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Introduction and Background

Algeria is the second largest country in Africa in terms of land mass and the first to have been colonised by a European power during the nineteenth century. It currently has close to 35 million inhabitants, mainly concentrated along towns and cities of the Mediterranean littoral. Over three quarters of Algerians are under the age of 30. Most of the population has Arabic as their first language, although a significant minority (about 20-25 per cent of the population) is Berberophone or *Amazigh*, and French is widely spoken in urban areas. This reflects the rich legacy of successive invasions, originally by Arabs (who conquered and converted local Berber populations from the dominant animism to Islam from the seventh century onwards); subsequently by Ottoman authorities (who established a garrison in Algiers and three regencies or beyliks with capitals in Médea, Constantine and Mascara lasting from the sixteenth to early nineteenth century); and finally, from 1830-1962 through its administrative incorporation into France and colonisation by diverse European settlers.

The one continuity throughout this thirteen-century history has been the presence of Islam as the dominant religion and civilizational referent. Although devout Algerians overwhelmingly follow Sunni Maliki rites, historically sufism has played a significant cultural and political role throughout the country. (There are also tiny remnants of Kharajite Shi'ite, Christian and Jewish populations). Logically enough, Islam has in the modern period been mobilised as a political and cultural resource against foreign invaders, but not always homogeneously or consistently. Sufi-inspired, charismatic-millennarian ('maraboutic') movements characterised resistance to both Ottoman rule and early French colonisation. But by the first decades of the twentieth century, the rise of mass political movements in Algeria swung the ideological pendulum toward secular nationalist, liberal, pan-Arab, socialist and even communist forces. Islamic reformism or Islamism was certainly influential politically and culturally throughout the colonial period, its principal expression being the Association of Algerian Muslim Ulama founded in 1931 under the charismatic leadership of the religious notable Abdelhamid Ben Badis. This political strand, however, was only one – and arguably less prominent – of several interwar anti-colonial political forces. Ben Badis' association was fashioned as a self-consciously elitist organisation, explicitly eschewing political engagement at the time of its emergence, and instead directing its energies toward the 'moral education' of the country's Muslims through a network of schools and religious clubs. The Association's membership peaked at about two thousand and remained confined to the petit bourgeois and merchant classes, principally from the more conservative inland regions in the East of the country.

With the rise of the French Popular Front in 1936, the Islamic reformists became more politicised, joining with Algerian communists and the integrationist Federation of Elected Natives (Fédération des Elus Indigènes) in convening a Muslim Congress aimed at securing full civil equality between Muslims and non-Muslims in Algeria. By the outbreak of World War II, this assimilationist stance was transformed into a more explicitly independentist position, articulated in Ben Badis' iconic slogan 'Islam is my religion, Arabic is my language and Algeria is my fatherland'. Yet the mass mobilisation for Algerian independence and its strategic direction was determined by the radical nationalists of Messali Hadj's Algerian People's Party (Parti du Peuple

Algerien, PPA) in combination with various smaller dissident liberal and leftist forces. The National Liberation Front (FLN) that subsequently led the anti-colonial struggle inherited this very broad and eclectic ideological mix, including among its cadres and discourse aspects of all the above political tendencies.

Algeria's revolutionary war of national liberation (1954-1962) delivered a twenty-year experiment in state-planned development. Despite this, the post-colonial economy continued to be tightly linked to the former metropolitan centres: GDP growth – an average of 7.2 per cent between 1967 and 1978- was strongly dependent on exports throughout these years (95 percent of the foreign currency earnings stemmed from hydrocarbons exports), while European partners to this day account for over two-thirds of Algeria's foreign trade (France being the largest single partner) (Henry, 1996; Martín, 2003; Ruedy, 1992). The nationalisation in the 1970s of the strategic hydrocarbons sector did little to undermine the disproportionate reliance on international markets as a source of national income - most notably the energy markets, but also through the sizeable income generated through remittances from Algerian workers living abroad. Oil and gas today still constitute 90 per cent of Algeria's export value. So long as the international energy prices remained high, such external dependence was able to fuel some degree of domestic industrialisation and democratic socio-economic infrastructure in education, health, transport and welfare. Once these prices plummeted in the 1980s and 90s, however, the country was forced to borrow from international financial institutions, raising the debt ratio to GDP and the debt service to crippling levels by the mid-1980s.

With unexpected death of President Houari Boumediene in 1978, Algeria began a process of economic liberalisation under the new President Chadli Benjedid in the course of the 1980s, dropping much of the country's revolutionary programme and socialist orientation, and initiating a timid process of political pluralisation. This was in part a response to the wider international context - involving the fall in oil and gas prices – and the beginnings of the neo-liberal 'counter-revolution' across the world. But it also corresponded to a deliberate strategy among the country's elites – principally the Army General Staff – to selectively extend the reach of the private sector in the economy and de-centralise industry.

Widespread rioting across Algeria in the autumn of 1988 spurred on this process, and in February 1989 a popular referendum approved the country's new constitution which, among other state-society reforms, authorised the formation of independent associations 'with a political character' (Ruedy 1992). Thirty new political parties emerged in the following months and in June 1990 the country's first freely contested local elections resulted in a resounding victory for the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS in the French acronym). The Islamist ascendancy was confirmed in the first round of legislative elections in December 1991, where the FIS gained 44 per cent of the votes. Faced with the now unstoppable (and electorally-mandated) rise to power of the Islamists, the country's military command, backed by secular political and social forces, cancelled the second and definitive round of legislative elections scheduled for January 1992. The Army declared a state of emergency, outlawed the FIS, incarcerated its leaders and followers, and established a military junta –the High Council of State – as the country's new executive power.

For all its fragmentary political platform, the FIS managed during the brief period of ‘opening’ (or *infitah*) to socially coalesce a generalised rejection of the Algerian state as it had evolved thirty years after liberation, replacing civic conceptions of the national solidarity with religious ones. As Hugh Roberts has suggested, the radical Islamists successfully targeted the Party-State’s legitimacy as rightful inheritor of the revolutionary war against French colonialism. ‘The avowed purpose of the FLN’, Roberts averred as early as 1988 ‘was the “restoration of the sovereign, democratic and social Algerian state within the framework of Islamic principles. Yet the state which the FLN established, the *Democratic and Popular Algerian Republic*, is most certainly not an Islamic state’. Consequently, Roberts continues, ‘The question raised by the radical Islamist movement in Algeria is therefore this: what does it mean to speak of “the framework of Islamic principles”; if the state which claims to have been established within this framework does not embody or base itself upon these principles, is not an Islamic state? The Algerian government does not have a clear answer to this question’. (Roberts, 2003: 4 and 6. Italics in original). It was this frontal challenge to the State’s legitimacy - a removal of the Emperor’s clothes, so to speak - that focused the minds of the country’s elites and their supporters, and elicited a correspondingly radical reaction to the Islamist challenge.

These series of events were the proximate cause of the violent conflict that raged between (and indeed among) Islamist insurgents and the State, as well as other Algerian social and political forces on both sides of the conflict, during the 1990s and shaped Algerian politics since then. There is no need to delve here into the detail of this protracted civil strife – its various phases, actors and turning points. Suffice is it to say that the conflict cost close to 200,000 lives (including the assassination of a Head of State), resulted in thousands of ‘disappearances’ and gross violation of human rights by both state and insurgent forces, and has consequently directly affected the bulk of the Algerian population to one degree or another (Evans, 2007; Willis, 1999).

The changing relationship of Algerian Islamism to the Algerian state will form one of the central articulating themes of the analysis that follows. It is the dialectical, almost (perversely) *symbiotic* relationship between the State and Islamist contestation in Algeria over the past two decades that will be emphasised here. The political economy of post-colonial Algeria has given state authority – particularly the Army and the nationalised hydrocarbon sector – a pronounced patrimonial/clientelist character which has in turn shaped the form and content of IPD. The specific expression of such patrimonialism has certainly shifted over time: the revolutionary populism of the Boumediene years gave way to Chadli’s attempts at implementing a state-led neo-liberal revolution, which in turn has delivered a form of authoritarian market state over the past decade. Across each of these periods however, we find the valorisation of the Algerian state and its Army as the main or even sole source of legitimate authority, underwritten by these institutions’ origins in the foundational moment of the Algerian war of independence. For all the ideological and political permutations within the State and the Islamist opposition over the years, two bodies – the FLN and the National Liberation Army, ALN – remain the touchstones of nationalist ‘authenticity’ and therefore indispensable referents of political legitimacy. The historical memory of the war continues to play a pronounced role in Algerian public life, and the revolution won ‘by the people, for the people’ has been

appropriated in one of two ways, usefully identified by Omar Carlier as a ‘populism of contestation’ and a ‘populism of regulation’ (Carlier, 1995: 310).

The rest of this chapter aims to probe the tension between these two manifestations of Algerian populism in explaining the fraught relationship between Islam and political dissent in that country. After a first section sketching the anatomy and development of contemporary Algerian Islamism, subsequent parts of the essay will focus on how the agenda of IPD in Algeria was shifted by President Bouteflika’s strategy of national reconciliation. What I call ‘Bouteflika’s gambit’ (and others have labelled the ‘Bouteflika effect’) combined domestic reform and reconciliation with an international strategy of diplomatic recognition and economic integration into the world market. As such, international and indeed transnational forces – from the Global War on Terror to the influence of regional politics and diasporic communities – should also be factored in as a signal influence on IPD in Algeria.

Throughout the article I adopt a broadly materialist framework that sees IPD as an expression of concrete socio-economic and political crises, rather than some transcendental, cultural feature of Islam or so-called Muslim societies. I thereby aim to draw out some of the similarities between Algeria and other patrimonial post-colonial states (most notably Egypt and Pakistan) whilst also highlighting the particularities of the country’s socio-economic and political make-up as a major hydrocarbons exporter and a regional diplomatic broker. These specific features will be considered in relation to Asef Bayat’s reflections on post-Islamism – how far Algeria’s recent history and its peculiar dynamics of IPD can be considered as an example of a polity that has moved beyond a political culture framed by the global Islamist resurgence of the past decades, and how indeed this may help to explain Algeria’s apparent immunity from the revolutionary changes taking place regionally as part of the so-called ‘Arab Spring’.

An Anatomy of Dissent

Commenting on the Chadli government’s reaction to the 1988 riots, Omar Carlier has suggested that it was almost as if the Islamist opposition was given the following injunction: ‘We’ll leave you with the mosques and the town halls, you leave us with the market and the State’ (Carlier, 1996: 380). Although laced with some irony, this statement nonetheless offers a neat entry-point into one of the deeper continuities in the relationship between Islam and political dissent in Algeria. As already noted, Islam has been present in Algerian politics throughout the modern period, yet the form and force of this presence has varied considerably. Séverine Labat makes the point elegantly when she affirms that ‘The struggle for Algerian independence has in effect been organised around two axes, the one ‘cultural’, represented by the Association of Ulema, the other political, embodied in the PPA-MTLD, and subsequently the FLN. In making Islam an expression of national unanimity, each of these two poles of Algerian nationalism simultaneously turned Islam and the Nation into the major issues in the quest for legitimacy by the different clans aspiring to exercise power’. (Labat, 1995: 59)

This tension between Nation and Islam, or between civic and religious conceptions of nationalism, was initially resolved by the new Algerian Republic through a relegation of Islam to the cultural or spiritual sphere, broadly conceived. What remained of the Association of Ulemas had already been assimilated into FLN during the war, and

with independence much of their previous activity and concerns were now directed through the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Although all of the country's post-colonial Constitutions have made reference to Algeria's Arab-Muslim character, the substantive socio-economic and political implications of this affirmation have remained nebulous (beyond symbolic gestures like making Islam the religion of state and reserving the Office of President for Muslims only). If anything, it has been the *absence* of properly Islamic policies and orientations within Algerian government and society that has historically exercised Islamist political forces in the country.

These were initially expressed through *al-Qiyam al-islamiyya* (Islamic Values) – an association of former AUMA members, led by Hachemi Tedjini, who rejected integration into the FLN and became one of the early critics of Ben Bella's 'impious' adoption of 'foreign' and 'westernised' ideas of Marxism, socialism and autogestion. (Evans and Phillips, 1997; Labat, 1995; Roberts, 2003; Willis, 1996). *Al-Qiyam's* influence was chiefly denunciatory, focusing its energies –as the AUMA had done at its inception - on policing what it deemed to be immoral and un-Islamic public behaviour (consumption of alcohol, immodest dress, mingling of the sexes) as well as challenging the influence of secular, leftist ideas and culture through its own publications and religious activities.

Such denunciations were opportunistically instrumentalised by Boumediene on deposing Ben Bella in June 1965. Although the dynamics of the coup responded to more deep-seated factional and personal antagonisms among the revolutionary leadership rather than to any fundamental dispute over the place of Islam in the new republic, Boumediene and his supporters were intent on 'nationalising' Islam. Instead, Boumediene's incorporation of Islamic reformist such as Ahmed Taleb Ibrahimi into cabinet as Minister of Education (and later, Minister of Information and Culture) together with his 'Arabisation' policy during the 1970s opened new avenues for the 'Islamisation' of the public sphere, outside the Army and the State. It was during the Boumediene years that Islamist figures like Abbasi Madani and Sheikh Abdellatif Soltani - both leading lights in *al-Qiyam*, the former a future leader of the FIS – made inroads for their cause among university students, the urban slum-dwellers and disaffected civil servants (Willis, 1996). The contrasting conceptions of Islam and the Nation were increasingly, if very unequally, polarised between secular leftist supporters of Boumediene and his Islamist opponents – many of which had been inspired by the post-1967 'Qutbist' turn in the Mashreq. The antagonism was played out –both physically and philosophically - in university campuses, in public spaces and in some workplaces. With the launch of an 'Agrarian Revolution' in 1971 aimed at, among other reforms, radically redistributing private land to local cooperatives and 'socialist villages, Boumediene took, for many of his Islamist critics, one leftist turn too far. Sheikh Soltani articulated this anti-leftist sentiment in his 1974 polemic 'Mazdaqism is the Is the Source of Socialism' which famously argued that true Muslims should not pray on nationalised land (Evans & Phillips, 1997). Indeed for Evans and Phillips, 'Boumediene's leftward turn was a crystallizing moment. The roots of the Islamist movement which emerged in the 1980s are to be found in this episode. On the one hand it cemented the alliance with those groups most threatened by the Boumediene regime – large landowners, business interests, conservative elements of the state administration who provided the Islamists movement with important financial support. On the other hand Soltani's arguments wielded enormous influence and came to form the basis of an all-encompassing critique of the

Boumediène regime. Anti-socialism and anti-communism, along with the call for government based upon the sharia, became the cornerstones of the Islamist lexicon.’ (Evans & Phillips, 1997: 93). It is to this new phase of Islam and political dissent that we now turn.

In somewhat stylised form, we can identify three broad strands of dissident Islamic movements emerging from Algeria’s twenty years’ crisis after 1988. The first crystallised around what might be labelled ‘collaborative dissidents’ willing to compromise and work with the existing state power, not least since some of their cadres and leadership are former state functionaries. The *harakat mutjama’ al-silm* (Movement of Society for Peace, MSP), founded by Mahfoud Nahnah and two of its splinter parties, *Ennahda* (Renaissance Movement) now led by Lahbib Adami and Abdallah Djaballah’s *harakat al-islah al-watani* (National Reform Movement, MNR in its French acronym) all represent the more conservative, pious and accommodationist wing of Algerian political Islam (See Boubekour, 2007 for a good overview). They have all participated in elections, some have won representation in the Popular Assembly and the MSP has held several portfolios in successive cabinets since 1988.

A second, more powerful expression of Islamism, which we may label ‘oppositional’ or ‘militant’ comes in the shape of the FIS. Uniquely among Islamist organisations (across the Arab world at least) the FIS is explicitly a ‘front’ in that it encompassed very different tendencies, from the pragmatic ‘technocratic-nationalist’ *Jaz’airists* (ie. Algerianists) to more ideological *Salafists* (in a historical, rather than contemporary sense) who adopted a pan-Islamic stance (Labat, 1996). The broad and under-specified programme of the FIS was a deliberate ploy to tap into popular discontent with the ruling FLN and the state. Indeed the French pun that suggests the FIS is the ‘child’ of the FLN (‘le FIS est le fils du FLN’) captures well the Islamists’ intention to take over the nationalist mantle from the ruling party.

A final manifestation of Islamist political dissent is properly *jihadist* in that it adopted armed struggle (the ‘lesser jihad’) as its chief strategy of opposition. Although some have traced this form of dissent back to the warlordism and banditry of the Ottoman period, and subsequently to the anti-colonial resistance of the *maquis*, the explicitly *jihadist* movements only emerged over the past thirty years (Hafez, 2000; Martinez, 1998; Layachi, 2004). The short-lived *al-Haraka al-islamiyya al-musallaha* (The Armed Islamic Movement) of the nineteenth-eighties gave way in subsequent decades to armed wing of the FIS, the *al-Jaysh al-islami lil-inqadh* (Islamic Army of Salvation, AIS in its French acronym) and the more radical *al-Jama’at al-islamiyya al-musallaha* (Armed Islamic Group – GIA in French). The latter group in turn morphed into the Salafi Group for Preaching and Combat (*al-Jamaa’atu l-Salafiyyatu li l-Da’wati wa l-Qitaa*) and from Spring 2007 into al Qaeda in the Islamic Countries of the Maghreb (*Tandhim Al Qaeda fil Maghreb al-Islami*) (Steinberg and Werenfels, 2007; Ashour, 2010).

The ‘bloody decade’ of the 1990s caused significant economic disruption and market distortion for the everyday lives of Algerians as the ‘informal’ sector, fuelled by criminality, violence and cross border smuggling (*trabendo*, a shortened version of Spanish for ‘contraband’) coupled with official corruption deepened social inequalities, stunted growth and promoted inflation (Martinez 1998). By the end of

the 1990s, official unemployment in Algeria stood at 29 per cent, inflation at 20 percent while the share of expenditure going to investment drooped to 28 percent of GDP (Hodd 2004: 42). It against this backdrop that we should then understand the Islamist resurgence of the last three decades as a 're-invention' of populism. Algerian Islamists have drawn extensively from the imagery, language, programme, idiom, organisation and indeed cadres of the national liberation movements. The one crucial ingredient they have added to the populist legacy is the seeming incorruptibility and authenticity of 'Islam'. Whilst the populism of the national liberation movements was institutionalised into state power- in the process acquiring all the secular, this-worldly trappings of such forms of political rule - Islamist populism allowed itself, in the main, to resist the world of 'le pouvoir' and instead built (and billed) itself as an opposition, grassroots movement guided by other-worldly piety. As the legitimacy of post-colonial states collapsed in tandem with that of secular Arab ideologies, the social base of such 'populism of contestation' remained relatively unaltered, drawn from a combination of urban under-employed university graduates, petit bourgeois traders and the lower echelons of state bureaucracy. But its ideological axis was re-aligned toward the only worldview which remained seemingly untarnished: that of political Islam. Three broad political issues in particular have sustained this realignment.

The first of these is the conjunctural response to a general crisis. Algerian Islamism in the various expressions just outlined succeeded above all as protest movement capable of channelling multiple sources of popular discontent through a generic, and therefore broadly appealing grammar of 'corruption', 'power', 'degradation', 'the people' and so forth - as a political formation that was *against* the existing *decadent* order and promised moral and political *regeneration*. The content of such regeneration was once again, overwhelmingly generic and underspecified: it included the application of sharia law, the shift towards a 'Muslim' or 'Islamic' society, the *jihad* against corruption - all of which was neatly packaged in one of the preferred slogans of the Algerian FIS: 'Islam is the solution'.

The second arena of Islamist politics refers to the critique of political representation as constructed by the post-colonial state. Rampant corruption, ostentatious display of wealth, cynical manipulation of power and influence, and naked oppression have characterised much of the ruling classes' political behaviour in the region during this period. The military regime's obstinate monopoly of economic and political power, and its opaque campaign against armed Islamist insurgency after 1991 have severely dented any faith in representative politics as an expression of democracy. The rejection of democracy as concept 'imported' by 'distant powers', and its replacement by a 'socially and culturally profound' notion of *shura* which is 'immediate' and 'direct', is all the more powerful when Islamists reduce secular post-colonial regimes to mere puppets of the former metropole.

Finally, Algerian Islamism has captured the country's anti-imperialist agenda and legacy by aligning it to a broader transnational Islamism. The dual emphasis on the inferiority and humiliation of the Arab-Muslim world on the one hand, and the possible alternative in the 'path' of Islamic civilisation on the other, echoes forms of Third World anti-imperialism which characterised the international relations of other Islamist movements across the globe. Algerian Islamists have in the past readily adopted the Iranian revolution's slogan 'Neither East nor West' (*la sharqui, la*

gharbi) as a rallying point for their more internationally-minded sympathisers. Over the past two decades, however, the anti-imperialism of the *ihadists* has followed one of two paths. The first, exemplified by the AIS and GIA, explicitly continued in the *mujahid* tradition of the national liberation war and focused its attacks on the ‘French Party’ (*hizb frança*), both in France and Algeria. Despite their diealogical and tactical differences, these two armed groups integrated much of the ‘Algerianist’ (*jaza’ira*) tendency within its ranks (Hafez, 2000). A second more ‘internationalist’ approach to jihad was adopted from the late 1990s by the Salafi Group for Preaching and Combat and subsequently al Qaeda in the Maghreb. Here, the combination of personal networks among ‘Arab Afghans’ (often in exile), a southward shift in attention toward Mali and Niger and the 2006 affiliation of the Salafi Group to al Qaeda, produced an Algerian jihadism that was transnational in its composition, doctrine and actions (Filui, 2009).

If ‘democracy’ is understood in Schumpeterian terms as a mere *process* involving transparently competitive elections among a plurality of political candidates who are able to freely express their programme and principles, then there is no question that the bulk of Algerian Islamist forces were perfectly compatible with democracy. At its height in the early 1990s, the FIS plainly represented a significant section of Algerian political opinion and as such it mobilised and participated in successive electoral contests, in the main respecting due process, freedom of expression and the rule of law. Once we consider ‘democracy’ as a set of *substantive rights* (to personal autonomy, basic human needs, involving the separation of powers and so forth) then the Islamist attachment to democracy becomes more problematic. It is certainly the case – as elsewhere in the Muslim world – that Islamists offered welfare, health, education and legal support where the state failed to do so. Yet this ‘third sector’ provision was not premised on universalist assumptions of democracy, but has itself acted as a form of political patronage, attached to the particularistic religious-ideological beliefs of Islamists. Similarly, the internal workings of the FIS and its successors were closer to the proclaimed ‘Islamic’ alternative to democracy, ‘shurikratiyya’: rule through consultation of (male) elders, clerics or notables rather than through a transparent and participatory process of internal democracy. The issue, then, as Asef Bayat has helpfully put it, is not whether Islam is compatible with democracy (which it clearly can be), but rather ‘under what conditions can Muslims *make* them compatible’ (Bayat, 2007: 4). The argument made in this paper is that the twin forces of a patrimonial state founded on hydrocarbons wealth and a post-colonial praetorian guard on the one hand, and a narrowly populist and ideologically involutionist form of political dissent, have made it very difficult for Algerian Muslims to make democracy compatible with Islam.

Of course, the core ideological components of Algerian Islamic political dissent have been expressed in a wide variety of ways at different junctures over the past two decades - all of which often complicates reference to a catch-all category like ‘Islamism’. As we shall shortly see, on the accommodationist end of the spectrum, both the MSP and MNR leaderships have effectively been co-opted by the state, while the MNR has established tactical alliances with the staunchly secular (and Berberist) Rally for Culture and Democracy and the (Trotskyist) Workers’ Party. Such political professionalisation and ideological pragmatism has nonetheless generated some dissonance with their grassroots membership: ‘[w]hile the MSP and the MNR have succeeded politically by accepting co-optation, many of their supporters still vote for

them in protest at Western policies and state authoritarianism.’ (Boubekeur, 2007: 4). Similarly, on the extreme jihadist end of the continuum there is considerable evidence to suggest that these groups were so deeply infiltrated by the state’s secret services, that in some instances they simply acted as agents of those factions of ‘le pouvoir’ intent on ramping up a ‘strategy of tension’ (Yous, 2000). The one underlying theme in these diverse experiences, then, is the constant interaction between the state and forces of political dissent which produced complex dynamics of cooperation and convergence; of contestation, manipulation and accommodation; of convergence and fragmentation.

Over the last decade these political tensions have in the main been resolved in favour of the state and its supporters within civil society. Crudely put, ‘le pouvoir’ has won the civil war, reducing the emergency of the 1990s to a series of politically and geographically marginal and - from the state’s perspective – manageable local insurgencies. Co-optation and reconciliation have replaced repression and counterinsurgency as the dominant responses to political dissent in Algeria. One individual, President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, has symbolised this successful switch in strategy, which we now explore in greater detail.

Bouteflika’s Gambit

The principal political objective of Algeria’s ruling elites since the failed pluralisation of 1988 has been securing social stability and political continuity. This should of course not be confused with the quest for democracy, accountability or increased socio-economic equality. The ‘normalisation’ or ‘pacification’ of Algerian politics through the 1990s was instead pursued through the age-old combination of ruthless violence and electoral legitimation. The parameters which structured this aim for stability and continuity are not clear-cut, and involve complex and often opaque struggles among and within various interconnected loci of socio-economic and political power in Algeria, including the Army High Command, diverse political parties and social movements, terrorist groups and assorted business interests. It is in this context that Abdelaziz Bouteflika returned to Algerian politics from a twenty-year exile to win the presidential elections of April 1999 with an overwhelming majority of 73.9 percent of the vote (albeit from an unofficially estimated 23 per cent turn-out and after the withdrawal of six major opposition candidates in the face of widespread media bias and eventual rigging).

Undeniably, Bouteflika’s electoral success seems implausible without the endorsement of Algeria’s General Staff. It would be naïve to interpret his ascent to power as the work of a lonely maverick. As one acute observer of Algerian politics commented at the time of the new President’s accession, ‘Bouteflika has a long way to go before he can claim to be commander in chief as well as in name’ (Roberts 2003: 276). For Roberts, the vigorous reshuffle of the army leadership in February 2000 ‘completed a take-over of the Algerian army by former officers of the French army at the expense of the last survivors of the *maquis* tradition’, which in turn suggested that ‘The army commanders may be counting on the development of strong ties to Western defence establishments to compensate them ... for the loss traditional internal public support and legitimation as well as provide organisational models, training and hardware’ (Roberts 2003: 273-74).

There is a further, more structural difficulty in reading Bouteflika's rise and permanence as corresponding to the power of any specific constituency with a discernible political strategy, and that is what Benjamin Stora has labelled 'the invisible constructions' of Algerian politics (Stora, 2001). Without falling blithely into Orientalist tropes of an unfathomable an exceptional 'Other', Stora nonetheless does draw our attention to the opacity, duplicity and paranoia that has characterised much of Algerian politics (or what some Algerians call *la boulitique* – roughly 'politicking'): 'This deliberate opacity hinders our attempts at explanation, at eliciting some measure of solidarity from outside the country. Like negotiation, war unfolds within closed doors, in the shadows. The culture of secrecy, a working-mode of French political society, explains the veil thrown over this conflict.' (Stora, 2001: 45).

Bouteflika's 'two-pronged approach to the Algerian crisis' according to Robert Mortimer, involved 'a policy of amnesty towards the armed groups and a policy of projecting Algeria on to the world stage' (Mortimer 2004: 185). On this reading, it is possible to discern a fraught and precarious, but viable alignment between the Army leadership's objectives and those of the President as identified by Mortimer, where Bouteflika acted as the 'public face' of the Army's wider strategy for domestic and international rehabilitation of Algeria in the eyes of world. The 'professionalisation' of the Army and the accompanying 'civilianisation' of the Presidency have, together with the reconstitution of the historic FLN as a party of government further re-arranged the balance of power between military, executive and legislative authority in Algeria.

Domestically, the centrepiece of Bouteflika's successive presidencies was the process of national reconciliation aimed at closing the period of civil strife inaugurated in 1992. A 'Concorde Civile' law approved by referendum in September 2000 offered different levels of amnesty for those rebels involved in the insurgency of the 1990s while a presidential amnesty was extended to the AIS. In the wake of his re-election in April 2004, Bouteflika launched a second phase of political normalisation through the Charter of National Reconciliation and Peace (once again approved by referendum in September 2005) which 'was divided into four sections, designed to consolidate peace, consolidate national reconciliation, address the issue of the "disappeared" and solidify national cohesion' (Joffé 2008: 219). Together, these successive exercises in reconciliation delivered what Ashour (2010) has identified as one successful, and one flawed process of 'de-radicalisation'. Among the former is the case of the FIS's armed wing, the AIS, where a combination of economic inducements – securing employment or facilitating the start-up of small businesses for those who put down their guns - and a comprehensive programme of state protection for former guerrillas secured the effective dismantling of the AIS as a paramilitary organisation after 2000. The unsuccessful case of de-radicalisation involves the GIA, which by 2005 had all but disappeared through a process of splintering and military 'eradication'. Only a tiny fraction of the estimated 10,000 GIA militants of 1994 survive today as the al Qaeda in the Islamic Countries of the Maghreb. In Ashour's estimation, 'Unsuccessful de-radicalization can be explained in the GIA's case by the lack of charismatic leadership due to short term tenures, limited educational and theological backgrounds, excessively violent behavior and virulent factionalization .' (Ashour, 2010: 131).

These political process aimed and neutralising and dismantling the *jihadist* wing of Algerian Islamism was subtly intertwined with Bouteflika's economic policies, associated by Iván Martín to three 'broad axes': '[t]o continue with the already initiated "market reforms", promoting the private sector's role in the economy and creating a favourable environment for investments [...] the reduction of trade protection in Algerian markets'(Martín 2003: 41) as well as a range of 'structural reforms' in public and judicial administration, education and, as we shall shortly see, in the hydrocarbons sector. Such reforms have been widely contested by, among other forces, the trades unions, and in many respects still remain unrealised. Similarly, it is far from clear that Bouteflika's gambit of articulating national reconciliation with international prestige has yet paid off. 'The high oil price and resulting buoyant revenue have given the "distributive state" in Algeria a new lease on life' Hugh Roberts persuasively maintained in 2007. 'As a result, the regime's capacity to co-opt opposition and buy social peace is high and the effective pressure fundamental institutional reform is low' (Roberts, 2007: 19). The reliance on the hydrocarbons sector to periodically inject the regime with a new lease of life is however a risky enterprise, for it is subject to both the vagaries of international commodity markets and the precariousness of domestic patrimonial-clientelist alliances and their accompanying de-radicalisation processes. The next section explores both these determinants in the so-called 'Bouteflika effect'.

The Role of Energy in the 'Bouteflika Effect'

Algeria's hydrocarbon sector was first developed on a serious commercial scale in the years after the Second World War. The opening decades of the twentieth century had witnessed generally unsuccessful oil explorations in the north of the country, and it was not until 1954 – the very same year the revolutionary war for national liberation was launched – that significant gas findings were confirmed in the Sahara, first in Djebel Berga and subsequently at the giant Hassi Messaoud oilfield (Aïssaoui 2001). Initially, and despite the intensification of the war, exploration and exploitation was conducted by private French companies supported by public authorities. The defeat of the French in 1962 saw the creation of the Algerian *Société Nationale de Transports et de Commercialisation des Hydrocarbures* (SONATRACH) responsible not just for the research, development, exploration, transport and marketing of Algeria's hydrocarbons resources but subsequently their downstream refinement, liquefaction and petrochemical transformation (Nelson 1985). Emboldened by the rise of OPEC and spurred on by Boumediene's burgeoning strategy of 'industrialising industries', the Algerian state took a 51 percent stake in SONATRACH in 1971 and effectively nationalised the country's hydrocarbons sector.

Since then SONATRACH has operated as a major arm of the state and a critical resource in Algeria's external relations. During the first twenty years of its existence, the company adopted a 'do-it-alone' policy in line with the government's revolutionary nationalist ideology, placing significant barriers on private and overseas investments in the country's hydrocarbons sector, one consequence of which was an extraordinarily low density of exploration (Aïssaoui 2001). In the face of this under-exploitation and the plummeting international oil and gas prices, the Chadli regime introduced a new Hydrocarbons Law in 1986, replacing the existing arrangements with legislation that authorised access of foreign capital to production-sharing contracts, joint ventures, joint-stock investments and risk service contracts with SONATRACH. The national company still retained 51 percent participation in

national oil, restricted foreign access to gas and limited joint ventures to fields discovered after 1986. But a protracted process of what during the 1990s became known as ‘capital opening’ was now underway. In 1991 fresh amendments to the 1986 Hydrocarbons Law opened a new gas and oil strategy which according to one expert revolved around ‘three policy directions: first increasing the hydrocarbons resource and production through a boost in E&D efforts; secondly, enhancing the oil recovery of existing fields within a re-development programme; thirdly, bringing on stream all discovered, but not yet developed, gas fields’ (Aïssaoui 2001: 101). This in turn facilitated the award between 1987 to 2000 of 45 production-sharing exploration contracts with 27 companies from 20 different countries (Aïssaoui 2001: 101). It is with this background that we can begin to identify the main contours of the ‘Bouteflika effect’ as it unfolded in the wake of the former foreign minister’s first electoral victory in April 1999.

Two fairly contingent and largely exogenous political and economic developments have shaped the tight connections between Algeria’s foreign and domestic politics. The first is the sharp and sustained rise in oil and gas prices over the last decade. The second was the launch of a ‘war on terror’ after 9/11. Bouteflika demonstrated great skill in turning these global events to his country’s advantage. Specifically, Bouteflika’s three terms in Office have seen an attempt at the complex conjugation of (a) the diversification and intensification of Algeria’s external relations, accompanied by (b) the diplomatic rapprochement with Paris and Washington which in turn has fostered (c) the process of domestic political ‘normalisation’ aimed at (d) transforming Algeria into a ‘pivotal state’ of the world market and global geopolitics (Zoubir 2004). Once again, the country’s energy sector has been central to this strategy.

Three major diplomatic events in as many years reflect the reinvigoration of Algeria’s foreign policy under Bouteflika. Algiers hosted the 35th Summit of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in July 1999, thereby reopening an era of pan-African and Third Worldist activism on the part of Algeria which, as Boumedienne’s foreign minister, Bouteflika himself had embodied in the 1970s. While holding the OAU Presidency for one year, Bouteflika brokered the December 2000 ceasefire between Eritrea and Ethiopia, mediated between conflicting parties in the Great Lakes region, launched –with South Africa and Nigeria – the New Partnership for African development (NEPAD) and represented African interests at the Kananaskis G-8 Summit and at other international fora dealing with the continent’s debt burden. Most tellingly, under Bouteflika Algeria has intensified diplomatic and strategic links with Nigeria, among other initiatives opening negotiations for the future construction of an Nigeria-Algeria Gasline (Nigal) (Clarke 2008, Mortimer, 2006; Zoubir 2004).

Twelve months after the OAU summit, Bouteflika flew to Paris for the first ever full state visit of an Algerian President.¹ These were subsequently reciprocated by the French President and, while the benefit of hindsight suggests such exchanges were of more symbolic than substantive value, most informed accounts of the visit recognise the kernel of truth in Bouteflika’s diplomatic rhetoric on leaving France in the summer of 2000 (with a small reduction of its debt burden to France, a promise of

¹ As the ever meticulous Hugh Roberts indicates, the 1983 visit by Chedli was an ‘official’ visit (Roberts, 2003)

investment from the French business class and some equestrian gear allegedly belonging to the Emir Abdelkader): ‘Algeria seeks to have an exceptional, not simply normal or trivial, relations with France’ (cited in Zoubir 2004).

These same observers note that Algeria’s diplomatic normalisation with France served as the prelude to a rapprochement the rest of the European Union. In December 2001 – after a five-year delay caused by Algeria’s civil war - Algiers signed an Association Agreement with Brussels. This brought both political dividends for Algeria (in the dedication of a specific chapter to terrorism in the Agreement) and economic benefits in the form of greater European investment in the country. But it is the two pipelines delivering Saharan gas to the Iberian and Italian peninsulas (Medgaz and Galis respectively) that have ‘locked in’ southern Europe’s energy security to Algeria’s key role as natural gas supplier (Darbouche 2008). This is, to be sure, not a foregone conclusion as Libyan competition and Europe’s own attempts at diversification of supply can modify the terms of such interdependence. But as one specialist has succinctly noted: ‘In the long term, Algeria’s gas market is dependent on the European economy and the direction of environmental pressures, currently running in its favour’ (Clarke 2008: 235).

The frantic shift from relative isolation to multilateral engagement in Algeria’s foreign relations culminated in July 2001 with Bouteflika’s two-day visit to Washington. As in previous high-profile visits to western capitals, this gathering bore mixed fruits for Algiers. On the one hand, investment and trade accords reinforced American capital’s position as largest foreign direct investor in Algeria with US\$5 billion worth of assets in the Algerian economy (principally the hydrocarbons sector). On the other hand, American business made it clear at this and subsequent bilateral gatherings that such figures reflected half of the potential investment should Algeria deliver improvements in security, infrastructure and legislation favourable to foreign investors. The 9/11 attacks paradoxically (some might argue, cynically) worked in Bouteflika’s favour as his officials were now able to make a strong case for the connections between George W. Bush’s ‘global war on terror’ and Algeria’s ten year counterinsurgency against domestic terrorism. Successive visits to Washington in November 2001 and July 2003 cemented this counter-terrorist partnership, as did Algiers’ closer relations with NATO. Algeria is currently one of a handful of African states engaged in AFRICOM’s Joint Combined Exchange Training (‘Flintlock’) exercises, and a signal member of the Trans-Saharan Counter-Terrorism Partnership. Algiers authorised the use of its Tamanrasset airfield in the deployment of American P-2 ‘Orion’ aerial surveillance and a subsidiary of Halliburton, Brown and Root-Condor is reportedly partner to a joint venture with SONATARACH for the extension of the Tamanrasset and Bou Saada military air bases (Volman 2007).

The overall strategy informing this rush of diplomatic activity has been neatly summarised by Yahia Zoubir: ‘A close analysis of Bouteflika’s pronouncements highlight[s] two intertwined objectives, both of which had a direct linkage to foreign policy: restoration of civil peace and economic recovery’ (Zoubir 2004: 164). The great challenge for Bouteflika and his supporters has been to reconcile these two objectives, for without the restoration of peace there will be no recovery; yet the chosen path of recovery (a deeper integration into the world market) can still upset the restoration of civil peace.

Algeria is actively courting foreign investment in a bid to find employment for its youthful and educated working population, as well as upgrading the country's economic infrastructure. Bouteflika's diplomatic campaigns have been geared at marketing Algeria as a stable and resourceful 'emerging market' full of lucrative potential for those firms willing to bet on country's future. And the hydrocarbons sector has been at the forefront of this process of rebranding. Algeria's full hydrocarbons potential is elusive, although its natural gas reserves were estimated at the start of 2008 to be the ninth in the world, with 2.6 per cent of global reserves ('Worldwide Look at Reserves and Production' 2007). On some calculations 'Only 15% of Algeria's 1.5 million sq km of prospective sedimentary area has been explored to date' (Clarke 2008: 239). Vast areas of the western Sahara and the Atlas mountains still remain untapped, and SONATRACH is intent on significantly increasing both oil and gas production (in process re-balancing its output in the direction of oil). The 'go-it-alone' policy of the 1970s and early 80s has gradually been replaced by a regime much more accommodating of foreign investors, with 25 international companies today operating in Algeria's hydrocarbon sector. Yet SONATRACH still remains in firm control of Algerian hydrocarbon resources, and recent international bidding rounds have been extremely selective and in some cases, dismissive of foreign partners and players (most notoriously in excluding Spain's Repsol-YPF and Gas Natural from the Gassi Touil LNG venture).

The internationalisation of Algerian hydrocarbons has, however, not flowed in one direction only. SONATRACH is becoming a player in the global oil and gas sector through its portfolio of upstream and downstream investments. It holds 40 percent equity in a recently discovered Yemeni block, 15 percent interest in Anadarko and 5 percent in Duke Energy and has recently 'focused on expanding its upstream activities in the Middle East and Africa, petrochemicals entry into Spain with German partner BASF, oil trading in London and Singapore, and LNG trading in Amsterdam' (Clarke 2008: 238). Similar ventures are forecast in Iraq, Chad and Angola. In sum, SONATRACH is still living up to its role as the government's most powerful weapon of economic statecraft, both domestically and internationally.

There is an intrinsic risk to hedging a country's economic recovery on international commodity markets like those of oil and gas. This is especially so for a country like Algeria where a full 90 percent of foreign earnings stem from gas. Still, the record price increases of the last decade allowed Algeria to reverse its current account deficit and it now holds an estimated US\$ 110 billion foreign exchange surplus – over 50 percent of its GDP. Much of this is being reinvested through public expenditure, ostensibly to secure future economic growth and drastically reduce the country's high unemployment (still officially at 14 per cent) - all of which indicates a sharp sensitivity to the perils of an economic and political dependency on hydrocarbon rents. For our purposes, the two arenas where such patrimonial redistribution has proven especially relevant are with regard to the co-optation strategy and the factional instrumentalisation of hydrocarbon revenues.

Miriam R. Lowi has documented how the initial 'eradicationist' strategy of repression which came to dominate the state's response to insurgency in the 1990s gave way by the turn of the new century to co-optation and manipulation of the opposition (Lowi, 2009). As we saw earlier with regard to de-radicalisation, the regime proved especially adept at exploiting the progressive fragmentation of the Islamist opposition,

playing the personality cult of various insurgent ‘emirs’ against each other and undertaking selective negotiations with, and eventual agreements with different rebellious factions. It is estimated that shortly before his re-election in 2004, Bouteflika distributed ‘on average, the equivalent of \$50-60 million to every *wilaya* [administrative province] he visited’ (Lowi, 2009: 141). This, combined with the emphasis on the country’s new-found diplomatic *prestige* (an elusive but very valuable property given Algeria’s signal role in post-colonial Pan-Africanism and the campaign for a New International Economic Order) furnished Bouteflika and his supporters with a powerful ideological narrative of national unity and reconciliation.

Yet Bouteflika’s ascendancy has, predictably enough, not gone uncontested – and not just from the ‘usual suspects’ among civil society. At the start of 2010, the complex edifice of the Algerian state was rocked by a series of scandals, high-level sackings and the assassination of a police chief, which have shaken the foundations of Bouteflika’s regime. Four Bouteflika allies at the helm of SONATRACH were dismissed from their posts over alleged corruption relating to international procurement contracts. The investigation was led by country’s top intelligence and security agency, the *Département du Renseignement et de la Sécurité*, (DRS) – a bastion of the ‘deep state’, and then followed by the assassination under suspicious circumstances of Ali Tounsi, the chief of another law enforcement agency, politically closer to the President’s office. The upshot of all this intrigue, according to John P. Entelis is ‘[a]n Algerian political economy strategy increasingly in the hands of resource nationalists with the critical support of *le pouvoir*, in which control of Sonatrach is essential’ (Entelis, 2011: 671). This in turn may well complicate or even reverse Bouteflika’s two-pronged strategy of external rehabilitation and domestic reconciliation.

Bouteflika’s gambit, then, has not rested solely on this awareness of the potential contagion of the ‘Dutch disease’. It is also, and fundamentally premised on the assumption that Algeria’s domestic recovery is deeply reliant on ending its international isolation. The closure of the twenty years’ crisis in Algeria lies, for Bouteflika and his supporters, in reinstating Algeria’s international diplomatic and economic stature in world affairs. The benefits of such a policy for many of the 35 million Algerians is not immediately palpable, beyond the rhetorical power of restoring this nation’s past dignity and prestige. The political and economic price of Bouteflika’s gambit is likely to be high among public sector workers, secular defenders of the regime and among the many millions that may not see the direct benefits of foreign investment, international prestige and political normalisation in terms of employment, housing, inflation or general standard of living. Yet, because the other possible alternative – a return to the political turmoil and socio-economic involution of the 1990s – is currently unacceptable to most Algerians, it is also likely that the ‘Bouteflika effect’ may well succeed in delivering the stability and continuity that has eluded Algeria since Boumedienne’s demise in 1978. Here the historical memory of the war of national liberation and the more recent civil war generally plays in favour of the President’s strategy of normalisation. Some have rightly pointed out, ‘[h]ow experiences of colonial repression are understood within a deeper historical context ... which maintains a power and potency for past incidents of such repression beyond the state’s official narrative of these events’ (Githens-Mazer, 2009). But the evidence thus far suggests that Bouteflika ‘narrative’ is gaining legitimacy while the counter-discourse of ‘Islam is the Solution’ no longer acts as a mobilising force.

Some Concluding Reflections

There is a certain circular quality to the experience of Islam and political dissent in contemporary Algeria. After twenty years of crisis, the country is still run by a narrow military-bureaucratic oligarchy which has staked its survival on the distribution of hydrocarbon wealth to curry political favour from supporters and contenders alike. Despite the ripple effects of the ‘Arab Spring’ across that part of the world, the Algerian regime thus far seems to have snuffed out local expressions of the regional revolts, not least through the support proffered by its European and American allies. In Lise Storm’s blunt but accurate rendition, ‘The reason why the democratic opposition is so weak can be summed up in one word: repression.’ (Storm, 2009) It was under very similar circumstances –albeit with the locus of revolutionary change in the Soviet bloc - that Chadli Benjedid opened a process of political reform which was to mark his own demise, the rise of Islamism and the subsequent ten-year civil war. The crucial difference between the current conjuncture and that of the early 1990s is that, in Algeria at least, it is Islamism that is in political decline while ‘le pouvoir’ has reasserted its hegemony.

There are two basic reasons why Algeria’s twenty-year crisis has come full-circle. The first of these, as we have seen, is the defeat of the Islamist insurgency and the accompanying success of co-option strategies. Islamist insurgents have been geographically contained to the mountainous hinterlands of the country. Perhaps more importantly, *ihadists* have been politically marginalised by their self-proclaimed association with al Qaeda, a network that has never had popular backing in Algeria or indeed elsewhere across the Muslim world. In contrast, the regime has managed to incorporate aspects of the Islamist programme and some of its ‘accommodationist’ personnel into the *bricolage* of the regime itself. In this regard, one of the legacies of Islamist populism of the 1990s has been the recycling by Bouteflika’s regime of some of the dissident discourse of that decade, particularly surrounding ‘national resurgence’ and ‘moral regeneration’. Ironically, the appropriation by the FIS of the historical FLN’s nationalist mantle in the 1990s has now been inverted with the re-incorporation of populist components from the FIS into the re-launched FLN. As the foreign minister under the nationalist ‘golden age’ of Boumediene, Abdelaziz Bouteflika literally embodies the ‘retro’ turn to the 1970s, almost acting as an amnesiac for the ‘lost decades’ of the 1980s and 90s.

The second factor behind the reassertion of state power over dissident movements in Algeria has been the regime’s successful manipulation of hydrocarbon wealth for the purpose of acquiring legitimacy. Here, it is the core of the state apparatus itself that has taken on a populist turn, mobilising the nation’s natural resources not simply for economic redistribution at home, but also for the purposes of diplomatic rehabilitation abroad. In Lowi’s apt summary, ‘It is through the selective distribution of rent and other material favors that loyalties are bought, alliances are cemented, and networks are greased. Similarly, the withholding of material favors is itself a powerful means of destroying alliances and networks.’ (Lowi, 2009: 179). True, the ‘populism’ on display in Bouteflika’s Algeria is no longer of a revolutionary type – one seeking to radically transform social relations ‘from above’. It is rather a patrimonial/clientelist sort of populism that invokes many of the nationalist tropes of ‘unity’ and ‘resurgence’, but in fact (re)distributes wealth and privileges in a politically selective and instrumental fashion.

As his paper has argued, the return to a clientelist populism has broadly achieved its aims of securing social stability and regime continuity. The coercive strategies of the 1990s have slowly been replaced by the co-optive tactics of the new century, as the combination of socio-economic and political incentives and the disincentive of returning to civil war have fragmented the Islamist opposition and integrated much of it into the regime's political machinery. I hope in the final version of this paper to explore some of the comparative dimensions of this experience, as there are plainly some points of convergence with other Muslim-majority polities considered in the project – perhaps most notably Indonesia and Egypt. Both share with Algeria a fraught history of anti-colonial revolutions which delivered military rule by a single, mass radical-nationalist political movement. Indonesia comes closer to Algeria in terms of its dependence on geological wealth, whilst Algerian Islamism is perhaps more proximate ideologically and sociologically to the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. Still, there are plenty of particularities to the Algerian experience, which I aim to draw out - not least a trajectory of regime liberalisation, civil war and regime restoration which is arguably unique among the countries covered in the project, and itself reflective of a very specific relationship between Islam and political dissent.

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