

**Peer-reviewed academic journal**

**Innovative Issues and Approaches in  
Social Sciences**

**IIASS VOLUME 19 (2026)**

## **Innovative Issues and Approaches in Social Sciences**

IIASS is a double blind peer review academic journal published 3 times yearly (January, May, September) covering different social sciences: political science, sociology, economy, public administration, law, management, communication science, psychology and education.

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IIASS has started as a Sldip – Slovenian Association for Innovative Political Science journal and is being published by ERUDIO Center for Higher Education.

### **Typeset**

This journal was typeset in 11 pt. Arial, Italic, Bold, and Bold Italic; the headlines were typeset in 14 pt. Arial, Bold

### **Abstracting and Indexing services**

COBISS, International Political Science Abstracts, CSA Worldwide Political Science Abstracts, CSA Sociological Abstracts, PAIS International, DOAJ, Google scholar.

### **Publication Data:**

ERUDIO Education Center

Innovative issues and approaches in social sciences, 2026,  
vol. 19

ISSN 1855-0541

**Additional information:** [www.iiass.com](http://www.iiass.com)

# ALGERIA–SLOVENIA RELATIONS: ANALYZING POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC DYNAMICS THROUGH SMALL AND MEDIUM STATES DIPLOMACY

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## **Abstract**

The aim of this paper is to examine Algeria–Slovenia bilateral relations through the lens of small and medium states diplomacy, focusing on how both countries navigate structural asymmetries in the international system. Methodologically, the analysis employs the Marginalization Model to explain the peripheral positioning of small and medium states, while also integrating the concept of Strategic Niche Diplomacy to capture their agency. The results show that, despite limited material resources and bargaining power, Algeria and Slovenia manage to exert strategic influence through selective engagement, coalition-building, and multilateral participation. Their niche strategies—Algeria in energy, regional security, and infrastructure; Slovenia in technological innovation, space sciences, and pharmaceuticals—enable both states to transform structural constraints into diplomatic leverage. Historical milestones, such as early diplomatic recognition, the establishment of resident embassies, and high-level visits, further demonstrate the institutionalization of bilateral ties. Overall, the findings highlight that small and medium states can overcome marginalization through proactive, capacity-driven diplomacy, providing a model of resilient and adaptive foreign policy in regional and global affairs.

**Keywords:** Algeria, Slovenia, Small State, Medium State, Marginalization Model, Niche Diplomacy.

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## Introduction

The bilateral relations between Algeria and Slovenia offer a compelling example of how medium and small states navigate the complex architecture of international relations, balancing constraints imposed by geography, historical legacies, and structural asymmetries in power. Algeria, as a medium-sized African state with considerable regional influence, and Slovenia, as a small European state strategically positioned within the European Union, exemplify the diverse approaches that states with limited global leverage adopt to secure political, economic, and strategic objectives. Despite differences in regional contexts and historical trajectories, both countries have demonstrated a sustained interest in establishing diplomatic, economic, and multilateral linkages, reflecting broader dynamics that characterize interactions among small and medium states globally.

This study situates Algeria-Slovenia relations within the theoretical framework of Small State Diplomacy and Medium State Strategies, a perspective that emphasizes the mechanisms through which states with limited material capabilities and constrained geopolitical influence seek to optimize their international standing. The framework underscores that such states do not operate solely as passive actors within the global system; rather, they employ deliberate strategies-ranging from niche diplomacy, coalition-building, multilateral engagement, to targeted economic partnerships- to safeguard sovereignty, maximize benefits, and mitigate vulnerabilities. By applying this framework, the study examines how Algeria and Slovenia have calibrated their foreign policies and bilateral interactions to navigate asymmetric international structures while advancing national interests.

The primary objectives of this paper are threefold. First, it seeks to identify and analyze the political, economic, and strategic dimensions of Algeria-Slovenia relations, situating them within a broader comparative context of small and medium state diplomacy. Second, it investigates the specific strategies, instruments, and diplomatic tools employed by both countries to enhance bilateral cooperation, including political consultations, economic agreements, and participation in multilateral institutions. Third, it evaluates the explanatory power of the small and medium state framework in understanding the successes, limitations, and adaptive behaviors observed in this bilateral relationship.

In doing so, the study not only contributes to a nuanced empirical understanding of Algeria-Slovenia relations but also advances

theoretical discussions concerning the operational capacities, strategic calculus, and diplomatic agency of small and medium states. The analysis draws upon a triangulation of sources, including official government statements, bilateral agreements, trade and investment data, and secondary scholarly literature, thereby providing a comprehensive and methodologically robust assessment. Ultimately, this research demonstrates that even states with relatively constrained capabilities can exert influence, pursue strategic objectives, and cultivate mutually beneficial relationships, provided that their foreign policy is informed by coherent strategies, adaptive mechanisms, and an understanding of structural opportunities and limitations within the international system.

This study adopts a comparative–explanatory case study design to examine the dynamics of Algeria–Slovenia relations within the broader framework of small and medium state diplomacy. The comparative element stems from analyzing the bilateral behavior of two asymmetrical actors- Algeria, a regional medium state in North Africa, and Slovenia, a small EU member state- while the explanatory component seeks to account for how structural constraints and strategic agency interact in shaping bilateral outcomes.

The research relies on both primary and secondary sources:

- Primary data: include official government statements, bilateral agreements, embassy communiqués, and records of high-level visits drawn from Algerian and Slovenian diplomatic channels.
- Secondary sources: consist of peer-reviewed academic literature on diplomacy and international relations, as well as reports and policy analyses produced by regional and international organizations.

This combination of sources ensures both empirical grounding and theoretical depth, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the Algeria–Slovenia relationship within broader regional and global contexts.

### **Theoretical Framework: Diplomacy of Small and Medium States**

The study of small states and medium states in international relations has undergone a profound conceptual transformation. Early scholarship, particularly within realist and structuralist traditions, tended to portray these actors as passive participants, constrained by the hierarchical dynamics and power disparities of the international system (Keohane, 1969: 296). Subsequent research, however, has shifted toward recognizing these states as capable

agents that actively deploy diplomatic, economic, and normative strategies to navigate systemic complexities. This agency manifests despite inherent material limitations, as smaller actors exploit institutional frameworks, coalition politics, and niche specialization to amplify their influence. A pivotal analytical lens in this regard is the marginalization model, which underscores how structural asymmetries constrain—but do not predetermine—the scope of their strategic behavior, allowing room for creative adaptation and policy innovation.

### **Defining Small and Medium States**

The classification of actors as “small” or “medium” states in international relations represents a complex and multidimensional challenge, shaped by both material capacities and systemic interactions. Early analyses largely relied on quantitative metrics, such as population size, gross domestic product (GDP), and military capacity, to distinguish these actors from great powers. For instance, the Commonwealth Secretariat identifies small states as those with fewer than 1.5 million inhabitants (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2022: 5), whereas the United Nations Forum of Small States considers populations under 10 million (United Nations Forum of Small States, 2022). Limited economic and military resources, moreover, constrain these states’ capacity to act unilaterally in domains such as security, trade, and diplomacy (Keohane, 1969: 297). While these metrics provide a useful starting point, an exclusive reliance on them risks oversimplifying the complex realities of small and medium state behavior.

A more nuanced understanding requires attention to relational and contextual factors, which recognize that a state’s influence is relative to its environment rather than absolute indicators. For example, a country may be small relative to a neighboring great power despite a moderate population or economy, highlighting that systemic position and regional dynamics strongly shape perceptions of smallness (Thorhallsson, 2012: 142). Relational approaches emphasize that smallness is not a static attribute but a condition constructed through power asymmetries, geographic proximity, and interactions with dominant actors. Luxembourg’s integration into European institutions exemplifies how relational positioning can amplify influence beyond demographic or economic constraints. This aligns with argument that small states can offset material limitations by embedding themselves in cooperative regional frameworks, thus transforming vulnerability into a platform for policy influence (Katzenstein, 1985: 30).

Medium states occupy an intermediary space between great powers and small states, demonstrating how moderate material capacities can be leveraged through strategic engagement. States such as Canada, Australia, and South Korea exemplify medium states, amplifying their influence through coalition-building, proactive multilateral engagement, and issue-specific diplomacy (Cooper and Shaw, 2009: 16). By leveraging normative leadership, expertise in international institutions, and targeted advocacy, these countries secure a voice in global governance that exceeds expectations based on size alone. Eduard Jordaan's distinction between "traditional" and "emerging" medium states underscores that such actors may differ not only in material capabilities but also in their normative agendas, with emerging medium states (e.g., Brazil, South Africa) often combining reformist objectives with regional leadership ambitions (Jordaan, 2003: 170–171). Medium States often act as mediators or agenda-setters in multilateral forums, illustrating that influence is as much a function of strategic positioning as of material power.

At the opposite end, micro-states—including Vatican City, Monaco, and Nauru—demonstrate that minimal populations and territorial extents do not preclude meaningful international influence. These states often cultivate niche expertise in domains such as finance, humanitarian advocacy, conflict mediation, and specialized diplomacy (Thorhallsson and Wivel, 2006: 653). By concentrating resources and capabilities in highly targeted areas, micro-states convert structural limitations into leverage, achieving international visibility and credibility disproportionate to their size. Their strategies often rely on strategic alliances, symbolic roles in international organizations, and normative authority, underscoring that smallness can be mitigated through ingenuity and specialization. This reflects Long's tripartite framework of intrinsic, derivative, and collective power, wherein small and medium states amplify their agency by exploiting unique domestic assets, aligning with stronger actors, and pooling influence through coalitions (Long, 2017: 190–191).

Adding further complexity, small state and medium state identity is shaped by subjective and intersubjective dimensions. Recognition by other states and international actors contributes to a state's perceived status, which in turn influences both its external diplomatic interactions and internal policy orientation (Thorhallsson, 2012: 151). This intersubjective recognition affects access to forums, invitations to coalitions, and the legitimacy of normative or specialized initiatives. Consequently, the strategies of these states are influenced

not only by material constraints but also by reputation, perception, and the expectations of larger powers. This constructivist lens is particularly relevant in Global IR perspectives, where Charalampos Efsthopoulos (2023: 334) emphasizes the plurality of medium state identities and their adaptability across issue areas.

Historically, the conceptualization of small and medium states has evolved alongside shifts in global power structures. During the colonial and early post-colonial periods, these actors were often characterized primarily by vulnerability and dependence. The Cold War introduced new opportunities for agency through alignment with either bloc, while post-Cold War globalization and multilateral institutionalization expanded avenues for small and medium states to exert influence through normative leadership, specialized diplomacy, and issue-based engagement (Hey, 2003: 9). Jordaan's work shows that this evolution has produced a more fluid understanding of "middleness," shaped by changing systemic configurations and domestic transformations (Jordaan, 2003: 178).

Understanding these dimensions is critical for analyzing the strategic behavior of small and medium states. While limited in absolute terms, these actors often employ innovative strategies—such as niche diplomacy, coalition-building, soft power projection, and multilateral engagement—to compensate for structural limitations. A nuanced appreciation of their heterogeneity underscores that influence in international relations is not determined solely by size or resources but also by strategic creativity, relational intelligence, and the ability to exploit systemic opportunities (Long, 2017: 203).

In sum, small and medium states occupy a complex, multi-layered space in global politics, where material capacity, relational positioning, normative authority, and strategic ingenuity converge to shape diplomatic behavior. Their classification cannot be reduced to numerical thresholds; instead, it requires an integrative understanding of structural constraints, relational dynamics, historical evolution, and adaptive strategies. By recognizing these dimensions, scholars and policymakers can more accurately assess the potential influence of smaller and medium actors in the international system.

### **The Marginalization Model: Strategies and Agency of Small and Medium States**

The marginalization model constitutes a central theoretical framework for understanding the behavior and strategies of small states and medium states in the international system. It posits that these actors often occupy peripheral positions in global decision-

making processes, primarily due to structural asymmetries in power, resources, and influence (Thorhallsson, 2012: 50). Unlike great powers, which largely define and enforce the rules and norms of the international order, smaller states must navigate systemic constraints while identifying creative avenues to pursue and assert their national interests. This peripheral positioning does not imply passivity; rather, it shapes the strategic environment in which these actors operate.

At the heart of the model lies structural asymmetry, referring to the inherent imbalances in economic, military, and institutional capabilities between small or medium states and dominant global actors. These asymmetries manifest in multiple ways: limited leverage within international organizations, reduced bargaining power in diplomatic negotiations, heightened vulnerability to coercion, and dependence on external resources (Keohane, 1969: 28; Baldursson and Steinsson, 2015: 230). Understanding these constraints is essential, as they delineate the boundaries within which smaller states can exercise agency and formulate foreign policy strategies.

Despite these disadvantages, small and medium states often exhibit strategic adaptation. Rather than competing directly with great powers, they employ nuanced strategies to maximize influence within constrained environments. These include forming selective alliances, actively engaging in multilateral forums, and strategically deploying soft power—from cultural diplomacy to humanitarian engagement and issue-specific expertise (Cooper and Shaw, 2009: 18; Long, 2017: 188). Such mechanisms enhance their visibility, credibility, and bargaining capacity, demonstrating that influence is not determined solely by material resources.

Agency and autonomy remain central to the marginalization model. Small and medium states retain discretion in setting diplomatic priorities, selecting partners, and coordinating domestic and foreign policies to reinforce international standing (Thorhallsson, 2012: 53). This autonomy enables them to exploit policy niches or act as mediators in disputes where larger powers have limited direct stakes—an approach reflected in Jordaan’s (2017) distinction between “traditional” medium states, which reinforce the existing order, and “emerging” medium states, which use their agency to pursue reformist agendas.

A particularly salient form of strategic adaptation is niche diplomacy, whereby small and medium states concentrate efforts in specialized policy areas where they can exert disproportionate influence. Domains such as environmental governance, human rights

advocacy, peacekeeping, and conflict mediation provide platforms for gaining recognition and legitimacy on the international stage (Baldursson and Steinsson, 2015: 235). Long's (2017) tripartite framework—intrinsic, derivative, and collective power—further explains how such actors amplify their impact by leveraging unique domestic strengths, aligning strategically with stronger partners, and pooling influence through coalitions. The marginalization model identifies several proactive strategic responses:

- Multilateral Engagement – Actively participating in international and regional organizations to shape norms, set agendas, and influence decision-making (Cooper and Shaw, 2009: 25).
- Coalition Building – Forming alliances with like-minded states to pool resources, amplify bargaining power, and present unified positions in negotiations (Keohane, 1969: 30).
- Soft Power Utilization – Leveraging cultural, normative, and economic instruments to shape perceptions and gain influence (Long, 2017: 191).
- Issue Linkage – Connecting national priorities with broader global concerns to attract support and integrate into multilateral frameworks (Baldursson and Steinsson, 2015: 237).

Historically, the marginalization model underscores a shift from viewing small and medium states as passive actors toward recognizing them as proactive participants in global governance. During the colonial and early post-colonial periods, structural constraints entrenched dependency on external patrons. The Cold War opened new avenues for maneuver through bloc alignment, while the post-Cold War era—characterized by globalization, multilateralism, and norm-driven diplomacy—expanded opportunities for these actors to exercise creative influence (Efsthopoulos, 2023). These shifts illustrate that the strategies highlighted by the marginalization model are dynamic, historically contingent, and context-sensitive.

Building on the insights provided by the marginalization model, it becomes analytically useful to foreground the dynamic interplay between structural constraints and agency. While the model delineates the peripheral positioning of small and medium states in the international system—highlighting their relative scarcity of material resources, limited bargaining leverage, and susceptibility to coercion—it simultaneously underscores their capacity to exercise deliberate agency within these confines. This dual perspective allows

for a nuanced understanding of how smaller actors navigate systemic asymmetries: they are constrained by the overarching architecture of global power yet retain discretion in shaping strategic priorities, selecting partners, and exploiting policy niches. By explicitly framing the analysis in terms of structural constraints versus agency, one can better interpret the proactive strategies employed by these actors, from coalition-building and multilateral engagement to niche diplomacy and issue linkage. In this sense, the structural-agency lens complements the marginalization model by providing a conceptual bridge between systemic limitations and the innovative maneuvers through which small and medium states assert influence on the international stage.

In conclusion, the marginalization model challenges traditional realist and structuralist assumptions that equate influence exclusively with material power. It demonstrates that small states and medium states can exert meaningful influence through strategic adaptation, agency, niche specialization, and the intelligent exploitation of systemic opportunities. Influence, in this conceptualization, is multidimensional and relational, shaped by both structural realities and the capacity to innovate within them (Thorhallsson, 2012: 55; Jordaan, 2017). As such, the model offers a robust analytical lens for interpreting the complex behavior of smaller actors in international relations.

### **Strategic Niche Diplomacy as an Analytical Lens**

Building on the marginalization model, strategic niche diplomacy constitutes a focused and deliberate framework through which small and medium states transform structural constraints into actionable influence in the international system. While the marginalization model highlights the peripheral positioning of these actors—emphasizing their relative scarcity of material resources, limited bargaining leverage, and susceptibility to coercion—niche diplomacy operationalizes agency by identifying sectors where these states possess unique comparative advantages or specialized expertise (Baldursson and Steinsson, 2015: 235).

At its core, niche diplomacy rests on the principle of selective engagement. Small and medium states strategically choose policy arenas where they can exert disproportionate influence relative to their size. This includes focusing on issue areas such as:

- Energy and infrastructure diplomacy, where resource-rich states leverage hydrocarbons or critical logistics networks to influence regional or global markets;

- Technological and scientific innovation, including ICT, space sciences, and pharmaceuticals, where states compensate for limited territorial or military power with knowledge-based capacity;
- Environmental governance and climate policy, which allow states to shape norms and multilateral agendas through technical expertise or moral authority;
- Conflict mediation and peacekeeping, where smaller states can serve as neutral facilitators, providing legitimacy and trust in multilateral negotiations;
- Human rights advocacy and normative diplomacy, enabling states to gain recognition and moral leverage within international institutions (Thorhallsson, 2012: 53; Cooper and Shaw, 2009: 25).

The effectiveness of niche diplomacy lies in its ability to concentrate diplomatic, economic, and technical resources on carefully chosen domains, thereby amplifying impact and visibility. Unlike broad-spectrum foreign policy strategies, this approach emphasizes quality and strategic depth over breadth, allowing smaller states to overcome structural asymmetries while maintaining a credible international presence.

From a methodological perspective, niche diplomacy bridges the structural-agency divide. It provides a conceptual lens to analyze how small and medium states convert limitations into influence through targeted interventions, coalition-building, and selective multilateral participation. By doing so, it complements the marginalization model, offering concrete mechanisms through which agency is exercised: forming alliances in specialized sectors, leveraging domestic strengths, aligning with stronger partners, and linking national priorities to global agendas.

Historically, niche diplomacy has been instrumental in the evolution of small and medium state behavior. During the Cold War, states like Sweden, Canada, and Algeria developed niches in peacekeeping, development aid, and energy diplomacy to enhance global relevance despite limited conventional power. In the post-Cold War era, the acceleration of globalization, multilateralism, and norm-driven governance has further expanded the potential domains for niche specialization, enabling smaller actors to gain visibility and legitimacy in global policy-making (Efstathopoulos, 2023).

In conclusion, strategic niche diplomacy offers a dynamic, actionable, and empirically observable framework that complements the marginalization model. While the latter explains the constraints and

peripheral positioning of small and medium states, niche diplomacy elucidates how these actors exercise agency, optimize comparative advantages, and secure influence in targeted arenas. Together, the two frameworks provide a comprehensive analytical toolkit to understand the nuanced, multidimensional behavior of smaller states in the international system, highlighting both the limits imposed by structure and the opportunities created through strategic specialization.

### **Algeria–Slovenia: Political and Diplomatic Evolution**

The diplomatic relations between Algeria and Slovenia are grounded in a historical trajectory marked by mutual recognition, progressive institutionalization, and strategic engagement. Following Slovenia's declaration of independence in 1991, Algeria was among the first countries to extend formal diplomatic recognition in 1992, signaling both support for Slovenia's sovereignty and Algeria's proactive approach to emerging European states. This early recognition established a foundation of trust and mutual legitimacy, a critical prerequisite for sustained political and economic engagement. Formal diplomatic relations were subsequently established in 1992, enabling structured political dialogue and creating avenues for bilateral cooperation. However, for decades, the relationship remained largely symbolic, with limited resident diplomatic presence and primarily mediated interactions through international forums (internet 1).

A major milestone was achieved in May 2024, when Slovenia inaugurated its embassy in Algiers, followed by Algeria's opening of its embassy in Ljubljana in August 2024. The establishment of these permanent missions represented a historic evolution from non-resident diplomatic accreditation to full ambassadorial representation, reflecting a commitment to deeper political, economic, and cultural engagement (Achour, 2025). The reciprocal embassy openings also allowed both states to institutionalize bilateral consultations, facilitate high-level exchanges, and better coordinate positions on regional and global issues.

High-level visits have further reinforced diplomatic ties. The 2025 official visit of President Abdelmadjid Tebboune to Slovenia symbolized not only the consolidation of political relations but also the maturation of bilateral diplomacy. During this visit, both countries emphasized convergence on key regional and global issues, including migration management, regional security, and multilateral cooperation. Strategic agreements covering energy and higher

education cooperation were signed, marking a new phase of partnership (Kavcic, 2025).

These historical milestones illustrate a gradual but deliberate trajectory from formal recognition to structured political presence, culminating in active bilateral and multilateral engagement. Each step reflects both countries' strategic calculation: Algeria asserts influence and cultivates partnerships beyond North Africa, while Slovenia leverages its EU membership to foster relations with African states. Collectively, these developments demonstrate how historical decisions, symbolic gestures, and institutional establishment collectively shape the foundation and resilience of Algeria–Slovenia diplomatic relations (Achour, 2025).

### **Alignment and Divergence in Algeria–Slovenia Foreign Policy**

Algeria and Slovenia exhibit both convergence and divergence in their foreign policy approaches, reflecting differences in regional context, strategic priorities, and capacities. Alignment is most pronounced in global and multilateral domains, where both countries seek to project influence through international institutions. Both Algeria and Slovenia are committed to promoting peace and security, supporting United Nations peacekeeping missions, and advocating for multilateral solutions to conflicts. They also share interests in human rights promotion, environmental sustainability, and climate action, often coordinating positions in relevant UN committees (Internet 2).

Divergence primarily arises in regional and bilateral policy domains. Algeria focuses on North African and Sahelian security, counterterrorism, energy diplomacy, and regional integration within Africa (Shiferaw, 2019: 3-6), whereas Slovenia emphasizes European Union integration, adherence to EU regulatory frameworks, Central European economic cooperation, and neighborhood policy within the EU context (Fenko and Svetličič, 2017: 15-20). These differences necessitate strategic adaptation, whereby both states selectively engage in arenas where they can maximize influence while safeguarding national interests. The table below summarizes the key areas of alignment and divergence in Algeria–Slovenia foreign policy:

**Table 1. Areas of Alignment and Divergence in Algeria–Slovenia foreign policy**

Policy Area	Alignment	Divergence
Peace & Security	Support for UN peacekeeping, conflict mediation, anti-terrorism norms	Regional focus differs : Algeria prioritizes Sahel/North Africa, Slovenia EU/Europe-centric
Human Rights	Advocacy in UN forums, gender equality initiatives, protection of civilians	Implementation and regional focus vary, particularly in EU vs. African context
Multilateralism	Promotion of multilateralism, active participation in UN, African–European dialogue platforms	Strategic emphasis differs: Algeria on African initiatives, Slovenia on EU-mediated processes
Migration & Refugee Policy	Shared interest in managed migration, refugee protection, humanitarian support	Algeria faces regional migration pressures in Sahel ;Slovenia focuses on EU external borders
Energy Diplomacy	Interest in energy security at multilateral level	Algeria actively exports hydrocarbons and engages in African energy policy; Slovenia mainly relies on EU energy framework
Economic & Trade Cooperation	Support for bilateral economic agreements	Algeria prioritizes African regional integration; Slovenia emphasizes Central European economic networks
Regional Integration	Both support regional stability and cooperative frameworks	Algeria: African Union and Sahel cooperation; Slovenia: EU integration and neighborhood policy

Source: based on Algeria Ministry of Foreign Affairs ([www.mfa.gov.dz](http://www.mfa.gov.dz)), Government of Slovenia – Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs (<https://www.gov.si/en/state-authorities/ministries/ministry-of-foreign-and-european-affairs/>), (Achour, 2025) and (Kavcic, 2025).

This table illustrates how Algeria and Slovenia balance cooperation in areas of shared interest with selective differentiation in regionally-specific policies, allowing both states to exercise agency and maximize influence despite structural asymmetries. Divergences are

managed through careful strategic adaptation, while convergence in multilateral platforms reinforces diplomatic leverage and political alignment.

### **Multilateral Engagement and Niche Diplomacy in Algeria–Slovenia Relations**

Multilateral engagement and niche diplomacy constitute complementary mechanisms through which Algeria and Slovenia navigate structural asymmetries in the international system while maximizing their political influence. Given differences in regional scope, capacities, and strategic priorities, both states carefully select international arenas and specialized sectors where they can exert meaningful impact.

Algeria and Slovenia participate in a wide range of multilateral platforms, leveraging these forums to advance national and regional objectives, coordinate on global challenges, and enhance their diplomatic visibility. Algeria, as a medium-sized state with significant influence in North Africa and the Sahel, channels its engagement through the United Nations, the African Union, and African–European dialogue forums, focusing on peacekeeping, counterterrorism, and energy diplomacy (Sour, 2022: 164.). Slovenia, as a small European state embedded in the EU, prioritizes participation in EU-mediated initiatives, the European Neighborhood Policy, and UN committees, emphasizing governance, human rights, and migration management (Zupančič and Hribernik, 2011:38-41).

A key feature of both countries' multilateral engagement is the use of niche diplomacy, whereby states concentrate on areas of specialized knowledge or strategic advantage to maximize influence. Algeria leverages its regional security experience and energy diplomacy expertise, while Slovenia draws upon its EU integration experience, regulatory knowledge, and technological capacity. By focusing on these domains, both states transform structural limitations into diplomatic leverage, reinforcing both bilateral and multilateral positions. The table below illustrates the multilateral platforms each country engages with, the specific areas of niche diplomacy they prioritize, and the strategic purpose of these engagements:

**Table 02: Comparative Overview of Multilateral Engagements and Niche Diplomatic Priorities: Algeria and Slovenia**

Country	Multilateral Platforms	Niche Diplomacy / Areas of Specialization	Strategic Purpose
Algeria	United Nations (UN), African Union (AU), African–European Dialogue Forums	Regional security, counterterrorism, energy diplomacy	Influence regional agendas, enhance leadership in African security and development
Slovenia	United Nations (UN), EU-mediated initiatives, European Neighborhood Policy	EU integration expertise, regulatory frameworks, technological capacity	Secure credibility in European policy-making, shape governance and human rights norms
Both	UN debates on peacekeeping, climate change, migration management	Coordinated positions on global issues	Maximize impact in selected arenas, reinforce bilateral trust and alignment

**Source:** Elaborated by the author based on Algeria Ministry of Foreign Affairs ([www.mfa.gov.dz](http://www.mfa.gov.dz)), Government of Slovenia – Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs (<https://www.gov.si/en/state-authorities/ministries/ministry-of-foreign-and-european-affairs/>), and United Nations ([www.un.org](http://www.un.org)).

This table demonstrates that Algeria and Slovenia adopt a targeted, issue-specific approach, selecting arenas where their comparative advantages are most pronounced. Algeria’s leadership in African peacekeeping operations allows it to shape regional security agendas despite asymmetries in size relative to European powers. Slovenia, by leveraging technical and regulatory expertise within EU and UN frameworks, secures authority in European and global policy debates, despite its limited demographic and geographic scale. Through the combination of multilateral engagement and niche diplomacy, both states not only reinforce their international presence but also cultivate trust, alignment, and policy coherence in bilateral

relations. By carefully aligning their strengths with chosen international platforms, Algeria and Slovenia mitigate structural constraints, exercise agency, and expand diplomatic influence across political, security, and governance domains.

In summary, the political dynamics of Algeria–Slovenia relations are characterized by a careful balance between historical foundations, bilateral alignment, divergence in regional priorities, and strategic engagement in multilateral forums. From early mutual recognition and the establishment of resident embassies to high-level visits and structured consultations, both countries have progressively strengthened their diplomatic ties. The combination of aligned interests, selective divergence, and the use of niche diplomacy in multilateral platforms enables Algeria and Slovenia to maximize influence, reinforce bilateral trust, and navigate structural asymmetries effectively. Overall, the relationship exemplifies a pragmatic and adaptive approach to international diplomacy, reflecting both states' strategic agency and commitment to constructive cooperation.

### **From Energy Security to Scientific Innovation: Multi-Sectoral Cooperation between Algeria and Slovenia**

Energy cooperation between Algeria and Slovenia represents a strategic response to structural asymmetries and emerging geopolitical challenges in the European energy landscape. The 2022–2023 European energy crisis, triggered by disruptions in Russian gas supplies following the war in Ukraine and subsequent EU sanctions on Moscow, exposed the continent's vulnerabilities and highlighted the urgent necessity of diversifying energy sources. For Slovenia—a small state with limited domestic energy resources—this crisis translated into acute supply pressures, rising energy costs, and the immediate need to secure reliable imports to preserve economic stability and national energy sovereignty.

Prior to the conflict, Slovenia's energy dependence on Russian natural gas was particularly pronounced, with roughly 85% of its imports transiting through Austria, a country that itself relied heavily on Russian supplies. In 2020, over 80% of Slovenia's natural gas and around 25% of petroleum products originated from Russia (Tkalec, 2023: 05). Such structural dependence not only constrained Slovenia's policy autonomy but also heightened its exposure to market and geopolitical shocks, rendering diversification a strategic imperative rather than a discretionary choice.

Algeria, endowed with substantial hydrocarbon reserves and a longstanding role as a reliable Southern European supplier, gained a strategic advantage during this period of EU vulnerability. In November 2022, Sonatrach concluded a three-year contract with Slovenia's Geoplin to supply approximately 300 million cubic meters of gas annually—meeting roughly one-third of Slovenia's demand—via the Tunisia–Italy Trans-Mediterranean Pipeline (Ghebouli, 2023: 10). This cooperation was further consolidated in May 2025, with both sides agreeing to raise annual supplies to 500 million cubic meters (Achour, 2025), thereby enhancing Slovenia's energy security and reinforcing Algeria's role as a dependable regional hub.

For Slovenia, the reliance on Algerian gas reflects a deliberate diversification strategy aimed at reducing vulnerability to supply shocks from dominant producers such as Russia (Government of Slovenia, Ministry of Infrastructure, 2022). This approach resonates with the concept of “strategic hedging” in niche diplomacy, in which smaller states cultivate targeted bilateral partnerships to mitigate dependencies and expand policy autonomy (Marston, 2024: 30). In this sense, energy cooperation transcends commercial transactions, becoming a structural pillar underpinning broader foreign policy and regional strategic alignment.

The partnership extends beyond hydrocarbons, as both countries explore collaboration in renewable energy sectors, particularly solar and wind projects. Algeria's abundant solar resources, combined with Slovenia's technological expertise, provide a basis for knowledge transfer, skills development, and innovation (Kavcic, 2025). These initiatives align with EU–Mediterranean energy transition policies, offering potential integration into trans-Mediterranean electricity interconnections and contributing to Europe's decarbonization objectives. Consequently, the energy dimension of the Algeria–Slovenia relationship not only addresses immediate supply concerns but also embeds their cooperation within long-term sustainable energy governance frameworks.

Technological innovation and space cooperation have similarly emerged as strategic pillars complementing energy collaboration, demonstrating the multi-sectoral depth of the bilateral partnership. Slovenia's Space Strategy 2030 and full European Space Agency membership provide institutional platforms to export specialized competencies—including satellite systems, earth observation, and small-satellite manufacturing—while facilitating Algerian integration into European research and innovation networks (Government of the Republic of Slovenia, 2023). Slovenia's rank of 34th in the 2024

Global Innovation Index, coupled with its classification as a Moderate Innovator in the European Innovation Scoreboard, reflects strengths in human capital, scientific output, and high-tech exports (Del Valle Ortiz, 2025: 04).

Algeria, in contrast, remains ranked 115th in the Global Innovation Index, facing systemic constraints in venture capital availability, R&D intensity, and technology diffusion, despite certain strengths in human capital and research (World Intellectual Property Organization, 2024). This structural gap explains Algeria's strategic interest in partnering with Slovenia to accelerate capabilities in satellite applications, encompassing water management, agricultural monitoring, disaster response, and other high-technology domains.

High-level exchanges between ASAL and the Slovenian Space Office in 2025, including a cooperation framework on satellite development and telecommunications, have translated strategic intent into operational collaboration (Ilderawumi, 2025). Instruments such as co-funded research chairs, joint R&D calls, start-up incubation, technology transfer agreements linked to local manufacturing, and reciprocal engineer secondments ensure that capacity-building and knowledge transfer remain central to the partnership. Through this approach, Slovenia secures market access and reputational leverage, while Algeria accelerates technological acquisition and domestic industry development—a dynamic that mirrors the strategic logic observed in energy cooperation.

The pharmaceutical sector constitutes an additional domain of strategic collaboration, where economic opportunity intersects with public health imperatives. Slovenia's pharmaceutical industry, led by Krka d.d.—which achieved €1.806 billion in sales in 2023 and operates in over 70 countries—specializes in generics and treatments for chronic diseases (Barbič-Žagar et al., 2024: 333). Algeria's pharmaceutical market, dominated by the state-owned Sidal Group, meets between 55% and 76% of domestic demand but remains dependent on imports for high-cost treatments, particularly oncology drugs (Pedersen and Wellmann, 2024: 11). A potential joint strategy could focus on oncology production lines in Algeria, collaborative R&D for biosimilars, GMP-compliant training programs, and integration into EU-regulated supply chains. The BIOCAD–Sidal partnership (2022–2023) on monoclonal antibody biosimilars illustrates how technology transfer and domestic production can enhance national self-sufficiency (Internet 3). From a niche diplomacy perspective, Slovenia exports technical expertise and regulatory experience to North Africa, while Algeria leverages market

scale and regional influence to advance African Union and WHO health strategies (Internet 4).

Scientific cooperation has become increasingly institutionalized across sectors, including renewable energy, environmental sciences, information technology, and space science. The April 2025 Memorandum of Understanding between the higher education ministries of both countries formalized frameworks for researcher mobility and joint innovation projects (Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research Algeria, 2025). Momentum was further reinforced in February 2025, when a delegation of eight Slovenian space-technology firms, organized by the Slovenian Space Office with SPIRIT Slovenia, visited Algeria to engage with ASAL, CEST, CDS, and Algeria Venture, while initiating the drafting of a space science MoU and accelerator exchange programs (Ministry of the Economy, Tourism and Sport Slovenia, 2025).

These initiatives exemplify the pragmatic application of niche diplomacy: Slovenia contributes research excellence and European-standard institutional capacity, while Algeria provides emerging markets, operational testing environments, and regional outreach. Anticipated outcomes include enhanced research capacity and human capital in Algeria, expanded access for Slovenia to North African networks, and the co-development of innovation agendas in climate-smart agriculture, renewable energy integration, disaster monitoring, and digital infrastructure. Collectively, energy, technological, pharmaceutical, and scientific cooperation illustrate a coherent, multi-sectoral strategy through which Algeria and Slovenia translate comparative advantages into tangible, mutually reinforcing diplomatic and economic leverage.

## **Conclusion**

The Algeria–Slovenia case exemplifies strategic niche diplomacy, wherein states leverage specialized capabilities to maximize influence despite structural asymmetries in power, size, or resources. Algeria’s comparative advantages lie in its abundant natural resources, particularly hydrocarbons, as well as its expertise in regional security and infrastructure development. By concentrating on these areas, Algeria projects influence across North Africa, the Sahel, and Europe, establishing itself as a reliable partner in energy supply and a stabilizing actor in regional security.

Slovenia, conversely, capitalizes on technological and scientific expertise within the EU framework, focusing on sectors such as technological innovation, space sciences, and pharmaceuticals.

These specialized competencies allow Slovenia to extend its diplomatic reach beyond geographic and demographic constraints, fostering collaborative projects with Algeria and other international partners.

Through targeted partnerships, both countries create synergistic collaborations: Algeria's strengths in energy and infrastructure complement Slovenia's expertise in high-technology sectors, enabling both states to enhance bilateral trust, visibility, and agency in multilateral forums, including the United Nations, EU–Mediterranean initiatives, and regional innovation networks. Such coordination transforms structural disadvantages into strategic leverage, allowing small and medium states to exercise meaningful agency within the global system.

From a policy perspective, the implications are clear. Strategic niche diplomacy enables Algeria and Slovenia to:

- Mitigate structural constraints through focused engagement in areas of comparative advantage.
- Enhance bilateral and multilateral influence by coordinating sector-specific initiatives that reinforce mutual interests.
- Translate specialized capabilities into policy impact, shaping agendas in energy security, technological innovation, and scientific research.
- Offer a replicable model for other small and medium powers, demonstrating how proactive engagement and selective specialization can overcome marginalization while maintaining autonomy and credibility.

In conclusion, the Algeria–Slovenia relationship illustrates that small and medium states can effectively navigate asymmetries in the international system by combining structural awareness with agency-driven strategies. By leveraging niche diplomacy, they transform potential limitations into opportunities for influence, cooperation, and innovation. This integrative approach highlights a model of resilient, capacity-driven foreign policy that balances alignment, autonomy, and strategic impact, providing insights for both scholarly analysis and practical policy formulation.

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