

Algeria: The Obstacles to Democracy

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BRIAN TERRANOVA, AUG 13 2011

From 1989 until 1991, Algeria was seen as a model for democracy in the developing world, a model that would transition an authoritarian regime into a liberal government. This democratic transition, led by former president Chadli Bendjedid, was significant for two reasons. The first being that many countries in the West saw Algeria as a catalyst for democracy not just with African dictatorships, but for the Arab Middle East as well. Secondly, Algeria was becoming a true case of democratic thinking and acting in a post-colonial era. Unfortunately the democratic transition did not come to fruition and Algeria still remains an authoritarian state. However, some of the democratic practices implemented during Bendjedid's presidency are still in place, mainly a (somewhat) free press and multiparty elections.

Algeria's current political situation is rooted in its history, specifically with that of French colonialism. Islam and identity are two pieces of the democracy puzzle that have profound effects on the current situation of Algeria. Additionally, the state must deal with an internal Islamic terrorist threat that is very active outside the capital of Algiers. The Islamic threat is not just militant; it is also political, even though political parties based on religion are banned in Algeria. To this end, I will identify the main challenges Algerian society faces for transitioning democratically while being hindered by its history. In conjunction, the paper will outline any potential democratic prospects for the country and determine whether any democratic concessions by the government are just a result of tactical liberalization. By tactical liberalization, I mean the bolstering of a ruler's autocratic power through a policy that should encourage democracy. I will also look at the role of Islam in Algeria, and whether there could be a chance for reconciling Islam with democracy. Lastly I will take note of internal and external influences, such as Algeria's Berber population and France, as factors in Algerian society.

Overview of brief democratic transition

Chadli Bendjedid, president of Algeria from 1979 until 1991, decided that economic and political reform was needed to get out of Algeria's economic crisis stemming from the oil shock of the 1970s (Evans, pg. 5). The reforms, which tried to liberalize the economy, did not have the intended outcomes, and actually led to governmental corruption, a larger dependence on oil, and a growing foreign debt that needed to be repaid (Evans, pg. 5). Algerian citizens were growing largely frustrated with the inefficiency of the National Liberation Front (FLN), and this culminated in the 1988 work strikes and food riots. The FLN called in the military to restore order, which led to killings, disappearances, and torturing of thousands of Algerians and further delegitimized the government in the eyes of public (Evans, pg. 5). What resulted in 1989 was an appeasement of the public by the FLN through tactical liberalizations in society. Specifically, the institution of multi-party elections in 1991, with the belief that even with more politically parties, the FLN would still be victorious. Bendjedid took other steps to transition to a democracy, such as allowing freedom of the press, denationalizing some state industries, and separating powers between the president and the military (Volpi, pg. 83).

To the detriment of the FLN, the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), an opposition political party, won the first round of elections due to large scale disdain for the FLN (Evans, pg. 4). As background, FIS was an Islamic political party that wanted to do away with all things Western in Algerian society, specifically democracy, and ran on a platform of social justice and creation of jobs (Evans, pg. 6). The FIS was barred from the second round of elections as the military again stepped in and ensured the FLN remained in power while also deposing Bendjedid (Evans, pg. 6). This action

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resulted in a civil war between the Algerian government and armed Islamic groups calling for a change that ended in 1999. The war killed upwards of 150,000 Algerians. The military eventually banned all political parties based on religion in March 1997, but the FIS remains as an unofficial group.

Not so much toward Democracy

There are three elements in the power structure of a state: sovereignty, compliance, and coercion. These elements are utilized to maintain social order and keep society functioning. There is no question that Algeria is a sovereign nation and uses its sovereignty to not only keep other states' from interfering within its domestic agenda, but also internal factions, namely the Islamists and the Berber population. The other two elements, compliance and coercion, are captured in Algerian politics and society by declaring a state of emergency (since 1992), concentrating power in the executive branch of the government, using the military to quell any demonstrations on the streets, intimidating the media, and monitoring opposition forces. Algeria experiences frequent attacks from internal Islamic extremist organizations that want to overthrow the government and create a true Islamic state, which the military has not been able to subdue. Yet even with these terrorist attacks, Algeria is efficient in keeping the main governing party, the military-backed National Liberation Front, in power.

Since independence from France in 1962, the FLN has been the only party to preside over Algeria, and the party and the military have been one in the same. The military has been the arbiters of power in Algeria, consolidating political power unto itself because it was the one institution in Algerian society that did not crumble due to poor economic strategy and social disorder. In fact the military cashed in on the oil wealth, using this money to pay its soldiers as well as pay rents to other actors willing to accept military direction. Moreover, the Algerian military, like many other African militaries in power, used the threat of internal disorder to strengthen its power grip on society. However the military-backed FLN has not been the most effective ruling party for Algeria, and they have made some crucial mistakes that have led Algeria down a non-democratic path. These mistakes, namely ineffective economic development, lack of national identity, and keeping communities marginalized will be outlined in the following sections.

Mistakes: Wrestling between the happiness of society and government

Like most countries in Africa, history has played a defining role in the struggle of democracy in Algeria. France colonized and subsequently ruled Algeria for 132 years, transforming all aspects of the social, economic, and political systems that were previously in place. France's colonization did not bring about democracy upon independence in Algeria, but France did impart the importance of education before "teaching" Algerians about political representation (Volpi, pg. 20). France realized Algeria did not exhibit a national identity, which would hinder any chance of a unified government, a government that would still be under France's influence nonetheless. To this end, Algerian-educated elites were given French-Algerian citizenship, and the children of these elites attended French schools and learned the French language (Volpi pg. 22). These elites, along with tribal chiefs and Islamic sheikhs were utilized for the development of Algeria's political institution (Volpi, pg. 22), one that was in cahoots with French imperialists and saw all wealth and state privileges bestowed on the elite classes. For the most part, the Algerian leaders during French colonial times were puppet governments and those that were opposed to the way of government were dealt with accordingly. For over 130 years, Algerians only knew one way of ruling a country and that was with a strong ruling elite and a weak civil society. This style of governing the local Algerian population has not seen considerable change except for the departure of colonialists after the independence war between 1954 until 1962.

The end of colonialism in Algeria did not bring about democracy. Rather, the strategy of military elites of the new ruling party, the National Liberation Front imitated oppressive French imperial rule. No social and economic services were provided because there was no political will to deliver the services. What happened in Algeria next is much like what has happened to many other African countries on the verge of failure. The military stepped in and consolidated political power within its own institution. In 1965, a military coup led by Houari Boumedienne ended Ahmed Ben Bella's reign, the first president of Algeria after independence, and assumed the political, economic, and social problems inherited from the civil war. Boumedienne presided over Algeria under the FLN party as well because only one-party rule was allowed at the time. Boumedienne's presidency lasted until the late 1970s and exhibited a relative

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peace and successful economic development, which is important because Algerians were content with the FLN and were able to experience higher living standards, thus keeping them happy. He developed Algeria through industrialization, specifically through oil and gas exports that garnered economic growth, moving Algeria through the ranks of other African countries to becoming a modern, industrialized state. Boumediene successfully turned Algeria around from the political, social, and economic demise that came under Ben Bella's regime, an example of an effective authoritarian government delivering economic growth and services to its population. Until his death in 1978, jobs increased year after year as did the price of oil, which not only brought about free health care, education, and subsidized housing, but also helped legitimize the FLN in the face of the population (Cavatorta, pp. 74, 77). After oil prices peaked in 1980 at \$40 per barrel, they slowly began to decline thereafter, hitting a low of \$10 per barrel in 1986 and sending Algeria into an economic slump, losing revenue while experiencing high unemployment and inflation (Lowi, pg. 3). There were also food shortages and cuts in electricity and water, leaving the population to now question the FLN's leadership capabilities.

Even recently the Algerian population still questions the FLN's capabilities, but most of the population is subdued by government spending from hydrocarbon money. Algeria is a rentier state, whereby it uses this money on economic benefits for its population in return for compliance to the government system (Cavatorta, pg. 50). The Central Intelligence Agency's *World Factbook* (<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>) states that Algeria's hydrocarbon industry accounts for over 95% of its exports and approximately 60% of its budget revenue. Oil in particular has become the backbone of the economy and is linked with much of the economic production in the country (Cavatorta, pg. 50). The FLN wanted to use oil to spur economic production and create a larger industrial base for society, however this did not happen, and oil wealth has instead been used for social spending which has weakened civil society (Cavatorta, pp. 73-74). A weakened civil society allows the FLN to spend freely on its populist platform and reap oil wealth, and will also overlook corruption and corrupt networks in Algeria's oil industry, which in turn, hinders development of civil society.

Naturally, as a rentier state in hydrocarbons, Algeria's revenue fluctuates on the global demand, supply, and price of oil and gas. Between 2000 and 2008, Algeria gained over \$100 billion in foreign currency reserves due to the increase of oil prices (Lowi, pg. xxii). The current president, Abdelaziz Bouteflika, *undertook spending initiatives during this time to spur economic production, fix damaged infrastructure from the 1990s, and appease the population, which can also be classified as tactical liberalizations. For example, Bouteflika spent \$55 billion on housing, railway and metro infrastructure, judicial system, banking sector, and information technology reforms, as well as privatization increases (Kotze and Garcia-Rivero, pg. 341). In 2004, he developed a \$60 billion plan to reform the oil and gas industry but nothing came of this plan as he fell ill in 2004 and subsequently abandoned it (EIU, April 9, 2010). In 2009, he created plans to spend \$286 billion to develop infrastructure and enlarge Algeria's skill base through education (EIU, October 6, 2010). The government also promotes local privatization through encouraging younger Algerians to begin their own private businesses, such as pizzerias and cafes as a way of battling high unemployment (Evans and Phillips, pg. 294). But even with these schemes, unemployment remains around 10% and because the government would rather conserve the oil money or use it for their own interests, it turns a blind eye to black market activities (Evans and Phillips, pg. 294).*

But there can also be tactical de-liberalization. Because Bouteflika has had access to insurmountable wealth, it has allowed him to rule as he pleases. As such he uses this money to suppress the opposition and has consolidated political power in the office of the president (Lowi, pg. xii). He has stalled other acts of economic liberalization, including the privatization of the state-owned hydrocarbon companies, Sonatrach and Sonelgaz, as well as the selling off of Algerie Telecom and Air Algerie (Lowi, pg. xiii). Further, Bouteflika repealed a 2005 hydrocarbons law that liberalized licensing in the oil and gas industry and deferred *"measures that would constrain lucrative economic activities and assets of members of military"* (Lowi, pg. xiii). *These acts show that FLN social spending is really a societal appeasement measure, not so much liberalization, even though the spending has the ability to create jobs. It is a tug of war between how much of the hydrocarbon wealth should be invested in the general population and how much the government and military elites should receive.*

Identity and Islamism

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Algeria lacks a national identity. This internal problem is one that hinders a strong democratic movement because the Algerian population is not unified under a "self." Rather, there is the Arab-Algerian and the Berber-Algerian, with a minute portion of Europeans in Algeria, along with the Bedouin, Berber, Hausa, Saharawi, and Tuareg tribes. The vast majority of Algerians are Muslim – the Berbers practice their own spiritual interpretation of Islam – although some Jews and Catholics are present. Since independence, Islam has been utilized as a unifying force by the government. The FLN utilized Islam as a unifier of the Algerian population against a Christian France during the civil war (Kotze and Garcia-Rivero, pg. 333) and later ran on the platform that the "war had been fought by the people and for the people" (Evans and Phillips, pg 6). Yet they could not effectively utilize this newfound Algerian nationalism based on Islam to its advantage, splintering due to arguments of who and how the country should be managed. Regardless, the FLN's method of governing was just as domineering as the French, (Evans and Phillips, pg. 23) silencing those citizens that were believed to be in the opposition. The tactics under the new totalitarian-military regime did not only repress dissent physically, but also bought off opposition members (Evans and Phillips, pg. 23). This gave FLN elites a false confidence that its form of rule was in the interest of its citizens and successfully progressed on a mission of state-building (Evans and Phillips, pg. 23). For these reasons, a new opposition was forming to FLN dominance in the form of Islamism.

Islamism has a history in Algeria, with the movement founded in the 1920s by Sheikh Abdelatif Soltani (Evans and Phillips, pg. 6). Sheikh Soltani supported the FLN during the Civil War because he saw the party as a means of gaining a truly Islamic society. Yet, like many members of the FLN, he became disillusioned with FLN rule after independence and broke away due to their socialist ideology and what he saw as their Western style political attitudes (Evans and Phillips, pg. 6). The first two post-colonial presidents, Ben Bella and Boumedienne, encouraged Arabo-Islamic identity as a way to cultivate and nurture Algerian national identity, especially for the vast majority of Algerian peasants in the countryside. In the 1963 Constitution, Arabic became the official language and Islam the state religion (Lowi, pg. 92). The FLN ran an Islamic, socialist campaign with policies intended to lift the poor out of poverty and into a modern state. The problem was that the FLN did not abide by Islamic principles in its rule of law, focusing more on the economy and how to bring wealth and support to the party.

Under Boumedienne, the funding and construction of mosques and numerous Islamic institutes occurred in the 1970s. This helped to strengthen the Algerian-Muslim identity (Lowi, pg. 95) but the mosques also provided an outlet for opposition against the government as they were the only place Algerians could congregated without being reprimanded by the security forces (Lowi, pg. 95). Boumedienne and the FLN were aware of the rising Islamists, so rather than repress them, Boumedienne sought to appease them by allowing those religious traditionalists in the government to oversee education and 'Arabization' reform (Lowi, pg. 95). In the 1970s, French was the language of the elites and the educated, which was desirable in political and economic life. With Islamists, France was the enemy, thus education reform called for the teaching of Arabic language and an Islamic curriculum. The problem was that all the educated teachers spoke and taught French; therefore Algeria imported foreign Arabic teachers, many dubbed "undesirable" in their own country, such as members of the Muslim Brotherhood (Lowi, pg. 96). Under these foreign teachers, students were indoctrinated with a fundamentalist Islamic political perspective. Schools were the foundation of Islamism and curriculums aimed to provide Algerian youth with the correct tools to build an Islamic state (Lowi, pg. 96). What further exacerbated anger toward the regime was that children of the elite who attended French-language schools were promised jobs, and those who spoke Arabic were not guaranteed the same opportunities, leading to demonstrations at universities in 1977 (Lowi, pg. 96).

A major event occurred in 1988 that culminated the Islamist movement in Algeria. The economy was crumbling under declining oil prices and the FLN was not showing any resilience. The most affected by the weak economy were young Algerian males, usually the recipe for riots and protests. In October, riots broke out, with the youth vandalizing FLN buildings and state-owned enterprises and chanting slogans that incorporated Islamic and democratic demands. (Volpi, pp. 38, 42). These Algerians were also chanting for change from an unreligious, socialist government; a change they believed the FIS could bring under the banner of Islam. Unfortunately this did not happen, as the FIS was blocked by the military from the second-round of the 1991-92 elections. This military intervention further galvanized the disillusioned youth to fight for the different militant Islamic groups in Algeria in the 1990s, such as the armed wing of the FIS, Armed Islamic Group, and Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (Volpi, pg 69). The poor were also targeted as prime recruits for these organizations through the promise of money.

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This sentiment with the FIS and a new way forward for Algeria still holds true currently. The new generations of Algerians did not live under colonial rule and perceive the FLN and its socialist cause as inefficient (Kotze and Garica-Rivero, pg. 342). Hence, Islamism has grown further as a political force to combat the decrepit socio-economic status of most Algerians.[1] In a 2004 survey, 63% of Algerians perceived that Islam and democracy were compatible where a democracy guided by Islamic principles will provide an accountable and legitimate government (Tessler, pg. 188). The reason Algerians want more religion in politics is because the current state is “state characterized by repression, coercion, and lack of respect for human rights” (Kotze and Garcia-Rivero, pg. 343) and they believe religion is the answer for a stable, peaceful, and secure life. Riots still occur in Algeria to express the anger against the regime, but many of these go unreported by the media (Evans and Phillips, pg. 298). Algerians want to be included in the political process, to be recognized as citizens, want a good government, and want the “use of the oil and gas wealth for the benefit of the majority, not the minority” (Evans and Phillips, pg. 300).

But it must be noted that Islamism and the call for a new government usually does not equate with a democratic outlook in Algeria. The FIS wanted to oust the FLN because it disregarded religious principles as a foment of policy and neglected social development (Evans and Phillips, pg. 148). FIS, along with other Islamic groups also saw the FLN as a product of Western democratization and modernization, which is not compatible with Islam (Cavatorta, pg. 141). There are a few offshoot Islamic militant and political parties, but the main terrorist organization is al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM),[2] which still attacks Algerian targets. AQIM and any other smaller Islamic groups want to bring about a true Islamic state to Algeria, one that is not influenced or aided by any Western nation. Although these Islamic groups refute democracy, their existence and struggle has helped open the door to new political thinking about the future of Algeria.

The other issue with forming a cohesive Algerian identity is the Berbers. The Berbers migrated to Algeria around 10,000 to 5,000 BC and currently, most are known as Kabyles in the Kabylia region, making up approximately 20% of the population (Evans and Phillips, pg. 7). As the Algerian government tries to create a national identity based on Arab culture, linguistics, and Islam, it is alienating a significant portion of the population that has an affinity with its own culture, language, and own version of Islam. The Berbers have demonstrated against the FLN to gain concessions toward their culture and ultimately, to gain recognition as a distinctive group that plays a role in Algerian politics. For example, the Berber Spring uprising in 1980 began after a Berber professor was banned from holding a public meeting, which led to strikes and riots in the Kabylia region that fought for an increased awareness and appreciation of the Berber population in the form of human rights (Evans and Phillips, pg. 7). There was also a similar Berber riot in 2001, which was repressed by the military and killed around 500 Kabyles. Subsequently, a Berber Cultural Movement was formed, blaming the government for violence against the Kabyles and promoting their own cultural goals alongside the Islamist movement from the 1980s to today (Lowi, pg. 105). There has been little success from the movement, aside from developing Berber political parties, including the Front of Socialist Forces (FFS) and the Rally for Culture and Democracy (RCD). In 1988, Tamazight, the Berber dialect, was recognized as an official language, although it was not allowed to be taught in schools (Lowi, pg. 94). In 2004, the Algerian government increased Tamazight publications in the media and on television (Library of Congress, pg. 19). In addition, the first Tamazight Koran became publically available in 2007 (*Reuters*, February 19, 2007).

Interestingly, the Islamist movements and Berber Cultural Movement did not team together to fight and oppose the government. The Islamists have always been suspicious of the Berbers, perceiving them as another enemy opposed to Arab culture (Lowi, pg. 106). The Berbers did support the FIS against the FLN, but did not vote for them in the 1990 election (Evans and Phillips, pg. 157). Berber support for the FIS was more toward physically fighting the FLN, although they were not supportive of the Islamist militant groups in the 1990s (Lowi, pg. 104). But in 2001, the Berbers threw their support behind the armed Islamic groups, which actually had a negative effect on their own movement and undermined Berber pro-democracy parties, specifically the FFS (Lowi, pg. 108). Unrest remains in Algeria, usually coming via protests pertaining to ethnic, cultural, and linguistic rights (Library of Congress, pg. 22). Yet Kabyle civil society does not hold much influence or power politically as the government is very aware of the support the Berbers have given to not only Islamic militant groups, but also pro-democratic political parties in return for progress on their own cultural goals (Lowi, pg. 108).

Becoming the Ultimate Autocrat: Abdelaziz Bouteflika

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The past is present in Algeria. Although the country is an authoritarian state, it technically exhibits a civilian-run government led by an independent politician. The current Algerian president, Abdelaziz Bouteflika, rose to power in 1999 as an independent candidate though he was a former general in the military. The 1999 elections were perceived as free and fair until the night of elections, when six of seven candidates pulled out due to allegations of election fraud (Quandt, pg. 17). Bouteflika easily won as he was the only candidate left standing. These allegations were not misplaced as officially Bouteflika received 74% of the vote but inside sources have stated he received only 30% (Quandt, pg. 17). Subsequently, Bouteflika won the 2004 and 2009 elections as an independent, even though his ties to the FLN are prominent. For example, Bouteflika is honorary chairman of the FLN (Library of Congress, pg. 18). Yet he is a safer candidate for the presidency because he was not implicated in any wrongdoing during the civil war in the 1990s and runs on a platform of ending violence and returning Algeria to a place of prominence in the world (Evans and Phillips, pg. 256). He promises to bring stability to Algeria, develop the economy, and continue with the reconciliation process.

One of Bouteflika's three greatest political successes thus far was executing a peace settlement with Islamic militant groups and former political party Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) in 1999 that eventually ended the civil war and decreased terrorism in Algeria (Diamond, pg. 273). The author Frederic Volpi points to the decline of oil prices in 1997 and 1998, which made the government concede politically to the FIS as a tactic to mollify the general public's exasperation of violence, i.e. a form of tactical liberalization (Volpi, pg. 115). The second success was drawing up the Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation in 2005, which provided amnesty to 2,000 insurgents of the 1990s civil war, except for those that committed crimes against humanity such as mass murder, bombings, and rapes (Algeria Country Report, pg. 15). The problem with the Charter is that it is not a truth and reconciliation process nor did it investigate crimes committed by the Algerian military. The military was accused of illegal arrests and detentions, using napalm, disappearances, and torture, but the Charter absolved the military from any wrongdoings (Kotze and Garica-Rivero, pg. 342). The government has allocated millions of dollars for families of disappeared victims, but families are unhappy about the lack of investigations into the military (Algeria Country Report, pg. 15). Political violence has simmered since the implementation of the Charter, but it is actions such as these by the government that bring about its disapproval and lack of confidence by the general population.

The third political success is eliminating the presidential term limits from two so that Bouteflika could run for president again in 2009. In 2008, Bouteflika proposed a constitutional amendment to extend presidential terms and this was subsequently passed in November of that year by the Algerian parliament. Bouteflika is not a "puppet" of the military, but he still needs its support for his presidency, even though he is popular among the population for bringing stability to Algeria through ending the civil war and his amnesty program (Library of Congress, pg. 22). In return for absolving the military of criminal actions in the 1990s, it is believed that the military supported the amendment of presidential terms (Lowi, pg. xii). Although it is believed that Bouteflika has actually reduced the influence of the military in politics, this is contested as Cavatorta explains: "Some scholars argue that Bouteflika's presidency has been able to wrestle considerable power away from military figures, but others consider this 'retreat' of the army only a façade change and claim that Bouteflika is a creation of the military" (pg. 3). Yet Bouteflika does promote competitive elections (Diamond, pg. 273), most likely because he understands that Algerian political parties do not have enough support or power to actually rival him (Evans and Phillips, pg. 280).

Can democracy come of this?

Is there a chance for democracy? Not if Algeria can return to an effective authoritarian state as it was in the 1960s and 1970s because it will then be able to appease its population with education, jobs, houses, and rising living standards. The use of tactical liberalization can be good because it is bringing some sort of liberalization to society in the area of politics or economics. This is not necessarily bad for the population, although it would still question Algeria's stance on human rights, freedom, and liberty. But as it is well known, democracy does not take place in one day. Minimal steps such as what Algeria achieved in the early 1990s may not be a sufficient change to society but it at least gives society new ideas regarding the governing of a state. The two most important remaining elements from the 1989-1992 democratic transition are the free press and multi-party elections. These political concessions, or tactical liberalizations, along with diverting power away from the military, aimed to redefine the FLN elites as democracy advocates (Cavatorta, pg. 83). The population was pushing for democracy and was supportive of these

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measures, but the popularity of the FLN was not sustained after the military intervened in the 1992 elections to halt the transition. Still, political pluralism and a relatively free press are prevalent in Algerian society. But because Algeria is an authoritarian state, both the free press and multi-party elections come under scrutiny.

Algeria's multi-party system does not allow any political party to run. All parties must register with and be approved by the Ministry of Interior (MOI). In July 2008, Ahmed Taleb Ibrahimi of the Wafa political party withdrew from Algerian politics altogether because the MOI refused to approve his party due to alleged ties to the FIS (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor). Those political parties that are deemed to be based on religion are not approved. All elections are heavily watched by the military and even influenced by them (Kotze and Garcia-Rivero, pg. 334), leading to complaints of being denied public meetings and advertising (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor). Hence political corruption is customary, even when registered candidates are able to run for office. For example, in 2004 when Bouteflika was re-elected, the government arrested opposition leaders and members of the press, while also containing any Islamist dissent (Evans and Phillips, pg. 289). Then for 2009 presidential election, five other candidates campaigned for office, although it was known Bouteflika was the favorite. The official turnout was 75% of registered voters with Bouteflika winning approximately 90% (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor). Opposition parties put the turnout between 18-55% (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor).

The media is an interesting feature of Algerian society. There is a free and independent press as well as a state-controlled media establishment, with most published in French and Arabic, though Tamazight content is increasing. The state owns its own publications, television and radio stations, printing presses, and the main advertising agency, which only advertises in state-preferred publications. Most content played on televisions and radios is also pro-government. This has actually helped independent newspapers to survive in Algeria because there is a market to exploit in which the public wants to read/hear news that is not controlled by the government (*Reuters*, February 19, 2007). The internet and satellite television has also contributed to the variety of choices and sources of information in Algeria (Quandt, pg. 19). Independent newspapers, like El Khabar, own their own printing presses to circumvent state regulations, but it is not easy to run a news publication as authorities have imposed strict defamation laws on journalists, while targeting them for harassment and arrest (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor). For example, the editor of El-Watan newspaper, Omar Belhouche has a pending criminal case in connection with libel and defamation (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor). However, most citizens are able to criticize the government without fear of reprisal and some papers, such as *Soir d'Algerie* "pours scorn on country's leaders in a way most journalists in Arab world would never dream of doing" (*Reuters*, February 19, 2007). This does not hold true for opposition political parties, as they were only allowed minimal radio air time to campaign and were denied television access by the government in the 2009 elections (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor).

Multi-party elections and a relative free press are a decent foundation for a new democratic transition in Algeria. The population is on board for forming a new government and implementing a new governing style, but does this mean that they are proponents of democracy? A 2004 survey on democracy prospects in Algeria believes it is so. A majority agrees that democracy is the best form of government for Algeria, but there are some conditions, specifically the desire for Algerian laws to be based on shari'a (Islamic law) (Tessler, pp. 185, 188). Further, the question of the sovereignty of God over the sovereignty of the state comes into play. If Algeria becomes a truly Islamic republic, then God's word, as told through the Quran and Hadith are bond. Rather than forfeit the sovereignty of the state to God, men of religion could have a stronger role in Algerian politics as a way to increase satisfaction toward the government and the implementation of democracy (Diamond, pg. 277; Kotze and Garcia-Rivero, pg. 340). It appears that those Algerians surveyed believe that in this way, Islam and democracy are compatible; but most are concerned that Algeria exhibits a government which is held accountable and practices fairness and equality (Tessler, pg. 188). Unfortunately, 2004 is the most recent democracy survey, but it is a clear indicator that Algerian society's disgust of the current governing scheme has not died with the end of the civil war in 1999.

Academics like Diamond and Collier preach the role of the international community fostering democracy in the developing world, but this is not the case with Algeria, even though it is one of the few developing world countries that underwent a (failed) democratic transition. Most of the international community has turned a blind eye to the repression of society, dating back to the military intervention of the 1992 elections, as many foreign countries did not

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want to see Islamists take power. For example, Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya did not rebuke the military coup on the FIS because they did not want an Islamic government in Algeria to encourage their own Islamic radicals to become politically powerful (Volpi, pg. 57). Moreover, France or the United States did not take any steps to pressure the Algerian military to let the will of the people stand because of oil and gas interests. France, Spain, and Italy were concerned that an Islamic revolution would cause mass migration to their shores (Evans and Phillips, pg. 147). In fact, by not having any external scolding for the actions of the military, FIS and its armed militant wing saw this as cooperation between Algeria and the West, which further exacerbated the hatred and anger toward the FLN (Volpi, pg. 70).

The West, especially France and the United States, have remained silent on Algeria's domestic agenda for two main reasons: economic interests and national security interests. France is the leading investor in Algeria outside of hydrocarbons, with 430 subsidiaries established and a large network of small and medium enterprises (*French Foreign Ministry*). Oil companies such as BP, Total, and Arco hold contracts that are important to sustain for economic reasons, and countries like France, Italy, and the U.S. are willing to forgo Algeria's human rights to ensure oil and gas flows are not disrupted. At the same time, Algeria is dependent on the international community because of the oil and gas exports, not to mention foreign aid resources. Regarding national security interests, Algeria is a Muslim ally in the War on Terror. France, Britain, and the U.S. do not want to disrupt Algeria's offensive battling of al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb. Therefore, Algeria can play off these countries on its human rights abuses on account of security promises and access to resources. There is an argument that Bouteflika and the Algerian military could wipe out AQIM, but chose not to so to maintain a state of emergency and retain tight control on society (Evans and Phillips, pg. 296). There is also the argument that the military is set up more to prevent internal coup d'états rather than fight an external battle (Volpi, pg. 87). Regardless, the War on Terror has been an asset for Algeria in hindering democratic progress because foreign countries that have the clout to pressure Algeria to democratize prioritize their own security first.

Throughout this paper, it has become evident that history defines Algeria's present situation but is also a factor in Algeria's future. Islam, identity, good governance, security, and an increased effort of reconciliation are needed for Algeria to fully stabilize and provide for its citizens. The FLN was thought to be the true Islamic party, but it has failed in this regard. As Algerians are calling for a religious government, a moderate version of Islam is needed in this sense, not one portrayed by AQIM or the armed wing of FIS. The current government is actually helping to eliminate Islamic radicalism and extremism through its support of the War on Terror as well as by disallowing the imports of religious books preaching conservative Salafism (*The Daily Gleaner*, December 4, 2010). But the connection with religion and government is not necessarily democratic; rather the population prefers a government that is morally tenable (Kotze and Garcia-Rivero, pg. 347). Therefore to enhance the idea of a democratically religious government, a new way of thinking and acting must be put forward. New leaders must show that corruption hinders development and when elected, the state comes before oneself and one's friends. It is not enough that Bouteflika encourages corruption investigations into his government (*EIU*, April 9, 2010), because this is just a form of tactical liberalization, as the government is putting on a façade of transparency. Corruption will not be rooted out of Algerian politics until there is a cultural shift away from the practice in government.

There also needs to be a strong reconciliation process under the *Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation that will not only encompass all victims of the civil war but will prosecute military crimes against humanity. The verdicts instituted in these cases could then set precedents for a more free and fair rule of law. Defending citizens against the military establishment is a prime demonstration of the awareness of human rights and the needed transparency of government. The government also gains the confidence of the people. An enlarged reconciliation process could be the initiative for good governance, but economic development would need to follow soon after. Currently there is no future in the economy for the majority of the population (Evans and Phillips, pg. 297). Social spending plans can only alleviate some of the anger and resentment toward the government and offset minimal economic hardships of the citizens. Further, as there are minimal taxes on the population because of hydrocarbon money, the regime does not need to engage its citizens (Evans and Phillips, pg 297). Until the government invests the hydrocarbon money in the future of the economy, Algerians will either turn to black market or criminal activities to find a living.*

Lastly, a new national identity needs to be created that includes every Algerian. Any identity that was developed

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after independence has been lost due to the internal violence and mistrust of government (Volpi, pg. 108). Good governance and economic development would be the initiatives to undertake that unifies all Algerians under a recognized and legitimate government. In short, the government needs to provide for its citizens and invest in their future in order for them to be proud of being Algerian. Islam could be a secondary factor, although it will exclude Jews and Christian unless religious tolerance is displayed simultaneously. But Islam is the state religion and it appears that it will not lose popularity in Algeria. But within Islam, the principles of peace, equality, and fairness could be transferred to society and practiced by law. In this way could democracy and Islam become compatible in Algeria because the positive values inherent in Islam are similar to those of democracy. Having an Islamic aspect to one's identity could lead to hard-lined perspectives, as can be seen throughout Algeria's history. Thus a the challenge of trying to balance between being perceived as Islamic from within but maintaining relationships with Western countries is one that can stall progression toward just and inclusive political practices.

In Algeria, there is a movement for a new government. Corruption and social upheaval are the harbingers for this movement and the Algerian government has not made real headway to realize the wishes of the people. Tactical liberalizations are deceiving, especially when the same president that vows to investigate corruption in his administration but still protects the economic interests of his friends. There is an election system that is misused, because common sense says that Algerians would not vote for oppression (*Economist*, April 17, 1999). But the military does not trust the common sense of the people. Effective authoritarianism is better than what Algerians are experiencing today, but concrete steps need to be taken to liberalize the economy in order to spur investment and development, which in turn would lead to social changes and perhaps a cultural shift toward democracy.

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[1] Between 1994 and 1997, 380,000 jobs were lost with no welfare given by the state. By 2001, 27% of the population lived on at least \$1 a day (Evans and Phillips, pg. 271). Currently the poverty level in Algeria is 4.1% with an unemployment rate of around 10%. The current poverty rate in Algeria is around 5%, although this does not mean economic prosperity (<http://news.marweb.com/algeria/social/poverty-rate-declines-to-in-algeria.html>).

[2] Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb is the successor of the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat group.

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