

# The price of stability

The conditions of authoritarianism in Algeria

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## Abstract

Algeria, alongside many other countries, was not swept up in the so called third wave of democratization. Instead, the wake of some political opening, it experienced a return to authoritarian rule. With the holding of regular elections in a multi-party system that allowed for relatively free press, traditional democratization theory would predict political reform. Arguing that this liberalized form of authoritarianism cannot be analyzed with traditional transition theory, this study adopts rather recent theoretical approach. In using an historical-institutional approach, developed by Jason Brownlee, the conditions of authoritarianism in Algeria are examined. The influence of a number of variables are analyzed and related to the implications of the theory.

Military is still highly present even after the president made efforts to civilianize his image. A strong power coalition is made up of military generals, the ruling parties and economic elites. Opposition is disunited with the legal parties co-opted or internally weak and Islamist parties excluded from the electoral process. Repression of Islamist groups is conducted with the tacit consent of foreign powers with an interest in political stability. Democracy is a façade well enough engineered to gain the regime international recognition.

The historical-institutional theory does well explain the case of Algeria even as some modifications and subjects for future research are suggested.

*Key words:* Algeria, liberalization, authoritarianism, transition, elections opposition.

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# 1 Introduction

In the last couple of decades, democratic reform took place in many parts of the world. Military dictatorships, authoritarian governments and communist regimes fell in Latin America, Central and Eastern Europe, Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia. This tendency was considered to be part of a global democratic trend, known as the “third wave of democracy” (Carothers 2002:5). The Middle Eastern countries too experienced a liberalizing trend that was disrupted and turned back towards authoritarianism. While scholars have considered this stage of half-completed democratization as inherently unstable, it is now evident that the liberalized autocracies were more durable than observers predicted.

Authoritarian rule seems to be not merely a transitory state on a paved way to democracy but rather a type of form of government. Daniel Brumberg has argued that the typical features of such government: guided pluralism, controlled elections, and selective repression in Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Algeria, and Kuwait are “not just a ‘survival strategy’ adopted by authoritarian regimes, but rather a *type* of political system whose institutions, rules, and logic defy any linear model of democratization” (Brumberg 2002:56). If scholars used to believe that the third wave of democratization would sweep with it liberalized autocracies like Morocco, Algeria, Egypt, Jordan and Yemen, recent research is calling for further investigation of the conditions of authoritarian rule.

This thesis considers the case of Algeria, whose transition to democracy has proven incomplete. In Algeria, perhaps more than in any other Arab country, the fear of an Islamist takeover is in the collective memory since the Islamist party FIS won the interrupted elections in 1992 which set the stage for a brutal civil war.

Even though political reform has allowed a relatively open multi-party electoral system, Algeria’s secular authoritarian regime seems able to sustain power without resorting to severe fraud or military repression. With relatively free media and a vivid civil society the democracy discourse is omnipresent. Yet, opposition has failed to present any real challenge to the regime.

## 1.1 The aim of the study

The objective of this thesis is to outline the conditions of authoritarian rule in Algeria. The case of Algeria will serve to illustrate the various mechanisms that

played in the hands of the regime. This thesis attempts to answer the question “What are the central conditions of durable authoritarian rule in Algeria?”

The theoretical contribution of the study is a deeper understanding of the conditions of authoritarian durability. It will test the generalizing ambitions of theories on authoritarianism on the case of Algeria to see if they hold under conditions specific to Algeria. To the extent that the theories cannot explain this case, contribution to the theory on authoritarian regimes can be made. Thus, a second question can be drawn from the first one: Can the historical-institutional theory on authoritarian durability account for the case of Algeria?

The study is limited to the time around 1995 until today, starting at the time when Algerian political life began to normalize after the crisis, while, at the same time, the political opening at the beginning of the crisis was reversed. Thus, the Algerian experience constitutes an example of a failed transition that after liberalization returned into an authoritarianism that appears to be durable. While some scholars have referred to this phenomenon as liberalized autocracies (Brumberg 2002) or as new authoritarianism (Volpi 2003), this thesis simply refers to it as authoritarianism, since there is nothing new about it. It is simply a matter of a new façade of democracy that surrounds the same leaders.

## 1.2 Previous research

While there is extensive literature on the subject of democratization and the conditions for successful transition, less research has been conducted non-democratization. Only recently has it become clear that in order to understand why anew authoritarian rule has arose and in the wake of liberalizing reforms, we must ask questions about the characteristics of this type of political system. The idea that there is no linear, predetermined, way to democracy has been expressed by Thomas Carothers as “the end of the transition paradigm” (Carothers 2002). The aim of this study calls for a theory of non-democratization in terms of authoritarian regimes.

Jason Brownlee, assistant professor at the University of Texas, Austin, has contributed to this theory building, with a focus on Middle Eastern, particularly Egypt’s, experiences of authoritarianism. He provides a comprehensive theory of the conditions of authoritarian continuity or demise. Brownlee conducts a four-country case study on Egypt, Iran, the Philippines and Malaysia and finds that the historic role of party institutions was crucial.

Ellen Lust-Okar, assistant professor at Yale University, has done similar studies on the cases of Egypt, Morocco and Jordan showing that “the formal rules of the game” can govern the opposition in ways that play in the hands of the regime. My study will build on this research when adding Algeria to the case studies.

## 1.3 Method

This study is a theory testing case study with some generalizing ambitions. A qualitative case study on Algeria will contribute to further knowledge of the nature of authoritarian regimes. A single case study of this kind cannot provide definite conclusions that can be generalized to account for other cases, but relating the findings to previous knowledge this study can produce more certain results.

Algeria will serve as case study to try the more general suggestions drawn from Brownlee's study, drawn from the four countries. Using the historical-institutional theory to account for authoritarian regime survival in Algeria, this study tests the generalizing ambitions of the theory. The theory, developed from a four case study of Egypt, the Philippines, Malaysia and Iran, claims to have generalizing ambitions. Testing this theory on Algeria can substantially strengthen or potentially modify this knowledge about the nature of authoritarian regimes.

Chapter 2 outlines the main features of the theory by Jason Brownlee, which will be referred to as "the historical-institutional theory". These findings will, in chapter 5, be used to systematically analyze the conditions of Algerian authoritarianism.

In structuring the depiction of Algerian experiences of authoritarianism and its potential causes, keeping an open mind will be valuable. As this thesis aspires to be theory testing, simply presenting evidence that supports the variables suggested by the theory would be dubious. An important part of the study will be to consider multiple possible explanatory variables and successively dismiss the faulty ones. To keep an open mind throughout the research process will raise the probability for the study to include all possible contributory causes and thus raise the reliability. Consequently, as the scope of this thesis is broad, many variables will be examined at the expense of the depth of each one. The next chapter outlines the historical-institutional theory. Proceeding to briefly tell the story of Algeria, chapter three and four provides the empirical background necessary for the analysis in chapter five.

## 2 A historical-institutional approach

Jason Brownlee has studied structural as well as actor-oriented explanations to regime durability. In his book “Authoritarianism in the age of democratization” (2007) he provides an understanding of the conditions for regime survival and demise. He develops an historical-institutional explanation for when political reform can lead to multiparty elections but yet result in authoritarian rule that seem stable over time.

Brownlee conducts a four-country case study on Egypt, Iran, the Philippines and Malaysia. The findings of the four case studies are brought together in an historical-institutional explanation for the variation in outcome. The strong ruling parties in Egypt and Malaysia have provided the institutions for lasting authoritarian rule while the lack of a ruling party in Iran and in the Philippines produced the opportunity for democratization. In Brownlee’s account “the institutional legacies of early elite conflict are the parameters that circumscribe subsequent political actors’ contests for power” (p. 202).

Choosing four cases with different historical experiences Brownlee attempts to account for a broad spectrum of explanatory variables. Further, the cross regional approach allows the study to leave the constraints of orientalist ideas.

This chapter will shortly present the general features of this theory on authoritarian longevity, and briefly complement it with the findings of Ellen Lust-Okar, drawn from her book “Structuring conflict in the Arab World” (2005). Proceeding to discuss the implications of applying the theory on Algeria, each explanatory variable will be further examined in chapter five.

### 2.1.1 Institutions matter

In authoritarian regimes, the leader might overshadow the organization that he rules. Speaking of Mubarak in Egypt usually refers not only the leadership but to the entire political structure. But personalistic rule is at its strongest when combined with a ruling party or coalition. Brownlee argues that leaders’ capacity is dependent on the appropriate institutions. Long lasting regimes manages to sustain the coalitions that their counterparts in Iran and the Philippines did not. Institutions restrain autocracies and, through restricting leaders from drifting towards exclusionary personalism, make them last (pp. 204-205). This “rule by the institutions” should be conceived as the rule contained by an organized political system in which the institutions should be thought of in abroad sense, not



only made up by authorities, judiciary and political parties but the adherence to conventional practices such as elections and pluralism.

### 2.1.2 The political role of parties

The role of political parties is the overarching conclusion of Brownlee's work. Their capacity to reconcile conflicting interests prevents elites from defecting, and forming new parties that could produce real competition to the regime. This view goes beyond the idea that the main characteristic of ruling parties is its ability to provide loyal voters through the distribution of payment. In this 'clientelist' view, voters support the incumbent party because they expect to receive continuing material benefits. Thus, authoritarianism becomes a function of distribution of patronage.

This literature, according to Brownlee tends to minimize the agenda-setting influence of ruling parties. The 'clientelist' networks prevails among both durable and fragile regimes, yet two of the regimes in Brownlee's study suffered elite defections whereas two did not (pp.214-216). "The coalition-maintaining aspect of ruling parties, rather than their operation as patronage networks, explains elite cohesion within the regime and electoral control at the polls" (p.215).

### 2.1.3 Opposition opportunities

Brownlee presents two traditional perspectives in democratization theory on opposition movements' power to cause regime change. In the four cases he shows that neither mass protest nor the emergence of moderate parties ensuring continued livelihood of the elites will convince an incumbent regime to hand over power in authoritarian countries like Malaysia or Egypt. If a regime is backed by a ruling party it is not forced to engage in pacts or to heed protest. In the absence of a ruling party or a coalition both types of challenges are necessary to produce regime demise (pp. 205-207).

### 2.1.4 The role of elections

As much as elections symbolize democracy Brownlee shows, through statistical tests and case studies, that elections per se do not account for variation in regime outcome over time. While literature has tended to treat elections either as an inherently destabilizing factor, or as strengthening autocracies, this theory holds that neither of the two appears to be true in the light of the four countries studied. The institution of elections matter, but the outcome is often manipulated through

formal rules that seriously restrict opposition possibilities. At the same time, mass support is crucial for regime legitimacy, and through elections it measures its popular support. The effectiveness in achieving their goal of preventing opposition to gain influence is dependent on their coalitions. Formal rules are only part of the explanation, what occurs within the authoritarian regime matters more (pp.207-209).

To Brownlee, the lack of opposition is a result of authoritarianism, rather than the other way around (2007:123). If this is true, we would want a more comprehensive understanding of opposition behavior. In the presence of a ruling party, what hinders a strong opposition? Ellen Lust-Okar provides a framework for understanding the behavior of opposition parties as a response to the electoral system. She suggests that systems where some opposition is banned, like in Algeria, will produce a different outcome than systems where all parties play by the same rules. According to Lust-Okar prohibiting extremist parties also affect the choices of legal parties. Authoritarian regimes benefit from the existence of radical opponents since legal opposition is threatened by their attempts to destabilize the regime. Moderates will fear losing their influence and chose not to mobilize against incumbents. This way, the formal rules of the game render all opposition harmless to the regime (Lust- Okar 2005).

### 2.1.5 The political infrastructure of repression

Institutions affect the state's ability to use violence against their political opposition. Whereas Egypt's regime has been deeply involved in military rule Malaysia's rule has been comparatively civilian, yet lasting authoritarian. Brownlee suggests that opposition challenge of Marcos in the Philippines emerged because the regime had undermined the infrastructure to maintain control over the repressive apparatus. Also, even if a regime such as the one in Egypt were led by a civilian president, such a shift would not inherently lead to democratization or even instability as long as the regime maintained a coalition encompassing policymakers, the military and the security services (pp. 210-211).

### 2.1.6 Foreign patrons and local contestants

Foreign powers are not a major drive for democratization, but neither does strong ties to the US guarantee stability. Brownlee points out that foreign powers, principally the US, took a wait-and-see stance in the four cases. In Egypt, where Mubarak was a close ally in the "war on terrorism", the US favored the regime and avoided advocacy of political reform. In the Philippines it was not until the People Power movement declared electoral victory that the Reagan administration called for Marcos's departure. Brownlee holds that in lack of a moderate

opposition that the US comfortably can deal with, it will support status quo. In the presence of a moderate opposition in Egypt, it would receive US support for democratization (p. 211).

### 2.1.7 Economic cleavages

“Material and personal interests fundamentally shape behavior but actors engage each other in a setting where such basic concerns acquire a political aspect that is not derivable from interest alone” (p. 212). Institutions not merely aggregate and sort materially based interests, they also influence preferences and actions. Brownlee shows that the way in which material interests are manifested in political action depends on the availability of a ruling party for reconciling factions. The party mediates and negotiates social cleavages that could otherwise have formed class based groups. In Egypt the party reconciled modernist and traditionalist fractions conflicting over economic reform. The ruling party regimes in Egypt and Malaysia had different class composition but managed to maintain elite coalitions in similar ways (pp.212-214).

## 3 The Story of a failed Transition

For a long time Algeria was thought of as an integral part of France. The settlement of colonizers in Algeria ensured a thorough fragmentation of the society. At the time of independence struggle, the Algerians rioted not only against the French but against the political institutions (Quandt 1998:15-18).

After independence Algerian rulers subscribed to a conception of democracy similar to the one in former communist countries. Western democracy, according to Youcef Bouandel, was perceived a bourgeoisie concept that favored the individual at the expense of the collective. The one-party system was believed to be the most appropriate model for achieving economic development and social harmony (Bouandel 2003:4-5, Quandt 1998:27). Islam had been an integral part of the struggle for independence, but to the revolutionary leadership Islam was to serve an identity-forming instrument rather than a legal code by which to order the state (Entelis 2001). The single party National Liberation Front, FLN, together with the president, Houari Boumediene, built a secular socialist state with a vision of non alignment that was to be the predecessor for Arab and African independence struggle (Mundy 2009).

In 1988 in response to a nation wide revolt, the military brutally shot hundreds of young men who were protesting against unemployment and social despair. The price of oil did not rebound after its drop in 1982 and by 1988 the regime could not buy-off the protesters (Quandt 1998:37-40). President Chadli surprised many when presenting a reform program, allowing for a multiparty system.

### 3.1.1 Democracy interrupted

The Islamic party Islamic Salvation Front, FIS, emerged in 1989 and appealed to all social strata by addressing social problems and corruption as well as the high taxation of small entrepreneurs (Entelis 2001). When the party surprisingly won the first round of parliament elections in late 1991, the military stepped in to prevent the FIS from forming government.

The elections were cancelled and a Haut Conseil de Sécurité, HCE, was appointed to lead the country. As a response to the coup d'état, the FIS radicalized (Entelis 2001:431), and its armed branch, the Armed Islamic Group, GIA, declared war against the secular army. By 1993 the conflict between various Islamist groups and the armed forces escalated into a horrendous civil war. By

1994, the GIA and its guerrilla groups increasingly turned to military strategies that were not subject to clear political goals (Volpi 2003:71). Violence became part of everyday life and until 1998 about 200 people were killed every week (Quandt 1998:66-67). Moreover, a number of massacres occurred which killed hundreds on civilians on a single night. Accusations came from Islamists that the army engineered the brutal killings so that Islamists would be blamed. Several observers have concluded that all parties in the civil war had economic gains from the violence and thus an interest in prolonging it (Werenfels 2007:48-49, Bouandel 2003:13).

Promising the return to order and to fight terrorism, General Zeroual in 1994 was the logic choice for president to normalize the situation (Dris- Aït-Hamadouche 2008). In 1994 the HCE through meetings with the military decided to appoint Lamine Zeroual, a FLN member and military candidate, president of the transitional government. Zeroual was conceived as more connected to Arab majority than the French-speaking ruling class and he belonged to the *concelieures* who believed in dialogue with Islamists as opposed to the *eradicateurs* who believed in extermination (Stone 1997:115-116). Despite failed attempts to dialogue with the FIS, 'reconciliation' was the catchword in Zerouals effort to normalize political life. After winning presidential elections remarkably free from interference or fraud (Stone 1997:199) in 1995, Zeroual continued the trajectory of previous leaders in announcing constitutional amendments tailor-made for his interests (Aghrout and Zoubir 2009). The new law prohibited parties based on religion or ethnicity, thus banned the FIS. Also, in introducing a second chamber to the parliament 'Conceil de la Nation' in which one third of the members were appointed by the president, the power sharing was further distorted in favor of the executive's office.

### 3.1.2 The Rome Accords

Because the FLN tried to clean itself from the accusations of being responsible for the crises they did not participate in the military appointed regime. In 1995, the FLN together with other opposition parties called for a compromise and a common dedication to democracy in the Rome Conference. The government and all political parties, including the FIS, were invited. The Islamic Hamas (now the MSP), did not participate. The party did not condemn the interruption of the electoral process 1992 and legitimized the government by taking part in it (Bouandel 2003:12-13). In the end, the parties who joined had together won 85 percent in the first round of elections in 1991.

The Rome Accords<sup>1</sup> resulted in an agreement to respect human rights, elections and constitutional rule, reject violence and to give recognition to Arabism, Islam and Berber identity, with both Arabic and Berber languages

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<sup>1</sup> also called the Sant' Egidio Plattform

promoted. The FIS leaders should be released and all parties should resume their activities. The government dismissed the initiative as interference in domestic affairs. Quandt has pointed out that in reality the platform mirrored the rhetoric of the regime (Quandt 1998:70-71).

The initiative came in a period when the dominant perception was that the regime was collapsing. Military was faced with the most damaging attacks and accepting the initiative would have been interpreted as capitulation (Martinez 2005). Following the crisis transparency and pluralism was no longer on the agenda. The Rome Accords received less international support than anticipated by its initiators (Martinez 2005). The international response was to go along the regime (Cavatorta 2009:154).

For the first time the president enjoyed popular legitimacy and the influence of the military was ostensible limited to the constitutional process. In reality, the military was as strong as ever (Stone 1997:120).

## 4 Towards authoritarianism

By the late 1990s Algeria had returned to formally constitutional rule. Participation rates were historically low, but both parliamentary elections 2007 and presidential elections 2004 were relatively corruption free, with few irregularities or manipulation (Entelis 2007b:26). However, the state of emergency remained and under Bouteflika separation of power has diminished as decision-making was further concentrated within the executive's office (Entelis 2007a:8-9).

### 4.1 President Bouteflika

In 1999, Abdelaziz Bouteflika, former Foreign Affairs Minister and high ranking FLN cadre, was elected president, as the primary choice of the military. Both the FLN and the RND allegedly were pressured by the military to pledge their support for Bouteflika. Suspicions were raised when Bouteflika was nominated by the FLN without a regular congress was held. The Islamic Movement for society and Peace, MSP (former Hamas<sup>2</sup>), finally threw its support after their leader Nannah was disqualified (Bouandel 2003:19). Later it was revealed that the disqualification was staged by the military because Nannah was gaining popularity (Volpi 2003:79).

In the following presidential elections military claimed to stay neutral as a first step of professionalization of the army. However, this withdrawal from the political arena is disputed. While some argue that Bouteflika is establishing an independent power base, signaled by his landslide victory of 85 percent in presidential elections 2004 (Mundy 2009), the military neutrality was close to meaningless since Bouteflika met no serious challenge (Werenfels 2007:60-62).

Bouteflika has launched a successful diplomatic offensive trying to break the international isolation after the years of crisis. Progress in economic cooperation and the successful introduction of the Civil Concorde, made Bouteflika appear as the strongman who could put an end to violence and re-launch Algeria internationally.

Bouteflika was officially independent from the FLN since 1999, but the return of FLN to domination was as important asset when Bouteflika in 2008 presented

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<sup>2</sup> There is no connection to the Palestinian Hamas

the constitutional amendments that eliminated time limits of his presidency. In November 2008, about year before the next presidential election were to be held, the parliament approved the amendments, removing article 74 that stipulated two five-year terms as the limit of mandates for the president (Aghrout and Zoubir 2009).

In April 2009 the Interior Ministry reported a 70 percent turnout at the polls and Bouteflika won his third victory by 90.2 percent, surpassing by far his earlier records. While opposition was hoping that low turnout would revoke some of Bouteflika's legitimacy, he could now claim victory even over apathy (Mundy 2009).

Political parties were manipulated or internally torn between participating and boycotting the elections. The ouster in 2006 of Prime Minister Ouyahia, leader of the RND, woke suspicion since he had opposed the amendments. Ouyahia was replaced with the more loyal Abdelaziz Belkhadem, leader of the FLN. Also, right in time for the elections, Bouteflika raised the salaries of the members of parliament, a measure that was also opposed by Ouyahia, who warned that inflation would leap. After the firing of Ouyahia, both parties threw their support behind Bouteflika. Opposition against the amendments came from intellectuals, journalists, lawyers and trade unionists under the slogan "It is time for the constitution to be applied, not revised" (Aghrout and Zoubir 2009), referring to the constitutional revisions pursued by each president.

The 2009 result of the presidential elections following the constitutional change was by the international community, according to Geoff Porter, Director Middle East and Africa at Eurasia Group, received as a 'non-event' (Carnegie Middle East Centre 6 April 2009).

#### 4.1.1 The core elite

Power in Algeria is concentrated in the hands of a few individuals within the executive branch of the government. Isabelle Werenfels has identified Algerian elites and the generational change that took place within it between 1995 and 2004. What during the 1990 was an elite made up by the last bastion of revolutionary generals was slowly changing as military publicly withdraw from politics in 2002. The core elite were made up by president Bouteflika, the director of the presidential office, Larbi Belkheir, and advisers within the military and intelligence service. Also, the Said Bouteflika, the president's younger brother and advisor belonged to the inner circle. Other actors with input in decision-making were the ministers of commerce who headed negotiations in WTO



membership and the minister of energy who until 2002 also presided over the state-owned hydro-carbon giant Sonatrach.<sup>3</sup>

Regular elections are held but the legislative and judicial branches are virtually meaningless bodies, as they are controlled by the executive authority. The large gap between state and society; between civil society and the political system continue to manifest itself (Entelis 2007a:8-9).

The situation for non state-controlled media has worsened recently. In 2009 Algeria reached a 141<sup>st</sup> place in the ranking by a Reporters Sans Frontières survey of 222 countries. This meant worsening its placing by 20 ranking units compared to the year before (Reporters Sans Frontières Press Index). However, by Arab comparison, the press was remarkably free and powerful, openly commenting on Bouteflika's authoritarian style of rule and criticizing his family's dubious businesses (Werenfels 2007:75).

## 4.2 The presidential alliance

The parliamentary elections held in June 1997 were the first pluralistic ones albeit manipulated (Werenfels 2007:53). Only four months earlier Zeroual created the National Democratic Rally, RND, to gain mass support for his reforms. In all essentials, the RND subscribed to the same political agenda as the FLN. Competition between the two was merely an act, or, as put by Bouandel, another example of the authorities' attempts to establish a multi-party system while the centers of power remained the same (2005:412-413). A coalition government was formed by the RND who won 33 percent of the votes, the FLN (14 percent) and the MSP 14 percent.

The FLN were moribund during the 1990s, but has returned into playing in the regime's hands (Bouandel 2003:13). Bouteflika was officially independent from the FLN since 1999, but in the 2002 the FLN provided the foot soldiers to bring people to vote (Mundy 2009).

Today since 2002, the presidential alliance is made up by the FLN, the RND and the Islamic MSP. In the most recent elections to the senate, in December 2009, the FLN strengthened its majority, while the few credible opposition parties were co-opted or weakened by internal conflicts (El Watan 31 December 2009).

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<sup>3</sup> Werenfels also identifies certain actors that, depending on the issue in question, were consulted. These were the prime ministers, party leaders, the presidents of the two parliamentary chambers, presidential advisors, the leader of the powerful Union Générale des Travailleurs and a few top cadres in the administration or in the largest state enterprises. The influence of various ministers depended on their specific clientelist affiliations, but ministers usually did not belong to the inner circle of decision makers (Werenfels 2007:56-57, 63).

#### 4.2.1 A change of generations

By the end of Bouteflika's first term the political parties were in the midst of a major generational shift that was not only explained by demographic change. Isabelle Werenfels has illustrated closely the way in which the revolutionary generation stepped aside for the third generation. Rajeunissement became the slogan of political parties as diverse as the FLN and the Islamist but legal MRN. Born after independence, this generation was reform-oriented in its discourse (Werenfels 2007:79).

The almost doubling of the number of seats held by third-generation members of parliament, from 16, 58 to 31, 44 percent, signaled the representation of new interests. Although the new elite carried renewal 'cultural capital' was an asset in recruitment. Among the third-generation RND and FLN elites identified by Werenfels, every single one were part of the 'famille révolutionnaire', with a former position within one of the FLN mass organizations (2007:87).

Werenfels shows that recruitment mechanisms were crucial in balancing conflicting factions that arose from external changes and dynamics, resulting in system continuity rather than disruption. Newly recruited reformists, though often found themselves unable to change the system they were now incorporated in (Werenfels 2007). The same patterns showing in many Arab countries where elite change seemed to pave the way for elite maintenance (Perthes 2004). In Egypt, the recruitment of the 'new guard' into the NDP was crucial for controlling conflicts between reformists and conservatives (Brownlee 2007:130-137).

### 4.3 The weak opposition

The contesting elites who want to alter or completely change the system belong to two groups: Islamists and Leftists. While most of these contesters who managed to reach influence had been pushed in from below by social forces like the Kabyle protest, they nonetheless were co-opted. Like the MSP, they lost their popular appeal in cooperating with the regime. Only to some extent did they exercise a certain veto power because they served as the Islamic alibi so that the government could claim to be pluralistic (Werenfels 2004:186).

In understanding Islamic opposition it is crucial to understand the historical role of Islam as counter-hegemony. Islam remains an important instrument of political challenge today but it is being met violently by the authorities' full force counter-terrorism in its attempts to suppress all forms of independent Islamic political expression (Entelis 2001:426).

With many of the FIS cadres still imprisoned, the Islamist opposition is fragmented. Even if the FIS were legalized, the party is unlikely to return to the

popularity of its heydays (Stone 1997:122). The three Islamic parties in the parliament, The MSP (9,64 percent), the MRN and Nahda, have all lost seats compared to 1997 and 2002. The rejection of the MSP to ally with the MRN in the parliament, despite sharing ideological ground, has given rise to the concept 'participationist opposition' (Roberts 2002:28). Because only parties who are willing to participate in the government are allowed to work freely the MSP feared to endanger its privileges if it allied with the MRN. Parties with a principle programmatic opposition against the regime may be able to stay legal but are subject to endless harassment and occasional destabilization, according to Roberts. The MSP has, because of its willingness to cooperate with the regime been accused for being a product of the regime itself, aimed at splitting the support of the FIS (Bouandel 2003:13).

Even though Islamic parties have recently experienced internal crisis and division, this does not mean that Islamism as a social and political phenomenon has diminished (Dris-Aït-Hamadouche 2008:90).

Rather than the popularity of fundamentalism, it was the ability to address social problems that gained the FIS its success in 1992. The same groups, disillusioned with the regime and the social order, did in the following election in 1997 either not vote at all or voted for the MSP or the other Islamic party Ennahda. The social problems were still present in, but parties based on religion were banned (Stone 1997:122).

Also the 'democratic' parties have failed to present competition and to make the pluralism of the political system any more than a façade. The 'democratic front' made up by the Kabyle based RCD and the workers party failed to mobilize any viable opposition (Dris-Aït-Hamadouche 2008:90-91). In the 2008 election on the constitutional change allowing for unlimited re-election of Bouteflika the RCD were almost split by internal conflict. In the end, it boycotted the election and was one of few who were against a third term for Bouteflika. Socialist Forces Front, the oldest party in opposition, tried to give unrealistic demands of fundamental change of the country's political system, and subsequently it boycotted (Aghrouit and Zoubir 2009). Youcef Bouandel concludes that 'Algerian parties were both guilty of accepting the state's omnipresence, and its victims' (2003:18).

Although Algeria exhibits a vivid civil society (Entelis 2007b:24), Islamist groups and secular associations have failed to unite. While sharing the language of democracy and human rights, they have been unwilling to form umbrella organizations that would be strong enough to demand radical democratic change (Cavatorta and Elanza 2008:572). As this thesis will explore further, Algerian history presents some insights in the difficulties for these factions to unite.

### 4.3.1 The Kabyle uprising

In 2001 a massive uprising took place in Kabylia in the northern part of Algeria. The more liberal, secular and culturally distinct Berber community in the Kabyle region revolted after a schoolboy was shot by the military police. The course of events took place around the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1980 Berber Spring uprising.

The Berber party RCD, which is the only one of the 'democratic' parties who enjoys some popular support, were pushed to withdraw from its short governmental alliance. The protests demanded representation and their right to speak their language and the regime could dismiss the protests as minority riots and satisfy with the increased divisions between Arabs and Berbers. In fact, Kabyle region has generally represented more widespread demands for democratic accountability. And it exhibits some of the more hopeful signs of a vivid civil society. Yet the Kabyle community has failed to formulate coherent political demands with a nation wide appeal (Volpi 2003:104-109).

The regime was never seriously threatened by the uprising. It resulted in a compromise where the Berber language was promoted to national language alongside Arabic. While, in fact, it was the biggest pro-democracy display since 1988, the result only illustrates the success of the regime to neutralize its challengers and in turning the general opinion of the demands towards the idea that they represented demands specific for the ethnic Berbers (Mundy 2009).

## 4.4 Electoral rules

Constitutional amendments or changes in electoral laws have been made under each ruler since independence 1962. From the abolishment of religious based parties 1995 to the latest constitutional amendment eliminating term-limits for Bouteflika's re-election in 2008, various adjustments have been made to suit the interests of the incumbents.

The percentage threshold aimed at keeping Islamist parties out also strike against regionally based parties such as the Berber RCD. With most of its voter base in the Kabylia region the party has effectively been kept out of the parliament through the requirement to raise a minimum of 5 percent in each constituency.

Closed and fixed party lists ensure the electorate votes on a party rather than on a candidate. Candidates are dependent on the party leader to get nominated at the top of the list which encourages party loyalty and conformism. Some candidates resort to dubious means in order to secure good ranking, others switch allegiances to the party that offers the more favorable position (Bouandel

2005:411). The system weakens the idea of candidates being responsible to their electorate (Quandt 1998:131). Voters do not choose their representatives as much as the party leaders do in composing the lists for elections. Youcef Bouandel suggests that with selection, promotion and political careers depending on party leaders, conformism becomes the norm (Bouandel 2003:17-18).

Electoral rules in Algeria favor large and already established parties. Laws restrict party incomes to only state subsidies, membership fees and strictly limited donations. State subsidies are primarily derived from the party's number of seats in the parliament. Also, dependency on media coverage, make it hard for new parties (Bouandel 2003:18).

## 4.5 The changing but ever present role of the military

Political elites in Algeria have derived their legitimacy from their involvement in the war of independence. As few Algerians have questioned the right of the former Mujahedin to rule, the core elite has been made up by a revolutionary coalition including the head of state, the FLN and the military. Ultimate authority has resided in the military since the departure of the French in 1962 (Stone 1997:123,129).

The civil war between security forces and armed Islamic insurgents had by 2004 ebbed away to what is described as an intermediate armed conflict. (Werenfels 2007:47) Today, Islamist insurgency is reduced to Salafiyya's jihadist wing with little or no representation in mainstream or opposition groups (Entelis 2007b:25). However, as Martinez points out, histories of civil wars are written by their winners, and the Algerian incumbents are writing one that carries authority and legitimates the continued political influence by the army (Martinez 2005).

After a decade of controlling the state, in 2002 the military publicly stepped out of politics. The public relations campaign promised to respect any elected president or party. Press conferences were held and strategies on terrorism fighting were publicly presented. The withdrawal was connected to 9/11 and a strategy to draw attention away from demands that army responsibility for the massacres during the civil war was investigated (Werenfels 2007:60-61).

The influence of the military in political life is hard to determine. According to Werenfels 'there was a slowly growing sense in 2003 that military décideurs were neither able nor wanted to completely monopolize decision-making, either because they lacked expertise or interest or because they encountered resistance' (2007:57). At the same time, the implicit support by the military was still crucial for the success of any presidential candidate and in the election campaign 2004 Bouteflika praised the army as the "backbone of our country" and "our dearest thing" (Werenfels 2007:61).

During Bouteflika presidency political power has distorted towards the executive's office. The pursuit of the constitutional revision in 2008 that allows for Bouteflika's unlimited re-election is regarded his latest success in neutralizing the foes in the military who opposed the amendments (Aghrout and Zoubir 2009). Before the 2004 presidential election, not all generals in the military agreed to support Bouteflika but his strong diplomatic success in overcoming the international isolation during the crisis strengthened his position vis-à-vis military. New association agreements signed with European Union in 2001 added to the international credit Bouteflika was paid for putting an end to the violence. These were all reasons that made the military unable to dispose Bouteflika (Werenfels 2007:58).

The resignation of Army Chief of Staff General Mohamad Lamari, in 2004 was next triumph for Bouteflika. With little left of the mastermind of the 1992 coup (Mundy 2009), a new generation of young officers were appointed to the armed forces (Entelis 2007b:25).

Studying the process of elite change that took place during the period 1995-2004, Isabelle Werenfels concludes that the generational change within the elite was crucial to counterbalance internal division that arose in the period. Within the military, this meant turning away from the legend of the revolutionary generation. Newly recruited top cadres seemed to favor professionalization of the army and the end of army involvement in politics. At the same time, this generation of elite was business-oriented and its general analysis of Algeria's problems was similar to the analysis of the World Bank (Werenfels 2007).

Bouteflika has civilianized his image, but military elites remain deeply involved in politics and decisions regarding economy. Also, Bouteflika's latest triumph over military may not be a definitive one. Ahmed Aghrout and Yahia H. Zoubir speculate that 'the deal sets limits upon the presidential prerogatives in certain areas, "red lines" that Bouteflika cannot cross' (Aghrout and Zoubir 2009).

In addition, integration into the international arena of counter-terrorism cooperation allows the army to maintain its linkages into the political sphere. By the mid 1990s, the US found a new geostrategic interest in its already established military links with Algeria. This cooperation was further extended after 9/11 2001 with the US "war on terrorism". The Algerian military elements of the regime seized the opportunity of international recognition by quickly stating that it was one of the early victims of terrorism (Werenfels 2007:62).

Cooperation with the EU on intelligence matters has also intensified and ties with NATO were growing. The US provision of military aid and the sale of weaponry solidified the integration of Algeria into the West-dominated international community. As Cavatorta states, such military cooperation signifies trust between governmental actors (2009:167-169). The military, thus, remained influential in more than one way.

## 4.6 International influence

At the time of the military interruption of the elections in 1992, Western governments urged Eastern Europe to embrace democracy. Nonetheless, US and French governments at this time they did not criticize or condemn the act of the military in Algeria. Akacem suggests that if oil flows were threatened, international concern for Algeria's political and economic reform process might have been greater (Akacem 2005:155).

Algeria's proud history of independence and Boumedienne's ideal of non-alignment seemed distant at the end of the cold-war and the collapse of the Soviet Union. During the civil war the country had been internationally isolated, but Bouteflika's diplomatic success earned the country an invitation to NATO's Mediterranean dialogue and in 2002 an association agreement with the EU was signed. In 2004 negotiations for a WTO membership was making progress. (Werenfels 2007:55).

According to Zoubir, the diplomatic offensive launched by Bouteflika after his election in 1999 was twofold. Apart from restoring the country's image abroad it aimed at attracting foreign investment (2005:170). The IMF continues to push for improved market competition after the failure of structural adjustment. The interventions together with other economic aid have served to strengthen military leadership and reduced its incentives to compromise with the opposition. The task of the government has been to keep the difficult balance of the interests of various stakeholders, particularly the military (Akacem 2005:157).

### 4.6.1 United States

The US was a marginal factor during the civil war but in the 1990s it discovered Algeria and its geostrategic value and after 9/ 11 2001, cooperation with the US intensified (Cavatorta 2009:121). John Entelis has argued that the US is in a position to question the power of the regime but for geostrategic reasons and energy related reasons, it stays silent (2007:10). While it serves the purpose of the US to launch a picture of the Maghreb states as moderate, if not democratic, the reality of the various US support is that it further stabilizes the authoritarian order at the expense of civil society. Entelis continues to warn that the people will direct their frustrations at the far enemy, the United States, as much as at the near enemy, the local authorities (Entelis 2007b:23).

According to Frédéric Volpi, the ruling elite are dependent on 'the good will and timely interventions of the Western governments and international financial organizations to diffuse the recurrent risk of social upheaval linked to a reduction in its oil and gas revenues'. Volpi calls to mind the question of whether Western

powers and the United Nations, over 30 years after decolonization, promoted international stability at the cost of the internal viability of some states (2003:116-117).

International civil society has had a greater impact on Algeria than have state actors. Emerging international norms threaten to undermine Algeria's role as a Third World leader as it advocates the kind of justice and self-determination for developing countries that it is itself repressing (Akacem 2005:163).

#### 4.6.2 The European Union and France

The interest of the EU lays in the proximity and political, economical and cultural relations to Algeria. The Diaspora community augments the risk of overspill of social tensions to Europe (Brender 2007:3). In November 1995 the EU invited twelve North African and Middle Eastern governments to sign the Barcelona Declaration of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, as a part of a new approach to its neighbors in the post-Cold War era. According to Cavatorta, the initiative was launched in response to the Algerian crisis, to 'solve' the problem of political Islam (2007:165). The partnership aimed at the establishment of a free trade area, MEFTA by 2010 and cooperation in a range of political, social and economic areas. Democracy, however, could easily be taken off the agenda by the regime, as the primary goal of the EU was to curb Islamists. Democracy as a goal was subordinated with the tacit consent of the EU and cooperation deepened in the name of security (Cavatorta 2009:165).

While the partner countries pledged to promote peace, stability and security in the region, emphasis has been on economic cooperation with the hope of positive spill over into other sectors. But economic liberalization has failed to produce any significant economic growth and there is little indication that elites are more inclined to comply with human rights and democracy standards of the Barcelona Declaration. Fulvio Attinà argues that expectations on the Partnership differ between the European countries and the partners in North Africa. So far the achievements of the European Union have been the containing of colonial flows of exchange while leaders of North Africa have enhanced their international status (Attinà 2005).

Relations with France continue to be complex. The support of the former colonist is important in negotiations with the EU. Also, France is the largest importer of Algerian exports. French politicians dispute over the way the threat of political Islam should be dealt with, but throughout the 1990s Paris supported the government. Despite its disappointment with the way Bouteflika was elected, France continues to support the regime while suggesting it negotiates with the opposition (Akacem 2005:158).



## 4.7 Economic change

Following a doubling of military spending the financial survival of the regime was secured in 1995 when the IMF stepped in with loans in return for structural adjustment. The Paris and London Club rescheduled public and private loans, respectively. At this time, state enterprises employed nearly one third of the country's workforce. The energy sector was privatized and by 1997 the IMF cited Algeria as an example of successful structural adjustment.

Privatization (to business elites close to the regime) was followed by closures of labor-intensive state enterprises leaving unemployment high. State finance however, was boosted by access to international finance and foreign investments in capital-intensive oil and gas sector. (Volpi 2003:113-115). Also, high oil prices made state fiscal economy prosper while poverty is still widespread and unemployment is high, especially among young people.

What appeared to be liberalization was in many sectors the conversion of public monopolies to private ones. Deregulation of food and agricultural distribution, trade liberalization and privatization were, according to Werenfels, the economic reforms with the strongest impact on the ruling elites. By the end of the 1990s, the winners from the liberalization were the core elites and their allies. Oligopolies arose and the struggle for the redistribution of rents was far from free market competition. The 'godfathers' who controlled the mafia-structures of the economy were typically found close to military-bureaucratic apparatus and among former army officers. (Werenfels 2007:49-50).

Algeria continues to be a rentier economy. The hydro-carbon sector accounts for roughly 60 percent of budget revenues and over 95 percent of exports. Outside the energy sector there has been little success in reducing high unemployment. (CIA 2009). Wealth is not created through mass mobilization of work force in production sector but rather through distribution of rents from the state income of oil and natural gas. Francesco Cavatorta points out that the rentier features of the Algerian economy make it dependent on world market prices over which fluctuates beyond the control of the regime. Also, rentier states depend on the technology, investments and expertise of oil multinationals which are very much involved in the politics of the regimes (Cavatorta 2009:50).

The market is dominated by forces which, due to their political positions oppose competition. The low purchasing power of the real wage is connected to the rentier economy as wealth is not in proportion to the productivity of labor (Addi 2006). Wages are insufficient to supply families with only one income as food prices are skyrocketing (El Watan, 22 December, 2009). As the state is the provider of subsidies, the regime successfully has created an environment where change rewards no-one. Especially, to groups that are likely to gain from reform, opposition is too costly. Puts it essentially, 'reforms create hostility in every strata (Addi 2006:213).

Recently, the 2005 hydrocarbons bill was revised ensuring market privileges to the national oil and gas company. The law twists market competition so that the principal source of revenue is controlled by the economic elites, who rest their power, patronage and privileges upon the company (Entelis 2007b:27).

#### 4.7.1 The vertical legacy

Regimes that emerged from nationalist movements for independence such as FLN dismissed the relevance of class struggle as they claimed to represent all socio-economic groups within society. The new state would serve the common need. The single party FLN became the intermediary between the state and the people, represented via interest groups that were not class based but included members from different socio-economic backgrounds. A women's organization would include women from professional backgrounds, housewives, students and factory workers. Horizontal class interests were fragmented and divided by vertical interest groups (Murphy 1999:13-14). Not only interest groups and the military are such vertically organizations. Informal society is organized in similar formations, including tribe, family, clan, and regional affiliation, ethnic or religious background (Murphy 1999:18-19).

In Algeria, with the rise of the multi-party system, membership in political parties had become a vehicle to access to state resources (Bouandel 2003:13). Yet, the different parties were unable to gather nationwide support because they were regionally based or religiously based (although explicitly religious parties were banned). The Algerian system of informal and competing vertical networks prevented the emergence of a nationwide contesting party. The civil war and economic liberalization had strengthened the vertical ties, hindering class based structures from bridging vertical cleavages. This way, no nationwide class based party arose amid the vertical networks that could threaten the stability of the system (Werenfels 2007:152).

## 5 The conditions of authoritarianism

This final chapter of the thesis outlines the conditions of authoritarianism in Algeria, while analyzing the influence of the various factors in comparison with the historical-institutional theory. The chapter ends with a summary of the conclusions.

### 5.1 The role of political institutions

Institutional rule, that prevents power abuse by a capricious leader, does, according to the historical-institutional theory, sustain authoritarian regimes. Constitutional rule is endorsed by the Algerian regime but amendments to the constitution have been tailor-made to suit every president. The tendency to stick to constitutional procedures is reflected in the maneuvers of the president to gather support for the latest constitutional change. Such illusionary democratic processes are critical in maintaining the authoritarian rule found in Algeria.

Even though the military has the means to stay in power without the constitutional process, such arbitrary use of power would render the façade of a functioning civilian-led state. Instead the RND and the FLN stepped in to mobilize support. Elections are regularly held, albeit frequently manipulated, but with the coalition of the ruling parties and no viable opposition alternatives, the regime does not have to resort to severe fraud to stay in power.

That the regime is inclined to stick to the constitutional process shows by the civilianization of the political institutions. Through sustaining its coalition with the ruling parties, the presidential office and economic elites it maintains a tacit agreement on a faulty but solid facade of democracy. Furthermore, stability is the key word in attracting the foreign investments, international recognition and military support that, in turn, seem to have propped up the regime.

It is worth noting however, that with the third term of Bouteflika, Algeria has experienced a move away from political institutions. Giving less importance to parliamentary procedures and political parties suspicions have been raised that the president is trying to usurp sole power. According to the theory, such measures could have a potentially destabilizing effect.

## 5.2 The role of the ruling parties

The altering of the Prime Minister title to the FLN leader Belkhadem and then back again to the RND leader Ouyahia, who is close to the military, should perhaps not only be seen as reflecting the president's tendencies to surround himself with friends but also as a means of reminding the parties that they are subject to the arbitrariness of the regime. Even the tandem FLN-RND who constitute the cadre of the presidential alliance, are subject to the institutional weakness of the parliament. However, their inclusion in the government coalition is crucial for mass support and the legitimacy of the regime. The electoral apparatus provided by the parties is indispensable to raise votes for Bouteflika who claims any real president enjoys the support of an overwhelming majority of the people.

The FLN has not always been strong, and the RND is a rather new party, although only ostensibly a challenger to the FLN. The ruling coalition in Algeria does not have the same historically uncontested position as does, for example, the NDP in Egypt. However, the case of Algeria presents some evidence that these institutions exhibited the characteristics that Brownlee argues are the crucial ones in preventing regime demise.

Through its vertical organization, political parties could contain different socio-economic groups that internally negotiated the political agenda. Disagreements over the terms of economic liberalization were managed through the careful integration of a new business-oriented generation into the party. In the end, economic liberalization and privatization had strengthened the ties. Even as the new generation favors civilian rule, it appears that the Reformers, once employed, found themselves unable to push for reform. Challenging the system meant challenging the same structures through which they had earned their elite status.

A family background in the war of independence or a connection to the army proved to be an asset to aspirants. The parties, especially the FLN, continue to be deeply intertwined with the military institution, where a similar generational change took place, only slower.

## 5.3 Opposition

If the theory of Jason Brownlee is able to explain authoritarianism in Algeria we would expect neither mass protests nor the emergence of moderate opposition to produce regime failure in the presence of a ruling party. The experience of Algeria

shows us that the opposition parties' agreement to engage in a multiparty system in the Rome Accords in 1995 did not convince the regime to give up power.

The Rome Accords was an example on what Brownlee calls a national pact that would ensure the survival of the incumbents and that therefore, according to some transition theories, should impose change. For several reasons the regime was strong enough to reject the proposal and continue to outlaw the FIS. The initiators of the accords were disappointed that they did not receive the international support they had hoped for, and president Zeroual could dismiss the initiative as foreign interference in domestic affairs.

That the government managed to reject the initiative taken by the coalition of parties should be seen in its context. As the regime was pressured by attacks, democracy was subordinated to other goals such as national order and security. Similarly, international demands were first and foremost encouraging the fight of extremism. More than once, the "Islamic threat" has legitimized authoritarian measures against its opponents.

At this time, however, the FLN was participating in the Rome Accords and was not working with the regime. It was rather with the support of the military that the regime could avoid resorting to the kind of compromises that the Rome Accord stipulated.

Similarly, the massive uprising in the Kabyle region in 2001 constitutes the sort of mass protest that, according to other transition theories, could lead to power handover. In Algeria, the protests were successfully averted, and no vital sacrifices had to be made. Rather, the result shows the efficiency in the regime's co-optation strategies and the continued failure of the opposition to challenge the incumbents. The masterful 'etnification' of the discontent hindered the uprising to escalate into the massive movement that claimed profound political reform in 1988. These two cases serve to illustrate that the regime in Algeria was strong enough to control these challenges.

### 5.3.1 Elections and rules

The recent developments in Algeria strengthen the historical-institutional theory, in that elections do matter, but the rules are manipulated. In Algeria, like in many other authoritarian states regular elections are being held. But according to the theory, elections do not account for variation in outcome. Instead, electoral rules will be adapted to the circumstances so that the outcome is controlled. It is whether regimes succeed in this or not, that will affect its continuity.

In Algeria, elections maintained the patterns of ruling party dominance and opposition marginalization, alike the situation in Egypt (Brownlee 2007:130). Bouteflika could not have kept power by force in the presidential election in 2009. Notwithstanding the military means might have been available, such mischief would have caused an international outcry rendering agreements and recognition

only sustained through seemingly free and fair elections. But the constitutional change was feasible without violence, through the mobilization of the ruling parties and mass organizations. The massive support signaled the regime's superiority, and might serve to deter future challengers. The very holding of elections worked to present a picture of a healthy state. Also an international community of organizations, investors and diplomats seem to satisfy with official election result to assume democratization is in progress.

The weakest link in the chain is one dictated by Bouteflika himself. Drawing his legitimacy from referendums and claiming to have massive voter support, the historically low voter turnout in the recent elections should be a source of worry.

Electoral rules favor large and established parties. They are the result of careful calculations and electoral laws are constantly revised. However, other measures, discussed in the sect section, seem to have been more damaging to the opposition. This study adds Algeria to the many countries where the electoral institutions are present and without severe irregularities, but yet they are authoritarian.

### 5.3.2 The weakness of the opposition parties

Opposition parties in Algeria are weak. This is not only a result of military repression or discriminating electoral laws. In more than one way, opposition behavior seem to be the result of a legacy of corporatism and single party-behavior. In the historical-institutional view, opposition parties are weak as a consequence of authoritarianism. The structural setting provides the regime coalition with the mechanisms of preventing all viable opposition from rising. This theory highly accounts for regime behavior in Algeria. However, it does not consider the opposition behavior or how opposition manipulation is engineered.

The theory of Ellen Lust-Okar can cast some light on why some parties are willing to cooperate with the regime even though their political agenda endorse system change. According to this idea 'the structures of contestation' affect behavior of opposition groups. In Algeria, the structure of contestation is a divided one, meaning some parties are legal while some are prohibited. By giving some parties a legal status the regime has raised their cost to mobilize against it, and thus they end up co-opted. To a legal party, such as the Islamic MSP it is rational *not* to engage in opposition together with banned Islamic parties, since it would risk loosing its small amount of influence. At the same time they are loosing those voters who think of them as sell-outs. Legal opposition groups can either go along with the regime, undermining their ideology or political program, or they risk harassment. Illegal opposition is, like the FIS, subject to the repressive military apparatus. It appears the divided structures of contestation, apart from repression and electoral rules, shape the behavior of opposition parties in

systematically breaking down any credible challenger, may it be an opposition party or a leader. The structural settings seem to work in the hands of the regime.

Moreover, Islamist groups have failed to unite, as well as the 'democratic' parties are fragmented and oscillate between participating and boycotting elections. It seems that Brownlee's assumption applies to Algeria: The lack of opposition is not what created authoritarianism, rather it is a consequence of it.

To expect from the future, if parliamentary power continues to fade and power moves away from the political institutions, the trend to boycott elections can become a more important way of protesting. As much as low voter turnout threatens the authenticity of the elections, widespread boycotts of elections could raise a challenge to the regime.

## 5.4 Military and repression

According to the historical-institutional theory, it is not through military rule that authoritarian regimes maintain control over the repressive apparatus. Control can successfully be upheld by civilian rule through coalitions that go beyond the public image. This feature of authoritarianism seems to be highly present in Algeria.

Even as Bouteflika civilianized his image and steered his rule away from the military this does not indicate that it is becoming unstable or more democratic. Rather, the army 'return to the barracks' has led to new and obscure corridors of power. Especially as the so called demilitarization took place in times of economic liberalization. Military generals were deeply involved in privatization of state enterprises, a precondition for further strengthening of top-to-bottom organization and the emergence of new loyalty networks. The diffusion of power into the economic sphere and into political decision making ensured a common interest between the generals and the political elites. The war of independence is still present in the collective memory and even as the military is no longer shrouded in mystery it is an institution thought of as a corner stone of the secular state. A military past or family tie to the army is as a merit for new recruitments into the ruling parties and the army.

The concept of 'the Islamic threat' serves to legitimate repression while the international 'war on terror' provides the tacit approval of the Western powers. The ostensible professionalization of the army has gained it international credit for taking steps towards democracy. But army responsibility for the disappearances and brutal massacres during the war has still not been investigated

The idea of the military institution as one of the government authorities to provide security and protect the country from radial rebellion lingers. Civilianizing his image has not made Bouteflika's rule less authoritarian. Quite to the opposite, presidents may come and go, but the military cadres seem to always

be behind the scenes. Only recently, for tactical reasons, have they retreated, but many doubt that the military cadres have fully retired from politics.

The theory predicts that as long as the regime maintains a coalition that encompasses policymakers, the military and the security services, it still controls the means of repression. In Algeria, it seems the military is still the cadre of that coalition.

## 5.5 International influence

The institutional- historical theory assumption that foreign powers are not a drive for democratization is all too accurate in Algeria's bitter experience. In Algeria, the support of foreign powers seems to have strengthened the regime in times of domestic crises. The theory rightly accounts for the tendency of international actors to promote stability rather than an uncertain outcome, especially when radical Islam is in the picture. But explaining Algerian authoritarianism with the theory would underestimate the influence of international actors.

Brownlee concludes that foreign power influence in his case studies was reactive, and thus took a wait-and-see stance to a certain course of events. This study, on the contrary, gives reasons to believe that foreign influence supported the regime in several ways, and thus actively contributed to the regime durability.

Cooperation in international organizations such as the EU and the WTO gave recognition to the authoritarian regime. The integration into the international contexts gave access to conferences, trade agreements and financial support. Domestically, Bouteflika's diplomatic offensive strengthened his popularity and contributed to the achievement of consolidating power around the executive office.

EU influence on Algeria through the Euro Mediterranean Partnership, is anything but reactive. It is a driving force for economic integration among the Mediterranean countries. While cooperation allegedly goes beyond trade, investments and security arrangement, the military and economic dimensions have been the most prominent. The EU and France, as the main trading partner together with the US, were in a strong position to promote political reform, yet they did not. At the same time we can suppose that Algerian concern for its international image and leadership role among the Mediterranean countries would make it receptive to such outside critique.

The remaining rentier features of the Algerian economy make it dependent on external factors such as world market prices in oil and gas. Should the rentier contract be broken, the authorities more than ever are dependent on influx of foreign money in loans, investments and trade to buy off social protests.

The "war on terror" provided a deepened military cooperation with the US. The security discourse has legitimized repression while subordinating human



rights and political reform. Also, for geo-strategic reasons, related to oil supply and the importance of allies in the region, the US chose to refrain from criticizing authoritarian behavior of the regime, while the supply on weaponry continued.

The historical-institutional theory needs to take into account that supporting status quo in countries like Algeria, is not only incompatible with a discourse of democracy promotion, it seems to have strengthened the regime. Further research need to take into account that international support may be an important contributor to authoritarian rule.

## 5.6 Economic cleavages

The institutional–historical theory takes theories of social and class conflict seriously, but concludes that elite behavior takes place at the intersection of economic interests and political institutions. Political parties mediate and negotiate social cleavages and they provide the institution for groups to co-exist in a positive-sum fashion. Applying the theory on Algeria, we would assume it is the extent to which party institutions defuse conflict that determines the way in which material interests are manifested in political actions. This study shows that elite behavior was shaped by the same circumstances as were other socio-economic groups. Unchangeable to the individual these circumstances made it rational to engage in the vertical organizations available, be it the mosque, the party, mass organizations (usually created by the FLN) or the military.

To the unprivileged, a party membership could provide access to state resources. Economic cleavages seem to not have caused fractionalization within the parties, in accordance with the theory. While economic liberalization enriched only the higher strata, the generational shift and the recruitment mechanisms through which new loyalties were created seem to have neutralized factions within the vertical organizations. While Brownlee predicts *one* strong political party to absorb potential division, it seems the very organization of the military, the economical elite (often close to or even within military), and the ruling party coalition served the same purpose in Algeria. If in Egypt, conflicts that arose from economic liberalization were mediated by the ruling party, while in Algeria, several institutions were involved in the process.

This study has shown that conflicting interests of different private sector tycoons and lobby networks were not necessarily mediated inside the party, but stuck in an equilibrium that nonetheless resulted in system continuity.

Moreover, rentier features of the economy made the regime able to withdraw the political opening offered in the beginning of the 1990s. When oil prices increased and fed the rent distribution the regime were able to buy off social protest and ensure regime loyalty without resorting to democracy. With the structural adjustment program and what appeared to be economic liberalization, a

corrupt private sector was boosted while state control over the oil and gas company was retained.

The lack of class based interest groups prevented the Algerian society from organizing on the basis of economic interest. Instead, corporatist features of Islamic groups created a dysfunctional opposition base unable to ally with secular leftist groups. Where these groups emerged, for example in Kabylia, they were dismissed as ethnic. Following these findings, it seems that the same structures that were behind the ruling parties' ability to mediate material interests affected the entire political system, also preventing viable opposition.

## 5.7 Summary of conclusions

Jason Brownlee's historical-institutional theory provides a comprehensive explanation for authoritarian rule in Algeria. The legacy of authoritarian rule adheres to institutional features formed long before the so called third wave of democratization. Military cadres continued to articulate its influence through the party coalition even after the political institutions were civilianized.

Institutions such as regularly held election and the civilianization of politics were crucial in upholding the image of a functioning state. This image earned the country foreign investments and international support that not only fed the rentier economy but gained legitimacy for the incumbents domestically. Foreign actors, thus, were not neutral in their influence but contributed to system continuation.

The theory predicts that a ruling party coalition will serve the purpose of absorbing elite rifts and prevent defection. In Algeria, the presidential alliance with the ruling parties FLN, the RND and the co-opted Islamic MSP was in coalition with military generals and private sector elites. A generational shift is in progress where recruitment mechanisms and new client-networks of the elites were important in preventing conflicts. Elite change was a source of system maintenance.

Opposition parties are co-opted, banned or unable to challenge the regime. This study argues that the strategy of the regime to create a weak opposition has been successful for a number of reasons including an inherent lack of class-based organization.

This study outlines the conditions of authoritarian rule in Algeria. Added to the case studies conducted on Egypt, Iran, The Philippines and Malaysia, it seems that the historical-institutional theory accounts well for understanding the continuity of authoritarian rule.

Some findings of this study points to that the importance of international influence have been underestimated. Also, a number of institutions seemed to have served the same purpose in Algeria as did the single ruling party in Egypt. Whether a broader understanding of party coalitions would strengthen the theory

should be subject to further research. Moreover, future studies needs to take into account the international factor in the conditions of authoritarianism.

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