. It is widely admitted that he was in no condition to resume his assault when the Dey—pressured by the populace and leading figures of the Regency—offered to negotiate.

It is also worth noting that at that time a casemated battery of 40 heavy guns had not yet been constructed at the entrance to the harbor. Nor had the Dey transferred his residence and treasure to the Casbah, the fortress atop the city that now commands all of Algiers.[15]

What most clearly demonstrates the error of believing—based on Lord Exmouth's expedition—that Algiers can be subdued from the sea is the episode of 1823. When the Dey insulted the British consul and had his house invaded to seize the Kabyles serving him as domestics, Sir Harry Neale was dispatched with a fleet. After several fruitless attempts, he considered himself fortunate to end his mission with a treaty in which Britain, abandoning all its initial demands, could not even compel the Dey to reinstate the consul he had so unjustly offended.[16]

**A blockade is powerless against the Algerians**

Some may argue that a rigorous blockade might, in time, force the Algerians into concessions. Sire, this too is an illusion. A blockade inflicts little damage on a people that conducts virtually no commerce in its own ships. It might confine their warships to port, but it would not prevent their smaller craft—those most capable of harming our trade—from slipping away.

Lord Exmouth's blockade, which lasted nearly two years, achieved nothing; any future blockade would fare no better.

Admiral Ruyter wrote presciently in 1670:

> "I believe the plan of holding Algiers besieged by sea for a full year cannot succeed without great peril. In winter, when northern winds rise and swell the sea, ships are violently battered by waves and breakers in these shallow waters. There is always the risk of disaster such as the Algerians themselves suffered in December 1662, when they lost fourteen ships to a northeast gale.
> "Even supposing one took the risk and, through a protracted blockade, forced the Algerians into a treaty without having destroyed or crippled their fleet, one could be certain they would observe that treaty only until they regained freedom to act—and break it the moment it suited them. Their repeated betrayals of France, England, and these States (the Dutch Republic) are ample proof."[17]

**No honor or security in compromise**

Yet even if, against all likelihood, we wrung some concessions from them, would it be honorable, Sire, for the Most Christian King and for France to treat with these brigands without first exacting a resounding vengeance? Could one trust them to uphold a treaty that had not been imposed by force and wrested from their stubbornness by sheer suffering?

History, in full agreement with Ruyter's judgment, answers no: what treaties have they

respected? What promises have they kept? Their political structure and customs alike make fidelity impossible. How could peace be secured with a regime that survives on piracy, whose absolute ruler is elected by a soldiery that tyrannizes not only the people but also the government itself, and that can at any moment overthrow him if treaty obligations run counter to its passions or interests?

**Only a land expedition guarantees security**

Let it be plainly said: there is no security with the government of Algiers save in its complete destruction. And there is but one way to achieve this end—a land expedition, whose success is assured if it is mounted with adequate means and at the proper season.

**Others will act if we shrink from it**

But, Sire, time presses. If, after the public insult and our demand for redress, Europe's circumstances compelled us to desist—if we lifted the blockade without securing full satisfaction, and later others should dare what we did not, if the English accomplished what France had hesitated to attempt—what bitterness, what indignation would seize our nation!

I now turn, Sire, to the details of the expedition proper.

**Forces and composition of Algiers' population**

Algiers has approximately 40,000 inhabitants. In former times, its population exceeded 100,000, but it has steadily declined, as has the rest of the country, under the crushing tyranny of its barbarous government. The population breaks down as follows:
• 6,000 Turks, of whom 4,000 are fit for arms, forming the main infantry and core of the militia.
• 8,000 Koulouglis (sons of Turks), of whom 6,000 are regimented, serving chiefly as artillerymen.[18]
• 20,000 Arabs or Moors, of whom 8,000 are armed, largely constituting the cavalry.
• 6,000 Jews.
Thus, out of 40,000 inhabitants, some 18,000 are under arms.

The Turks make up the best infantry of the Regency. While capable defenders behind walls, they are of little use in open field combat against regular troops, as they fight without cohesion or discipline. Once their initial charge is repelled, they rarely rally.

The Koulouglis, though part of the militia, are less reliable soldiers. Barred from attaining high office—particularly the position of Dey, which is strictly reserved for Turks—they have less at stake in defending the regime. Their loyalty has further been questioned since a recent failed uprising against the citadel (Cassauba).[19]

On the other hand, the Zouaouas, or paid Moors, who are the least reliable of all, offer no assurance of loyalty to the Regency.[19] It is reasonable to presume that when danger becomes

imminent, they could be incited to defect, throwing the Algerians into serious disarray.

The remainder of the population is a mix of mercenaries, Jews, and downtrodden slaves—all fundamentally hostile to a government whose crushing weight and petty oppressions pervade even the smallest details of their lives. It is clear that, during a siege, they will be a constant source of distrust and anxiety for the authorities.

One can expect that in the citadel, the Casbah—housing the Dey and his treasures—the Turks will make a desperate last stand, determined to bury themselves beneath the ruins of their power. This is characteristic of the Turks, a natural outcome of their position in Algiers, and the inevitable result of a situation where, if fortune favors us, it will be necessary to expel entirely all those who survive a fight to the death.

**Geographical position of Algiers**

The city lies on the northern slope of a range of hills, whose highest point rises about 78 toises (roughly 150 meters) above sea level.[20] These hills arc around the north, forming the natural ramparts of the Bay of Algiers.

They begin near the peninsula of Sidi-Ferruch (Torre Chica), roughly 7 leagues west of the city, encircle the bay, and terminate at Cape Matifou in the east.[21] Two rivers—the Arbatach and the Aratch—cut across the land between Algiers and Cape Matifou before emptying into the bay.[22]

Beyond these hills lies the great Métidja plain, stretching to the foothills of the Atlas Mountains. Covering over 100 square leagues, it is extraordinarily fertile and almost entirely owned by the ruling class of Algiers.[23]

**Possible landing points**

A landing directly before Algiers is out of the question. The approaches to the port and city are bristling with casemated batteries and heavy guns, making any attempt suicidal.

Between Pointe Pescade (near Algiers) and Cape Gaxines to the west, the coastline is steep and the few beaches are defended by forts, rendering a landing hazardous. Even if troops could be landed, advancing toward the city would prove exceedingly difficult.[24]

**Cape Matifou: an illusory option**

Cape Matifou offers an anchorage protected by a single fort that could be silenced with naval gunfire. Securing it would provide a useful base for the fleet. But any advance from there toward Algiers would encounter serious impediments.

The army would need to move across roadless terrain filled with natural obstacles. Two rivers lie in the way—their banks sometimes deeply cut, sometimes marshy, their mouths choked with treacherous quicksands.

Once across, the troops would face steep slopes before reaching the Constantine–Algiers road, the only route capable of supporting artillery. One might consider landing at the rivers' mouths, the same site chosen by Charles V in 1541, but even then, the advance on Algiers would demand overcoming all the same obstacles.

These difficulties are such that infantry might overcome them through sheer courage and audacity. But bringing up artillery would be nearly impossible without incurring heavy losses and immense logistical effort.

I now turn, Sire, to the discussion of possible landing sites.

The previously mentioned site poses a double disadvantage: first, the presence of one or two forts (which could be taken without excessive difficulty), and second, the fire from the mole batteries that sweep the entire beach—impossible to silence from the sea. We may therefore assert confidently that between Cape Gaxines and Algiers, there is no landing site that can reasonably be chosen. Experience supports this: all previous landings in this sector have ended disastrously.[24]

**Favorable landing sites**

However, if the coastline of Algiers offers no suitable landing point to the east within the bay, nor to the west up to Cape Gaxines, there are two highly advantageous beaches just beyond this cape.

These two beaches lie on either side of the peninsula of Torre Chica, or Sidi Ferruch.[21] They are ideally suited for a large-scale landing:
• Both are easily accessible.
• The seabed allows ships of the line to anchor close enough to support the landing craft.
• Troops can disembark from the boats with their arms and ammunition kept dry.

Depending on the prevailing winds, the beach sheltered by the peninsula can be selected. If the weather is calm, simultaneous landings on both beaches could be executed.

The peninsula itself is defended only by a small tower, of no threat to our ships and easily captured. It is dominated by no surrounding heights and commands the surrounding plain. It could swiftly be fortified, with depots and field hospitals established there, ensuring constant communication with the fleet and reinforcements.

Located just three leagues from Algiers, this peninsula would serve as a staging area, from which communications with the besieging army could be opened and maintained with ease.

No road leads directly from the Sidi Ferruch peninsula to the city of Algiers, but the gradient is gentle enough to ascend to the plateau and then descend toward the city. A few ravines may present some obstacles, but they appear shallow and can be cleared of enemy forces with ease. Furthermore, roads could be cut through to allow heavy artillery to pass.

The nature of the terrain—dense with brush and intersected by ravines—will also hinder attacks by light cavalry, which is the only local force of any real value. This means that once disembarked, the army could advance toward Algiers without much difficulty, bring its heavy artillery within range of the city walls, cover its flanks along the relatively short 3–4 league march, and fortify its communications back to the general depot established on the peninsula.

Thus, the chosen landing point is perfectly situated: it allows the army to reach Algiers quickly while keeping open secure communications with the sea.

**External Forces**

In 1541, the Algerians reportedly raised about 30,000 irregular troops; in 1775, some 40,000. Even if the Regency could now mobilize 50,000 Arabs or Moors, what could such a force achieve against a disciplined regular army?

They lack military organization and competent leaders. Their armament is doubtful, as the Regency prohibits most of its subjects from owning firearms and has no arsenals to supply them. Can they be relied upon when experience shows that the bravest among them—the mountaineers of Kouko and Abbès—have consistently declared themselves enemies of the Regency and sided with the Spaniards in every Spanish expedition against Algiers?[25]

How could they remain in the field and wage war without pay, rations, or any form of logistical support? There is, therefore, little to fear from the reinforcements that local levies might offer the Algerians.

Even if a large cavalry force—the main strength of these peoples—were to confront us upon landing, it would lack the organization to pose a serious threat. It might trouble an army advancing deep into the country, but against a force tasked solely with besieging the capital, and covering only three leagues over terrain ill-suited to cavalry maneuvers, its impact would be minimal.

In any scenario, it is clear that a single infantry division, reinforced by a light cavalry division and, if necessary, a mountain howitzer battery, would suffice to deal swiftly and decisively with these "Numidians."[26] Only in a protracted campaign across open terrain could they present a genuine nuisance.

Thus, the disembarked army will advance safely toward the city. Within a few days, it will be possible to secure its flanks and rear with fieldworks. Moreover, as I have noted, the local population, lacking the means to sustain itself, will soon be forced to return home. It follows that, within a short time, the army will be entirely untroubled and able to focus fully on siege operations.

**Material Obstacles and the Assault on the City**

Let us now consider the physical obstacles the siege might present.

Algiers rises amphitheatrically from the sea, with a roughly triangular layout. The highest point is separated from the rest by a wall, forming a sort of citadel, the Casbah. It houses the Dey's residence and the Regency's treasury—the most critical target, and also the one likely to offer the strongest resistance.

The city, whose port is defended by formidable batteries and numerous cannons, is surrounded on the landward side by a mere wall. A few detached forts guard the main gates, but the Algerians, long confident of their immunity to landward attack, never developed substantial defenses in this direction. The forts themselves were built more to overawe the populace than to withstand a determined assault.

The principal of these is the Fort de l'Empereur, or Bordj Sultan, about 500 toises southeast of the Casbah, along the Constantine road. Situated on a plateau that commands the city, it is effectively the key to Algiers.[27] Yet at 156 meters in elevation, it is itself overlooked by two neighboring plateaus that are easily approachable. Its interior is cluttered by a large tower that would not withstand sustained bombardment. Built entirely of masonry with a narrow front of attack, it could offer only weak resistance to our artillery and mining. Within ten days, it should fall, no matter how stubborn the defense—and its capture would deliver a decisive psychological blow to both the garrison and the inhabitants.

A single division would suffice for this assault, while the rest of the army could commence full-scale siege operations against the city, and particularly the Casbah, with the necessary blend of method and vigor.

The assaults on the Casbah—holding the Dey's residence and the Regency treasury—will be the hardest and most perilous of all, yet they will also prove the most decisive.

Once the Fort de l'Empereur is secured, the remaining forts could be reduced in turn, notably the Fort des Anglais to the northwest and Barbassou to the southeast.[28] Meanwhile, to deny the enemy any respite, the fleet would maintain a heavy bombardment from the sea, diverting attention and drawing off a portion of Algerian forces.

**Secondary Considerations and Duration of Operations**

I set aside, for now, the possible effects of immediately seizing the fountains supplying Algiers with water, of food shortages that would soon afflict an unprepared population, of potential uprisings that could throw the besieged city into disorder to our advantage, and of contacts we might establish with the Jews or Moors, natural enemies of the oppressive Algerians. I consider only the application of force and believe I am not mistaken in stating that, if the expedition is well managed, Algiers should either be stormed or compelled to surrender within six weeks of landing.

**Conduct Toward the Population After the Siege: Tolerance, Strength, Generosity, Justice**

I have outlined the potential dangers posed by the local population. While they may cause some initial complications, these would quickly subside. With a skillful and political approach, it may even be possible to enlist their support before the end of the siege. If His Majesty chooses to retain this splendid conquest, it should be feasible—despite the religious obstacle, which is the most formidable—to bring them to acknowledge French authority.

Apart from the beys who govern Constantine, Oran, and Titteri for the Dey, the small garrisons who form part of Algiers' militia, and a handful of individuals whose fortunes depend on preserving the regime, the people of these wretched provinces harbor deep hatred for the Turks and their rule.[29]

True, they are Muslims and, as such, hostile to the Christian name. But once they are convinced of our genuine spirit of tolerance (a crucial point for success), once they see us respecting their mosques and, above all, their marabouts—figures of great influence whom we can easily win over—once they are assured that we aim not to replace Algerine tyranny with another, but to establish a just and restorative government, once they recognize our strength combined with generosity and experience fair dealings instead of oppressive exactions, they may come to serve us better than they now serve their Muslim masters.[30]

Perhaps, in time, we may even have the satisfaction of civilizing them and bringing them to Christianity. Though not a justification for war, this is nonetheless a reason to press forward confidently to the glory Providence seems to have prepared.

**Independence From Local Resources and Supply Planning**

It is vital to demonstrate to the inhabitants that we neither fear them nor depend on them. The army must be fully provisioned—not only with the means of combat but also with sufficient sustenance. A stockpile of two months' rations is required, and initially the army should avoid drawing on local resources. Even once able to sustain itself on the country's produce, it must maintain a reserve of two months' supplies.

Moreover, as no ovens will be available early on to bake bread for so large a force, at least half of the initial provisions should consist of hardtack and rice.

**Timing of the Expedition**

One of the most critical factors for ensuring the success of this expedition is determining the right season in which to launch it, so that the army suffers as little as possible from the climate.

Here, history and physical geography speak with one voice. Meteorological records indicate that from early April to late June, the sea off Algiers is consistently calm, and there is little or no rainfall. From July through November, the weather remains fairly good, but the sea becomes rough and at times stormy. Finally, from November to March, incessant rains make the climate highly unhealthy and the terrain exceedingly difficult for any military operation.

The expedition must therefore be undertaken in April—when the country also offers the greatest abundance of forage for men and horses—in order to complete it before the onset of bad weather. This condition is so vital that, if in 1830 the army could not be landed between April and May, I state frankly that the operation should be deferred to the following year.[31] In such an undertaking, nothing beyond the ordinary risks of war must be left to chance.

History itself reinforces these lessons. Two major expeditions against Algiers failed because they were launched in the wrong season:

- The first was in 1541, led in person by Charles V. Against the advice of Andrea Doria, he sailed from Sardinia in November, landed in the Bay of Algiers near Cape Matifou, routed the forces opposing him, and set up camp on the plateau where today's Fort de l'Empereur stands. But eight days later, he was forced to re-embark, as storms destroyed his supplies and munitions—at a moment when the Algerians were already considering surrender.
- The second expedition was that of 1775. The Spaniards, under the command of O'Reilly, landed on July 1 with 21,000 men in the bay near the mouth of the Araitch River. The sea was already rough, causing disorder during the landing, though it was carried out with determination. The Regency's troops were routed on all sides. However, the turbulent winds hampered communication between land and sea, leading to discord among the commanders. O'Reilly lacked firmness; the troops re-embarked, and the expedition failed.[32] [33]

**General Assembly Point**

Choosing the right season is not enough; it is equally crucial that the entire force depart and arrive together. Without this coordination, success will be impossible. It is therefore essential to designate a general assembly point for both the fleet and the army.

Under normal circumstances, Toulon would be the natural choice. However, given the current situation, a location closer to Algiers might be preferable. Since Spain is under French occupation, it would be advantageous to use the troops stationed there for the expedition—they are already battle-hardened and acclimatized.[34] If the occupation were to end, these troops would not be replaced. If it were to continue, they could be rotated out and replaced by fresh units that would in turn acclimatize.

Two ports appear equally favorable: Carthagena and Mahón.[35] The choice between these, or between Toulon and one of them, will depend on negotiations with the Spanish Court.[36] It should be noted, however, that Carthagena lies in a region with few resources and a frequently unhealthy climate, making Mahón and the Bay of Palma the preferable options—Mahón for the army and Palma for the fleet. In any case, a prompt decision is essential. If the assembly point were to be in Spain, specific preparations would be required, along with expenses that could be avoided otherwise.

**Miscellaneous Questions**

What forces should be allocated to such an undertaking? What expenses will it incur? What qualities must the expedition's commander possess? And what remains to be done once Algiers is taken? I will address these questions as succinctly as possible.

**An Army of 33,000 Men**

To capture Algiers, an army of 33,000 men will suffice, provided it is abundantly supplied. All provisions and munitions must be fully stocked. The proposed organization is as follows:
• 4 Infantry Divisions
• each with 4 regiments (2 battalions of 800 men each)
• total per division: 6,400 men
• total infantry: 24,600 men
• 1 Light Cavalry Division
• each regiment with 4 squadrons (150 men per squadron)
• total cavalry: 2,400 men (armed with sabres or lances; the latter are especially effective against Turks lacking bayonets)
• Artillery and Support
• 1 horse artillery battery
• 8 field artillery batteries on foot
• 1 mountain battery
• total artillery personnel: 1,000 men
• 1,500 logistics troops, 1,200 draft horses
• Engineers: 1,500 men

Grand Total: approximately 33,000 men (not including logistical staff, medical services, and administration).

**Troop Composition and Origins**

For the infantry:
• 2 divisions to be drawn from Cadiz
• 1 division from Barcelona
• 1 division to be formed in France from regiments at the Saint-Omer camp (1826–27) or, preferably, from units currently in Spain, already acclimatized to a climate similar to that of Algiers.[37]

For the light cavalry:
• reinforce the 3 regiments already in Spain with a 4th regiment selected from French light cavalry units experienced at Saint-Omer. These troops and their horses are already acclimatized.

**Various obligations arising from the situation**

I will not burden Your Majesty by detailing every necessity of the service. However, it is essential to note that the Minister of War will need to address particular requirements, stemming

from the expedition's unique nature, the terrain, the climate, and the current state of our supplies and military resources.

**Encampment**

The army will have to bivouac under tents, and all camping equipment will need to be created from scratch.

**Health of the troops**

The climate, exerting a strong influence on the men's constitutions, will require specific medical supplies and a carefully regulated diet, enforced with the discipline military service demands.

**Siege works**

As the terrain around Algiers includes bare rock in some areas, the army must be provided with a vast quantity of sandbags for constructing trenches and batteries.

Moreover, since the region lacks wood suitable for gabions, fascines, and blockhouses, large quantities of pre-prepared timber must be sent from France. Palisades and blockhouses will prove especially valuable against the type of enemy we are likely to face.

**Supplies**

Given the country's inability to sustain the army initially, everything necessary for two months' complete autonomy—including a permanent reserve—must be prepared in France or Spain and shipped in advance. Many items currently lacking in our arsenals will have to be manufactured before departure.

**Recruitment**

Finally, Sire, the regiments selected for the expeditionary army must be significantly reinforced. New recruits must be clothed, armed, equipped, and trained well before embarkation. To achieve this, immediate action is necessary to avoid being caught unprepared. Like the Minister of the Navy, I require a formal order from Your Majesty to begin preparations for which only five months remain.

**Coordination with the Navy**

It is equally vital, Sire, to stress that such an enterprise demands close coordination between the army and the navy. I must confer promptly with the Minister of the Navy to ensure that embarkation is organized in a way that guarantees the success of the landing. Troops must embark and land together—regiments with their brigades, brigades with their divisions—and each unit must have at hand its supplies and combat equipment. In short, the subdivisions of the fleet must mirror those of the army, so that upon reaching African shores, each force has

everything it needs to operate effectively.

**Cost**

It is difficult to calculate the exact cost of such an expedition. Experience shows that all overseas campaigns are enormously expensive. The Minister of the Navy has already estimated 30 million francs for troop transport alone. As for the army itself, excluding ordinary budgeted expenses and counting only extraordinary costs—material, campaign preparations, bonuses, pay increases, food supplies, and all other provisions—I estimate at least 40 million francs will be required from the moment Your Majesty gives the order until the capture of Algiers and the end of the year.[38] Future expenses will depend on Your Majesty's decisions regarding the conquest and the resources drawn from the captured territory.

**Qualities of the Expedition's Commander**

The chosen commander must be more than a capable general; he must possess extraordinary strength of character, decisiveness under pressure, and unwavering tenacity to face defenders who will fight desperately behind their walls. He will need strategic prudence, seizing opportunities without undue risk, and political acumen to sow discord among his enemies and govern effectively after victory.

Above all, he must inspire strict discipline, lead by selfless example, and endure with patience and even cheerfulness the hardships of siege and the hazards of a harsh climate. He must combine intellectual agility with moral courage, able to recover even from setbacks. If the conquest extends beyond Algiers, he must also demonstrate wisdom and foresight in organizing governance so that the population quickly recognizes the benefits of French rule. Like Desaix in Egypt, he should aspire to the noble title of "Just Sultan."[39]

**Completing the Conquest**

Once Algiers is taken, the army must entrench itself firmly, fortify the city, and use the remaining good weather to advance on Bona and Oran. If these cities resist, they can be forced into submission. The conquest will not be complete until Constantine falls. Should it not capitulate immediately, a campaign can be prepared for the following spring, using Bone as a base.[40] Meanwhile, efforts must be made to weaken local resistance and prepare the ground for swift success.

**Summary**

In short, Sire:
• The war against Algiers is already underway and must end honorably for France.
• The causes are just; the grievances are serious; the Dey offers no redress.
• Even if peace were improbably secured, Algiers would not keep its word—no more than it has

respected treaties with past French kings.
• Algiers survives by waging war on Christian commerce; for Europe to know peace, Algiers must perish.

The Navy is today powerless to punish Algiers. The last attempt by the English in **1824** provided clear proof of this.[41] Since then, the Algerians have further strengthened their coastal defenses.

A blockade would inflict little harm on the Dey and even less on the country itself. Difficult to maintain and impossible to make watertight, it would not prevent small corsair vessels from continuing to ravage our commerce over time. A land expedition is therefore indispensable.

The landing site is known. The operational plan is straightforward. The cost is moderate. Success can be regarded as certain if the attempt is made in the favorable season. But there is not a moment to lose; otherwise, we must abandon all plans for **1828**.[42]

External circumstances are decisive. Europe is at peace, and it is likely this state will hold through **1828**. But can we hope it will last much longer? Sound policy dictates that we seize this moment—perhaps the last—to undertake an operation that may later become impossible, and which we cannot abandon without remaining indefinitely exposed to fresh insults.

No power has yet intervened in this conflict, though it pits France against the enemy of all Christian states. Europe should applaud such a generous determination. And if, at the moment of execution, any jealous government dared to obstruct it, the very army intended to punish Algiers could be turned against that power to chastise its treachery.

Domestic circumstances also favor the expedition. Public opinion demands it. If the government does not act, it will have to explain why it chose to persist in a situation that wounds the nation's pride, commercial interests, and dignity. By contrast, if a glorious result crowns the enterprise, it will be no small advantage for the King to close Parliament's session with the keys of Algiers in his hand and to present them to France's deputies.[43]

For all these reasons, Sire, I implore Your Majesty, in the name of France's most vital interests, in the name of national honor, and in the name of your own glory, to take a decision. A decision that will avenge Christendom even as it redresses France's grievances; a decision that will serve the nation as much as it honors your reign; a decision that must otherwise be renounced—likely forever—if Your Majesty delays further.

I await the King's orders.

**Minister and Secretary of State for War**
**Signed: Clermont-Tonnerre**

Read in Council on October 14, 1827.
The King ordered to wait.

October 16, 1827.
Signed: Clermont-Tonnerre.[44]

## Notes

**1** **"Provoked … through the person of your consul."** Allusion to the **"fly-whisk" (fan) incident** of **29 April 1827**, when the Dey of Algiers **Hussein** struck the French consul **Pierre Deval**, triggering a French blockade and, ultimately, the 1830 expedition.

**2** **"Restoration."** The **Bourbon Restoration** (1814/15–1830); the memo's political frame is late in **Charles X**'s reign.

**3** **"Renew the Chamber of Deputies."** Under the **Charter of 1814**, the King could dissolve and re-elect the **Chamber of Deputies**, a lever with obvious domestic-political utility.

**4** **"Most recent treaty concerning Turkish affairs."** The **Treaty of London (6 July 1827)**, by **Britain, France, and Russia**, on the Greek question; it included a principle of **non-aggrandizement** vis-à-vis Ottoman territory—hence the author's effort to argue Algiers lay outside.

**5** **"Succeeding where Charles V failed."** Emperor **Charles V**'s **1541** expedition against Algiers was wrecked by storms and logistical failure after an initial landing near **Cape Matifou**.

**6** **"Tippoo Sahib." Tipu Sultan** of Mysore (r. 1782–1799), defeated and killed by the British and their allies in **1799**, after which **Mysore** was partitioned and subordinated.

**7** **"Burmese empire."** Reference to Britain's gains in the **First Anglo-Burmese War (1824–1826)**, culminating in the **Treaty of Yandabo**.

**8** **"Algiers is not truly part of the Ottoman Empire."** In practice, the **Regency of Algiers** functioned with wide **de facto autonomy** under Ottoman suzerainty: a local **dey** elected by the **Janissary** corps, a consultative **divan**, and only nominal authority for the Ottoman **pasha**.

**9** **"Baba-Ali Dey … expelling the pasha." Baba Ali Chaouch** (Bābā ʿAlī), an early-18th-century dey, is credited in French sources with consolidating the office and curbing the residual pasha's role, emblematic of Algiers's autonomy.

**10** **"Right to make war on Algiers."** French writers often argued that **Franco-Ottoman treaties** (capitulations and later conventions) did **not** bar France from independent war against the **Barbary regencies**, which maintained **separate diplomatic practice**—a legal-political claim useful to this memo's case.

**11** **"Pupil of Baraïctar."** The Sultan is **Mahmud II** (r. 1808–1839), politically linked to the reformist grand vizier **Alemdar Mustafa (Bayrakdar/Baraïctar)**, whose program culminated in the **1826 "Auspicious Incident"** abolishing the Janissaries and launching army reforms.

**12** **"Cape Lidhie … Cape Roux … Bastion de France."** Period toponyms on the Regency of

Algiers' littoral: the western limit near **Oujda** (close to today's **Cap de l'Eau/Three Forks** area) and the eastern near **La Calle/El Kala** (**Cap Rosa**), site of the French trading post known as the **Bastion de France**.

13 **"Lord Exmouth in 1816."** The British bombardment of **Algiers** under **Admiral Edward Pellew, Viscount Exmouth**, occurred on **27 August 1816** (not 1817), compelling a treaty to free European captives and curb slavery; enforcement proved uneven.

14 **"Renaud's design."** Reference to **Bernard Renau d'Eliçagaray** (also Renau), the French naval engineer who developed **bomb ketches** mounting large mortars—central to **Duquesne's** Algiers operations in the 1680s.

15 **"Casbah … fortress atop the city."** The **Casbah of Algiers** (Qasbah), the upper fortified quarter; after 1816 the Regency expanded **shore batteries** and strengthened the Casbah's role as command and treasury center.

16 **"Sir Harry Neale … 1823." Sir Harry Burrard-Neale**, a senior Royal Navy officer, led a coercive mission after a diplomatic affront to the British consul; contemporary British outcomes were limited and short of the maximal demands asserted in London.

17 **"Admiral Ruyter … 1670." Michiel de Ruyter**, Dutch admiral, is frequently cited in 17th–18th c. literature for arguing that a **prolonged naval siege of Algiers** was hazardous and strategically ineffective.

18 **Koulouglis.** *Kouloughlis* (Turk. *kuloğlu*), men of mixed Ottoman-Turkish and local ancestry; a distinct stratum in the Regency's forces and administration.

19 **Cassauba / Zouaouas.** "Cassauba" is an old spelling for the **Casbah** (upper fortified city). "Zouaoua" (Zwāwa) was a period term for **Kabyle** Berbers of the Tell Atlas; many served as auxiliaries but were not simply "paid Moors."

20 **Toise.** French measure ≈ **1.949 m**; thus **78 toises ≈ 152 m**.

21 **Sidi-Ferruch / Torre Chica.** The **Sidi Fredj** peninsula, c. **25 km SW of Algiers**; also called **Torre Chica** in early modern sources. It was the historical landing site chosen by the French in **June 1830**.

22 **Arbatach & Aratch.** Period spellings for the two rivers east of Algiers—corresponding to the **Oued Hamiz** and **Oued Harrach**, which empty into the Bay between the city and **Cap Matifou**.

23 **Métidja.** The **Mitidja** plain, a broad, fertile basin south of Algiers at the foot of the **Blidean Atlas**.

24 **Cape Gaxines / Pointe Pescade. Cap Caxine** (west of Algiers, lighthouse point) and **Pointe Pescade** (today **Raïs Hamidou**): coastal sector historically judged unsuitable for a major opposed landing.

25 **Kouko and Abbès.** Likely the **Kabyle polities of Koukou** (Jurf/Lower Djurdjura) and **Beni**

**Abbès** (in the Bibans/Kherrata region), noted for recurrent anti-Regency stances and occasional cooperation with **Spanish** expeditions.

**26** **"Numidians."** A classical label repurposed in 18th–19th-century French prose for **North African light cavalry**, evoking ancient Numidia rather than an exact ethnonym.

**27** **Fort de l'Empereur / Bordj Sultan.** The commanding landward fort southeast of the **Casbah**; controlling heights that the French made their principal objective in **1830**.

**28** **Fort des Anglais / Barbassou.** Period names for secondary works on Algiers's land front; "Barbassou" is often identified with the **Bab Azzoun** sector—spellings vary across French sources.

**29** **Beys and provinces.** The Regency's three inland provinces were **Constantine** (east), **Titteri** (Médéa highlands), and **Oran** (west), each ruled by a **bey** under the Dey of Algiers.

**30** **Marabouts.** Maghrebi **Sufi holy men**/saints and their shrine-networks, influential in communal mediation and local authority.

**31** **Dating note.** The memorandum (read **October 1827**) elsewhere urges action in **1828**; this reference to **1830** reflects either later marginal updating or a copyist's modernization.

**32** **O'Reilly, 1775. Alejandro (Alexander) O'Reilly**, Spanish commander, led the **July 1775** expedition against Algiers; initial success unraveled amid surf, supply, and command frictions.

**33** **"Araitch River."** Variant for the **Oued Harrach** (also "Aratch"), east of Algiers—site associated with several historical landings.

**34** **"Spain is under French occupation."** Refers to the French intervention of **1823** ("**Hundred Thousand Sons of Saint Louis**") restoring **Ferdinand VII**; French forces maintained an occupation presence into the later 1820s.

**35** **Carthagena / Mahón / Palma. Cartagena** (Murcia, SE Spain); **Mahón** (*Maó*) on **Minorca**; **Palma** on **Majorca**—all valuable assembly/anchorage points for a Western Mediterranean expedition.

**36** **"Spanish Court."** The Bourbon court of **Ferdinand VII**; use of Spanish ports depended on bilateral arrangements with Madrid.

**37** **Saint-Omer camp.** The **Camp de Saint-Omer** (Pas-de-Calais) was a large maneuver/training camp under the Restoration, used to concentrate and exercise line and light troops.

**38** **"30 million … 40 million francs."** Restoration-era budget magnitudes; transport costs fell under the **Ministry of the Navy**, while "extraordinary" army credits covered campaign matériel and stipends beyond peacetime appropriations.

**39** **"Just Sultan."** Allusion to **General Louis Desaix** (1768–1800), nicknamed **"Sultan el-Kebir / Sultan Just"** by Egyptian notables during the French occupation for comparatively equitable

administration.

**40** **Bona / Oran / Constantine. Bona** (today **Annaba**), **Oran** (major western Algerian port), and **Constantine** (fortified eastern capital)—the Regency's principal centers outside Algiers.

**41** **"English … 1824."** The text's date is off: the major British **bombardment of Algiers** under **Lord Exmouth** occurred **27 Aug. 1816**; later British coercive missions (e.g., **1823**) had limited effect.

**42** **"1828."** The memo's planning horizon; elsewhere it contemplates 1828 as the window for action and (in one passage) echoes a later copyist's "1830," the year of the actual French landing at **Sidi Ferruch**.

**43** **"Parliament's session … deputies."** France's legislature comprised the **Chamber of Peers** and **Chamber of Deputies** under the Charter; "Parliament" here is a rhetorical shorthand.

**44** **Clermont-Tonnerre. Aimé Marie Gaspard, marquis de Clermont-Tonnerre** (1779–1830), royalist statesman and former **Minister of War**; several Restoration-era Algeria memoranda are attributed to him. The dating and portfolio labels here reflect the document tradition and council minutes appended to copies.

*French troops on the beach at Sidi-Ferruch, June 14, 1830 by Pierre-Julien Gilbert.*

**Remarks in the Secret Committee of the Chamber of Deputies**

by Baron d'Haussez, Minister of the Navy.[1]

March 16, 1830

The war in Algiers has been controversial from every angle, but perhaps it has not yet been viewed in its proper light. This issue is too significant for you not to consider some points that, I believe, will help restore it to its rightful perspective. For centuries, France had held a large territory and an important settlement on the African coast, established to protect the coral fishing it conducted across more than sixty leagues.[2] Yet, starting with the Restoration, the Algerian government began, through both statements and actions, to show its intent to challenge this possession.

These actions include:
• The long-declared and eventually carried out plan to expel us from a French-held territory and destroy our settlements on the African coast;[2]
• The breach of our treaty-guaranteed rights to coral fishing;[2]
• The refusal to abide by international law and to stop a system of piracy that rendered the Regency of Algiers a threat to all ships sailing in the Mediterranean;
• Serious breaches of jointly agreed regulations with France regarding the inspection of ships at sea;
• The unilateral imposition of taxes and duties in defiance of treaty agreements;
• The looting of several French ships and two Roman ones, despite promises to respect those flags;[3]
• The forcible expulsion of the King's consul general from Algiers in 1814;[4]
• The invasion of the consular agent's residence in Rome in 1825;[5]
• And throughout all these events, a persistent intention to deprive us of our possessions, benefits of every kind, and hard-earned treaty rights, while shirking the obligations those treaties imposed.

Ultimately, it was a demand that led to the final break between the two nations.

A convention signed on October 28, 1819, between France and the Algerian firms Bacri and Busnach (and approved by the dey), fixed France's debt to these firms at 7 million francs.[6] Article 4 allowed French citizens who were themselves creditors of Bacri and Busnach to file claims with the Royal Treasury against this sum, up to the value of their demands. These claims were to be decided by the royal courts in Paris and Aix.[7]

French claimants submitted demands amounting to 2.5 million francs. As a result, 4.5 million francs were paid to Bacri and Busnach, and the balance was held by the Caisse des Dépôts et Consignations until French courts reached their decisions.[8]

During 1824 and 1825, these claims were under review by French royal courts. However, in

October 1827, the dey, growing impatient for the balance of the 7 million francs, sent a letter to the King's Foreign Minister. In it, he demanded the immediate transfer of the 2.5 million francs to Algiers and insisted that the French claimants appear before him to justify their demands.[9]

Baron de Damas, then serving as Foreign Minister, decided not to respond personally to such an inappropriate letter.[10] Instead, he instructed the consul general that the dey's demand was unacceptable, as it directly violated the October 28, 1819 convention. Under these circumstances, on April 30, when the consul general visited the dey—following custom—to offer greetings on the eve of Muslim celebrations, the dey angrily asked whether he had received a reply to his letter. When the consul answered that he had not, the dey struck him several times with a fly-whisk and ordered him to leave.[11]

When the King's government learned of this insult, it ordered the consul to leave Algiers. After his departure on June 15, the dey promptly instructed the governor of Constantine to destroy French establishments in Africa—most notably Fort La Calle, which was thoroughly looted and razed after the French forces evacuated it on June 21.[12]

It was at this point that the blockade began—a blockade which, ever since, has cost France over 7 million francs per year without yielding any results.[13]

In July 1829, realizing the failure of its repressive measures and contemplating stronger actions to end the conflict, the King's government decided it should first make one final effort with the dey. M. de La Bretonnière was dispatched to Algiers to present France's rightful claims directly to the dey in his palace. The dey rejected them outright. As La Bretonnière's vessel was preparing to leave port, the nearest coastal batteries opened fire simultaneously on his ship, following a signal from the dey's own castle. The shelling continued for half an hour until La Bretonnière's ship had sailed out of cannon range.[14]

This is the series of grievances, and this is the true picture of circumstances that now force the King to use the means Providence has given him: to defend the honor of his Crown, to protect the rights, property, and very safety of his subjects, and to finally liberate France and Europe from the triple scourge the civilized world can no longer endure—piracy, the enslavement of captives, and the tributes imposed by a barbaric state on all Christian nations.[15]

From this point, any idea of reconciliation was abandoned, and the King found himself compelled to turn to military strength to exact a vengeance that had previously been postponed for other reasons. The issue was no longer whether to go to war, but how to conduct it. In so grave a matter, the government was bound to act with the utmost caution and reflection. Having made its decision, it must now carry it out decisively and with vigor.

Gentlemen, you do not expect me to disclose details whose publication could jeopardize the success of the expedition. However, there are certain points I can share, and because they help correct assertions founded on inaccurate facts, I am eager to lay them before you.

Criticism of the planned expedition centers on three main points: insufficient time for preparations, the anticipated challenges of landing, and the uncertain prospects for the army's operations on land.

A few remarks should be enough to help you assess properly these fears, which stem—and understandably so—from the fact that those voicing them are not in a position to know the actual state of affairs.

More than anyone, Gentlemen, I wished for more time to manage the massive preparations required of my department. But, because of delays from other factors, the King's decision came so late that we had to rely on steadfast resolve and a refusal to be daunted by obstacles to achieve the likelihood of success that time would not necessarily have guaranteed—but would have made more convenient. I knew the skill and dedication of the officers and staff in my department, and I was confident they would answer the call. I have not been proven wrong. Preparations once expected to take six months will now be completed in just four, and the ships departing from the Atlantic ports will reach the Mediterranean in time for the fleet's planned assembly.[16]

The enthusiasm shown by the dedication of naval officers has also appeared among the rank-and-file sailors. Everywhere, recruitment has proceeded smoothly; the men brought in are already on board, and yet the government has still left enough sailors to meet the needs of commerce.

Some claimed that ship charters could not possibly meet the extensive logistical needs of this operation. That claim is as unfounded as the earlier ones.

Most of the required ships have already been secured in French Mediterranean ports, and the rest will be easily obtained—at more favorable terms than if sought abroad. Contracts signed with shipowners guarantee that these vessels will be ready by the first days of April.[17]

Now that preparations for the fleet's departure are in place, some question the ease—or even the feasibility—of landing. On this point, Gentlemen, I must restrain my desire to dispel all doubts. Doing so would mean revealing sensitive details: either disproving false assumptions or confirming accurate ones, which risks exposing our plans to the enemy. I trust you will understand and approve this discretion. You can draw confidence instead from the King's selection of capable officers to lead the expedition, from the commitment and experience of our land and naval forces, and from my assurance that no precaution has been overlooked—so that only the sea's inherent uncertainties remain beyond our control.

Some say that even after the landing, the war will be far from over. We do not deny it; but a strong army, fired with enthusiasm and inspired by memories and hopes of glory, will know how to meet the enemy it must fight. It would not be the first time French soldiers have faced African militias—and history has shown us what such encounters can bring.

Some have asked what the future of the State of Algiers will be after its conquest. I do not believe this is the right moment to address that issue. Until the event is accomplished, its

consequences cannot be foreseen precisely enough to make it a subject for public debate. And, Gentlemen, you will understand that it is impossible for me to set out a clear position on this matter at present.

People have also inquired whether the necessary funds will be sought from Parliament, whether contracts are being awarded competitively and transparently, and whether advance expenditures have already been made that could turn out to be wasted. I can and must lay these doubts to rest.[18]

The ministry will ask Parliament for the extraordinary funds required by the circumstances. But I can assure you these funds will fall far short of the figures proposed by some, who—lacking any solid basis for their calculations—have committed serious errors by estimating costs according to the scale of the results expected.

Contracts have been awarded openly and competitively; supplies were either taken from naval stockpiles or purchased in the usual way. Regarding ship charters, I invited shipowners from all Atlantic and Mediterranean ports. Where rates of 25 or even 30 francs per ton had first been demanded, I negotiated them down to 16 francs for French vessels and 13 francs for foreign ones.[19]

Admittedly, these rates—negotiated for the first charters—may increase for subsequent ones due to dwindling transport capacity and the sharp rise in commercial freight prices. However, I am confident that any additional costs will not greatly exceed my estimates and will certainly not reach the levels demanded in our Atlantic ports or in England. Competition has responded to our call, and I expect this will help drive prices back down.

Certain expenditures were made in advance—this was unavoidable, given the need to prepare for the expedition. But let there be no concern: these expenses will not have been in vain. They will lead to an expedition that brings glory to our forces and serves all of Christendom—avenging not only France's honor but also freeing Europe from the indignity of paying tribute to pirates and securing its maritime trade.

I will not dignify with a defense the odd accusation that the government sought permission from a foreign power to avenge the insult to the French flag. My sole response is outright denial—though the absurdity of the charge should suffice to discredit it. Like those who came before them, our young captains do not need, nor would they seek, a "road map" from any foreign state before marching to victory. To doubt this would be an insult; even hinting at such a doubt would be an extraordinary, and unwelcome, maneuver in a French assembly.[20] [21]

I will not take up more of your time, Gentlemen, with further elaboration on the expedition now in preparation. France's honor has long called for it, and the government has left nothing undone to ensure that it achieves both military glory and commercial benefit.

**Notes**

**1 Baron d'Haussez. Hyacinthe-Louis de Quélen, baron d'Haussez** (1784–1867), **Minister of the Navy and Colonies** under **Charles X** (1829–1830).

**2 Coral fishery & "French-held territory."** The long-standing French **La Calle / Bastion de France** concession near **El Kala** (eastern Algeria), a coral-fishing and trading enclave originating in the early modern period.

**3 "Roman" ships.** I.e., vessels sailing under the **Papal States** flag.

**4 1814 expulsion of the consul.** A Restoration-era rupture in relations; French accounts cite harassment/expulsion of the French representative in Algiers amid post-Napoleonic turbulence.

**5 "Consular agent's residence in Rome," 1825.** Incident in the **Papal States** involving the Algerine Regency and French representation; cited in Restoration polemics as part of a pattern of affronts.

**6 Bacri & Busnach.** Prominent **Jewish Algerian merchant house**, long creditors of France from provisioning contracts; the **1819 convention** settled outstanding claims at **7 million francs**.

**7 Courts at Paris and Aix.** Royal courts designated to adjudicate **French third-party claims** against the settlement fund.

**8 Caisse des Dépôts.** The **Caisse des Dépôts et Consignations** (founded **1816**), a French public financial body holding the residual **2.5 million francs** pending judgment.

**9 "The dey." Husayn (Hussein) Dey** (r. 1818–1830), ruler of the **Regency of Algiers**.

**10 Baron/Comte de Damas. Amédée, comte (often styled baron) de Damas** (1798–1862), senior royalist minister; portfolios varied under Charles X (Foreign Affairs, War).

**11 Fly-whisk incident.** The famous **"coup d'éventail"** (usually dated **29 April 1827**), when the Dey struck **French consul Pierre Deval**, precipitating the French blockade and, ultimately, the 1830 expedition.

**12 Fort La Calle.** The fortified **La Calle** post at today's **El Kala**, center of the French coral fishery; sacked after the rupture.

**13 Blockade costs.** The **French naval blockade of Algiers (1827–1830)**—expensive and strategically inconclusive in contemporary accounts.

**14 La Bretonnière mission (1829).** A last coercive-diplomatic attempt; **de La Bretonnière** was a French naval officer/envoy. The **Casbah** batteries' fire on his departing vessel was taken as a final insult.

**15 "Triple scourge."** Standard Restoration-era formula against the Barbary Regencies: **piracy**, **white slavery (captivity/razzias)**, and **tribute**.

**16 Atlantic ports to the Mediterranean.** Implies rapid assembly/transit via **Gibraltar** to

rendezvous with forces from **Toulon/Mediterranean** bases.

**17 Chartered shipping by April.** Routine Restoration practice: charter **French and foreign transports** (measured by freight per ton) to move men, animals, and stores for an overseas expedition.

**18 "Parliament."** Under the **Charter of 1814**, France's legislature comprised the **Chamber of Peers** and the **Chamber of Deputies**; "Parliament" is convenient shorthand for the two.

**19 "Frs per ton … charters."** These are **transport charters (affrètements)** paid per **register ton** of capacity; the Navy routinely hired private (including foreign-flag) transports for troop and supply lift.

**20 "Permission from a foreign power."** A jab at opposition press rumors that the ministry had sought **British** acquiescence before acting against Algiers—allegations the government publicly denied.

**21 "French assembly."** The minister is addressing the **Chamber of Deputies** in debate over the expedition's preparation and funding.

**Au Roi et aux Chambres, sur les véritables causes de la rupture avec Alger et sur l'expédition qui se prépare** (excerpts)

by Alexandre de Laborde (Député de la Seine).[1]

> "A just war is one that is necessary; and arms are pious when there is no hope left except in arms."
>
> — Livy, Book IX, ch. X.[2]

> "Kings must be careful about the wars they undertake. They must be just—but that is not enough: they must be necessary for the public good. The blood of the people should be shed only to save that same people in the most extreme need."
>
> — Fénelon, *Télémaque*, Book XVI.[3]

Truth penetrates with difficulty the walls of a palace and the formalities of court etiquette; but common sense circulates freely among the people, is welcomed everywhere, and today it says everywhere: before sacrificing thirty thousand men and sixty million francs, one must first know why, and then how.[4]

These are the two questions I intend to examine in this work, which I venture to address to the King and to the Chambers—the true and sole judges of this great cause.

Opposed as I was to the war in Spain, and favorable to the expedition to Greece, I have seen my predictions confirmed: the first of those wars stifled, in an absolute monarchy, the elements of civilization and liberty, while the second reestablished them forever in their ancient homeland.[5]

The war against Algiers, however, differs from both. It produces only a troubling astonishment, like something one cannot understand, whose cause and aim are sought in vain. But upon closer examination, one finds it unjust in origin, imprudent in its haste, fruitless in its results, and—in recent days—culpable and criminal in its execution.[6]

What? In the midst of a constitutional country—and during the recess of the Chambers, which could easily have been summoned two months earlier—a war that has been deferred for three years is suddenly improvised. Worse still: when those Chambers are in session, they are prorogued in order to avoid accounting to them for the reckless expenses being made before their very eyes. This is an unprecedented example in the annals of free governments—especially in that of England—and contrary to our own financial laws. It opens the way to a charge of *forfaiture* (breach of constitutional duty).[7] No doubt that charge will arise when the Chambers reconvene, even if a new Scipio were to say to us: "On such a day, I destroyed Algiers; let us give thanks to the gods."[8] The answer will be: the destruction of Algiers is not worth the loss of the least of our liberties, still less the infringement of our most cherished right.

France needs institutions, not conquests; a compact, free territory enriched by labor, not a

superfluous colony—in fact, not even a colony, for colonization will not be permitted. (I know for certain that a promise was made to the British government that as soon as Algiers was destroyed, the French army would withdraw. The ministry may deny it, as was done with the *cordon sanitaire* or the Army of the Faith; but the future will reveal the truth.)[9]

No sooner had news of this expedition spread than the crowd of men who cannot live without glory—*vitam sine Marte pati*—rushed to salons and to the Ministry of War, clamoring for posts.[10] What matter to them the fatigue? there will be dangers; what matter the privations? there will be honor. "Honor"—that magic word, often exploited by ambition and greed—will strip France of the flower of her youth and the last veterans of her armies.

And yet, how strange! When, not long ago, a less costly development of our forces along the Rhine alone might have won us provinces and restored part of our natural frontiers, no one stirred.[11] But today, the whole of France moves, like a gendarmerie on the march, to punish the slap of a pirate's fan—a pirate whose states we will not even be able to keep.[12]

A singular policy, a new way of viewing heroism and serving religion: to make an Iliad for a minister, and a crusade for contractors.[13] For glory is not the only divinity dispensing favors here; Fortune also holds court beside her, and on her brow shines again that radiant word, "supplies." But no longer the simple, commonplace supplies of food, fodder, and clothing; here it is a colonization of sixty thousand men—an entire mobile city, with its hospitals, magazines, and four months of provisions.[14]

The project-makers are rejoicing. The science of the laboratories will be exercised on the masses: some invent boats that run aground easily, ensuring a landing; a hundred newly designed carts roll out of the elegant workshops of Getting, as once the pontoons of Strasbourg for crossing the Bidassoa; and voilà, the supplies are transported to camp.[15] For greater speed, oats are bought in England and straw in Spain.[16] Economic cauldrons will make soup for the whole army from ox bones; another device will desalinate sea water; even artesian wells are planned for the African coast.[17]

One might think this a dream—but one is soon awakened, painfully, by the complaints of the whole country, which sees millions squandered on follies while its roads, canals, and ports have suffered neglect for years.[18] And all this at a time of political unease, when authority, standing on the threshold of its prerogatives, and the nation, at the limit of its rights, seem each to expect or fear a breach by the other in order to resist.[19] The hope is to calm all by tossing into this anxious atmosphere a bauble of glory—which would still be too dearly bought even if we could seize it.

Children, playing with the scythe of Death and the shears of the Fates, beware: these tools are sharp, and your hands are unskilled to wield them. A terrible responsibility weighs upon your heads—not the legal responsibility, which can be evaded when one wishes, and which no one dares fix for fear of limiting power—but that stern responsibility to public opinion, which is incurred by provoking contempt through blunders, and hatred through disasters.

…

Yes, without doubt, we may one day have to carry back to the African shore the standard of Saint Louis, to make the voice of Louis XIV resound there again. No one will accuse me—who said in the Chamber on 10 July 1829 that if necessity required, we should undertake this expedition, and that executed with prudence and sufficient force, it could not fail—of opposing what concerns the glory or safety of France.[20]

But before thus sacrificing treasure and the blood of our sons, which might be shed for a better cause—*quo graves Persae melius perirent*—we must be certain that no other means exist to end this miserable affair satisfactorily.[21] If, by some arrangement, the dey could be brought to make an open reparation—and my knowledge of the Turkish character persuades me it would be easy—then we should not hesitate. If otherwise, and we must accept this sad challenge, then at least let us neglect nothing to ensure success.

This expedition is not one to be improvised. Having studied the political question, I will now make some observations on the military one—without, however, indicating anything that might be of use to the enemy we must fight.

Of all the means available to punish the Regency of Algiers, as announced in the speech from the throne of 1827, the least effective has surely been the one employed: the blockade, now in its third year and costing France more than twenty million francs without result.[22]

If you stand too close inshore, you risk in a moment being driven onto the coast and smashed on the rocks. If you stand too far out, there is no blockade. Sailors have long noted this difficulty. In 1680, the celebrated Ruyter, writing to Conrad van Beuningen, the Dutch envoy in England, about combined measures against the Algerines, said:[23]

> I think the plan to keep the town of Algiers blockaded for a whole year by sea cannot be executed without great risk, because in winter, when the north winds strengthen and the seas rise, ships are too violently battered by the waves and breakers, which are dangerous because of the shallow water. One must always fear the perils to which even the Algerines themselves were exposed in December 1662, when they lost fourteen of their vessels and seven prizes, driven ashore by a strong north wind both inside and outside the mole.[24] And even if, notwithstanding this danger—which sometimes one might escape—we chose to take the hazard and, by a long blockade, forced the Algerines to sign a peace without destroying or greatly damaging their maritime forces, we may be sure they will keep the treaty only until they feel free to break it, as they have shown too often to France, England, and ourselves.

What this admiral said then, we have experienced these past three years—in a sad way. This

odious blockade, besides the loss of several Frenchmen massacred by Bedouins, has cost us one of our most distinguished seamen, the brave Collet, a man whose exploits crews recalled in the evening for inspiration.[25] Louis le Gros once said that the siege of some castle in the Beauce had aged him; it was the blockade of Algiers that wore out Collet with fatigue and anxiety, forcing him to contend ceaselessly with elements he could not master, under the gaze of enemies he could not strike.[26]

The previous ministry had felt the drawbacks of this measure and the need to prepare an expedition; but involved in the affairs of Greece, they had deferred it, though they studied the question and learned that a purely naval operation was now impossible—thanks to the new works with which the Algerines had fortified their seaward approaches, especially a new forty-gun fort of large calibre.[27] [28] Already, during Lord Exmouth's attack, the casemated batteries had resisted ten hours of uninterrupted fire from six ships of the line and seventeen frigates; the British had succeeded only by mooring unexpectedly close under cover of parliamentary immunity.[29] [30]

A bombardment of Algiers would likewise be useless today, as the houses are terraced and most protected from shells and Congreve rockets.[31] There remains only an attack from the land side—which, prepared long in advance and undertaken in a favorable season, could not fail, but which, if rushed and launched too late, could have disastrous consequences.

…

But all depends on the resistance of the masses coming down from the mountains and interior. At first, the whole army may have to remain united, or at least keep forces concentrated, to meet a decisive blow.[32]

The Algerian government is much like the old Ottoman janissary system: power resides in the militia, which elects the dey and other chiefs, and decides all matters in the divan with the mufti, the kiaia-agha, the kadi, and the corps commanders.[33]

The three provinces—Oran, Constantine, Titteri—are governed by beys drawn from the militia, appointed by the dey but soon independent in fact, paying him only taxes, much like the Ottoman pashas. They are Turks, surrounded by Turks, and thus aligned with the capital's militia.[34]

The Algerian army consists of:
1. Seven to eight thousand Turkish soldiers fit for duty;
2. Five to six thousand Koulouglis (of mixed Turkish and local descent) on the militia rolls;
3. Five to six thousand paid Moors, called zevourwachs or zouaouas;
4. Arab and Moorish tribes the beys can call up.[35] [36]

The first three groups form a garrison of about twenty thousand; the tribes are auxiliaries whose numbers are hard to gauge. Barberousse could muster about fifty thousand Moors and Arabs to defend Tunis in 1535 and 1541; only thirty thousand came to aid Algiers against Charles V. But

in 1775 and 1807, the numbers were far greater.[37] Reasonably, one may expect up to fifty thousand tribesmen to appear against the French—most mounted, poorly armed, and formidable only by their numbers, like so many Cossacks.[38]

A battle like those of Heliopolis or the Pyramids could disperse them; but they will not vanish. The taste for plunder, the country's poverty, and religious zeal will keep swarms of these new Cossacks hovering around the army, harassing communications, and trying to cut it off from the beachhead.[39]

…

If we take Algiers in the projected manner, we will be forced to evacuate it. We will have to destroy and abandon the fortifications that may have cost us dearly in men and money—works which, in our hands, could have become a second Gibraltar: already unassailable from the sea and easy to fortify on the landward side…. What is this fatality that leads our government always to make the sacrifice, and then to stop at the moment it could profit from it? We gave to Greece our armies, a fleet, and our money; and after thus securing her independence, we allowed England to place there a sovereign of her own choosing, while we withdrew our troops at the very moment they might at least have won us the blessings of the people.[40]

We spent four hundred million francs for Spain, and yet our influence there is so slight, our standing so low, that in this very war—which we are told is being waged for Christendom—the "Most Catholic" King refuses us any cooperation, or even the use of any place in his states for our troops, so as not to offend the Regency of Algiers, with which he has concluded a treaty later in date than our disputes with that Regency—a treaty he fears more to violate than to do anything to aid the ally who placed the crown on his head.[41]

Finally, France alone undertakes to fulfill the engagement, made by all the sovereigns, to destroy piracy—and the first thing required of her, and said to have been obtained from her, is that she draw no advantage from her own enterprise![42]

Why this shameful condescension on our part? Why this sort of servility even in the most disinterested and generous undertakings? It comes, I must say, entirely from our internal situation—from the cruel and unjust distrust which guilty men have inspired in a loyal and good sovereign toward the fidelity of his subjects; from this fear of revolution, which keeps him from throwing himself frankly into their arms, into their interests, into their preponderance; which channels all the efforts of government into a childish struggle against innocent liberties, against dear and harmless rights bought over the last fifteen years by unshakable loyalty, repeated sacrifices, and, one may say, even by marks of affection rarely shown by a people to their ruler.[43]

It is this unhappy misunderstanding that prevents the organization of a national force such as exists in Germany and England, that prevents our taking on a compact, solid attitude allowing us to dictate terms rather than receive them from abroad—that prevents us from claiming the full

share of power and glory to which France is entitled in the great European family.[44]

This digression is not foreign to the Algerian affair. Not only has England, we are told, exacted a promise that we evacuate the city after destroying it, but we may count ourselves lucky if the whole thing is not an embarrassment she has contrived for us; if secret maneuvers have not already made our operations more difficult; if the arrival at Algiers, just before the dey's refusal to M. de La Bretonnière, of two British warships had nothing to do with that refusal; if even now, gold is not circulating in the Atlas mountains, at the beys' courts, to stiffen their resistance. Mithridates and Tigranes, too, stirred up the pirates against Pompey.[45] [46] [47]

But no—in spite of England, in spite of the climate, in spite of our own imprudence—the expedition will succeed. It would have been better conducted and more assured had it been delayed until next spring; but while blaming its haste, let us applaud the ardor it inspires.

Ah! how different a spectacle the same fleet presented not long ago on these same shores, when it carried our battalions to the fields of Thermopylae and Marathon, to the aid of a people roused from a long sleep by the cry of liberty! "Come to Argos, to Mycenae," they seemed to say; "come gather the laurels of the Eurotas, wander on the banks of the Alpheus, and restore the city of Minerva." Today it is sad Nemesis alone who sits at the prow; Mars holds his lance reversed. This is a duty which honor must fulfill; it has but one merit—danger; our soldiers are content with that. Let us, then, unite with them; let no bitter thought mar the wishes we owe to their success. They are Frenchmen, they are our brothers, going to face the elements, the climate, and the barbarians; may Heaven protect them, and bring them soon, victorious, back to the soil of the fatherland.[48] [49]

…

Ministers of Foreign Affairs come and go in their gilded palace; they grant Europe elegant audiences, yet not one thinks to shake the dust from a treaty and find out for himself what he signs. And when, to pay out millions, to tear sons from their families, we ask only for explanations, we are met with inaccurate facts—and the Chambers are prorogued.[50]

But is this war just? No, assuredly not; I do not fear to say so—no. A political jury, a European congress, such as Henri IV dreamed of, would have judged otherwise. Their verdict would have been: the dey makes a claim, we rob him; he complains, we insult him; he gets angry, we kill him.[51] [52]

"Right or wrong, it is hard to miss condemning a scoundrel," says La Fontaine—but justice is not so simple.[53]

Aristotle says: "Nothing unjust should be undertaken, even if it would be useful to the fatherland." And if, contrary to that principle, one held that whatever is useful is therefore just, and judged a war not by its cause but by its outcome—even then, is this war useful? Is it advantageous for France to take Algiers, when she cannot hold it? Is such an operation worth the

men and money we are about to expend? Who could think so?[54]

Finally, since the war is neither just nor useful, is it at least legal? No more so—and here the question grows grave, for it touches our dearest rights. If, in the absence of the Chambers—even in their presence—the government can, under pretext of preparing for war, exceed the budget by a hundred million francs, and assemble an army, then representative government no longer exists.[55]

Even if the literal text of the Charter could be twisted to allow such a thing, there would still be a voice older and higher than the Charter—that of public morality and natural right. This voice would summon ministers to the bar of France and of humanity; it would tell them: "Varus, give me back my legions; Verres, give me back my treasure."[56] [57]

It would call as witnesses the mothers of these new Palinurus, left without a grave on a foreign shore; it would accuse the authors of this enterprise—even if it succeeded—of having deceived the King and the Chambers about rights that did not exist, about an insult that, from a barbarian, was more flattery than offence, indignus Caesaris ira; of having undertaken, in an unfavourable season and in violation of our rights, a war whose urgency and timeliness nothing proves; of being guilty, finally, of what Xenophon calls the greatest imposture of which a man can be capable—to persist in governing a country when one has not the ability.[58] [59] [60]

**Notes**

1. Alexandre de Laborde (1773–1842). Liberal deputy for the Seine under the Bourbon Restoration (1814–1830), antiquarian and publicist; a critic of the Algiers venture.

2. Livy. *Ab urbe condita*, Book IX, ch. 10; a topos on necessity as a ground for war.

3. Fénelon, *Télémaque*. A didactic novel (1699) urging just and necessary wars; widely cited in 18th–19th-c. political debate.

4. "Thirty thousand men … sixty million francs." Contemporary ballpark figures in parliamentary journalism for the 1830 expedition's scale and cost.

5. War in Spain / Expedition to Greece. Respectively: the 1823 French intervention in Spain ("Hundred Thousand Sons of Saint Louis") backing Ferdinand VII; and the French Morea expedition (1828–1833) aiding Greek independence.

6. Charge sheet. Laborde's fourfold indictment (injustice, haste, futility, culpable execution) frames his political case against the Algiers campaign.

7. Prorogation / *forfaiture*. The Crown's prorogation of the Chambers (parliament) amidst extraordinary military spending provoked claims of *forfaiture*—breach of constitutional duty under the Charter of 1814.

8. "New Scipio." Alludes to Scipio Aemilianus, destroyer of Carthage (146 BCE); here, a hypothetical conqueror of Algiers.

9. "Promise to evacuate" / *cordon sanitaire* / Army of the Faith. Opposition talking-point that ministers

privately assured Britain France would quit Algiers after destruction; Laborde pairs it with earlier contested commitments such as a Pyrenean *cordon sanitaire* and the ultraroyalist "Army of the Faith" in the 1820s.

10. "*vitam sine Marte pati*." Latin: "to endure life without Mars (war)." A jab at glory-seekers.

11. "Forces along the Rhine." Allusion to French nationalist hopes for "natural frontiers" on the Rhine—perennially debated in Restoration politics.

12. "Pirate's fan." The fly-whisk with which Husayn Dey struck the French consul Deval (1827), precipitating rupture; here trivialized as an unworthy casus belli.

13. "An Iliad for a minister … crusade for contractors." Satire of ministerial glory-seeking and war-contracting profits.

14. "Colonization of sixty thousand men." Hyperbolic image of the expedition's logistical tail (hospitals, magazines, multi-month supplies).

15. Strasbourg pontoons / Bidasoa. Evokes bridging materiel readied at Strasbourg for crossing the Bidasoa in the 1823 Spanish campaign.

16. Buying oats/straw abroad. Common logistics practice of the era—purchasing fodder where cheapest/closest to the theater.

17. Soup cauldrons / desalination / artesian wells. Contemporary techno-optimism: industrial field kitchens (à la Rumford), shipboard distillation, and artesian drilling touted as expeditionary fixes.

18. Domestic works. Opposition complaint that roads, canals, ports lagged while millions went to an overseas war.

19. Political unease. The Restoration's late-1820s Center-Right vs. liberal tensions, soon culminating in 1830.

20. "Chamber on 10 July 1829." Laborde had earlier said a well-prepared spring expedition could succeed—he now argues this one is hasty.

21. *"quo graves Persae melius perirent*." Latin lament ("where the proud/weighty Persians might better have perished")—a classicizing tag contrasting nobler causes; precise locus is debated in 19th-c. quotation anthologies.

22. "Speech from the throne of 1827." King Charles X's address to the Chambers (Nov. 1827) invoking the affront in Algiers and the recourse to coercion, followed by the French blockade (1827–1830).

23. Ruyter & van Beuningen. Admiral Michiel de Ruyter (1607–1676) wrote to diplomat Coenraad/Conrad van Beuningen on joint action against Barbary corsairs; frequently cited in 17th–19th-c. debates on Algiers.

24. December 1662 storm. Stock example in Dutch naval correspondence: a northeaster drove Algerine ships ashore "inside and outside the mole," underscoring the hazards of a close blockade.

25. "Brave Collet." A Restoration-era French naval officer associated with the Algiers blockade; invoked here as a casualty of the policy (contemporary polemical shorthand).

26. “Louis le Gros.” King Louis VI (r. 1108–1137), nicknamed le Gros; the Beauce siege quip was a common moralizing anecdote about the toll of prolonged operations.

27. Affairs of Greece. The French Morea expedition (from 1828) absorbed attention and resources while Algiers planning matured.

28. New seaward works / 40-gun fort. Refers to strengthened mole and harbor batteries at Algiers in the 1810s–1820s, including a heavy casemated position dominating the roadstead.

29. Lord Exmouth’s attack. Admiral Edward Pellew, 1st Viscount Exmouth, led the major bombardment of Algiers (27 Aug. 1816)—often misdated 1817 in French pamphleteering.

30. “Parliamentary immunity.” French *parlementaire* = flag-of-truce parley; the claim is that Exmouth exploited negotiations to moor unusually close before opening fire.

31. Congreve rockets. British incendiary rockets used in coastal bombardments; terraced flat-roof housing in Algiers reduced their destructive effect.

32. Mountain levies. I.e., Kabyle/Atlas highland tribes and interior auxiliaries whose massed descent could harry lines of communication.

33. Janissary system / offices. The divan (council); mufti (chief jurisconsult); kâhya/kiaia-agha (chief of staff/ministerial officer); kadi/qadi (judge).

34. Beyliks. The provinces (Oran, Constantine, Titteri) under beys nominally dependent on the dey; de facto autonomy typical of the Regency’s structure.

35. Koulouglis. Locally born sons of Turkish soldiers and indigenous women, a distinct estate within the Regency.

36. “Zevourwachs or zouaouas.” The Zwāwa/Zwawa (Kabyle) paid infantry contingents; French texts varied in spelling.

37. “Barberousse … Charles V.” Hayreddin Barbarossa and the Ottoman defense of Tunis (1535/1541); Charles V’s 1541 Algiers expedition failed amid storms.

38. “Cossacks.” Contemporary simile for irregular light cavalry—numerous, mobile, and troublesome rather than decisive.

39. Heliopolis / Pyramids. French victories in Egypt: Battle of the Pyramids (1798) and Battle of Heliopolis (1800), where disciplined squares routed massed cavalry.

40. Greece & a foreign sovereign. After intervention, the Great Powers installed Prince Otto of Bavaria as King of Greece (1832); French troops withdrew.

41. “Four hundred million for Spain” / Most Catholic King. Hyperbolic critique of the 1823 Spanish intervention cost and of Ferdinand VII’s reluctance to aid France against Algiers.

42. “Engagement … to destroy piracy.” Alludes to the post-Napoleonic concert rhetoric about suppressing Barbary piracy; Laborde claims France is told to gain no advantage.

43. Domestic distrust. Laborde’s liberal contention that internal political repression undermined national

cohesion and external leverage.

44. National force (Germany/England). Reference to robust Landwehr/militia systems and civic cohesion seen as lacking in Restoration France.

45. British "promise to evacuate." A recurrent opposition claim that ministers privately assured Britain France would quit Algiers after destruction; part of broader suspicions of British meddling in 1829–30.

46. La Bretonnière. French naval officer sent in July 1829 to present demands at Algiers; his ship was fired upon as it departed—a key prelude to the expedition.

47. Mithridates & Tigranes / Pompey. Mithridates VI of Pontus and Tigranes II of Armenia allegedly spurred Mediterranean piracy; Pompey crushed the pirates under the Lex Gabinia (67 BCE).

48. Greek *lieux de mémoire*. Thermopylae, Marathon, Argos, Mycenae, Eurotas, Alpheus, "city of Minerva" (Athens)—a classical set-piece recalling the recent French Morea expedition aiding Greek independence.

49. Nemesis / Mars' reversed spear. Mythic emblems of retribution and mourning/reluctant war, contrasting triumphal imagery with a sobering duty.

50. Prorogation revisited. Laborde's charge that the Crown prorogued the Chambers rather than debate costs and legal basis under the Charter of 1814.

51. Henry IV's "European congress." The Grand Design attributed to Henry IV (via Sully) imagined a concert of powers arbitrating disputes and suppressing piracy.

52. "The dey makes a claim … we kill him." Rhetorical summary of the Bacri–Busnach debt quarrel and ensuing fly-whisk affair (1827), escalated into war; "kill" dramatizes overturning the Regency.

53. La Fontaine. The line paraphrases a La Fontaine moralism about facile condemnation; cited here to warn against prejudging the dey.

54. Aristotle (paraphrase). A common early-modern maxim derived from Aristotle's Politics/Nicomachean Ethics: utility cannot justify injustice.

55. Budgetary control. Under the Restoration, extraordinary military outlays required Chambers' appropriation; Laborde argues executive overreach voids representative government.

56. "Varus, give me back my legions." Augustus's lament after Teutoburg Forest (9 CE), where Varus lost three Roman legions.

57. "Verres, give me back my treasure." Allusion to Cicero's prosecution of Gaius Verres, notorious for extortion as governor of Sicily.

58. Palinurus. Aeneas's helmsman in Virgil's Aeneid, lost at sea; emblem here for fallen sailors without burial.

59. "*indignus Caesaris ira*." Latin: "unworthy of Caesar's anger"—i.e., the affront (fly-whisk) should not have merited a war.

60. Xenophon. The aphorism is a paraphrase of Xenophontic themes (e.g., Hellenica, Cyropaedia) on

unfit leadership persisting in office.


*Taking of Algiers 1830 by Céréghetti*