



## Inclusion and exclusion in Algerian politics: paradoxes and complementarities

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ملخص

نحاول هذا المقال تحليل ديناميكية الإدراج والإقصاء في السياسة الجزائرية وارتباطها بالتناقضات وبأوجه التكامل التي تنجر عنها. وعليه سنهتم بالعلاقات التي تربط بين هذه الممارسات ومناخ النسق السياسي التي استمرت على الأقل حتى 22 فبراير 2019. ولهذا الغرض، سنفكك سياسة الإدراج التي تستهدف الفواعل السياسية كالأحزاب (جبهة التحرير الوطني، التجمع الوطني الديمقراطي، حركة مجتمع السلم، تجمع أمل الجزائر، الحركة الشعبية الجزائرية). كما سنهتم بشكات النفوذ المختلفة كالزوايا، الفواعل الاقتصادية، الإعلام، المعارضون الراديكاليون السابقون... ثم سنحلل آليات الإقصاء، وكيفيات واستغلاله كذريعة باسم الاستقرار السياسي ونتيجة لخيارات وتنازلات الفواعل السياسيين أنفسهم.

الكلمات الدالة: الجزائر: الإدراج: الإقصاء: السياسة: المناخ.

### Abstract

This article tries to analyse the dynamic of inclusion and exclusion in Algerian politics by insisting upon the paradoxes and complementarities it implies. We will direct our research towards demonstrating how this dynamic have increased the resilience of the political system at least until February 22<sup>nd</sup> which represents the most important challenge ever faced by the regime. We'll also explain how inclusion is applied with traditional political parties as well as new clients (the National Liberation Front (FLN) and the National democratic Rally (RND), the Movement for the Society of Peace (MSP), Tajamou Amel el Djazair and the Algerian Popular Movement (MPA). In addition, we can include some networks of influence (zawaya, trade and workers unions, some media, etc) as well as previous radical Islamist opponents. The next step analyzes the

different ways used by the Algerian rulers in order to exacerbate and manipulate exclusion. Our main concern is to show how exclusion can be an excuse to prevent domestic political instability as well as the consequence of the compromises the actors have chosen to do. The hypothesis according to which the popular uprising could change this practice remains uncertain.

**Key words:** Algeria; inclusion; exclusion; politics; resilience

### Résumé

Cet article tente d'analyser la dynamique d'inclusion-exclusion dans la politique algérienne ainsi que les paradoxes et les complémentarités qui en découlent. Nous nous intéresserons aux liens entre ces pratiques et la résilience du système algérien, au moins jusqu'au 22 février 2019. Pour ce faire, nous détaillerons la pratique de l'inclusion qui concerne autant les acteurs politiques et les clients émergents tels que le Front de libération nationale (FLN), le Rassemblement national démocratique (RND), le Mouvement pour la société de la paix (MSP), le Rassemblement de l'espoir de l'Algérie et le Mouvement populaire algérien (MPA). En outre, nous pouvons inclure certains réseaux d'influence (zawaya, syndicats de travailleurs et de commerçants, certains médias, etc.) ainsi que d'anciens opposants islamistes radicaux. L'étape suivante s'attellera à analyser les différents instruments utilisés dans la manipulation et l'exacerbation de l'exclusion. Notre objectif sera de démontrer comment l'exclusion est devenue une excuse pratiquée au nom de la stabilité politique, mais également la conséquence des compromis que les acteurs politiques ont choisi de faire. L'hypothèse selon laquelle le soulèvement populaire pourrait remettre en cause cette pratique est incertaine.

**Mots clés :** Algérie; inclusion; exclusion; politique; résilience.

### Introduction

Since the outbreak of the "Arab spring," the question often asked has been "who's next?" and Algeria was depicted as the country the most likely to witness the same upheaval. Yet, nothing has happened in the neighbour of both Tunisia and Libya. As it is well known, structural political and economic reforms have started in Algeria just after the October 1988



riots. The government presents such reforms as the authentic start of the present Arab spring, but forget to precise that the transition started at that time was brutally stopped in 1992. More than sixty years later, Algerian people are unsatisfied with a perpetual exclusion due to economic difficulties and to the closed alliance of the most influential parties formed to support the president's programme. However, they do not seem ready to follow the Tunisian, Egyptian and Yemeni examples. They observe the moving situation elsewhere. They compare what is going on in those countries with 1988 and 1992 events. Many of them conclude with some cynicism that "Algeria is not behind schedule on a revolution but is ahead with respect to failure" (Charef, 2001a).

Why do not the same factors (economic hardships and political obstructions) lead to the same consequences (a social revolt)? What did the Algerian leadership do to prevent the upheavals which have occurred in many Arab countries? To what extent the reforms incepted since 1989 have allowed the Algerian rulers to overcome political constraints and swing between the waves of inclusion and exclusion in a kind of competitive authoritarian regime? Could the popular uprising that swept Algeria lead to the breakthrough of this dynamic of inclusion/exclusion?

In order to answer these questions, this article will proceed as follows. First, it will start with a theoretical framework to situate political inclusion and exclusion in authoritarian regimes which try to maintain a controlled transition through the reforms launched since 1989. Secondly, it will explain how inclusive policy is applied in favour of the National Liberation Front (Front de Libération Nationale (FLN), the National Democratic Rally (Rassemblement National Démocratique (RND), and the close supporting parties (Movement of Society for Peace (MSP), Rally for Algerian Hope (Tajamou Amel Jazair (TAJ)), Algerian Popular Movement (Mouvement Populaire Algérien (MPA) as well as traditional and informal networks of influence (zawaya, clans, etc) and some ex-extremist islamist opponents. As for the third step, it will



analyze the exclusive policy and show how exclusion appears as a security excuse for the State and as a combination of fraud, co-optation that logically lead to a double self political exclusion, through abstention and riots.

### **1- Inclusion and exclusion: theoretical aspects**

It is worthy explaining that the dynamic of inclusion and the exclusion is practiced differentially whether the regime is portrayed as democratic or totalitarian. In the first model, the finding principle implies the inclusion of all the social, political, cultural tendencies through legal and consensual rules guaranteed by an impartial authority. In this regard, "modern democracies require constant input from all parts of society, irrespective of whether the input comes from majority population or groups with an ethnic minority background." (Kaldur, Frangen, Sarin, 2014, p.02). Furthermore, inclusion implies the diversification of political offer, allowing the representation of the subgroups. It encourages competition between agents of change and allows peaceful rotation of power, which is in fine the main aim of democracy.

In the second model, the guiding rule is the exclusion of all what is not entirely involved in the uniform and unanimous scheme made by and for the rulers.<sup>1</sup> More precisely, political exclusion is defined as follows: "being isolated from the «mainstream» of political life and from decisions about one's own life taken by others". (Kaldur, Frangen and Sarin, 2014, bis)

From this definition, we can conclude that the government in authoritarian regime maintains a strict control over all aspects of public and private life. If any actor tries to change the ideological, political and economic status quo, he will be excluded according to laws tailor-made, or eliminated

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<sup>1</sup> During 30 years, the FLN ruled the country by gathering inside it different ideological tendencies (right, left, conservative, islamist, liberal) that were in a competition.



physically or pushed to exile and silence. To explain things differently, we can assume that exclusion maintains the status quo, provoke frustrations, increase exasperation and finally produce radicalism and violence.

Beyond this common sense, exclusive rules seem to be simpler than inclusive norms as far as exposing the differences is always easier than demonstrating the resemblances. Inclusive norms are based on Universalist ones, while exclusive ones focused on the particularities of the group (Kazemi, 1996). In our particular case of study, exclusion is not the way a subgroup uses to stay culturally pure (Hardin, 2004), but a mean to keep the resources they have got. Power is undoubtedly the most important one.

Partially eclipsed between democracy and totalitarianism, authoritarianism is often defined according to the missing characteristics compared to the first and the second. "Its most extreme form is totalitarianism... and it is at odds with democracy and individualism".<sup>2</sup> It is worth noticing that one speaks about "change of authoritarian rule to democracy" and not "totalitarianism to democracy".

Compared to totalitarianism, the Algerian authoritarian regime has mixed between universalistic-inclusive norms and particularistic-exclusive ones. It is a semi excluding regime that imposes conditions and restrictions to political pluralism and allows a limited and controlled competition. This selective inclusion and exclusion is in line with constituting a democracy without democrats. A system based more on strategic negotiations and procedural tools than normative standards (Salamé, 1994).

However, the legitimacy of the Algerian government is weak but not non-existent as long as it takes profit from transition period to renew its resources and comforts its resilience capacities (Nathan, 2003). Besides, the reforms launches since 1989 are the main argument used by the Algerian rulers to

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.cramster.com/definitions/authoritarianism/735>



justify the absence of social revolt and pretend that a transition process is going on according to the Algerian specificities.

### **1-1 The political reforms**

Since 1989, the creation of a political party was authorized on the condition that religion, race, language, gender, region or corporate should not be used as a legitimate base. In 1996, another constitutional amendment introduced significant changes to electoral procedures. The Algerian Parliament became a bicameral institution, consisting of a lower chamber (APN, the People's National Assembly) and the Senate (the Council of the Nation).

The pluralistic elections have a troubled history in which inclusion and exclusion remained constant. The authorities canceled the first round of the legislative election in December 1991 to prevent the victory of the newly created Islamic Salvation Front (FIS). The second legislative election took place in June 1997. This controversial election led to the victory of newly-created President's party, the National Democratic Rally (RND). Five years later, the 2002 legislative elections signed the victory of non-voters. Abstention reached 50 percent, while the FLN re-emerged as the most powerful party, the institutionalized Islamist gained more grounds on the political level, and the RND practically collapsed. The 2007 elections confirmed this heavy trend (Dris-Ait-Hamadouche, 2008), but the RND continues to play the key roles in the government.

As for the media, there has been a clear distinction between newspapers and TV-radio media. Until 2011, the first ones were clearly a part of an inclusive political game, while the second remained under the state monopoly. Taking into consideration the pressures coming from the "Arab spring", the Algerian rulers decided to allow the creation of private radio and televisions (Dris, 2017). On another hand, most observers agree that the Algerian press is one of the most independent in



Africa and in the Arab world, at least before the start of the Arab revolts. Many journalists and newspapers seem very harsh against the president, the powerful generals and in denouncing the corruption of state officials. They contest the official results of the elections and express the positions of the opposition. They also dwell lengthily on the conflicts supposed to exist between the presidential office, on the one hand, and the military institution and intelligence services, on the other.

Consequently, cohabitation of multiparty system, pluralistic media, regular elections, civil government and formal institutions with restricted political liberties, manipulated elections, targeted repression, privileged access to state resources and media and clientelistic social policies have made of Algeria a competitive authoritarian regime (Levitsky, 2010, 5); a kind of regime that applies inclusive norms as well as exclusive policy. In this vein, Algeria could be portrayed as a relatively stable competitive authoritarian regime, in which democratic institutions such as national local Assemblies and independent judicial power exist but are currently violated. Political parties subsist but are disadvantaged by harassment and pressures, and uncertainty is limited to the regime sphere, thanks to a system of alternation within the system (Levitsky, 2010, 85).

### **1-2 Economic liberalization**

The most important economic reforms were initiated by MouloudHamrouche government (September 1989 -June 1991). In 1995, Algeria incepted with the World Bank and IMF a structural adjustment program that included several severe measures (Ratoul, 2001). After 30 years of economic reforms, how is the balance sheet? According to the African Development Bank, the GDP growth was an estimated 2.5% in 2018, up from 1.4% in 2017. Economic growth is projected to be 2.7% in 2019 and 1.9% in 2020. The subdued 2020 growth is due partly to a more restrictive fiscal policy—as of 2019 public expenditures are projected to decline due to budgetary consolidation, which is projected to reduce the fiscal deficit from 5.3% of GDP in 2018 to 5.0% in 2019 and 4.7% in 2020 (ADB, 2018).



Despite efforts to diversify the economy, Algeria still depends on oil and gas exports. Directly or indirectly, around 80% of the economy relates to hydrocarbons. The economic outlook still and will depend mainly on hydrocarbon prices, which collapsed in 2014. Between 2014 and 2015, the incomes lost 40% and the budget deficit increased seriously, to such extent that the government decided to apply the "unconventional financing" to pay the salaries of functionaries.

Actually, instead of liberalization, there is a re-monopolization of the economy around a few big groups and the explosion of speculative and informal activities, in addition to tax avoidance and flight of capitals. The pressures to maintain this opaque status quo are such strong that the modernisation of financial network remains unachieved. Furthermore, the Algerian army seems becoming an economic actor. With a budget of \$ 10 billion a year, the ANP is a financial force and has started to invest in the industry and to conclude partnerships with foreign companies (Aabar Investments, Caracal of Tawazun Group, Mercedes, etc).<sup>3</sup> This shift is already compared to the role the Turkish and Egyptian play in their respective country.

The positive points concerned exceptionally the agricultural sector which contributes 12% of Algeria's GDP and employs between 11 and 20% of the population in rural areas. Algeria has 8.4 million hectares of arable land, with the project of adding 2 million hectares irrigated land by 2019. This progress is linked to the Agricultural and Rural Renewal Policy (Politique de Renouveau Agricole et Rural, PRAR), launched in 2008. According to the National Statistics Office, the value added increased by 116% between 2009 and 2015 to reach €16.7bn, or 12% of GDP (Oxford Business Group, 2017).

These reforms could be analysed as the economic side of democratization, as long as democratization is linked to some

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<sup>3</sup> TSA, 12/10/2011





pre-conditions as liberalization. However, the historical context of economic reforms tends to favour three other different explanations. First, the Algerian economy was very close to the bankrupt and asking the IMF intervention was a necessity not a choice in 1992-1993-1995. Second, economic liberalization was the counterpart given to international community after interruption of electoral process, followed by political closure and violent antiterrorist policy. Third, liberalization allowed the development of clientelism which became a privileged tool to buy support, allies and votes (Hachemaoui 2014).

## 2. Inclusion of clients: the terms of a political exchange

The way Algerian rulers practice an inclusive policy can be assimilated to a political exchange between a political actor and another one; everyone has his own objectives and resources, and needs the resources of the other actor to achieve his own goals (Aylott, 2003). Consequently, the actors do an exchange of resources to obtain their respective interests.<sup>4</sup>

The rulers practice the political exchange with some political parties (the FLN, the RND, the MSP/TAJ, MPA) to benefit from their respective resources as well as the representatives of primary loyalties (local traditional authorities), and those who had renounced armed actions. The method is used also with some newspapers and private TV channels: selling the national reconciliation project or backing the reelection of AbdelazizBouteflika for a fourth and a fifth presidential mandate in exchange of some rewards like advertising contracts (Echourouk and Enahar mainly<sup>5</sup>).

<sup>4</sup> The basic illustration implies the left political party, source of authority and power on one hand, and a labor organization, source of supports and votes in another one. The political exchange consists in "votes against pro-workers measures".

<sup>5</sup> Since the beginning of the February 22 popular uprising, the two media became the fierce critics of the presidential circle, mainly the main advisor of the President, his brother Said and some businessmen and political leaders, considering them as the leaders of a "gang" (العصابة in arabic) that plundered Algerian economy.



## **2-1 Inclusion of the political parties: the presidential coalition**

The Algerian parties are usually classified into three categories: the parties of the central administration (the rulers) which are the FLN and the RND; the Islamist parties (MSP, MRN, Nahda, TAJ) and the so-called Democrats (FFS, RCD, PT, ANR, MDS, CCDR...) (Addi, 2006a).

More precisely, the governmental coalition that gathers the FLN, the RND and the MSP, replaced by TAJ, is the alliance of what is labelled the revolutionary family (historic legitimacy), the technocrats, the pragmatics (administration's influence) and the "moderate islamists" (religious caution) (Dris&Ait-Hamadouche, 2017).

This alliance potentially constitutes the three major ideological tendencies in Algeria. The FLN and the RND are unavoidable as long as the regime will need historical legitimacy (FLN) and will be crossed by different clans that negotiate and bargain their respective interests. It should be reminded that the creation of the RND and its fast integration within the system was linked to the exclusion of the FLN in 1992. The FLN marginalized, the regime lost its political base and decided to create the RND as a substitute. Therefore, many relatively young militants of the FLN moved to the RND and tried to give the party the image of modern, liberal and pragmatic political force in opposition to the conservative, traditional and old-fashion FLN.(Dris-AitHamadouche, 2008)

Two other examples illustrate the divergences that can occur within the system: the confrontation that opposed partisans of the reconciliation policy with Islamists to those radically opposed to such strategy in 1996-1997; the 2003-2004 opposition between the partisans and the adversaries of Bouteflika's re-election. In both instances, the groups of interests reached a compromise to guarantee the survival of



the system (Yefsah, 1991, Hamrouche, 1995). This vital aim implies including and excluding persons or political forces according to the conjuncture. The RND leader, Ahmed Ouyahia, is the most obvious symbol of how inclusion and exclusion work. Since 1997, he has been chief of the government for twice (1997 and 2004), retrograded to Prime minister (2008, 2017), appointed as a simple minister with or without clear function (1999 and 2002 in this order), and totally excluded from the government (2006).

Another example of how inclusion/exclusion works in Algerian politics is given by the Islamist parties. For both the MSP and later on TAJ, the religious caution contributes in containing the Islamist opposition, including potential opponents and giving the image of an open regime. The presence of the MSP may reduce the paradox within the political system itself. This system has continuously "forbidden the use of religious values for political goals" on the one hand, and continuously declared "Islam the religion of the State," on the other one. Furthermore, the alliance with the MSP or TAJ tends to establish a direct connection with the international Islamist movements, thanks to the status of MahfoudNahnah party within the Muslim Brotherhood and its status in the western countries as well.

The MSP decided to join the presidential coalition, and to participate in all elections (with the exception of the 2014 elections) for several reasons. The first one is dictated by the inclusion strategy followed by the Muslim Brotherhood. This involvement implies to participate in political life and penetrate the institutions in order to accelerate the islamization of society from the bottom. Algeria remains a centralized country and penetrating the institutions is a good way to reach all the sectors of society. The second reason is also a question of principle. The MSP rejects violence and believes in progressive changes. In other words, it believes that the regime can be changed from inside. The third reason consists in proving that an Islamist party is able to govern through universal standards. By this way, the MSP confirms its status of moderate Islamist force on one hand and tries restlessly to integrate its elite into



the administration and the economic networks, on another one. Through his ministers, functionaries and MPs, the MSP has built a militant aristocracy (Temlali, 2008). This shift explains the intensity of internal fights about the designation of the candidates to stand for elections. These fights are very frequent in the FLN and the RND, for, seemingly, the same reasons.

## **2.2 Inclusion of the previous radical opponents: reconciliation policy**

In addition to the three main political parties and the traditional networks, the regime looks at enlarging its support basis to his most radical opponents. The Chart of national reconciliation asked the Algerians to change their mentality, to forgive the past disputes and to go ahead toward a reconciled society, basing on religious approach (rahma), nationalist standpoint (national unity), and political argument (peace and security) (AitHamadouche, Zoubir, 2007). The reconciliation policy aims to attract the terrorists and push them to give up violence in counterpart of reintegration in social and economic life without any penal proceedings. In 2010, around 9000 cases of surrenders were officially confirmed and most of them reintegrated their former job.<sup>6</sup> According to government balance sheet, 95% of the objectives were achieved.<sup>7</sup>

Currently, the first objective of this policy is dividing and weakening the terrorist groups and most importantly to include Islamists in antiterrorist strategy. Thus, the

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<sup>6</sup> Farouk Ksentini chairman of Commission nationale consultative de promotion et de protection des droits de l'homme (CNCPPDH) (official) in El Watan, 13/08/2010. The CNCPPDH have been replaced in 2016 by the National Council of Human Rights chaired by MsFafa Sid LakhdarBenzerouki.

<sup>7</sup> For more details about security balance sheet, see ; « Lutte contre le terrorisme en 2018 : l'ANP fait son bilan », <https://www.algeriepatriotique.com/2019/01/01/lutte-contre-le-terrorisme-en-2018-lanp-fait-son-bilan/>



government recognized that soon after the 1997 agreement, a close military cooperation was established with AIS to fight GIA (Armed Islamic Groups). The same method was used to combat GSPC (Salafist Group for Combat and Predication) which became AQIM (Al Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb). In 2010, Hassan Hattab called a popular imam of a salafi mosque, Mohamed Ali Farkouss, to publish a religious law (fetwa), prohibiting all kind of contestation against the government. Set-in, meetings, street demonstrations, riots and oral blames are included in this contestation.<sup>8</sup>

The second goal aims to attract and include the Islamist electorate which represents potentially 4 million voters, according to 1990, 1991 and 1995 elections in which Islamist candidates were present (Tazaghart, 2003). In 2009, this proportion represents 20 percent of the electorate the regime wants to control, to contain and to use. To accompany the reconciliation process and attract the Islamists' sympathisers, the government decided to build the biggest mosque in Africa with the tallest minaret of the world, and mobilize the imams to push people to vote.

The partners of the regime in these political exchanges are more numerous simply because the regime's resources are also growing. The more the resources are substantial, the more clients are numerous. And the more the regime is incapable of reducing its lack of legitimacy, the more its need of the other's resources is crucial. Furthermore, as long as the credibility of the political parties will remain weak, they will be prompt to accept this "partnership" with the rulers. This tendency is reinforced by the widespread use of electoral patronage (Piattoni, 2001) and confirms the existence of democracy without democrats.

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<sup>8</sup> El Chourouk El Yaoumi, 14/09/2010



### **3. Exclusion: from the governmental policy to the self exclusion**

Exclusion is the consequence of some restrictive and exclusive measures taken in the name of national security. It is also the result of non transparent political actions and weak political parties which lead to weakened representative institutions (especially the parliament). This lack of legitimacy and efficiency explains the reason why people turn to violence instead of voting, which leads to another exclusion.

#### **3.1 Exclusion for security reasons**

If prioritizing between liberty and security is debated in many societies, the question is resolved in Algeria: security is the priority. Yet, compared to the 1990's, terrorism has undoubtedly decreased in terms of intensity and number of attacks, these last 20 years. However, it did not disappear. In 2018, Algeria was far from risky countries. With only 13 attacks, Algeria is at the 53<sup>rd</sup> rank.<sup>9</sup>

Consequently to the remaining terrorism and growing organized criminality, individual and collective liberties were made under control in different ways. Regarding media's control, the Algerian Information Code is restrictive (Zoubir, AitHamadouche, 2004). Indeed, the law makes the press liable and insists that freedom of speech must also respect "individual dignity, the imperatives of foreign policy, and national defense." In the name of these principles, the Government can restrict some freedoms and take legal action against what it considers as threats to the state or public order (Dris, 2012).

However, the Arab revolts have had an indirect effect. Nineteen years after its instauration, the Algerian government decided in 2011 to lift the State of Emergency which allowed the police to detain suspects in pre-arraignment detention for up to 12

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<sup>9</sup> <https://fr.sputniknews.com/international/201812131039288377-armee-algerienne-bilan-lutte-antiterroriste-exceptionnel/>



days.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, the 2010 report of the Observatory for Protection of Human Rights Defenders concludes that official control and restrictions on human rights have decreased since the 2009 presidential election.<sup>11</sup>

However, if classical terrorist actions seem under relative containment, another threat is getting more and more significant: the organized criminality. The lack of safety and propagation of urban criminality are also a crucial factor in social instability. The reports of the Gendramerie reveal that the drug dealers use war weapons to transport their narcotics, especially in southern borders, where armed groups are already active. It is the reason why Algeria, Mali, Niger and Mauritania decided in 2011 to create a security force including between 25.000 and 75.000 elements to fight terrorism and organized criminality.<sup>12</sup> As for the western borders, they are used to sell the drug coming from Morocco towards Europe.

To face these different security challenges, the Algerian government decided to reinforce the security forces. The hardest period for the police was undoubtedly the 1990's when police forces were asked to counter the Islamic armed groups, a task they were not prepared for (Tounsi, 2002).<sup>13</sup> However, the number of policemen increased to 210000 in 2018, against 100000 in 2009. It means that the ratio citizen/policeman has moved to 1 policeman to 204 citizens. In guise of comparison, the national ratio is 1 policeman for 306 inhabitants in Morocco, with approximately the same population.

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<sup>10</sup> The maintain of state of emergency was apparently not the Army request, as far as the general Mohammed Lamari himself attested in 2003 that he was partisan of its lift, simply because antiterrorist fight was possible without state of emergency. [http://www.algeria-watch.org/fr/article/pol/anp\\_presidence/lamari\\_bouteflika.htm](http://www.algeria-watch.org/fr/article/pol/anp_presidence/lamari_bouteflika.htm)

<sup>11</sup> TSA, 15/09/2010

<sup>12</sup> AFP, 21/05/2011

<sup>13</sup> In September 2003, the director of the security forces revealed that 2,269 gendarmes and 211 policemen had been dismissed over the previous two years for abuse of authority, including arbitrary arrests.



### 3.2 From co-optation to Exclusion

Pluralist elections represent a new tradition in Algeria but the fraud does not. If the rule of "the three nine" (99.9 percent) of the single-party system is almost no longer applied, transparency has not replaced it yet. Since 1989, every election has been followed by controversies about the winners. It is worth noticing that fraud cases are no longer a taboo or denied phenomenon. Hence, in 1997 an important contestation movement driven by the RCD and MSP has denounced the huge fraud and an investigation commission was settled to shed the light on this affair. The report was written and given to the Prime minister services but never been published. Consequently, no sanction was taken against anyone. Ten years later, the fraud denunciations came directly from the chief of the national commission himself, Said Bouchair, who retracted later on. The general secretary of the RND, Ahmed Ouyahia himself, spoke about fraud cases (Makedhi, 2007).

As for the private media, they systematically denounce the official results, notably the participation turnout. The media reported that this turnout could not overpass 20 percent and that the results of at least 15 percent of vote centers have been falsified (DRIS-AITHAMADOUCHE, 2008). The unhappy other candidates, the private media and the opposition all have contended the official results. They based their accusations on their witnesses on one hand, and on the general disinterest due to the absence of suspense, on another hand. People did not see any reason to go voting as long as they were convinced by the victory of the president.

In addition to the fraud, the political actors are excluded from the political battle by their own political choices. By accepting co-optation and refusing to change the way they rule their parties, the opposition provoked its self exclusion. Regarding co-optation, the Algerian government has used all the means to enlarge its alliance basis and neutralize its opponents. He





assimilated his rivals at the different levels of power through symbolic and/or material advantages. The public finances, the public media, the local representatives are involved (or involve themselves) in the fraud process. This is what Abdeslam Ali Rachedi, leader of the unrecognized party Assabil, calls the “modern fraud”.

Co-optation is not limited, however to the political sphere. A deep analysis imposes to include society, as a whole, as a category of analysis. Indeed, since the beginning of the Arab revolts, the government has reacted by satisfying almost all the socio-economic requests. For instance, the 2011 Ramadan assistance has achieved DA3.8 billion (\$55 million)<sup>14</sup> and subvention policy has been strengthened.<sup>15</sup> In order to prevent any “Algerian spring”, the government increased the salaries in almost all sectors. Everything has been done to satisfy the socio-economic demands and to calm down the popular angry. Finally, the government has bought social peace and people have sold their political requests.

On another hand, co-optation of political parties is very interesting and the example of the MSP is a case study. The MSP inclusion by co-optation has unleashed many critics inside the party and, then, its exclusion from the clan of the opponents to the Algerian government. The very first sign of co-optation appeared when HAMAS refused to condemn the interruption of the electoral process in January 1992. The second came when he joined the CNT (National Council of Transition), a kind of parliament designated by the militaries. The third sign came with the second round of the Saint' Egidio initiative (“Contrat National”), which, in early January 1995, put together the first “conciliators” (reconciliateurs), the ex FIS, the secular Front des

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<sup>14</sup> TSA, 26/07/2011

<sup>15</sup> See the opinion of Salah Mouhoubi (1949-2013), economic expert in several newspapers, L'Expression 19/07/2011, Liberté, 18/07/2011, El Moudjahid, 18/07/2011. See also those of Reda Hamiani, chief of Businessmen Forum (Forum des chefs d'entreprises), in El Watan, 25/07/2011, TSA, 27/07/2011, Le Temps d'Algérie, 25/07/2011.



Forces Socialistes (FFS), the Workers' Party (PT), and members of the FLN (Zoubir, 1998).

The fourth one followed the MSP participation in the government issued from 1997 elections with 7 ministers, five more ministers than the 1995 government. It should be pointed out that the stringer period for this Islamist party was in 1997 (seven ministries). However, the most controversial turning point was the 1999 presidential election in which the candidature of MahfoudNahnah was amazingly rejected. Surprisingly, the party accepted this exclusion and supported AbdelazizBouteflika. Later on, the MSP joined the presidential coalition with the FLN and the RND, excluding itself from the opposition (AIT OUARABI, 2006).

These decisions have generated a serious crisis within the party, leading many militants to leave and thus provoking a severe defeat in the 2002 elections (Tlemçani, 2005). Since then, the MSP has accepted the official results -whatever they were real or manipulated- with no real contestations. Finally, the MSP gave up the objective of the Islamic state (Temlali, 2008) and knew the most serious internal crises. AbdelmadjidMenasra, the leader of the sedition, left the party and created the Movement of Predication and Change (MPC). The opponents to BouguerraSoltani, leader of the MSP since the death of MahfoudNahnah, accused him of having betrayed Nahnah line, besmirched the image of the party, taken profit from his situation, supported the political power without any counterpart, and directed the party as dictator (Rafa, 2009).

However, it should be pointed out that Menasra's sedition was not a revolt against the MSP co-optation by the government, as long as he kept his support to Bouteflika.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Le Quotidiend'Algérie, 28/03/2011



If some political parties are neutralized by co-optation, most of them have been trapped by their own internal functioning, which is closed to the authoritarian system. They are neo-patriarchal in term of giving the chief the status of the absolute and unquestionable leader. It should be noticed that the Workers Party (Parti des Travailleurs (PT) hasn't known any rotation, since its creation in 1989.

Alternation occurred in the MSP only after the leader's death. In addition, some parties face harsh critics regarding their position towards running to get power. For instance, the FFS partisans do not always understand the unvarying boycott of the oldest opponent Algerian party. Even inside the MSP and RND some sympathizers expressed their frustration and accused the presidential alliance of preventing their respective party to run for the presidential election (Zoubir, 1997).

The MSP did not present any candidate since the 1999 controversy and 2019 could be the exception. The RND never runs despite his status as one of the two most powerful parties. Even the FLN was injured in 2009 when the president Bouteflika decided to run as an "independent candidate". During electoral campaigns, Algerian media correctly point out that the opposition is only capable of acting together to denounce the government, forming a tactical and circumstantial coalition rather than initiating a coherent alternative force. Personal attacks and ambitious rivalries dominated the debate inside and outside the representative institution. The parliament is the extension of the unhealthy relationship between the parties and power.

### **3.3 Consequences of Exclusion: riots in the streets, nobody in polling stations**

Electoral fraud, rent redistribution, and cooptation of political parties make people taking some distance from politics. They desert the elections and look for new ways to make their voice heard. In fact, the direct consequence of the lack of legitimacy inside political parties is the increasing abstention. Since 1997, the successive elections, local and parliamentary ones



especially, confirmed the increasing gap between the population and the political class as a whole.

Officially, the government declared that the abstention rate<sup>17</sup> was comparable to European and American elections. At the middle and long term, the representation crisis due to the high level of abstention can have dangerous consequences. The worst scenario is growing up of radical movements which could fulfil the emptiness. The second consequence of this detachment can be summed up in this question: "Where is the state?!" This complaint is heard after an aggression in the street, a kidnapping in Kabylia (East of Algiers), and an economic scandal revealed in the media. It is claimed after recovering dead Haragas in the Mediterranean.<sup>18</sup> Social exclusion is lived as a break between state and society.

Across the country, the angry generation expresses her upset by riots. As explained by a sociologist, NacerDjabi, "unrest is now a routine in Algeria. It is becoming a national sport simply because people see no improvement in their daily living conditions." (Chikhi, 2009) In 2018, there were 10000 social movements across the country. Riots can be caused by bread shortage, a football match, electricity cutting or houses distribution.

The list also compounds inter-neighbourhood conflicts (Bab el-Oued), inter-communal clashes (Berriane and Illizi), the exploitation of shall gaz (In Salah) and tribal conflicts (Djelfa, Laghouat and Bejaia). Social movements in Algeria look like those anywhere in the world. They are caused by social injustice (hogra), corruption, nepotism, and the strong feeling of non-management, bad governance and hopeless. This analysis is linked to the beginning question "Where is the state?"

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<sup>17</sup> The election-day turn out during the three previous legislatives elections were as following: 2007, 36.65%; 2012, 43.14%; 2017, 37.09%.

<sup>18</sup>harragas, illegal migrants.



Riots express the rupture between the state and people which actually has started at the beginning of the nation state building process. A process based on selective inclusion and exclusion. It also expresses the rupture between people and the elite, which has failed to become a powerful intermediary force, transmitting the requests of the bottom, the outputs of the top in a peaceful give and take process.

#### **4. Inclusion, exclusion and the 22<sup>nd</sup> February people uprising**

How does 22<sup>nd</sup> February uprising impact the inclusion/exclusion practice?

##### **4.1 The horizontal and vertical exclusion**

This popular uprising expressed how deep the gap between Algerian people and political leaders is. Though they expressed their support to the movement, no political leader of coalition party dared to take part in the Friday rally organized through different departments. For, the people uprising unveiled a crisis of confidence and beyond the crisis of legitimacy.

The extreme weakness of intermediary actors (political parties, trade organisations, NG's...) explains the reason why the 22<sup>nd</sup> February popular uprising has no leadership when it started and why it rejected any formal organisation after several weeks of demonstrations. In the same time, pacific character of this rebellion also provided evidence that Algerians have understood that violence is not only destructive but also an excuse the government uses to maintain political exclusion. This horizontal exclusion not only explains the popular rejection of traditional political leadership but also shows how difficult for him to produce his own leaders.

As for vertical exclusion, it is worthy noticing that the selective exclusion practiced by the regime turned to total exclusion decided by Algerian people. The slogan's demonstrators voice every Friday (They all have to go) sounds as a strong desire for a regime change.



#### **4.2 The inclusion dynamic of the people uprising**

Since 1962 independence, Algeria has never seen such a massive rally that has this inclusive characteristic. Firstly, the movement embodied all Algerian departments (wilayas) whatever their proximity with the political regime. Some department such as Adrar, Bechar, Tlemcen and Tebessa, have been theatres of a massive rally led by young people. Secondly, all segments of society are strongly represented: men, women, young and old peoples, jobless and workers, urban and rural, etc. In this vein, it should be noticed that the young generation is at the forefront as shown by the student mobilization every Tuesday. In addition to this, women presence strongly contributes in maintaining the peaceful character of demonstrations.

Thirdly, all claims expressed by demonstrators are exclusively politically motivated unlike the ones expressed during the last years which had social and economic connotations: Ouargla (jobless) and In Salah (the exploitation of shall gaz).

#### **Conclusion**

The great XIV<sup>th</sup> century Maghrebi sociologist Abdul Rahman Ibn Khaldun suggested that government's stability depends upon a combination of three actions: homogenising the ruling elite, linking between the ruling elite's interests and those of the influent actors and legitimating the alliance of interests. Actually, these three actions express three ways of selective inclusion. In this context, even excluding actions can reinforce inclusion policy.

The Algerian decision-makers have applied this combination with a relative success until 22<sup>nd</sup> February. In 1989, they undertook several political and economic reforms to face a threatening situation. This equation "reforming to survive" was applied once again in the 1990's, and then two decades later to face the Arab turmoil. At each step, the reforms have sustained



the homogeneity of the ruling elite by enlarging the dividends with influent actors (FLN, informal economic networks...), or at least with actors who were encouraged to become influent (RND, zawiya...). This selective inclusive policy could not have been made possible without an acceptable and effective legitimacy. Where does this legitimacy come from? As surprising as it may be, many people still believe in a Nietzschean Algerian "exception" made of Algeria's capacity of going through the turmoil and to get out of it stronger than before. As "revolutionary legitimacy" is challenged by "security legitimacy", the consequences would be inclusion policy with an exorbitant and unacceptable price. In 2019, inclusion implied allegiance to a portrait, obedience to non-constitutional actors and election of a bedridden candidate. The fifth mandate unveiled the limits of selective inclusion and tactical exclusion. Hence, the top decision-makers were unable to find a consensual successor to Abdelaziz Bouteflika. The violent exclusion of some important civilian and military personalities suggested that collegial consensus was cracked.

Facing the 22<sup>nd</sup> uprising, the classical inclusion-exclusion policy does not work. First, exclusion by repression is rejected as well as the intervention of the national army to repress pacific people. Second, inclusion by using clients' cooptation rapidly failed with Lakhdar Brahimi's attempt. Does it mean that the principle of "the best way to exclude someone is to include him, and the best way to include someone is to exclude him", is no longer operational? It is a question worth asking and deserves to be a subject for further researches.

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