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Army, State and Nation in Algeria

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Texte intégral

Ever since Independence in 1962, the army has played a critical role in the political life of Algeria. "The army's prominence is based on three factors: its historical legitimacy, the personal popularity and charisma of Colonel Houari Boumediene, and the army's populist discourse, which offered the prospect of a form of social and economic development oriented towards poverty alleviation. By the start of crisis in the 1980s, the historical legitimacy of the army had declined with the renewal of succeeding generations. Having failed to deliver on its promises, the populist discourse had also lost its credibility and influence.[1] From being based on the charismatic leadership of a popular figure, the Algerian regime evolved into a military oligarchy after the death of Boumédiene in 1978. The appointment of the notably uncharismatic and politically unambitious officer, Colonel Chadli Bendjedid, as President in 1978 was to lead the regime into a particularly violent period of crisis. In an effort to escape from this dead-end, the same regime that had appointed Bendjedid then nominated Abdelaziz Bouteflika as President. By doing so, the regime expressed the desire to turn back the clock and return to the successes of the past, by choosing in Bouteflika a former 'brother in arms' of Boumediene.

Among what are commonly known as 'political armies', Algeria is a case in point. As a country of the Third World where independence was obtained through a war of national liberation, the army had acquired a considerable degree of historical legitimacy as a result of this experience. The army came to be identified as the main source of political power in the new state. During the 1960s and 1970s, the popularity of the regime was bolstered by its leader, the charismatic Colonel Houari Boumediene (1965 - 1978). What undermined the confidence of the ruled in their rulers was the failure of the whole development project, promised by official policy statements, and undermined by demographic changes (with the population having tripled in fourty years). The result was a profound sense of social malaise and discontent. During the 1980s, the regime was buffeted by pressures caused by internal and external changes and tried to break free of its past policies. However there were serious

and undeniable political obstacles in its way, which resulted in a dangerous lack of political reform, and a tendency for stagnation.

These obstacles will be analyzed in relation to the army's political role, making it possible for us to understand the nature of the violent crisis that has beset the country since 1992. Nevertheless, it is first necessary to define a key notion that will be much used in this research; namely the notion of a political army. Basically, an army can be said to be 'political' when it is itself the main source of state power, and presents itself as the key holder of political legitimacy. In Algeria, there is a political army in this sense, since the army itself appoints the President and the members of the government. The army also intervenes in the political domain, under the supervision of a special service, the *Securite Militaire* (Military Security), which is under the control of the Ministry of Defence.

The regime in Algeria has always sought to minimize the importance of the army in the construction of state power, but with violent confrontation from the Islamists, the real picture emerged, through the use of the Military Security forces. In general, both researchers and public opinion have had a tendency to ignore the army's supremacy in Algeria, even though this is clearly a central dimension of the country's overall political sociology. Nevertheless the serious crisis which shook Algeria in 1992, unavoidably focused public and media attention onto the military hierarchy, which now appeared openly as the single main actor in the political arena. To get a better understanding of the role of the army, it is important to bear in mind its pivotal place at the origin of the present Algerian political system, and to grasp the strength of the army's connection to the very idea of the Algerian nation. When Boumediene, then Minister of Defence, deposed the elected President Ben Bella, in June 1965, despite the latter's election two years previously, this coup was carried out in the name of historical legitimacy.[2] It was also in the name of restoring historical legitimacy that Boumediene then appointed Chadli Bendjedid as President in 1979, and in 1992 proceeded to oust him on the same grounds. Even the decision to annul the elections of December 1991, in which the Islamists won the majority of the vote, was taken in the name of historical legitimacy. This time M. Boudiaf, who was a co-founder of the FLN and in exile since independence, was the one called on. In all these cases, the army's position in Algerian political life is closely tied in with the whole question of historical legitimacy, which is itself a critical issue for any political system, whatever its complexion.

The Bipolar Nature of Power; A Contradiction in Motion

The main contradiction, within the Algerian political regime is the bipolar nature of power relations. On the basis of this bipolarity, opposing 'clans' are formed, each of which seeks to control the State administration. Even seeking to discover who really controls political power in Algeria is not a neutral exercise, since it involves unveiling the mechanisms for the reproduction and distribution of political power, as well as the inner contradictions of the regime itself, and the violent crisis it is experiencing. The two-sided structure of State power frames the whole field of political life. For this reason, it is necessary to examine this bipolarity in more detail, so as to integrate the nature of the Algerian power structure into the whole history of the nationalist movement in the post-independence era. The bipolarization of the regime is not recognized in the official discourse because the legitimate power of the army is neither institutionalized, nor constitutional. There thus arises a gap between rhetoric and

reality, between the officially sanctioned lines of authority within State institutions and the influence of informal networks on decision making at different levels of the State bureaucracy. At an Individual level, military personnel are among those most critical of the inefficiency and incompetence of State administrative personnel. Yet they do not see the connection between the lack of competence, and their own controlling role over the powers of State. Any senior military officer finds it perfectly normal, for example, that it is the military that gives the go-ahead for forming a new government, and gives detailed advice on which civilians are to be selected to form part of such a government.[3]

For the military, such privileges are justified by its role of providing historical legitimacy to the political leadership, given the army's place in the foundation of the State. Nonetheless, the military has generally veered away from installing a military regime as such, given the legacies of the anti-colonial struggle. This is why, despite the importance of the army, the Algerian regime is not a military regime, let alone a military dictatorship of the Latin American type. It is, instead, an authoritarian regime which in large part derives its legitimacy from the armed forces. The Army, in turn, expects the regime in power to prevent any independent civil society forces from emerging, and thus avoid the public institutionalization of conflict.[4] The roots of the authoritarianism of the Algerian state are not found in its military origins, but rather in the populist Ideology which the army upholds. It is as if the latter has consistently demanded, since 1962, that the State administration should create a new society based on equal citizenship, and underpinned by State guarantees, with everyone depending on the State for their subsistence.

From this point of view, one can interpret the historical legitimacy of the Army as a potent political resource, which allows the army itself to intervene in politics - both directly and indirectly - in order to bring about the desired adjustments in Government policies and to carry out the role entrusted to it Thus, for example, stressing the uniqueness of the party and placing the economy under state control in the name of socialism, was to control society and prevent the emergence of autonomous and potentially rival political, economic and cultural elites. This explains why economic reforms, required since the mid-1980s, have never been applied. If such reforms ever were implemented, the inevitable result would be the withdrawal of the State from the economic sphere. The political cost would be that the State was obliged to abandon its capacity to use material resources for political ends, in order to control Algerian society. Privatization policies do not fit in with the established order, in which the Army controls the State, which in turn controls society.

An absolutist and authoritarian understanding of power underpins the military's ideological outlook, in which power is seen as an end in itself, and a necessary means of dominating society in order to deny or stifle political conflict. This form of power has been perpetuated at the cost of the weakening of civil society, particularly in the economic and cultural spheres. In this way, State power has undermined itself too, since the limits of political power depend on what society as a whole can provide. At the same time, the army's 'political cultural' is historically speaking one legacy of a colonial system that consistently refused to make any concessions that might improve the tot of Algerian people, or enable them to participate in the political affairs of their own country. After World War Two, independence through armed struggle was the only way out of this anachronistic position. Legitimately engaged in revolutionary violence, the FLN was born out of the very rigidity of the colonial system to which it was opposed. Having been submitted to a brutal form of domination under French colonialism, Algerians adopted violence as a means of resolving political conflicts. Independence was achieved only after seven and a half years of war, and at the cost of several

hundred thousand lives. As Independence was seized through revolutionary violence, an Algerian State was established under the overall control of the Army. This remains the situation today, with the armed forces acting rather like a single party regime that cannot tolerate any opposition to its own monopoly position. The dominant culture of violence remains deeply ingrained among the ruling class, and largely accounts for their persistent intolerance towards any kind of freedom of expression,

It should not be forgotten that the FLN itself disintegrated shortly after independence. The movement was in a sense reintegrated, or absorbed into the army in the form of a populist ideology which preserved the FLN's role symbolically; the army thereby came to embody the historical heritage of the FLN. In portraying itself as the soul of the Nation and the conscience of the State, the army drew on this legacy and on the collective memory of what the FLN represented. The regime's populism was expressed most starkly by Colonel Boumediene, and in particular in his opposition to multipartism, which he regarded as divisive of the general national interest. As Algeria's political leaders were fond of reminding everyone, the old political parties had not been able to bring about the downfall of the colonial regime, and had done no more than create divisions among the general mass of the population. In addition, more recently created political parties are accused of recreating the inequalities of the colonial system through sanctioning private property. The army therefore presents itself as the champion of the whole nation, opposed to the legalization of political parties and devoted to the defence of the Nation from all its internal and external enemies.

Houari Boumediene: A Charismatic Military Leader

During the war of 1954-62 political instability arose out of the numerous conflicts that emerged between the leadership of the nationalist movement and the local authorities in the *maquis* (i.e. the regional leaders of the Revolutionary Movement). Boumédiène, commander of wilaya V, became Chief of Staff in 1959, and was assigned the task of displining these *maquis and* imposing political and military order among them. From the time of independence, the classical army structure that Boumediene started to organize in Tunisia and Morocco was designed to neutralize any moves towards insubordination among leaders of *maquis* in the Interior. In the meantime, Boumediene refused to take over the *reins* of power himself, and instead he invited Ahmed Ben Bella to act as Head of State. Whilst the head of the armed forces nominated the head of State, the latter formally appointed the former as Minister of Defence. Boumediene was able to unify the army and reintegrated former combatants from the interior of the country; as Minister of Defence, he subsequently emerged as the dispenser of political authority, and no major political decision could be taken without his agreement.

From 1962 onwards, state power in Algeria was divided into two distinct forms; the legitimate power of the army, and the 'executive power' of the President and Government. The constant battle between these two forms of power for control over the State has affected Algerian political life since independence. In seeking to assert his relative independence from Boumediene, President Ben Bella relied on Colonel Tahar Zbiri, whom he appointed as Major-General without consulting his own Minister of Defence. Ultimately, the friction between Ben Bella and Boumediene found expression In the *coup d'etat* of 19 June 1965, which some referred to as a simple 'readjustment, given that the number of people removed

from office was fairly few.[5] In fact, within the terms of the logic of the regime, the contest between legitimate power' and 'executive power' now resolved itself fatally in favour of the former,

In seizing executive power himself, Boumediene took the precaution of not appointing a head of the army, in order to avoid falling victim himself to the same deadly logic that had afflicted his predecessor. He therefore retained the post of Minister of Defence for himself, and created a 'Revolutionary Council'. He himself presided over this collective body, which was declared the ultimate repository of national sovereignty and historical legitimacy. In creating this public institution, Boumediene was able to avoid accusations of personal ambition, whilst using the Council as a cover behind which important decisions could be made. The subtle fiction of collectivism was doubly advantageous: it institutionalized historical legitimacy by detaching it from the military hierarchy, and on the other hand, it allowed Boumediene, as President of the Revolutionary Council and Head of State, to keep a firm hold simultaneously on legitimate and executive power.[6] In this way, he was conforming to the logic of a political system which, whilst tending to concentrate power in the hands of a single individual, was also opposed to personalistic forms of political leadership. Even the fiction of collective decision making, behind which Boumediene hid, could not protect him from a near-successful attempt by the Chief of Staff, Colonel Zbiri, in December 1967, to militarily overthrow the regime.

After this coup attempt ended in failure, and in order to guard against any further disturbances of the military machinery, Boumediene initiated a wide-ranging programme of economic and social reform, and sought to associate these changes with his own persona. Further feeble attempts by the military to oust Boumediene were hopeless, given the degree of popular attachment to him as a political leader, and given his own close identification with the national liberation movement - out of which the army itself had arisen. The president was able to undermine his potential rivals in the armed forces by keeping himself somewhat aloof from his original power base within the army, and by advocating a more populist set of economic and social policies. These included plans for mass industrialization, an agrarian revolution, public enterprises run along socialist lines, and free state services for all, Including health care. All this went hand in hand with a more overtly charismatic and personalistic style of leadership, which was eventually rejected by the Algerians.[7]

This programme, incorporating economic modernization, radical agricultural reform, social justice through, universal education, free health care and the creation of employment, did reflect the expression of many Algerians' popular aspirations after independence. In giving priority to these goals, Boumédiène transformed himself into a charismatic leader who inspired the confidence of local communities. For the most part, the Algerian public trusted him as a leader whose personal legitimacy was based on the personal qualities he placed at the service of the society's shared goals and visions (material progress; the equitable distribution of resources, and the achievement of other Utopian aims buried within the collective unconscious of the Algerian populace). After several years of turbulence during the 1960s, state power was consolidated around Boumédiène himself, who came to be regarded as the repositary of legitimacy, in large part because in his speeches and pronouncements he forcefully expressed the aspirations and hopes of ordinary Algerians, giving the 'people' the feeling that they were taking a more direct part in political life through his own intervention and personality.

Boumediene was able to mobilize popular political energies for the benefit of the State public administration, to which the specific task of developing Algeria's economy was allocated. However, personal charisma is neither a stable base for rule nor an inexhaustible source of legitimacy. Maintaining charisma depends on the constant juggling act of matching public expectations and demands with the resources available to satisfy such demands, both materially and symbolically. In this particular political climate, the cult of the leader produces the illusion that injustices can be redressed. It must be said also that Boumediene was certainly a skilled leader, who resorted to the use of force only when there was no other option available. Under his Presidency, Algeria experienced a period of relative peace and stability which was unusual in its history. Although he knew how to exercise control over people, Boumediene nonetheless did not have much understanding of modern economic and political culture. He had a quasi-mystical belief in the ability of the State, provided it was run by well trained, able and committed officials and bureaucrats. His vision was one where politics was rooted in the Individual psychology of policy-makers. If his conception of the ideal Algerian society had not been so Utopian and unrealistic and led the country into crisis, Boumediene might have been a twentieth century Massinissa or Abdelmoumen.[8]

Generally speaking, for the Algerian elite the underlying problem that emerged from the war of liberation was the question of how to construct a non-partisan State capable of controlling a conflict-free society; in achieving this, the option of establishing particular Institutions to deal with problems of legitimacy and sovereignty has not even been considered. Algerian society has tended to both naturalize the whole question of state legitimacy and to fetishize sovereignty, through a political discourse that formally denied yet simultaneously mythologized these qualities. Whether applied to the nationalist discourse of the army or to the Islamic discourse, tin's political dilemma had to be resolved one way or the other. It is useful to remind ourselves of the meaning of such terms as legitimacy and sovereignty, both in theory and in relation to practice. We will now consider some of the ways in which such questions of legitimacy and sovereignty have arisen in the context of Algeria.

Political Legitimacy and Sovereign Power

It is possible to distinguish sovereign power from executive power within the dominant structure of the State. Sovereign power is held in the name of legitimacy, and executive power is exercised by the Government and distributed among the various administrative levels, from the Minister to the administrator. Sovereign power is delegated to the authority of the Government in place, which is responsible for administrative affairs and the management of the mainly oil-based revenues. In organic terms, State power is a form of hierarchy, in which each level has the prerogative to be obeyed by the level below. At various levels of the administrative ladder, a subtle pecking order distributes power so that each successive rank has progressively more power than that below it, and less than the rank above.

There is however a difference in the nature of power allocated to the top tiers of the State administration, compared with power at other levels. The upper echelons derive their power from outside the hierarchy, and on the basis of a form of legitimacy that created the hierarchical structure of the State in the first place. The external source of this elite's power is the constituent legitimacy of the State itself, which ensures the general consent of the governed. The State bureaucracy functions as an administration which passes on orders through delegation. Within this structure, the head of Slate is delegated by sovereign power (the king or queen in a monarchy, the electorate in a democracy, and the army in Algeria's

case). It is this that gives the leader the ability to take advantage of his authority to direct the state administration and to obtain the general compliance of the governed.

Legitimacy establishes the basis for administrative authority, and makes it possible for such authority to be accepted without excessive use of physical force or coercion. Legitimacy is also expressed through the shared consent of the popular majority, who agree to obey those in authority and State power.[9] Legitimacy - in other words the internalized belief of me governed, whether subjects or citizens, which leads them to voluntarily obey without being physically forced to do so - is an essential basis of State power, and for that matter of any other form of power relationship. This form of power enables those who govern to secure the obedience of the majority of those over whom they rule. If necessary, force will also be used to gain the compliance of a minority to the norms of the established order. Legitimacy, In this sense, is the mechanism by which a majority of the population supports a political regime, and recognizes it as operating in the people's general Interest

The operational efficacy of legitimacy in this sense depends on the belief among the majority that the regime is well intentioned, and that it is committed to protecting and promoting the general interest, whatever difficulties it may face in doing so. The power of the State authorities to impose itself is derived from the mobilization of the energies of this majority; what matters in this context is not the ability of the State to exercise physical force In order to gain compliance, but rather its ability to derive legitimacy from popular beliefs. If political authority is regarded as legitimate, then those in power can mobilize the potential energies of all those who hold this view, for example in order to use it in confrontation with any minority that might not acknowledge the legitimacy of the regime. This mobilization of the majority makes it possible to defend the existing political system. In Algeria, the legitimacy of the political system, as in any other case, is historically rooted; in this case it is indissolubly linked with the national liberation struggle that was waged in order to bring an end to colonial domination. Legitimacy is first and foremost the product of historical processes; processes which may combine to lend it great efficacy or alternately may serve to remove its capacity to function effectively. To put it another way, legitimacy always has a historical dimension, and unless it is actively renewed and reconfirmed, can lose its ability to underpin State power and effectively integrate the masses.

For reasons to do with the country's history, the Algeria regime established itself as an administrative State (the State being reduced to the bare bones of its administrative structure). Within such a framework, sovereignty is neither officially declared nor located within particular institutions, as it would be in a ideal type legal-rational state structure. Legitimate power, in this context, is hidden behind institutions which have no basis in political reality, and in this sense prevents the national community from becoming aware of its own ability to exercise powers of sovereignty. This fear of public exposure arises neither out of cynicism nor machiaveliianism, but out of the fact that the political sphere is not clearly distinguished from the religious and social spheres. The military hierarchy, from which such legitimacy is derived, is not even aware that it displaces the electorate by exercising sovereignty in its place. The electorate in turn does not ask for this sovereignty back, so long as it considers that it is being wisely used.

Patriarchal communal structures of authority are not aware of themselves as autonomous from the great meta-social forms of security, as Alain Touraine calls them, of God, Nature, History and Morality.[10] Members of such a society do not seek to exercise their sovereignty, or at least not in the institutional forms usual in a parliamentary democracy.[11] At this point, it

can be emphasized that the problem of sovereignty only arises in a society where there is functional differentiation, but not in a context where political, psychological, religious and moral spheres lack autonomy from each other.[12] In the few ideological texts that exist, the Army refers to national sovereignty as something which it protects from external attack. No reference is made to popular sovereignty, as expressed through universal suffrage. The army identifies itself with the collectivism of the Algerian nation, but not with the electorate as such. The electorate is ignored since it is assumed that there are no political conflicts among Algerian citizens, and therefore is no need to go through the periodic process of sorting out a majority and minority in terms of public opinion.

The only conflicts which are acknowledged openly are those between Algerians and foreigners, and between patriots and traitors. The latter conflict is not to be formalized in any case, since the only solution is to physically wipe out; or exterminate, the traitors. This approach accounts for the bloody nature of the present crisis, since for one side traitors include all those opposed to the national community, and for the other side the traitors are all those opposed to Islam, which is taken to define the political community. In neither of these forms of antagonistic political discourse does the notion emerge of an electoral body, or of popular political sovereignty. This is because such notions pre-suppose a sense of a neutral public space, in which the individual can exercise their civil and political freedoms, and in which a minority has the recognized right to oppose the majority.

In such a context, the rule of law, In the sense of a system of modern law based on popular sovereignty, is simply not possible. This is because the political leadership does not consider itself sovereign and allows the army, or - in the case of the Islamists if they ever came to power - would allow an Islamic army to control the process of legitimation. This situation can account for the laziness or the zeal with which those in power violate the juridical regulations they themselves put in place, and which in theory have the force of law for every citizen. Various competing clans and their followers even go so far as to parade their ability to break existing regulations with impunity, In order to demonstrate their powerful position. In short, laws which are put into force by the State administration are ignored or respected according to the relative dominance of various political dans. Any individual without a dan of their own is delivered to the arbitrariness of the Hobbesian state. He or she must pay in order to benefit from any law that accords some civil rights, and must also pai if he or she wants to escape from the constraints imposed by a particular piece of legislation. This double-bind means that public officials have exorbitant powers, since they are In a position to interpret the law, and also to *decide* whether to apply it or not in a particular situation, depending on the relative advantage they can draw from either option. The growing gap between the population and the State arises out of this form of administrative power and the tendency for officials to abuse the public and submit them to corruption and arbitrary governance. "The reforms instituted in the early 1980s In Algeria were intended to dose this gap between the State and the people, and to stabilize the regime in power. It was the ambiguity of reforms intended to consolidate the status quo, which helped to provoke the violent crisis now facing the country.

The Ambiguity of Political Reform under Chadli Bendjedid

When Boumédiene died in 1978, the Army was opposed to the Idea of reviving the Revolutionary Council, believing that this body had worked against their Interests. They

therefore appointed as Boumediene's successor the Regional military commander Chadli Bendjedid, who lacked his predecessor's dominant personality. The newly appointed President was unable to impose himself on his peers, and lacked the charisma needed to embody legitimacy. The regime thus entered a period of crisis and paralysis, which would work to the benefit of the Islamists. When they appointed Benjedid as President, the Army undermined the foundation on which the regime was constructed, and created a political vacuum that the Islamists would come to fill. Across different societies, experience suggests that legitimacy is expressed either through particular persons (in the form of charismatic domination) or in the more depersonalized form of institutional power (In the form of the modern State and legal-rational authority).[13] So long as the political sphere is not separate from forms of mystical nationalist and religious ideology, power will tend to be identified with a particular human being, namely a charismatic personality in which the members of the national community recognize themselves. This charismatic personality is expected to ensure the unity and cohesion of'the nation by defending it, or rather by organizing the nation to defend itself against any external threats.[14] The fatal mistake of the Army has been to refuse both charismatic, leadership and free elections, instead preferring political leaders with limited abilities, who are installed as President. Examples irclude Chadli Bendjedid, Ali Kafi, L Zéroual and A. Bouteflika. One of the few exceptions was Boudiafi, who was assassinated.

The charismatic authority of the Leader is essential to the ability of the patriarchally structured regime to reproduce itself. This regime needs the leader whose legitimacy is based on a populist form of political discourse, which translates symbolic values and images into political terms. The personal qualities of the Leader are essential to the regime's continued survival; he must be an arbiter, and must be strongly committed to his office, devoting many hours per day to his work. Such qualities certainly distinguished Boumediene from his successor, although it is also true that Chadli Bendjedid's term of office was during a difficult time, the model put in place by his predecessor having reached the end of Its useful life, and the period being marked by the collapse of world oil prices in 1985-86, The Government initiated reforms which were intended to improve the productivity of the economy, but their reforms were thrown out by the Army, which considered them too liberal and feared-that the free market would undermine the political capacity of the populist project.

The regime in power in Algeria provoked a crisis that was potentially fatal for its future survival. It did this by failing to put in power a leader with whom the public could identify, and by failing to create institutions with the capacity to regulate power relations between the State and the public. The lack of dear leadership created a vacuum which the Islamists were to exploit by taking power, whether through the ballot box or *by force*, Chadli Bendjedid tried to give a constitutional basis to the single party system, and thus to institutionalize power. When the Revolutionary Council was abolished, it was replaced by an elected Assembly, which became the official holder of national sovereignty. In reality, however, control over national sovereignty remained firmly in the control of the Army through the office of the President, who was elected through universal suffrage at the end of an electoral campaign run by a single party in support of a single candidate. The Constitution allows the President to derive his power from the electorate, and this enables him. to form the government and outline to the government the political and social policies that he has promised to implement But this constitutional image is illusory, given that the President himself is chosen by the military elite; the electorate is asked to ratify the military's choice, and the President is as a result highly dependent on the military elite that has selected him. The President can play off one faction or clan against another. Within limits, he can also choose who his collaborators will be, but his room for manoeuvre Is strictly limited since he cannot himself take over the

legitimate power of the army. With such dependency on the Army, a special relationship is maintained between the Presidency and the Ministry of Defence, which influences the Presidency politically and in personal terms. Formally speaking, these kinds of influences should be coming from trie FIN, the single party.

Officially, the FLN controlled the country and was the basis of political authority. Observing the real workings of the institutions of power and the relative weight of the party *vis a vis* public officials and the Army, suggests that the official supremacy of the party was a myth.[15] Both under Boumediene and his successor, Bendjedid (1579-1992), the FLN was organized as an administrative arm of the state, with its own hierarchy and budget, under the control of the President's office. The Party never played any major political role, and never took part in any Important decisions. Instead it operated as an outer garment for a regime where the army played the role of a dominant single party, and was thus the main source of political power. Under the cover of the FLN, any political debate that did not take place within the party structure was prohibited, so as to neutralize any local challenges to the dominant political order. In particular, the goal was to prevent the emergence of new elites, and to prevent them, from gaining any autonomy. As living conditions deteriorated and corruption became an increasing problem, the flaws in this system were exposed, and this provoked various internal and external challenges to the system. After the riots of October 1988 (which caused the death of dozens of young protestors), the regime was obliged to introduce a number of institutional reforms in order to ensure its own survival.

As a leader, Chadfi Bendjedid believed in the importance of formal institutional structures inherited by his regime. The system he inherited lacked flexibility, and the changes he introduced created additional obstacles to effective decision making. Bendjedid gave the party an importance that it lacked under Boumediene, and he expected the National Assembly to play its proper part within a parliamentary system. He also created the post of Prime Minister, under the control of the Assembly. At the same time, he introduced some notable changes in the organization of the army, including the creation of the rank of general. The greatest change in the organization of the army, however, was the decision to marginalize Military Security forces, having restricted these forces and having limited these Security forces' powers to those directly attributed by official regulations. All these reforms appeared obvious enough to Chadii Benjedid, but having introduced such reforms, his, regime lost much of its coherence in the 1980s. Ministers were used to implementing the orders of Boumediene, and hesitated to take any decisions, preferring to wait - as in Boumediene's time - for instructions from *President* himself. As the system became blocked, and was confronted with the collapse of world petroleum prices, paralysis resulted as clan competition for shrinking resources intensified. The regime was organizationally incapable of being reformed. The only options were either to reinforce the existing logic in order to restore some coherence and hence some effectiveness to the regime, or alternatively to create a completely new regime in which the army would cease to hold the reins of power, lacking the breadth of vision required, unable to master the subtleties of politics, and above all incapable of intellectual insight, Chadli Bendjedid was unable to manage the transition which he wished to see through following the riots of October 1988.

Democratic reforms were introduced through the Constitution of February 1989, but the binary nature of State power, which the military hoped to preserve intact, proved a stumbling block to genuine democratization. The military agreed to open up the political system and allow the operation of a multi-party system, electoral competition, freedom of the press to restrain corruption and to improve the overall credibility and effectiveness to the regime.

They believed that multi-partyism would revive the fortunes of the FLN through electoral competition. The purpose of the democratization process was thus to bring about an institutional reshuffle, by deriving executive power from the ballot box without undermining the unwritten, underlying constitution of the regime that the Army is the basis of State power. The military did not fear the outcome of the elections, since they expected the FLN to reach a compromise with the FIS within the National Assembly, and form, a government which would continue to recognize the overall legitimate power of the Army. What resulted, namely the outright victory of the FIS, threatened the political hegemony of the army. There was the distinct danger that a. single party, not the FLN, would form a Government without any reference to the Army, and might even impose its own Minister of Defence. "This would have meant the installation of a new regime, the end of the bipolar structure of State power, and the end of the Army's legitimate power.

The paradox of democratization in Algeria was that the existing political leadership sought to bring electoral legitimacy, which sanctioned the Government, in line with historical legitimacy, which was embodied in the Army. The military authorities expected these two forms of legitimacy to coincide, and thus to restore to the regime its popularity and to reduce the level of corruption and inefficiency in the public administration of the country, In its attempt to resolve the problem of corruption, the military exposed a fatal flaw in the underpinnings of their own position. They ignored that any system rests on a single power base, with only one ultimate source of legitimacy. Far from strengthening the regime, the constitutional reforms of February 1989 hastened the liquidation of the regime, bringing about a violent crisis. The regime sought to escape from this crisis by reverting to the strategies of the 1960s, and this was symbolized in the return of Bouteflika, a former Minister under Boumediene. The current regime's composition is incompatible with multi-party politics, since its leaders accept neither the independence of the judicial system, nor the principle of freedom of expression, nor the outcome of free elections.

The Presidency of Abdelaziz Bouteflika

The appointment of Bouteflika as the Army's preferred candidate In the Presidential elections of April 1999 was a sign of changes the military wanted to usher in. By choosing a civilian, who had been one of Boumédiène's close and faithful comrades, suggested a desire to reinforce the message that the regime was not a military regime, whilst also suggesting the desire for a return to the past and the era of Boumediene, although under a President who lacked the authority of a more charismatic Head of State. His selection also served another purpose; Bouteflika was Minister of Foreign Affairs for some time, and was selected for his knowledge of international institutions, which would be of use in defusing external pressure that came from international NGOs objecting to Algeria's abuses of human rights. At first die Army gave Bouteflika some room for manoeuvre, and were prepared to forego their usual role of selecting the government, even though the negative consequences of the government's economic and social policies would reflect back on the Army. A clear line was traced, nonetheless, separating the civilian regime from the domain controlled by the army (this included the appointment of the Minister of Defence, selection for promotion within the armed forces, the military budget, overall charge of the FIS affair, and the question of the Western Sahara). The President was entitled to appoint other Ministers, including for Housing, Health, Tourism and so on.

Following the underlying premise that the civilian President would not stray Into the Army's "private domain', the presidential election of 15 April 1999 fitted into the logic of restoring a central role to the armed forces. It is worth pointing out that the usual 'conclave' of generals did not meet in order to select Bouteflika as presidential candidate. Instead, General Mohamed Lamari, Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, decided against such a meeting, leaving the Head of Military Security, General Tewfik Mediene free to oversee the security operation known as 'presidential election', which was to replace the outgoing Zerouat.[16] Military Security was in charge of organizing the elections, and ruled out any candidates who could not be controlled or were thought capable of winning the election and using their power against the Army and Military Security. However for the elections to be credible, opposition candidates had to be encouraged to present themselves. A non-violent and loyal opposition, which, whilst not necessarily accepting tine supremacy of the Army, did not wish to take over power itself, was essential to the regime. This loyal opposition would be rewarded by being allocated a few ministerial positions.

The military's aversion to a strong President has been a constant feature of Algerian politics since the death of Boumediene. Given this aversion, those who have been appointed have lacked the broad appeal of a popular leader. Bouteflika was no exception, even though some statements which he made during his first few months in office caused concern, since they reflected a wider critique of the State by ordinary Algerians. Bouteflika undermined himself by talking too much, and sometimes in an incoherent and brash manner - and above all by not having taken any action which would suggest he was in overall control of the Army. His main aim seems to be to recreate the political system of the 1970s, based on external respect and on fear in the domestic arena. In trying to achieve this objective, he relies on outdated and weak modes of populist and third worldist rhetoric. The only way that Bouteflika could succeed in his goals, is if he were able to combine in his own person both the real and formal powers of State. This is highly unlikely, however, in view of the present fracture between the regime and society, which has tended to give the Army an even greater political role than before.

Although they have clearly indicated that there is a line over which he must not stray, the military distrust Bouteflika because of his unpredictability and his lack of coherence. In order to protect themselves against any unpleasant surprises, they have appointed General Larbi Beikheir - who previously held the same post under Bendjedid, as Principal Private Secretary. Bouteflika was not able to refuse this nomination, but in accepting it he compounded the incoherence of his own position; having blamed the on-going crisis on the policies of Bendjedid, he now accepted into his government Larbi Beikheir, who had been the main architects of those very policies.

To overcome his loss of legitimacy since being designated by the military, the newly elected President is doing whatever he can to gain popularity. He is seeking to initiate a peace process which can bring an end to the violent crisis Algeria is facing, and which has already claimed hundre thousand deaths since the national elections of December 1991, which were won by the Islamists, were cancelled. The Government introduced a new law, known as the 'law of civil concord', which was intended to release all imprisoned Islamists who had taken part in the uprising against the regime, provided that they had not been not involved in violent crimes. The project was discussed and adopted by the National Assembly and then subjected to a referendum in September 1999, when the majority of Algerians voted to accept the new law. President Bouteflika is aware that me majority of Algerians want peace, and seeks to promote an image of himself as a peace-maker. The task is a difficult one, however, and there are many obstacles in the way.

There are two possible scenarios. Either Bouteflika may submit to the conventional logic of the Algerian political system, in which the President obeys the informal power of the Army, even though he has formal authority over the Army.[17] Or he refuses to accept this logic, since it makes him a puppet of the Army, and insists on exercising authority over all the institutions of Slate, including the Army itself. If he adopts the latter approach, Bouteflika will be confronted with fierce opposition, as was Chadli Bendjedfd when he was forced to resign in January 1992. After this, Mohamed Boudlaf was publicly assassinated in June 1992, and Liamine Zeroual's Presidential mandate was prematurely brought to end [18]. The golden rule In politics since at least the time of Machiavelli is that there is no room for both the King and those who make kings. If Bouteflika wishes to control the army, he needs to appoint new high ranking officers so as to ensure their support given that they owe their promotion to him. But any such appointment would raise suspicion among those in control of the President's security. If they felt threatened, they might somehow remove him from office altogether. Bouteflika's main problem is that he can not wield power as extensively as those who designated him as President. The Army is still in control; and either Bouteflika gets rid of high ranking officers, or he agrees to be a puppet in their hands. Can he remove the high ranking officers who selected him as President? Only time can tell if that is be possible.

Bouteflika not only has to be concerned with the military; he also has to worry about the what the Islamists are doing. In his relationship with them, he is mainly concerned if he will be recognized as the legitimate President. He also has the credentials needed to initiate a dialogue with the Islamists. He took part in the liberation war against France, which in itself gives him historical legitimacy. One of the accusations of the Islamists is that many high ranking officers in the Algerian army formerly fought on the French side when Algeria was still a colony. According to them, France is still fighting Algeria indirectly through these officers. In other words, the Islamists claim that the liberation war did not end with formal independence, but continued through other means. Another advantage that Bouteflika has is that he was not in power when the election won by the FIS was cancelled. In a recent speech, he surprised many by stating explicitly that this cancellation itself was a form of violence. The President has attempted to gain the confidence of the Islamists, and has asked them to renounce violence, and to respect the formal institutions of State in which he says they will one day have their place. Prior to any agreement or discussion, however, the Islamists demand the removal of a number of high ranking army officers. This is the line that Bouteflika cannot cross, and it Is unlikely that time will give him the opportunity to do so. If he is to have any success in his negotiations with the Islamists, he will need to demonstrate his autonomy vis-a-vis the Army. Yet this is very difficult to achieve. If Bouteflika is able to convince the Islamic groups to give up violence and accept the regime in power, he will be able to gain the trust and support of the Army. But if he falls to achieve this, then the political stalemate will continue for some time.

Bouteflika knows that no settlement can be reached with the Islamists unless high ranking army officers who were involved in the decision to cancel the December 1991 election results are first removed from their posts. Yet these officers will put up fierce resistance if Bouteflika attempts to cross the thin red line' that separates civilian from military power. The President is thus caught between two sets of irreconcilable demands: the Army on the one side; the Islamists on the other. The very same officers who designated him President, in order to improve the regime's image abroad, are the ones the Islamists would most wish him to remove from office.

The only concrete outcome so far of the negotiations that have been taking place between the Intelligence Services and the *La Securité Militaire* (Military Security) [19], since October 1997, has been the law of civil concord'. This only extends the law to introduce a general amnesty for imprisoned Islamists who have not committed any violent offences. Negotiations have remained highly secretive, and even well-informed journalists do not know who is taking part in the discussions on either side. Neither does anyone know exactly what the Islamists are officially demanding. All the Islamic leaders are under surveillance, and none of them is permitted to give an interview to the press. Some observers are even questioning whether the negotiations that are claimed to have taken place did indeed occur. There is speculation that the talks may be a fiction invented by the Intelligence Services in order to further confuse the public about the current reality. It is believed that only the release of the two Islamic leaders, Abbassi Madani and All Belhadj would prove that a settlement had been reached between both sides. The logic of this peace process, which is controlled and overseen by the Intelligence Service, totally ignores the political aspects of the conflict in Algeria, and tries to resolve this conflict by legal means alone. The logic behind this seems to be that if a peace is brokered, then the Islamists will give back their weapons and will be forgiven for what they have done. The peace process has little chance of succeeding on either of these two grounds.

Bouteflika also has to deal with the non-Islamist opposition, which will similarly judge him on the basis of his actions rather than his words. These groups are asking for a negotiated peace reached through a political settlement, and with a transparent negotiating process. To achieve this, the non-Islamist opposition is calling for a National Meeting which would bring together all political parties, including the FIS, to discuss ways of ending the crisis. Another goal of a National Meeting would be to establish dear guidelines regarding the need to respect of the outcome of elections, guarantees of freedom of speech, equality between the sexes and other related issues currently emerging as essential components of development

An open and broadly-based meeting did take place in Rome in January 1995. This meeting was hosted by The SanfEgidio Community, and attended by the FIS, the FLN and the FFS. However, the document produced, by the partidpants [20] was violently rejected by the military who accused Italy and the Catholic Church of supporting terrorists and Interfering in matters of national sovereignty. In order to understand this reaction, we need to appredate that many high-ranking officers in Algeria believe that in general political parties are useless and can even be harmful to civil society. They also believe political parties should have no daim on the State or on Sovereignty, which continues to be embodied by the Army itself.[21] With officers trained within the confines of such a narrow political culture, there is little chance that Algeria will be able to put an end to the bloody, crisis that it has been experiencing for many years.

The path towards peace is both very long and very fraught since each side in the conflict has its own interpretation of what peace means, according to their respective interests. The Army want peace on condition first of all that the Islamists forget what has happened in Algeria since 1992, and secondly on condition that the opposition agree to conform with the unwritten law of the Algerian political system, namely that the ultimate source of all political power lies in the Army.[22] The Islamists want peace as well, but only on condition that the high-ranking military offidals involved In the crackdown on Islamists since cancellation of the December 1991 election results, are removed from their posts. President Boutefllka himself also wants to secure a peaceful settlement between the two sides, but he is confronted with

two apparently insurmountable obstades, in the attitudes of both the Army and the Islamists themselves.

The Army as a Political Party

After the October 1988 riots, the military hierarchy became convinced that political reforms were necessary. These reforms were only apparently democratic; the main aim was to appoint civilians from a wider range of backgrounds. Previously, the military had mainly appointed to office militants from the FLN. Political pluralism was legalized but the parties were not to put into question the prerogative of the Army in the matter of choosing the President. Elections were intended to lend legitimacy to decisions that had already been made, and the military hierarchy hoped the Islamists would accept this framework. From an ideological perspective, it is possible to envisage a compromise between the Army and the Islamists, particularly because one of the main sources of Algerian nationalism lies in Islam. Historically speaking, Algeria's particular brand of nationalism has been heavily influenced by the teachings of Islam, and the role Islam played in resistance to france is emphasized in the official history taught to children at school.

However, It is Important to remind ourselves that the Army and the Islamists are not fighting over ideological issues. What is at stake is who controls the State. The regime in power, defended as always by the army, is exhausted and has lost much of its legitimacy due to its unpopularity and corruption. It is now also challenged by the Islamists who believe their own legitimacy is derived from their support among the most destitute parts of the population. The extreme violence of the conflict reflects that fact that what is at stake is sovereignty itself. Sovereignty is something which the Army clearly does want to give up, and something which the Islamists wish to seize, whether by the ballot or the bullet. The Islamists' desire to gain sovereignty was clearly reinforced by the decision of the Army to cancel the electoral victory of the FIS in January 1992. Yet, it is interesting to note that the military and the Islamists are similar in several ways. Both conceive the body politic as conflict-free, and therefore with no need for political parties. The military have sought to achieve an egalitarian society run by civil servants appointed by themselves and not by politicians. For the Islamists too, the aim is to create a society that abides by a single set of religious laws and thereby avoids open conflict. The kind of equality sought in such a society would be the equality of all believers, united by their religious convictions into a quasi-family.

Having prevented political conflict from being expressed through an institutional framework, the military is now faced with an armed opposition that is supported by the most destitute among the Algerian population. This opposition who is eager for radical change and expresses the concerns of the marginalized through religious discourse and demands for cultural identity. The military's monopoly over politics has led to a politicization of the whole society, with political actions being judged according to religious standards.

There has been a major shift in political discourse, with more radical terms being used by new actors emerging with their own conception of what the State should be and how it should relate to Society. Basically, the Islamists wish to reform the former in order to improve the condition of the latter. Within the worldview of the new Islamist actors, and according, to their Utopian vision, the Algerian State has consistently betrayed the hopes of the erstwhile popular liberation movement. There is an overwhelming feeling of deception and disappointment, since it was the State that was to have met the Algerian people's needs and

hopes for social Justice. On the whole, the new political actors do not expect anything from a democracy that they regard as out of line with the precepts of Islam. Indeed they despite this democracy with the same contempt that the military has reserved for civilian pluralist politics, seen as an invention of competing elites who wish to conquer the State from the legitimate authority of the Army. The military appears to believe that if it loses control of the State then the Nation itself will be in danger.

Since the military and the Islamists are unable to reach a compromise without one side or the other betraying their own political principles, there is a stalemate in Algerian political life. This is a game in which there can be only one winner; it is a zero-sum conflict. There cannot be two winners, in other words. Sovereignty is not regarded as something that can be shared or be the object of a political compromise. The Islamists insist that high ranking officers, just be brought to trial for their part in previous injustices, involving among other things, bribery and political assassinations. It is unlikely that the military would allow this to take place, and impeding the opposition from coming to power through the ballot box has been part of this defensive strategy on the part of the military. Democratic transition cannot take place until the Army and the Islamic opposition can somehow be convinced that it is in their mutual interests to reach some sort of political agreement or compromise.

The Algerian experience shows that where the major protagonists feei that their lives, families and wealth are at stake and all their basic interests threatened, a shift in regime through democratic transition from authoritarian rule can fail completely. When electoral victory is seen only as an opportunity to crush the regime's opponents who have shown themselves openly, the losers who remain in office will stop at nothing to prevent the electoral transition from taking place. This leads to an atmosphere where the settling of scores is the main game. This is what accounted for the cancellation of the election results of December 1991, when the Islamists won. Some Islamist opponents of the government publicly threatened members of the ruling elite, demanding openly that they change their way of life, and accusing them of living in a manner that was contrary to Islamic values. Rumours spread immediately following the elections about people being arrested following accusations that they were living a lifestyle contrary to Islam, this gave rise to widespread fear. Taking advantage of this situation of panic, the Army pushed the President to resign and cancelled the elections in January, and then in turn arrested and jailed many of the Islamists who had been elected. A cycle of violence and repression, followed by more violence, was set into motion and this cycle continues in Algeria till today. After eight years of fighting, the civil war has now claimed an estimated 150,000 lives, causing huge human suffering.

Some of those who consider themselves democrats supported the Army crackdown on the Islamists, and supported the cancellation of the election results, all in the name of democracy. The culture of the party system is so deep-rooted in Algeria that the so-called democratic parties did not acknowledge the basic need for political pluralism. To have some chance of succeeding, electoral democracy and democratic transition require that the major protagonists in the political contest share the conviction that electoral victory does not mean the right to defeat the opposition through violence and the gun. If the stakes are about living or dying, rather than simply winning or losing office, the electoral process may take place but transition will be frozen by the political stand-off likely to result As in Algeria, this stand-off is likely to unleash a dynamic of violence as other avenues of political expression become blocked off. In these conditions, the intervention of the Army is seen as unavoidable if order is to be defended and if those in power are to be protected from attack and danger. In future, elections in Algeria may only be able to result in a transition if they follow on after a National Contract

or a Civic Pact has been achieved. The purpose of such a Contract or Pact would be to establish that all the parties involved in the electoral process agreed to commit themselves to respect the rules of democracy and to renouncing violence and the settling of accounts through killings after the outcome of a fair electoral process. A Contract of this kind had indeed been reached in January 1995 in Rome, but was later rejected by the Army as meaningless and non-binding. Clearly, a spirit of agreement is needed as well as a paper Contract The Army's control over the institutions of State confirms its status as a quasi-political party, operating as a single parly system, somewhat reminiscent of other authoritarian single-party regimes, including the former supremacy of the Community Party in the Soviet Union. In Algeria the main difference is that this supremacy exists de facto, but-is nowhere written down in law or in the country's Constitution. Nonetheless, the actions of the Armed forces illustrate the way in which it works as a dominant political party on the national and international scene.

In January 1992, for example, no longer trusting the elected President, the military asked him to resign. Once again in September 1998, the Chief of Staff of the Army asked President Lamine Zerouai to stop negotiating with the Islamists and asked him too to resign. The Chief of Staff was acting like the leader of a dominant political party. His disagreement with the President was shared by the majority of high-ranking officers, who meet regularly In a 'conclave'. This is a kind of Central Committee or sovereign assembly which decides the military's position on a range of sensitive issues, from selecting candidates for the Presidency to deciding on the virtues and drawbacks of negotiations with the Islamist opposition. In a real sense, the Army emerges from this process as a sovereign body which controls the Presidency and the civilian regime, rather than an institution which serves the civilian regime, as formally stipulated by the Constitution.

Relations between the Army and the Government - which does not control the Ministry of Defence - express the subordination of an executive institution to a sovereign authority which claims historically-derived legitimacy. The Army entrusts to civilian elites the task of running the State and implementing social and economic programs (industrialization during the seventies, agrarian reforms and health care policies). Such policies were inspired by the Army's populist goal of improving the living conditions of the poor peasants and the unemployed in the major cities. From the 1960s onwards, the Army considered itself to be pursuing the program it had been bequeathed by the liberation movement, and upon which its own legitimacy rested. This link ostensibly allowed and entitled the Army to claim to embody the interests of the Nation as a whole, and to be the only source of power.

Both under the one party system (1962-1989) and under the multiparty system introduced by the 1989 Constitution, the Algerian political arena is characterized by the supremacy of the Army. The military wields sovereignty in non institutional forms and seeks to shape the opposition according to this peculiarity. Indeed, the military desires that parties which compete to be in Government compete on the basis of tasks of a technical nature, and do not concern themselves with issues of Sovereignty, Political parties are allowed to criticize the Government, and even the President, but never the Army itself. The National Assembly is a framework for formal debates and criticisms but the representatives cannot bring into question the prerogatives of me Army. As a consequence, the National Assembly deals only with the formal power of the President and the Government and never with the real, but informal, power of the Army. This situation results in two different kinds of political opposition; those who accept the underlying rationale of the regime and another opposition which challenges the assumption that the Army should remain unchallenged as the backbone of any political

regime, whatever its part etiquette. The operation and rationale of the Algerian political system in recent decade has confirmed the view that in reality there is only one political party allowed - namely the Army. Making constant and implicit references to its position as a source of historical legitimacy for any civilian regime, the army claims for itself the ultimate right to control the civilian regime in power, and to retain for itself a monopoly of 'legitimate violence' under the cover of the State. The Army has agreed that reform of Algeria's political system is needed, but does so only on condition that the military itself does not have to give up the privileged position it has enjoyed since Independence in 1962. The outcome of this situation is a multi-party system in which various competing political parties are forever insulting each other and criticizing the Government. Yet at the same time, they are obliged to turn to the Army, asking them to grant civilian rulers the power to run the Institutions of State, whether by appointment or through recognizing the outcome of elections (whether rigged or fair).

The dualistic structure of power within the operation of the State introduces relations of rivalry between the Ministry of Defence and the Presidency. State power is undermined insofar as the President seeks autonomy from the Army, but is appointed to office by the Army in the first place. Clientilistic political clans become powerful in this context where parties are delegitimized, some supporting the President, others supporting his opponents. When a civilian or journalist criticizes a high ranking officer, he or she almost always has been given the green light to do so from another high ranking officer, usually from those who are in a more powerful position than the officer(s) being criticized. High-ranking officers may seek to settle their own accounts among themselves by using civilian institutions, including political parties and the media. Within such a system, the civilian individual does not have the means to challenge an officer or to play a political role. The civilian concerned can only mount such a challenge if he or she is assured of the protection of officers better placed in the military hierarchy. In such a system, it is fair to say that in order to be taken seriously, the opposition may find itself obliged to resort to violence as a means of expressing its opposition to the status quo. The Islamists certainly understood their position in this way; they were explicitly seen as opponents by the Army, and any kind of settled agreement was only possible once they had resorted to violence. However, unlike isolated civilian opponents of the regime, the Islamists were able to confront the Army effectively, being more deeply rooted in society than any other political parties or movements. Many more of their members were also ready to fight, and if necessary to die in resorting to violent opposition to the regime and the Army.

From time to time, the Algerian Army intervenes openly in military operations, but it intervenes covertly on a more permanent basis, through the Intelligence Service, the Military Security whose very name arouses a sense of fear. The Military Security, is under the control of the Ministry of Defence, and has the responsibility of watching over the political arena in order to guarantee the safety of the regime. It is organized rather like an underground party, and operates as if it were above the law, being regulated neither by the State authorities nor by the police or the judicial system.

The role of the Military Security has certainly not facilitated the process of democratic transition from authoritarian rule, which was formally initiated by the 1989 Constitution. On the contrary, the Military Security, has eagerly encouraged violence by itself infiltrating the ranks of the Islamist movement and parties. The Army's intolerance of the Islamist position, and the verbal violence against the FIS of many so-called democrats were part and parcel of the military's strategy of discrediting freedom of speech and multi-partisan, pluralist political

processes. The main aim was to demonstrate to the Algerian public that pluralist democracy represented a danger to civil order and to social peace. There was widespread infiltration of civilian political parties, the sowing of dissent and crises within and between the parties, and routine manipulation of the media, blackmail of journalists, threats against party militants and other 'dirty tricks' in the Military Security's toolkit. All these means were used to prevent civil society from developing in the direction of genuinely autonomous assodations. Any association not under the control of the Army is seen as per se a threat to the regime. All these observations serve to confirm the main argument in this chapter; namely that despite the occasional appearance of pluralism, the Algerian regime consistently operates as if it were a one party system.

That anyone who is suspected of being involved in a subversive network can be arrested at any time by the Military Security, provides us with further evidence that in Algeria there is no rule of law. The Military Security, has however been taken aback by the FIS and the Islamists' popular support, since the military personnel involved were mainly trained to guard against the emergence of rival elites, rather than to police the popular masses. The military was not prepared for the popular upsurge of vioience on the present scale. In response to the widespread violent opposition to the regime, the Military Security has resorted to ever more blatant violations of human rights. The Army also uses all the means at its disposal to resist the proposal coming from many human rights organizations that there is a need for an International Commission of Inquiry into Human Rights abuses In Algeria..

The main reason the Army is so keen to keep a tight control over the political arena by means of the Military Security is to undermine the credibility of the civilian opposition and the autonomy of civil society. The goal is to be able to point to the (created) havoc caused by 'free expression' of various conflicting Interests, in contrast to the harmony arising from the single voice of a unified Algerian nation. The Army fears the emergence of a competing competent and autonomous political elite emerging from the ranks of civil society. The military wants to continue choosing which civilians are to run the State administration, and suspect civilians of being less parotic than themselves, since the Army embodies the Nation. Fully fourty years after Independence, Algerian political culture is still pervaded by this notion of historical legitimacy. The military still regards itself as the only channel through which State authority can be passed onto civilian politicians, on the condition that these civilians respect the unwritten law that the Army is to remain the sole source of power of the Algerian political system.

The Army as Embodiment of the Nation and Master of the State

We need to bear in mind that the Army still regards itself as the most unswervingly patriotic element of the Algerian population. The military elite considers that its own commitment to the Algerian Nation has been fully tested over time. Higher-ranking officers in particular believe that their promotion places them closer to the origin of historical legitimacy, and believe that they are uniquely placed to set the ideal standards of nationalist behaviour and policy. Not only are they ready to die for their country (like the Islamists, ironically enough). They have also deliberately chosen the harshness of barracks life over the comfort and ease of a family and community. Their daily lives thereby symbolize the sacrifices that first liberated Algeria from foreign domination. Since he deters external (and internal) aggression against

the State, the soldier can be regarded as the 'shield'[1] of the Nation. As such, the soldier can be considered to hold the historical legitimacy from which any administrative authority must necessarily be derived. All mis is of course no more than an ideological representation, whose purpose is to justify the political supremacy of the Army, By monopolizing legitimacy to the detriment of the general development and refinement of State institutions, the Army has in fact prevented the integration of conflicting movements into the institutional structures of power. Its dominance has driven all those who seek reform or change into the arms of the Islamists, both by hampering the emergence of any real sense of citizenship and by completely smothering any autonomy for an emerging civil society. The political interest of military elites is to destroy and undermine the formation of any kind of public sphere for political debate and expression. The military makes frequent reference to the legacy of a national liberation struggle, but rarely invokes any respect for the rule of law. This is not surprising, since the rule of law would imply that the Army is just one institution among many, and should not be in overall control of the levels of State power.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has tried to show that in Algeria's case, State power is divided into two elements: the element of sovereign power, which is not regarded as accountable, to any institution, and another element of power, which is detained by the Government and informally accountable to the Army. Executive power held by the State civilian power holders is conceived as a tool for implementing policies rather than deciding on matters of national sovereignty or security. The policies implemented by the executive power mainly concern the basic needs of the population. Sovereign power embodies the Nation Itself, and is concerned with defending the Nation against both its internal and external enemies. Of these two forms of State power, the first pertains to the Nation, the second to the *State.*

Algerian history has not created a Nation-State; it has created a Nation and a separate state, linked by relations of subordination. A crisis has been generated, whose origins are to be found in the conception of the Nation and also in the limits imposed on the State. As in so many other countries, the Nation In Algeria is a mythical notion. But in Algeria the myth is more exaggerated to the extent that the citizens are united in the Nation not in their existing form, but in an idealized form derived from the ideological beliefs of the Army on the one hand, and the Islamists on the other. The competing images of the Algerian nation are so much in conflict that it is fair to say that the very idea of an Algerian Nation is in question. In a sense there are many Algerian Nations which serve to divide the people against each other.

There have been at least three historically distinct concepts of the Nation in the past: the first was that of Messali Hadj, the populist; the second that of Abdelhamid Ben Badis, the early Islamist; and finally, that of Ferhat Abbbas, the national modernist. At Independence the competing foundations of these three forms of Nationalism were not reconciled. On the contrary, Independence divided them more than ever and their followers are still fighting one another today. Each political current within the nationalist movement has sought to take over the State and to eliminate its rivals. Each has its own idea of what the Nation should be, and seeks to impose these ideas by force on Society. In this ideological environment, a multiparty system does not lead smoothly or automatically to democratic transition or consolidation. Instead, it tends to arouse further intolerance and generate cycles of violence - that are difficult to put an end to. Whereas the Nation generally is seen as a unifying element of political life, in Algeria the idea of the Nation divides the population further. This in part

accounts for the Army's own monopoly of legitimate violence, and explains why it is almost impossible for any civilian leader or movement to claim to speak on behalf of the Nation as a whole. The Army cannot but be involved with different political movements and parties, each with their different agendas and priorities. However, political rivalry also exists within the Army Itself, and can become more of a threat to civil peace than conflicts within civil society. Until recently, such divisions within the Army have been well hidden; however it is impossible to say whether this will continue to be the case, and whether the Army will continue to appear as a relatively stable and united force.

One of the most distinctive features of Algeria's political system has been that the State has rarely embroiled Itself In the Ideological divisions that have split the Society. Whereas in most democratic countries, the non-military institutions of State have a political character, in Algeria their role is almost purely technical; they have been confined to the role of administrative tools specialized for management of economic resources and geared as far as possible towards meeting the people's daily needs. The State is not directly linked to the electorate; it is simply an instrument at the disposal of the civilian elites for obtaining civil peace through the redistribution of resources. Relations between the sovereign Nation - embodied by the Army and not by the electorate - and the State administration shape the political realm in which institutions find their function in the hierarchy formed by the mythical Nation and the administrative State.

In all representations of Algerian political life, there is a major difference between the Nation and the State. The Nation is an ideological construct, and cannot be concerned with political opposition, popular unrest or dally concerns. The State on the other hand, is an administrative instrument of control, assessed on its ability to ensure satisfaction for the people in material terms. Rightly or wrongly the main criticisms of the State are framed in terms of misdemeanours, the incompetence of civil servants and official corruption. The mythical Nation is thus in no way debased by such criticisms, which are almost uniquely directed at the Institutions of the civilian State. Such criticisms are of course bound to intensify as the executive institutions of the civilian State are less and less able to manage the deepening crisis which Algerian sodety is undergoing.

There are many opportunities to make money when in public office In the State sector. This tends to attract less honest people who take jobs first serve themselves rather than the public. The resulting rejection of the State administrative institutions by the public fuels social tensions and violent unrest, leading on some occasions to riots and killing. It could be said that Algerian people love their Nation but dislike their State. Accordingly, even when the State comes under the fiercest criticism, this is on behalf of the Nation. Political parties compete for power, and when they are prevented from doing so, may claim that the Nation which they represent is in danger of disintegration. The Army, however, will not allow anyone but its own leaders to speak on behalf of the Nation as a whole, and will accuse any civilian who does so, of divisiveness and disloyalty or worse.

The Algerian State is not what a "modern" state as political scientists would define it. It is certainly not an institutional framework able to balance the autonomy of the judiciary, the legislature and the executive arms of State power. As is the case in many Third World countries, the Algerian State does not provide a framework for supporting individual citizenship and neither does it allow or enable the free expression of competing political views, through political parties, popular participation and a respect for civil rights. In order for citizenship to be a meaningful term, political legitimacy should stem primarily from the

electorate, through some process of elections perceived as free and fair, and resulting in the election of representatives who are involved in the formation of the Government. This is the theoretical schema within most democratic regimes, and is more or less the norm in most parliamentary democracies.

To draw an analogy, in Algeria it is the Army rather than the electorate which provides the basis for political legitimacy within the system as it stands. This source of legitimacy is, by its nature, based on force and the threat of force. Since the civilian State administration draws its authority from the Army and not from the electorate, the State is weak compared to the Army and powerful in relation to Society, which is crushed by the lack of autonomous leverage over power holders, civil servants and the armed forces. This results in a generalized tendency for corruption and clientelism which pervade public life. For this reason, the State administration has all but lost its credibility among the majority of the Algerian populace, and particularly among the most destitute and marginalized elements of trie population.

Being fully embroiled in the conflicts of civil society and the State administration, the Army is not as impartial as it ideally should be within a 'modern political system. Instead, it is used instrumentally by those who control its upper echelons for their own purposes, including the purpose of getting rid of adversaries and critics, and those merely considered as potential adversaries. The Army's strategy is to distribute the officers of State to more than one civilian political grouping, in order to hold each 'clan' in check and to hold in check their divisions. The State thus finds itself under the double demands of the military, which continues to keep a close eye on whatever is done by the State administration, and the Society, which expects the State administration to meet the social needs and political aspirations of the people. The military can see that their control over the Slate administration may have to be loosened somewhat. It seems they may be prepared to loosen their grip on the Government, and give political parties more room for manoeuvre, on condition that they can keep a tight rein on the process of appointing the President

So long as Algerian political culture continues to be shaped by the legacy of the liberation struggle and national liberation movement, the Army will remain the single most important actor in the political field. Algeria gained its Independence through violence, and the consequence of this historical reality can be seen as twofold. In the first place, violence underpins most forms of civilian and administrative politics. Secondly, political conflict is defined primarily in terms of opposition to foreigners and their domestic allies, who are regarded as traitors to the Nation. Within the context of this particular political culture, democracy generally entails conflict and even war.

In conclusion, the failure of the Algerian regime has mainly been a political failure. The Army has suffocated the State which was itself created through revolutionary violence. Throughout the world, the 1980s were a decade of post-populism and of a rapid transition from authoritarian rule towards more democratic forms of politics, and from state control towards the free market The Algerian Army has been out of step with this global trend, and has seemed to ignore the implications of the fall of the Berlin wall. Instead of giving the Nation statesmen of the ability of Colonel Boumediene from within its own ranks, the Army has preferred to hide behind the blunderings of a State run by incompetent civil servants. It is this politically created power vacuum that has encouraged the Islamists to try and take over the institutions of the State and claim historical legitimacy from the Army, both by the ballot and the bullet

Notes

[1] Cf. Addi (1990)

[2] In the declaration of 19 June 1965, the various charges against Ben Bella, which were used to justify the coup against him, are listed in some detail

[3] There is no reference in any public document to the Army's role in forming the Government On the contrary, the various Constitutions (1963, 1976, 1989) stipulate that the President is the supreme commander of the armed forces, which in turn have the duty to obey his Government

[4] This hypothesis *is* developed in the study by Addi (1994).

[5] In the Proclamation of 19 June 1965, the expression used was 'revolutionary readjustment'. This was not simply propaganda. In practice, military power, which incarnated political legitimacy, was therefore entitled to put an end to the mandate it had extended to even the head of State, the President himself. The President was thus accountable to the Army and not to the people. Cf. Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord (1966).

[6] Cf. Leca and Vatin (1976)

[7] Stability is of course also obtained through the use of compromise, alliances, allocation of jobs, exclusion and other forms of more or less overt pressure and persuasion

[8] Massinissa was a Berber chief during classical times, and under his rule Numidie became a prosperous state, Abdelmoumem was one of the Almohad emperors who promoted the expansion of Arab and Islamic civilization in North Africa and in Spain

[9] The present crisis in Algeria is precisely this; a crisis of legitimacy, which shakes the very foundations of state power in the country. See Addi (1993)

[10] 0.Touraine(1974).

[11] See Addi (1999b) on the patriarchal structures of Algerian society.

[12] I use the classical sociological distinction between society and community as employed by Marx, Tönnies, Durkheim and Weber, in order to analyze the process of social differentiation, including the growing awareness of members of a particular society that they constitute a sovereign political body and the ultimate repositary of legal authority. This process results in the separation of the political sphere from the spheres of religion, morality and psychology

[13] Cf. Weber (1947)

[14] Algeria has had two major charismatic figures with which the nation Identified, and whose political legitimacy was acknowledged. The fist was Messali Hadj, leader of the

nationalist movement until 1954, who Incarnated the national community forged out of the idealism of the independence struggle, and Houari Boumédiene in the 1970s, who incarnated the popular goal of economic development

[15] This Is the crucial difference between the Algerian regime and the Soviet regime, where the Communist Party was in control of both the Army and the KGB.

[16] There were many indicators that the Military Security had instructed the government to lend all support needed for the election campaign of Bouteflika

[17] See Addi (1996).

[18] See Addi (1998,1999a).

[19] *la Sécurité Militaire* is the most powerful institution, organized as a political police above the judiciary. For more Information, see Reporters Sans Frontieres (1996)

[20] See la Plate-forme de Rome (1995)

[21] See Addi (1994).

[22] See Addi (1998).