

Algeria: From One Revolution to the Other? The Metamorphosis of the State-Regime Complex

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Sociétés politiques comparées, 51, mai-août 2020

ISSN 2429-1714

Editeur : Fonds d'analyse des sociétés politiques, FASOPO, Paris | <http://fasopo.org>

Citer l'article : Mohammed Hachemaoui, « Algeria: From One Revolution to the Other? The Metamorphosis of the State-Regime Complex » *Sociétés politiques comparées*, 51, mai/août 2020, http://www.fasopo.org/sites/default/files/varia2_n51.pdf



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Abstract

A dominant narrative describes the postcolonial Algerian trajectory as a “revolution” which has alternately experienced a “Party-state”, the “Islamist peril”, a “civil war” then an “autocracy”—the “crisis” of the latter precipitating a “popular uprising” that caused the fall of the “*rais*” and imposed a “transition”. Breaking with the doxa, this study establishes that the domination, resulting from the counter-revolution of the 1950s, is based on a praetorian state-regime complex. The critical sequence that starts with the military coup of 1992 is less a “civil war” than a fierce neoliberal restructuring giving rise to the “reinvention of tradition” of the garrison state as “organized crime”. Drawing a “strategic learning” from the success of the praetorian counterrevolution orchestrated by the Egyptian secret police in 2013, the powerful Algerian deep state has been arranging the anti-Bouteflika V street demonstrations. Beyond an apparent radicalism, the *hirak* contributes to freezing the authoritarian status quo: anti-political, it operates a structural avoidance of the conflicts at work in the shade of praetorian neoliberalism. Celebrating brotherhood with the army, the late counter-revolution has increased the “caging” of the Algerian people.



Algérie : d’une révolution à l’autre ? Les métamorphoses du complexe État-régime.

Résumé

Un récit dominant décrit la trajectoire postcoloniale algérienne comme une « révolution » qui a connu tour à tour le « Parti-État », le « péril islamiste », une « guerre civile » puis une « autocratie », la « crise » de cette dernière précipitant un « soulèvement populaire » provoquant la chute du « *rais* » et imposant une « transition ». En rupture avec la doxa, cette étude établit que la domination politique, issue de la contre-révolution prétorienne des années 1950, s’appuie sur un complexe État-régime prétorien. La séquence historique qui s’ouvre avec le coup d’État militaire de janvier 1992 est moins une « guerre civile » qu’une violente néolibéralisation prétorienne, nécessitant la réinvention de la tradition de l’État-garnison comme « crime organisé ». Tirant un « enseignement stratégique » du succès de la gigantesque mobilisation orchestrée par la police politique égyptienne contre le président élu Mohamed Morsi en 2013, la puissante police secrète algérienne orchestre, canalise et encadre les manifestations de rue anti-Bouteflika V. Sous une apparente radicalité, ledit *hirak* contribue à figer le statu quo autoritaire : antipolitique, il opère un évitement structurel des conflits qui travaillent la domination néoprétorienne et néolibérale. Célébrant la fraternité avec l’armée, cette contre-révolution pacifique achève de renforcer la « mise en cage » du peuple.



Keywords

Algeria; crony capitalism; infrastructural power; military regime; neoliberalization; shock therapy; state violence; war of maneuver.



Mots-clés

Algérie ; capitalisme de copinage ; guerre de mouvement ; néolibéralisation ; pouvoir infrastructural ; régime militaire ; thérapie de choc ; violence d’État.

Eclipsed by the topic of “transition toward market democracy” that dominated mainstream political science throughout the 1980s and the 1990s, the study of authoritarianism has been experiencing a renewed interest in the field in recent years.¹ The rediscovery of this problem, seen as obsolete, is due, on the one hand, to the obvious failure of “transitology”² and, on the other hand, to the institutionalization, in the wake of the neoliberalization of the welfare states, of “de-democratization”, “post-democracy”, “oligarchy” and “authoritarian freedom”.³ Despite this welcomed renewal, the enigma of institutional change within authoritarian durability remains however largely unexplored.⁴

To avoid the fallacy that Charles Wright Mills called the “historical provincialism”, or the “assumption that the present is a sort of autonomous creation”⁵, the author of *The Sociological Imagination* recommends studying “trend[s] of considerable length” in order to grasp the “structure of an epoch”:⁶ “We study trends in an attempt to go behind events and to make orderly sense of them”.⁷ This vigilance, which follows in the footsteps of both Marx and Weber, is all the more justified because “many social processes require a significant period of time to work themselves out”. Also, the investigation of such “slow-moving causal processes”⁸ only in the present will “not only risk studying incomplete sequences but greatly restrict the number of cases”.⁹

THE PUZZLE

The present study aims to understand the dialectic of the event and structure and it also considers, following in the footsteps of William Sewell Jr., that “the key to an adequate theory of event is a robust theory of structure”.¹⁰ In keeping with historical sociology and as per Andrew Abbott, this study suggests that temporarily, the “‘causal force’ of enchainment” is “inevitably sequential” and that “order makes a difference”. It adds that synchronically, “reality doesn’t happen in main effects but in interaction”.¹¹ In a radical break with “presentism”—the dominant “regime of historicity” that proceeds by “tyranny of the moment” and “rewriting, day by day, of the past”—¹² this research is intended to take the “historical turn”¹³ in the study of politics seriously. Structured around the theoretical advances in historical institutionalism, this article sees institutions as inherently “distributional instruments laden with power implications”.¹⁴ Indeed, once established, institutions do not remain static as gradual and incremental shifts may introduce fundamental institutional transformations.¹⁵ By perceiving change and stability as “inextricably linked”, this perspective provides crucial insight into how institutions evolve over time.

Even if institutions matter however, not all of them matter evenly. Hence the heuristic importance of disaggregating heterogeneous authoritarianism. I therefore define a political formula as the political and institutional arrangement of the regime and the state, (political) economy and polity.¹⁶ Oddly, scholarship tends to treat states and regimes separate, rarely bringing them together without mixing them up.¹⁷ To fill this gap, it is important to build a theoretical bridge that couples them, especially given that each aggregate

¹ For a review of the literature, see *inter alia* Levitsky and Way, 2010; Art, 2012.

² For a critique of the transitology model, see Stark, 1996; Stark, Bruszt, 1998; Dobry, 2000; Burawoy, 2001.

³ *Inter alia*, Collier, 1979; Cristi, 1998; Crouch, 2004; Bayart, 2008; Hall, 2008; Somers, 2008; Camau, Massardier, 2009; Dabène *et al.*, 2010; Levitsky and Way, 2010; Winters, 2011; Brown, 2015; Dardot, Laval, 2016; Brown *et al.*, 2018; Chamayou, 2018; Harcourt, 2018.

⁴ Hibou, 1999; Camau, Geisser, 2003; Tsai, 2006; Heydemann, 2007; Slater, 2010; Hachemaoui, 2015.

⁵ Mills, 1959, p. 151

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 151, 152.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

⁸ Pierson, 2004, pp. 82-102.

⁹ Sewell, 2005, p. 83.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 219.

¹¹ Abbot, 2001, p. 193.

¹² Koselleck, 1997; Traverso, 2011; Hartog, 2012.

¹³ Mills, 1959; Somers, 1996; Abbot, 2001; Sewell, 2005.

¹⁴ Mahoney and Thelen, 2010, p. 8.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*; Streeck and Thelen, 2004.

¹⁶ For lack of space, I will deal here especially with the state-regime issue without neglecting the second one. For the relationship between political economy and polity, see *inter alia* Marx, 1985; Polanyi, 1983; Hirschman, 1963 and 1986; Gamble, 1988; Weiss, 1988; Waldner, 1999; Hibou, 2006; Amable and Palombarini, 2017.

¹⁷ Downing, 1992; Ertman, 1997; Slater, 2010.

juxtaposes diverse logics of power and temporality. While the state can be characterized as the “locus of political power”, a regime may be depicted as “that part of political system which determines how and under what conditions and limitations the power of the state is exercised”.¹⁸ Accordingly, we can apprehend “state power” as the conceptual key to tackle the state-regime complex.

Michael Mann famously disentangled the “power of the state” along two axes: “despotic” and “infrastructural” power. Despotic or hierarchical power, considered as a type of “distributive power”, relates to “the range of actions which the elite [of the state] is empowered to undertake without routine, institutionalized negotiation with civil society groups”.¹⁹ Infrastructural power, considered as a type of “collective power”, “enables states to diffuse their power through or penetrate their societies”.²⁰ It refers to “the capacity of the state to actually penetrate civil society, and to implement logistically political decisions throughout the realm”.²¹ Power may be “extensive” or “intensive”, “authoritative” or “diffused”.²²

In authoritarian systems,²³ infrastructural power may have “the capacity to prevent some political outcomes from occurring by exercising not only *ex ante* but also *ex post* control over the society”.²⁴ The more a formula combines power that is both collective and distributive, extensive and intensive, authoritative and diffuse, the more its exercise is effective.²⁵

The system of government established in Algeria since its inception during the War of Independence (1954-1962) seems one of the most resistant to study. Since the bloody riots of October 1988, the Algerian political regime has undergone multiple metamorphoses: from a “single” to “multi-party system”, from a “socialist” to a “market” economy, from an “institutionalized revolution” to “civil war”. During these transformations, the regime appeared sometimes military and sometimes civilian, while the state looked strong at times and weak at others. Apparently “bureaucratic-authoritarian” in periods and “populist”²⁶ in others, the Algerian political formula remains a conundrum.

The picture has become more complicated after the popular revolts that precipitated the fall of autocrats Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali in Tunisia and Hosni Mubarak in Egypt in January and February 2011.²⁷ These revolutionary events were followed by the quiet re-election of the elderly and invalid Abdelaziz Bouteflika in Algeria in April 2014, for a new presidential term—the fourth since his co-optation by the military oligarchy in 1999—and the so-called “dissolution” of the DRS (Département du Renseignement et de la Sécurité), the powerful secret police. Street demonstrations have occurred in Algeria since February 2019 and have been presented by conventional expertise as a “major historic disruption” and a “popular uprising” pushed “from below”, rather than a proper “revolution”. These events are presented as having caused the fall of Bouteflika’s assumed “regime” and brought the country into “transition”.

These conjunctures invite a radical rethinking of the political formula. Does the political course sanction a regime change or the transformation of the state? What types of institutional changes are propelled by what kinds of processes and under what conditions?

French political scientist Michel Dobry produced a powerful sociological theory of political crises²⁸ based on a few postulates including the differentiation of social fields. As he himself admits, the field of validity of his theory does not cover the configurations in which the “destruction of the adversary” and “plots” proceed from structuring rules of the game.²⁹ However, as I will show throughout this historical sociology, the “rise

¹⁸ Lawson, 1993, p. 187.

¹⁹ Mann, 1984, p. 188.

²⁰ Mann, 2012, p. 13.

²¹ Mann, 1984, p. 189.

²² Mann, 2012, p. 6.

²³ Linz, 2000, p. 159.

²⁴ Przeworski, 1988, p. 60.

²⁵ Mann, 2012, p. 6.

²⁶ For a tight theoretical discussion of these different authoritarian configurations, see Collier, 1979.

²⁷ Inter alia, Achcar, 2013; Beinin, 2016.

²⁸ Dobry, 2009.

²⁹ Dobry, 2009, pp. XXXIII-XXXIV, p. 25.

to extremes”, the “destruction of the adversary” and “plots” are structuring structures of the polity—in which, moreover, the social fields are weakly differentiated. Also, I will mobilize the conceptual instruments with which Antonio Gramsci conceived “organic crises”, “war of position” and “war of maneuver”³⁰ to apprehend the trajectory of the political formula in Algeria.

With Samuel Huntington, a hegemonic theory has asserted that the “no-party-state” is fragile while “strong one-party systems are always the product of revolutionary movement from below”³¹. In fact, social scientists have less studied counter-revolution than revolution.³² The present study is part of a research program intended to help fill this gap.

THE HISTORICAL FORMATION OF A STATE-REGIME COMPLEX

Following the methodology forged by Imre Lakatos, this study includes a “negative heuristic” and a “positive heuristic”.³³ Rethinking the Algerian political formula since its inception, the “hardcore” of this research program argues that the authoritarian domination in Algeria rests on the structural logics of the praetorian counter-revolution; the latter being not exclusive to reactionaries alone, nor is democratization the monopoly of so-called democrats.³⁴ The “positive heuristic” or the “protective belt” of this research program seeks to uproot the doxa in order to highlight its multiple omissions, shortcomings and blind spots.

A dominant narrative structures the understanding of Algerian politics. Invasive, it spreads across several fields, ranging from historiography to entertainment through novels, social science and mass media. Despite its numerous variations, the doxa describes the political trajectory of contemporary Algeria as a “revolution” (1954-1962) that allowed the construction, over more than a quarter of a century, of a “party-nation”³⁵ turned “party-state” whose crisis has given rise alternately to a “democratization without democrats”, a “civil war” and a “sultanistic” regime, the wearing of the latter precipitating a “popular uprising” that caused the fall of the “*raïs*”.³⁶

Beyond the “Genesis Amnesia”: Where do Institutions Come From?

Seriously defective, the conventional scholarship toward Algerian politics has multiple theoretical and methodological shortcomings, what Gaston Bachelard called “a collection of errors”.³⁷ The primary one lies in the misinterpretation of the foundational juncture of the war of independence. The orthodox discourse speaks of “revolution” when, in fact, it was a “praetorian counterrevolution”. This “doxic submission”³⁸ neglects Walter Benjamin’s thesis: “all rulers are the heirs of prior conquerors. Hence, empathizing with the victor invariably benefits the current rulers”.³⁹ Closely linked to this “original sin”, the second shortcoming relates to the neglect of the centrality of coercion⁴⁰ in the formation of the Algerian authoritarian domination.

³⁰ Gramsci, 1971. Dobry does not engage with the conceptual instruments forged by Gramsci in his work on crises.

³¹ Huntington, 1969, p. 418.

³² For notable exceptions, see Hirschman, 1991; Tilly, 1998; Mayer, 2000. Joseph de Maistre (1788) gave us a definition as concise as penetrating of this notion : « (Ce) qu'on appelle contre-révolution ne sera point une révolution contraire, mais le contraire de la révolution ». The revolution can be understood as the radical transformation of the structure.

³³ Lakatos, 1978; Burawoy, 1989.

³⁴ Hachemaoui, 2018.

³⁵ This notion was advanced by the famous FLN “organic intellectual” Mohammed Bedjaoui (Bedjaoui, 1961). The former FLN “organic intellectual” Mohammed Harbi has taken over this notion too (Harbi, 1980). Gramsci defines the concept of “organic intellectual” in his notebook 12 as follows: “The intellectuals are the dominant group’s ‘deputies’ exercising the subaltern functions of social hegemony and political government. These comprise: 1. The ‘spontaneous’ consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group; this consent is ‘historically’ caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production. 2. The apparatus of state coercive power which ‘legally’ enforces discipline on those groups who do not ‘consent’ either actively or passively. This apparatus is, however, constituted for the whole of society in anticipation of moments of crisis of command and direction when spontaneous consent has failed”. Gramsci, 1971, pp. 3-23. https://www.marxists.org/archive/gramsci/prison_notebooks/problems/intellectuals.htm

³⁶ Among the representative works of the standard narrative, Quandt, 1969 and 1998; Harbi, 1980 and 1993; Bennoune, 1990; Addi, 1994; Malley, 1996; Bendorra 2003; Martinez, 2003 and 2012; Stora, 2001; Roberts, 2003; Harbi, Stora, 2004; Werenfels, 2007; Lowi, 2009; Bouchène *et al.*, 2012; Ghanem 2012; Ait Aoudia, 2015; Mundy, 2015; McDougall, 2017.

³⁷ “Fond d’erreurs”, in French. Bachelard, 1966 [1949], p. 48.

³⁸ Bourdieu, 2003 [1997].

³⁹ Benjamin, 2013, 62. See also Koselleck, 2011, pp. 312-313. I used this framework in Hachemaoui, 2018.

⁴⁰ This neglect is not unique to the conventional scholarship toward Algerian politics. For exceptions, see Davenport, 2007; Policzer, 2009; Tilly, 2003; Sassoon, 2011; Greitens, 2016.

In focusing primarily on the window-dressing and rubber stamp “storefront” for the regime (i.e, the “party-state”, “multi-partism”, “civil society”, etc.) standard scholarship disregards the defining structure of the political formula: “the military as an independent political force” whose “intervention is usually politically decisive”.⁴¹ Such praetorian logic allows the formation of what Harold Lasswell coined a “garrison state”, a type of domination in which the “specialists (i)n violence are the most powerful group in society”.⁴² The seminal study by Samuel Finer in his classic work has not aged: “the military often work on governments from behind the scenes; and even when they do establish a military dictatorship they usually fabricate some quasi-civilian façade of government behind which they retire as fast as possible”.⁴³ For having forgotten it, the orthodox scholarship toward Algerian politics shows a third weakness consisting in the misapprehension of the political violence of the 1990s as a “civil war”. The mystification fashioned by this dominant discourse disguising the redeployment of the garrison state 2.0 as “organized crime” that allows the implementation of the neoliberal shock therapy. Fourth, the orthodox scholarship assumes a “power-free political science”. Hence, the record longevity of the “civilian president” orchestrated since 1999 is contemplated as the “army’s retreat from the political stage”⁴⁴ and a revival of the “rentier state” while the “demilitarization” is, as I will document, nothing but a storytelling hiding the garrison state 3.0 and the deepening of the neoliberalization of the polity. Last but not least, the standard expertise fails to theorize the aggregation of ideas, interests and institutions—the so-called usual suspects of the institutional change.⁴⁵

The present study mobilizes the following material: an ethnographic corpus of participatory observation as student and political journalist in Algeria during the 1990s; an ethnographic fieldwork in multiple regions of the country from 1999 to 2013, on authoritarian elections and political corruption;⁴⁶ interviews with key military and civilian figures from Algerian politics; an archival corpus and (unpublished) memoirs of leading former officials; documentary material constituted by the *Journal officiel* of the government from 1962 to 2019; the Algerian and a selection of the international press from the 1930s to nowadays (Arabic, French and English); a participant observation and interviews conducted during the so-called “révolution du sourire” with students and unemployed youth in Algiers between February and mid-August 2019.

The obvious deterioration of Abdelaziz Bouteflika’s health (following a stroke that had him hospitalized in France from April to July 2013) prevented the “*raïs*” from addressing his people and participating in international summit meetings—two activities he would have willingly engaged in. It also brought to the surface a crucial and however neglected question: who (really) governs Algeria?

In this context, media and experts have established a hegemonic narrative asserting that Bouteflika’s “re-election” sanctioned, if not the “dismantling”, at least the “loss of leadership” of the DRS to the advantage of the presidency, the army chief of staff, or a vaporous set of interest groups. The announcement on 13 September 2015 of the “retirement” of army general Mohamed Mediene from a quarter of a century commanding the powerful DRS seemed to represent the apex of this process. Though variegated, the assumed Algerian “independent press”, mobilizing the pathos of history, proclaims unanimously that the “retirement” of general Mediene signified a “political earthquake”, the “fall of a myth”, and the “end of an era”.⁴⁷

An article published in French newspaper *Le Monde* a few hours after the announcement of this presumed “forced departure” gives texture to this narrative: “The operation of ‘pruning back’ the powers of the Algerian security services [the DRS] that has been at work for the last two years in Algeria has now reached its height with the retirement of their head, general Mohamed Mediene”.⁴⁸ The report was *prima facie* confirmed by the announcement from the president’s office of the “dissolution of the DRS”.⁴⁹ Yet striking, these news are false. As Marc Bloch wrote,

⁴¹ Finer, 1962, p. 4.

⁴² Lasswell, 1941.

⁴³ Finer, 1962, p. 4.

⁴⁴ To quote the leading expert Hugh Roberts: <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200405/cmselect/cmcaff/36/5020105.htm>

⁴⁵ Blyth, 2002.

⁴⁶ Hachemaoui, 2011; 2013.

⁴⁷ See among the most authoritative newspapers: *El Watan* (in French) and *El Khabar* (in Arabic) of 14 September 2015.

⁴⁸ www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2015/09/13/algerie-abdelaziz-bouteflikalimoge-le-puissant-chef-durensignement_4755488_3212.html?xtmc=depart_a_la_retraite_du_general_mediene&xtcr= (accessed 7 June 2016).

⁴⁹ http://www.huffpostmaghreb.com/2016/01/30/ouyahia-confirme-la-dissolution-du-drs-_n_9118892.html (accessed 4 May 2016).

False stories in the press are certainly interesting, on the condition that their characteristics are properly recognized [...] In most cases, false stories in the press are invented, made up according to a preconceived pattern in order to manipulate public opinion or in response to an order coming from above. In other cases, they are simply to fill out a larger narrative of events [...].⁵⁰

And the great historian asked: “what would one say of research into the Napoleonic legend that left out the question of influence peddling [...]? Probably that it had neglected to look into the most important issues”.⁵¹ By taking up the celebrated story, conventional accounts of Algerian politics do not avoid such bias, and fail to critically examine the source material.⁵²

The first shortcoming lies in the triviality of the narrative. How could a man who has been seriously ill since the autumn of 2005, and who has had difficulty moving and speaking since spring 2013 be able to “dissolve” or even neutralize the commanding centralized coercive institution of the DRS? The secret police, it should be remembered, had preempted the political process in Algeria even before the January 1992 coup, and Bouteflika owed it his own cooptation in April 1999 and his subsequent authoritarian re-elections, as well as the judicial immunity handed to his relatives. The official story of the “weakening of the DRS” that spread only after Bouteflika’s stroke on 27 April 2013, eludes this reality.

Additionally, the dominant tale suffers from weakness relative to, if not the “tyranny of the moment”⁵³ and its counterpart “antihistoricalism” –⁵⁴ or what Bourdieu called the “genesis amnesia” –⁵⁵ at least the misinterpretation of the politics structuring the authoritarian formula.

Revolution vs Counterrevolution

The issue of political leadership goes back to the crisis of the nationalist movement (1951-1954).⁵⁶ Pioneer and charismatic leader of Algerian nationalism, Messali Hadj (1898-1974) was politically socialized in France during the 1920s and 1930s. Married with Émilie Busquant, a French woman born in a family of anarcho-syndicalists in the region of Lorraine, Messali Hadj built close relationships within revolutionary left parties, anti-fascists and anti-stalinian intellectuals such as Daniel Guérin, Robert-Jean Longuet, Yves Deschezelles, Alfred Rosmer, Marceau Pivert, Pierre Monatte and Jean Rous.⁵⁷ Fascinated during his youth by Mustapha Kemal (Atatürk), Messali Hadj was later impregnated by the spirit of the Great revolution of 1789. He designed the Constituent assembly as a junction between a democratic program and antifeudal struggle.⁵⁸

Geopolitics got the better of Messali and his proletarian movement for the first time in the mid-1930s. The Laval-Stalin pact of May 1935, devoting the allegiance of the French Communist Party to Moscow, entombed the issue of independence for the colonized peoples. Thus, although supporting the French Front Populaire government, the Etoile Nord-Africaine⁵⁹ was banned by the latter. This was also the case for the Parti du Peuple Algérien (PPA). Founded by Messali Hadj and Abdallah Filali on 11 March 1937, the PPA was forbidden after it had exhibited the Algerian flag for the first time on this side of the Mediterranean, during the demonstrations of 14 July 1937 in Algiers.⁶⁰ The fallacious argument that was put forward by the French Communist Party to ban the PPA and jail Messali and his companions was “trotskism”. An article published

⁵⁰ Bloch, 1999 [1921], pp. 24-25. My own translation.

⁵¹ Ibid, p. 28.

⁵² Among the significant articles that exemplify these biases, read the one produced by the influential Algeria Watch: <https://algeria-watch.org/?p=45374>. On the methodological issue of the critical examination of the source material, see Bloch, 1949.

⁵³ In French, “tyrannie de l’instant”. See Hartog, 2012.

⁵⁴ Somers, 1996.

⁵⁵ Bourdieu, 1977; Bourdieu, 2000. This bias is particularly pronounced in Kalyvas, 1999 and Mundy, 2015.

⁵⁶ Harbi, 1980; Simon, 2004.

⁵⁷ See Guérin, 1973; Stora, 1982; Messali, 1980; Simon, 1998 ; Messali-Benkelfat, 2013.

⁵⁸ Simon, 2005.

⁵⁹ The Etoile Nord-Africaine was an association created in 1926 by North African immigrant workers and trade unionists within the framework of the French Communist Party. Among its founders were Abdelkader Hadj Ali and Messali Hadj, respectively executive and permanent member of the PCF. See Carlier, 1995.

⁶⁰ The flag was sewn in 1934 by Emilie Busquant.

by French newspaper *L'Humanité* on 29 August 1939 titled "Six trotskists arrested in Algiers for reconstituting a dissolved league" ("Six Trotskistes arrêtés à Alger pour reconstitution de ligue dissoute"):

Messali and the nationalist party continued the adventurous policy inspired by the trotskyist Ferrat and speculating on the religious feelings and the aspirations of the Algerian masses for a freer life [...] The arrests of these auxiliaries of fascism provoked no reaction among the Muslim population who supports the Front Populaire [...]

Parti Communiste d'Algérie (PCA) executive Amar Ouzegane played a key role in this repression. He wrote:

Speculating on the national sentiment of our Muslim populations and their consequent dissatisfaction with the slowness that the governments of the Popular Front have put into realizing our just demands, the PPA has embarked on the odious mission of provoking our Muslim populations, divert them from their claiming struggles and lead them to adventure.⁶¹

Le parlement algérien. Organe de défense et d'émancipation du peuple algérien is the title of the journal Messali and his comrades of the proletarian PPA wrote during their detention in the prison of Maison-Carrée (Algiers) in 1939. This publication translates the articulation between the democratic and antifeudal struggle. The following extract is taken from an article dedicated to the 150th anniversary of the French Revolution:

One hundred and fifty years ago, the French, exasperated, oppressed by a feudal and inhuman regime, descended from the old suburb of Saint-Antoine to seize and destroy the Bastille that symbolized in their eyes all the servitudes they suffered from men in short pants and silk stockings [...] This is the beginning of this great revolution which has shaken so many kings and borrowers [...] The revolutionaries of the great eighty-nine days said in their enthusiasm that wherever they pass, the wind of freedom will pass with them [...] The Algerian people, who suffer from the colonial servitudes imposed on them in the name of democracy, can only bow very low before this revolution [...] We wanted to publish this Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen in full, so that readers and activists can know it in order to know how to profit from it [...].⁶²

Albert Camus, who was removed from the Parti Communiste Algérien in 1937 for having criticized the politics of hostility towards Messali's proletarian PPA that the stalinist organization had adopted in line with the Stalin-Laval pact, remembered this turning point:

[...] I was responsible for recruiting Arab activists, and getting them into a nationalist organization [the Etoile-Nord Africaine, and later the PPA]. I did it and these Arab activists became my comrades, whose dress and loyalty I admired. The turning point of [19]36 has come. These activists were prosecuted and imprisoned, their organization dissolved, in the name of a policy approved and encouraged by the PC. Some, who had escaped research, came to ask me if I would let this infamy happen without saying anything. This afternoon remained engraved in me; I still remember that I was shaking while being spoken to; I was ashamed; then I did the right thing.⁶³

The "election of a Constituent assembly by universal suffrage of all the habitants of Algeria without distinction of race or religion" has constituted the cornerstone of Messali's secular political approach since his foundational speech in Brussels at the seminal anti-imperialist league congress of February 1927. Influenced by the Third Communist International, the leader of the Algerian nationalist movement, hitherto permanent member of the French Communist Party, articulated his project around the building of a mass party to mobilize the people, weave a class alliance with the French proletarian movement, for the

⁶¹ *La Lutte sociale*, 2 October 1937. My own translation.

⁶² *Le Parlement algérien*, first year, 18 May 1939.

⁶³ Camus-Grenier, 1981, p. 180. My own translation. Albert Camus in the original French version: "[...] On m'avait chargé de recruter des militants arabes, et de les faire rentrer dans une organisation nationaliste. Je l'ai fait et ces militants arabes sont devenus mes camarades, dont j'admirais la tenue et la loyauté. Le tournant de 36 est venu. Ces militants ont été poursuivis et emprisonnés, leur organisation dissoute, au nom d'une politique approuvée et encouragée par le PC. Quelques-uns, qui avaient échappé aux recherches, sont venus me demander si je laissais faire cette infamie sans rien dire. Cet après-midi est resté gravé en moi ; je me souviens encore que je tremblais alors qu'on me parlait; j'avais honte; j'ai fait ensuite ce qu'il fallait".

internationalization of the “Algerian problem”,⁶⁴ and the tactical use of violence against police and military targets. In a message addressed to the general assembly of the Zimmerwald Circle in January 1954, Messali Hadj (Honorary president of the Zimmerwald Circle of the French city of Niort) wrote:

There are roughly half a million North Africans in France. And only in the Paris region, there are nearly 150,000 Algerians. Driven from their country following a shameful expropriation and exploitation, they now live a little on the fringes of the French people [...] Consequently, the French working class needs, in its fight against capitalism, forces of the North African peoples fighting against imperialism and vice versa [...] For that all the circles where the problems affecting the interests of the working class and internationalism are discussed must also link the problems of North Africans to their own.⁶⁵

Structuring the praxis of Messali Hadj since the Etoile Nord-Africaine, the strategic articulation between the workers issue and that of the independence invalidates the hegemonic narrative asserting that “in Algeria, the colonial domination did not create a bourgeoisie and a proletariat capable of leading the struggle for independence”.⁶⁶ The orthodox narrative that describes Messali Hadj under the guise of an alleged “islamo-populism”⁶⁷ as does the leading historian Mohammed Harbi in his influential work—curiously neglects two major historical facts. First, the emergence of capitalism in Algeria dates back to the Second Empire.⁶⁸ Second, activists of the Etoile Nord-Africaine and of the Parti du Peuple Algérien socialized within the CGTU (Confédération générale du travail unitaire), as much as Messali Hadj built a class alliance with the leaders of the leftist and revolutionary movements since 1926.⁶⁹

Opposed to his *Weltanschauung*, FLN leaders whom Nasser’s garrison state supported launched an armed struggle on 1 November 1954. Whereas Messali Hadj had made a good case for political and social revolution, the FLN took the steps of the independence through counterrevolution. Breaking with the structuring plea of a “Constituent Assembly elected by all the inhabitants of Algeria without distinction of race or religion”, in its Proclamation read from Cairo, the FLN advocated the “restoration of the Algerian state” of the Ottoman era (1515-1830) “within the framework of Islamic principles” and the “achievement of North African unity in its natural Arab-Muslim framework”.⁷⁰ In a public declaration sent to the Agence France Presse (AFP) from his house arrest in 8 November 1954, Messali Hadj denounced the colonial “regime of exception” and its “repressive frenzy which takes up the methods of May 1945”, and reaffirmed the strategy of his movement:

Yesterday as today, we will continue to work so that the friendship which links Algerian workers to the French people develops in the struggle for our two peoples, free from colonial and capitalist servitude, to move forward towards freedom, progress, justice and solidarity among peoples.⁷¹

Supporting the workers’ strikes of the Atlantic Loire in the summer of 1955, a leaflet of the Messalist movement transcribed:

In a magnificent surge of workers’ solidarity, the workers fought and are still bravely fighting against the employers, the government and their CRS at the very moment that imperialism is trying to crush by force the national aspirations of the Algerian people and the legitimate demands of French workers

⁶⁴ Rous, 1955; Simon, 2004, pp. 278-279. The orthodox historiography observes an eloquent silence on this important diplomatic issue. Harbi (1980, p. 160) however claimed that the “MNA’s tactical pro-westernism” (“le pro-occidentalisme tactique du MNA”) would have “alienate(d) him from the esteem of Third World leaders such as Nehru”.

⁶⁵ *Révolution prolétarienne*, February 1954 (My own translation); Simon, 2005.

⁶⁶ Harbi, 1980, p. 2.

⁶⁷ Harbi, 1984, pp. 121-123.

⁶⁸ Inter alia Nouschi, 1961; Rey Goldzeiguer, 1977; Ernest-Picard, 1930.

⁶⁹ By taking up the anathema of “populism” launched by the stalinists against Messali Hadj and his proletarian comrades, the dominant narrative forged by the former FLN organic intellectual, the leftist Harbi, was moreover suitable for the PCF.

⁷⁰ Harbi, 1981, pp. 101-103.

⁷¹ The archive is reproduced in Simon, 2005.

[...] This means that the united action of the Algerian and French peoples can at this moment be decisive and strike a fatal blow to the imperialist exploiter of all workers [...].⁷²

The cooptation of Abane Ramdane—who benefited from a remission of sentence in January 1955—at the head of the FLN in March 1955 marks the revenge of the counterrevolutionary current of the MTLD (Mouvement pour le triomphe des libertés démocratiques, created in 1947 in lieu of the dissolved PPA) on the revolutionary one embodied by Messali Hadj. Indeed, the FLN auto-proclaimed chief clearly intended to revive the reformist project of the “Congrès national algérien”: rid of Messali Hadj, placed by the colonial authority under house arrest in Niort in May 1952, the petty bourgeois and right wing MTLD—conducted by Kiouane and Ben Khedda—set about building a counterrevolutionary rally ranging from the stalinist Parti Communiste Algérien (PCA) to the religious Ulemas through the liberal reformists of the UDMA (Union démocratique du manifeste algérien, funded by Ferhat Abbas).

However, it was the continuation of this counter-revolutionary policy by the reformists, allied since May 1953 with the “liberal” mayor of Algiers and former head of French counterintelligence in America during the Second World War Jacques Chevallier, that caused the deep crisis of the PPA-MTLD.⁷³ The new mayor of Algiers co-opted the established lawyer and MTLD’s reformist Abderrahmane Kiouane as vice-mayor. Noteworthy, Kiouane was “related to the main families of the Muslim bourgeoisie”.⁷⁴ Prosperous bourgeois and practicing Catholic Jacques Chevallier declared: “Maître Kiouane on behalf of all his colleagues approved my point of view and undertook to work for the City Council ... without ever getting involved in politics. This pact was to be faithfully observed by all Muslim members of the City Council until their disappearance in turmoil”.⁷⁵ The revolutionary wing of the PPA-MTLD, who considered Chevallier as a “neo-colonialist”,⁷⁶ managed to regain control of the organization, hold a congress in Hornu (Belgium) in July 1954 and elect a Conseil National de la Révolution.⁷⁷ Former high school comrade of Ben Khedda and Kiouane, Abane Ramdane received the decisive support of Jacques Chevallier’s allies.⁷⁸ Abane was quickly supported by the reformists liberals of Ferhat Abbas’s UDMA, stalinist Amar Ouzegane, the Muslim bourgeoisie and a fraction of the Algerian European Christians like the priest Jean Scotto, head of the Mission de France in Algeria and Alexandre Chaulet, executive leader of the Christian trade union CFTC (Confédération française des travailleurs chrétiens), both close friends of Jacques Chevallier.⁷⁹ For the latter, who became Minister of war in Pierre Mendès France’s government, there was possibly “a card to play with Kiouane and his friends”.⁸⁰ Also, Abane intended, from the start, to mark a radical break with the legacy of the PPA: in a leaflet published in *Consciences Maghrébines*, a Christian journal,⁸¹ Abane Ramdane considered “the FLN as a rally, not as a party”.⁸² In a letter addressed in October 1955 to the FLN’s external delegation based in Cairo, the Algerian Thermidor set the political orientation:

You must have received a letter from x regarding the creation of a political rally [of reformists]: the UDMA [of Ferhat Abbas], the centralists [of MTLD], Ulemas and independents. We have given our agreement on the condition that the assembly is the projection, legally, of the Front.⁸³

⁷² Simon, 2004, pp. 87-88.

⁷³ Bennoune and El Kenz, 1990; Harbi, 1980; Simon, 2004.

⁷⁴ Chevallier, 1958, p. 135.

⁷⁵ Ibid, p. 134.

⁷⁶ *La nation algérienne*, 1 October 1954.

⁷⁷ Vaujour, 1985.

⁷⁸ Jacques Chevallier was appointed Secretary of State for War from 19 June 1954 to 20 January 1955 then Minister of War from 20 January to 23 February 1955. At the same time Jacques Soustelle, former boss of the French secret services from 1943 to 1945, was appointed by the Cabinet of Pierre Mendès France as Gouverneur général d’Algérie from 1 February 1955 to 30 January 1956.

⁷⁹ Scotto, 1991, pp. 156-158 ; Chaulet, 2012, p. 186.

⁸⁰ Quoted by Vaujour, 1985, p. 328.

⁸¹ The journal was managed by André Mandouze, a “progressist Christian” very close to Jean Scotto and whose editorial staff included, since its creation in March 1954, reformists close to Ben Khedda such as Mohamed Salah Louanchi. See Mandouze, 1998, p. 222. In his mémoires, the regional head of Mission de France, Jean Scotto, gave an indication concerning the links between the reformists of the MTLD and the Mission de France: “On 21 November 1954, the day of the ‘Présentation de la Vierge Marie au Temple’. The Church (Hussein-Dey church in Algiers) is full. At the back, a group of Muslims... In the group were Benyoussef Ben Khedda (...) and Salah Louanchi (...)” Scotto, 1991, p. 92. See also Louanchi, 1999 and Chaulet, 2012.

⁸² Belhocine, 2000, p. 88.

⁸³ Belhocine, 2000, p. 94.

It is here that the so-called incremental independence (“indépendance par étapes”) put forward by the leadership of the FLN in September 1955—in an approach reminiscent of that adopted by the Tunisian neo-Destour party of Bourguiba –⁸⁴ takes on its full significance.⁸⁵ The then reformist Abane Ramdane, who meets the Mendesist Robert Barrat (Secretary General of the Centre catholique des intellectuels français) and the stalinist (and former gaullist) Francis Jeanson in Algiers,⁸⁶ can thus state: “The Chinese led both national resistance and social revolution [...] For us the second problem was not on the agenda. We took up arms for a definite purpose: national liberation”.⁸⁷ In January 1956, André Mandouze met Pierre Mendès-France in Paris and “passed him the pre-negotiation proposals developed by the two highest leaders of the FLN present in Algiers: Abane Ramdane and Benyoussed Benkhedda”.⁸⁸ At the same time the two top officials of the FLN installed the reformist Mohamed Salah Louanchi at the head of the Federation of France of the FLN.

Praetorianism: The Formation of a Regime

The FLN leaders who accused Messali Hadj of treason installed an informal collegial leadership instead of an institutionalized mass party. “Despotic power” was increasingly exercised by the praetorian⁸⁹ elite whose institutional origins date back to the FLN triumvirate—the famous “3B” of Boussouf, Belkacem and Ben Tobbal.⁹⁰ With regard to institutional foundations, the triumvir Lakhder Ben Tobbal recommended the *de facto* institution over the *de jure* one (Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic: GPRA), declaring: “we had to appoint a president but keep the real power in our hands”.⁹¹ The original institutional weakness of the GPRA and FLN explains the *pre*-independence disintegration of these two apparatuses in favor of the praetorian force. Since then, the college of praetorians⁹² has made and defeated presidents, from Ferhat Abbas in 1958 to Abdelaziz Bouteflika in 2014.

Preparing for the launch of the revolution since the congress of the MTLD held in Hornu (in Belgium, on 14-17 July 1954)⁹³ and despite being taken aback by the FLN, Messali decided to send to Krim Belkacem (*maquisard* and co-founder of the FLN) 2 millions French Francs collected from the Algerian workers in France, from the first days of November 1954.⁹⁴ However, in the meantime the FLN leadership had established dirty tricks politics as a mode of settling conflicts. One of the main leaders of the FLN, Ahmed Ben Bella declared:

We were not unaware, in fact, that in the event of a “hard blow”, the French government would not fail to dissolve the MTLD and to imprison its officials. What the government did, to our great relief.⁹⁵

Conspiracy was at the root of this process, as evidenced by the way the famous FLN leader Yacef Saadi agreed to collaborate with the colonial police in delivering the Messalist bastion of the Casbah of Algiers in May 1955.⁹⁶ Messali Hadj⁹⁷ and the executives of the MNA (Mouvement National Algérien, the party he had founded immediately after the colonial dissolution of the MTLD on 5 November 1954) were the inaugural victims of the colonial torture and the FLN’s dirty tricks politics. The latter was defined by Abane Ramdane as the rotting—“*le pourrissement*”.⁹⁸ From his cooptation at the head of the FLN in March 1955, Abane Ramdane launched his calls for the murder of the Messalists in *Consciénces Maghrébines*:

⁸⁴ Julien, 1985.

⁸⁵ Barrat, 1955.

⁸⁶ Ibid; Jacquin, 1977, pp. 116-117; Tessier, 2016.

⁸⁷ Jeanson, 2006 [1955], p. 302. My own translation.

⁸⁸ Mandouze, 1998, p. 246.

⁸⁹ Finer, 1962; Huntington, 1969; Nordlinger, 1977.

⁹⁰ Harbi, 1980; Meynier, 2002.

⁹¹ Ben Tobbal, unpublished manuscript.

⁹² Hachemaoui, 2009, 2011.

⁹³ Vaujour, 1985, pp. 228-230, p. 233.

⁹⁴ Harbi, 1980; Simon, 2004.

⁹⁵ Merle, 1965, pp. 96-97.

⁹⁶ On the testimony of Yacef Saadi see Duchemin, 1962, pp. 214-215 and Godar, 1972, pp. 108-109. In the *Battle of Algiers*, the celebrated film he produced and in which he played his own role, Yacef Saadi ignored this historical episode. The orthodox narrative did the same.

⁹⁷ According to Harbi, the founder of the FLN, Mohammed Boudiaf, gave instructions to assassinate Messali Hadj from the beginning of 1955. See Harbi, 1980, p. 152.

⁹⁸ Belhocine, 2000, pp. 150 and 156.

Algerian people [...] we warn you against those who maintain confusion [...] to divert you from the real path. The National Liberation Army tribunal will be ruthless towards traitors and enemies of the nation.

The rotting strategy intensified after the Bandung conference (18-24 April 1955) initiated by Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. Pandit Nehru, who had known Messali Hadj since the anti-imperialist league congress of Brussels in 1927, read the discourse sent by the proscribed Algerian revolutionary leader during this famous international summit. In this discourse he reaffirmed the democratic solution to the Algerian conflict:

We ask the Conference to denounce the colonial war in Algeria, to engage in a dialogue with the real representatives of the people for a sovereign Constituent assembly elected by universal suffrage without distinction of race or religion, in order to give voice to the people in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and (the right) of peoples to self-determination.⁹⁹

Threatened on his left by a respected and mobilizing revolutionary leader and on his right by rivals who contested his legitimacy to command, Abane embarked on a counter-revolutionary journey forward to impose himself as the sole interlocutor vis-à-vis the French government. In addition to the support of the MTLD's reformers, Abane now had the enthusiastic support of the stalinist Ouzegane, the very one who, standing behind the colonial government, had denounced—together with his colleagues from the leadership of the PCA and the PCF—"Hitler's agents of the PPA"¹⁰⁰ during the bloody massacre of Sétif-Guelma-Kherrata in May 1945. In a letter sent in September 1955 to the FLN external delegation installed in Nasser's Egypt, the now assumed counter-revolutionary Abane, admitted:

We feared that the base would still be Messalist because the front does not exist [...] Messali [...] has become Algeria's No. 1 enemy [...] We have decided to shoot down Messali.¹⁰¹

While, following the stalinian method of the FLN leader "any conscious Messalist [had] to be shot without trial",¹⁰² the FLN's "Fédération de France" had to tackle "the destruction of Messalists".¹⁰³ An official document written by the "propaganda commission" of the "Fédération de France du FLN"¹⁰⁴ in February 1957 advocated for groundbreaking rules: the political assassination of MNA's executives and the establishment of a "close control over the political activities" of Algerian workers. Let us disclose this forgotten document sent to the leadership of the FLN and quote its most significant extracts:¹⁰⁵

[While] the MNA is already anchored in the masses [...] the militants of the FLN [...] are insufficiently prepared politically [...] and they do not have the same knowledge of France and emigration as the MNA executives [...] In addition, the MNA benefits from the complicity of part of the French left [...] These various factors have enabled the MNA not only to survive but to vitalize [...] The Front's rallies [are] more and more limited [...] A few months ago, it was extremely easy to strike the head of the MNA and to remove the real persons responsible for this situation [...] As for the USTA [Union Syndicale des Travailleurs Algériens] and the merchants union, their existence is closely linked to that of the MNA [...] These unions nevertheless allow the MNA to carry out a great activity in terms of political contacts with the French [...] The existence of many Algerian workers, a significant part of which is affiliated to French unions [...] poses important questions [...] They pose many problems that require close control over the political activities they may have, especially since they are not unrelated to a certain political confusion [...] There is a need here for clarification [...] and rapid "bringing into line". There are far too many more or less mandated "spokespersons", people

⁹⁹ Simon, 2004, pp. 278-279.

¹⁰⁰ Sivan, 1976, p. 141.

¹⁰¹ Belhocine, 2000, pp. 91-92. Without bringing the slightest proof in support of his statement, the former FLN "organic intellectual" Mohammed Harbi affirmed that "Messali will publicly pay tribute" to Abane Ramdane. Harbi, 1980, p. 128.

¹⁰² Belhocine, 2000, p. 150.

¹⁰³ Ibid, p. 156.

¹⁰⁴ Mohammed Harbi, who was a member of this commission, gave its component in his *Le FLN mirage et réalité*, p. 412.

¹⁰⁵ See *Révolution africaine*, n°46, 14 December 1963, pp. 12-14.

who “embody the Revolution and who dream of bringing the two camps closer” [...] One principle should prevail: no political activity by uncontrolled Algerians [...] Direct action in France will no doubt be a necessary stage in the liberation war. It is difficult for us to appreciate the choice of the moment, the extent and the forms that it must take [...] If we think that the breaking point is close enough, that is to say that the politico-military balance of power force will soon turn in our favor, then it becomes an immediate necessity to accelerate this evolution [...]

Mohammed Harbi, who published this archive in December 1964 in *Révolution africaine*, the propaganda newspaper of the newly Algerian garrison state of which he was the editor – in addition to his tasks of presidential adviser and member of parliament – later omitted to mention these noteworthy archives in his influential work on the history of contemporary Algeria.¹⁰⁶ The destruction of pluralism required by FLN theorists reached its climax in France where the Messalist movement benefitted from an organization, experienced activists, anchoring in the masses and the complicity of a fringe of the French radical left. While Messali Hadj escaped a deadly attack, his comrades of the proletarian Union Syndicale des Travailleurs Algériens (USTA) were murdered—as were the anarchosyndicalists by the stalinists during the Spanish civil war—including the valued Abdallah Filali and Ahmed Bekhat, by FLN commandos in the autumn of 1957.¹⁰⁷ During its foundational congress, which gathered nearly 300 delegates¹⁰⁸ and that Mohammed Harbi disregarded in his account on “Le MNA contre le FLN”,¹⁰⁹ the USTA had made the following appeal: “It is unworthy of our people to give the world the spectacle of brothers tearing each other apart. It is inconceivable to witness accounts, to these collective massacres without acting to put an end to them”.¹¹⁰ Messali sent a message to the USTA congress:

You must already seek by all means the links of cooperation with the non-Muslim Algerians who are our compatriots and with whom we will tomorrow build the new Algeria on the basis of equality, fraternity and social justice. This great work, which requires all our intelligence and our human spirit, requires a firm will to create a situation where the other ethnic minorities who live in Algeria find in us the friendship, the understanding, the security, which they need at the moment where the biggest transformations are at work. I tell you: although the most atrocious misery embraces our people, we must present ourselves to our brothers of other ethnic minorities as liberators, not only of a part of the Algerian people, but of all the Algerian population.¹¹¹

Condemning the assassination of USTA trade unionists, Albert Camus formulated his statement in the following terms:

Are we going to let the best union activists be assassinated by an organization that seems to want to conquer, by assassination, the totalitarian leadership of the Algerian movement? We kill them one after the other and each activist who sows the Algerian future sinks a little deeper into the night. It must be said at least, and as high as possible, to prevent anti-colonialism from becoming the good conscience which justifies everything and first of all the killers.¹¹²

After resorting to urban terrorism,¹¹³ the FLN executed the infamous massacres of Mechta Kasba—a village near Melouza on the edge of Kabylia and Hodna regions whose inhabitants refused to abjure their loyalty to Messali—and Wagram in the west of the country (near Saïda), killing more than 335 civilians in May-June 1957.¹¹⁴ The violent praetorian counterrevolution, decidedly favored by awful colonial repression,¹¹⁵ spared

¹⁰⁶ Harbi, 1980, 1981, 1984, 1993.

¹⁰⁷ *Combat*, 10 October 1957; *Le Monde*, 29 October 1957.

¹⁰⁸ Including Algerian women workers. *Combat*, 1 July 1957; *Le Monde*, 1 July 1957; *Le Monde*, 2 July 1957.

¹⁰⁹ Harbi, 1980.

¹¹⁰ *Combat*, 1 July 1957.

¹¹¹ *Le Monde*, 2 July 1957.

¹¹² My own translation. Quoted in original by Ageron, 1990.

¹¹³ Pervillé, 2002.

¹¹⁴ *Combat*, 1 June 1957; *Demain*, 13-19 June 1957; *Combat*, 14 June 1957; *Le Figaro*, 1-2 June 1957; *Articles et documents*, 4 June 1957.

¹¹⁵ Branche, 2001; Vidal-Naquet, 1972.

no one, not even its own designers: Abane Ramdane was assassinated in late December 1957 in a plot orchestrated by the “3B” and executed by the secret police in Morocco.¹¹⁶

Caught between the blindness and repression of the colonial forces on one side and the terror of the counter-revolution on the other, the project of the democratic revolution carried by Messali Hadj, his fellow unionists and anti-capitalist and anti-stalinian allies was defeated for a second and final time. By bringing their respective supports to a right-wing nationalism, the antagonist forces which structured the North-African geopolitical configuration sealed the fate of the revolution as a democratic exit from the colonial situation. Also, the FLN gradually benefitted from the support of the Egyptian garrison state and the Arab League, Franco—NATO’s ally—and the Vatican as well as satellites of the stalinian Eastern bloc.

The Garrison State and Praetorian Dilemma

From this uncertain historic sequence, which was at the foundation of the praetorian polity, the victors learnt a founding lesson: the counterrevolution, with its structuring rules of conspiracy, political assassination, protection racket, is effective to “destroy” the “enemy from within”. Also, the Algerian political trajectory was scattered with conspiracies (such as those of Lamouri in 1959, Cap Sigli in 1979, October 1988) and political assassinations of opponents (from the killings of Filali and Bekhat in 1957, Mohammed Khider in 1967, Krim Belkacem in 1970 to that of Ali André Mécili in 1987) and successive coups (1959, 1962, 1965, 1992).

Until the 1990s, the “infrastructural power” of the Algerian state included the army and other apparatuses of coercion, as well as the national hydrocarbons company Sonatrach, the diplomatic apparatus, state-owned banks and enterprises of state capitalism, the single party, the “administered mass organizations”, the (Algerian) Ecole nationale d’administration and the intelligentsia. Colonel Boumediene, the artisan of the August 1962 putsch and of the June 1965 coup, failed to escape the insoluble praetorian dilemma:¹¹⁷ to restrict the government to the military at the risk of being ousted by praetorian rivals or to incorporate civilian forces into the ruling elites at the risk of losing state power. Like Nasser¹¹⁸ who feared military coups as well as popular mobilization, Boumediene did not build a party-state¹¹⁹ (a communist-style formula that would require mobilization) but rather a garrison state. In so doing, Colonel Boumediene had to solve another dilemma: who guards the guardians? However, to avoid the counter-power of a chief of staff, whatever the cost of suffering—like Nasser with the famous Marshal ‘Amar—Boumediene had to guard the guardians through a dreaded apparatus.¹²⁰ The Sécurité Militaire was the heir to the MALG that had been set up by Abdelhafidh Boussouf in 1957. Fearing above all an alliance between part of the ruling elite and a socially anchored opposition—such as that outlined in the agreement concluded on 16 June 1965 by President Ahmed Ben Bella and the leader of the Front des Forces Socialistes Hocine Aït Ahmed, the putschist and barely legitimate Colonel Boumediene opted for a particular institutional design: the centralization, at his level, of the coercive institution. This formula enabled Boumediene to directly control the apparatus responsible for guarding the guardians and penetrating society, where fragmentation and exclusivity of the secret police did not respond to threats to his nascent dictatorship regime.¹²¹ Hence, the right-handed veto coup of 19 June 1965 and the removing of the army’s chief of staff following the failed coup of December 1967. The structure was reestablished seventeen years later, only. In the wake of this “coup-proofing”,¹²² Boumediene, as Hassan II and Nasser had done, used political corruption to “hold” his senior officers.¹²³

In this garrison state, the single party held no such congress during the long reign of Boumediene. At the opposite of the communist formula, in the Algerian regime it was the (political police) officer who oversaw

¹¹⁶ Ben Tobbal, unpublished manuscript; Harbi, Meynier, 2004.

¹¹⁷ Clapham and Edge, 1985.

¹¹⁸ Kandil, 2012; Waterbury, 1981.

¹¹⁹ Martinez, 2012.

¹²⁰ Hachemaoui, 2015.

¹²¹ This institutional arrangement contrasts with the theory proposed by Greitens, 2016.

¹²² Quinlivan, 1999; Kamrava, 2000.

¹²³ Hachemaoui, 2012a; Waterbury, 1976.

the political commissar. In such configuration, the Sécurité Militaire (SM) not only controlled civilians, but sought to guard the guardians as well. According to Khaled Nezzar who was Lieutenant-Colonel at the time, “We hated the men of Kasdi Merbah [chief of the Sécurité Militaire during the 1960s and 1970s]. We considered them as snitches”.¹²⁴ The post-Boumediene succession in December 1978 reflected this mutual hostility, constraining the secret police by favoring colonel Chadli Bendjedid, chief of a military region little attracted by power, to become president.¹²⁵ The ruling coalition formed around the *primus inter pares* and his praetorian allies of the military regions rapidly succeeded, however, in dislodging the head of the secret police. And for the first time since independence, after the “Berber spring” of April 1981 the apparatus of the secret police—the Military Security—was entrusted to Medjdoub Lakhel Ayat, an officer not belonging to the secret services.

Working behind the scenes, the praetorians developed pseudo-politics, a politics of dissimulation that made real politics as imperceptible as possible. As a type of infrastructural power, pseudo-politics crafts and orchestrates a “political society” and a “civil society” of *substitution* in place of genuine political representation. Pseudo-politics is not intended to depoliticize the population, but to prevent politicization of the society against the regime. In this respect, it can sponsor elections, assemblies and even street demonstrations, but pseudo-politics “do not affect policymaking or the composition of the ruling elite”.¹²⁶ The official trade union apparatus—created by the FLN in the crucial founding moment of the destruction of the USTA—has always been subordinate to the praetorian force and designed as an instrument of pseudo-politics.¹²⁷ The totalitarian left of the Algerian Communist Party (PCA), which had rallied to the FLN in the context of the elimination of the “trotskyist” Messalist movement, followed the same fate—even before independence.

To establish disciplinary control over the population, those in power used propaganda defined as “a set of methods employed by an organized group that wants to bring about the active or passive participation in its actions of a mass of individuals, psychologically unified through psychological manipulations and incorporated in an organization”.¹²⁸ As “propaganda must be total”, the “propagandist (should) use all of the technical means at his disposal—the press, radio, TV, movies, posters, meetings, canvassing”.¹²⁹ To achieve this aim, “propaganda is always institutionalized to the extent that there exists an ‘Apparat’ in the German sense of the term—a machine”.¹³⁰ The Algerian political police, trained at the KGB and Stasi schools, had always controlled this “ideological power” through which it broadcast (in psychology, movies, novels and academia) a “thin”, “pragmatic” and “institutionalized ideology”¹³¹ seeking to preserve the praetorian domination.

Before the “liberalization”¹³² of 1989, the media was influenced through censorship and propaganda exercises by an *Agitprop* ministerial department called the Ministry of Information (and Culture). The underground route consisted of placing propagandists in key positions in the governmental agency (Algérie Presse Service), the appointment of correspondents of such official media and other leading newspapers in the main capitals of the world—most of them will be recycled overnight in the so called “independent press” after 1989. An entire structure of the DRS—heir to the SM—is dedicated to the control of information, bringing together services from the recruitment of journalists to the drawing up of media strategies.¹³³ From

¹²⁴ Interview with the author, Algiers, November 2010.

¹²⁵ Interviews with general Rachid Benyelles and Abdelhamid Mehri (respectively Algiers, June 2003 and November 2010).

¹²⁶ Kasza, 1995, p. 59.

¹²⁷ In a letter sent from Cairo by the FLN’s external delegation to Abane Ramdane, we can read: “Our friends have made contact with the (Irvin Brown’s) ICFTU... and convinced the CIA leaders that nothing serious will be done on the union plane without the Front [de Libération nationale] [...] What it is needed [...] is a *scenario*: set up a committee, make a manifesto of the workers [...]”, Belhocine, 2000, pp. 147-148.

¹²⁸ Ellul, 2006, p. 31.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid, pp. 11, 13.

¹³¹ Mann, 2009, p. 348.

¹³² Przeworski, 1988, p. 61.

¹³³ Many influential journalists had been military school cadets. Author’s discussion with two of them (Paris, August 2012, June 2014): Adlène Meddi (*Le Point* and *Middle East Eye*) and Akram Belkaïd (*Le Monde diplomatique*, previously editor-in-chief of the newspaper of a French neoliberal think-tank close to the hexagonal power elite as well as to the Ben Ali regime: IPMED). “Héritier”, Akram Belkaïd is the son of well-established apparatchiki: former director of a military high school (ENITA) turned civilian and wealthier high official. In an article

the “Islamist subversion” to the “decapitation of the DRS”, Algerian politics is awash with such stories. Therefore, by reading such storytelling uncritically, standard analysis takes pseudo-politics for real politics.

This critical historical re-examination highlights crucial theoretical and historical issues:

- The regime-building, wrought in the wake of a praetorian counter-revolution which, to assert its domination, resorted to terror, preceded and shaped the state-building of the early years of independence¹³⁴;
- The garrison state of the first decade of independence, imposed after the capture of state-power, was articulated not on a “rentier pact” but on a “protection pact”;¹³⁵
- The already established state-regime complex later determined the way by which the oil boom revenues of 1973 should be governed;¹³⁶
- The redistributive pact that succeeded the protection racket helped broaden the regime’s social basis and alleviate coercion without running the risk, inherent to the “deepening” of the “bureaucratic-authoritarian” and “developmentalist” states, of worsening the social conflict;
- The praetorian formula was torn from the inside by “fundamental contradictions”: collegial *vs* personal rule; praetorianism *vs* institutionalized mobilization; redistribution *vs* accumulation; political corruption *vs* social justice, etc.
- Also, the Gramscian “organic crisis” appeared in the early 1970s,¹³⁷ with the first oil boom simply masking its deep structure.
- The major ideological and geopolitical neoliberal shift that took place in the center¹³⁸ as well as in the periphery (Egypt) added up to the crisis of the formula—especially since the attempt of “infitah”, a “passive revolution” to pass neoliberalization during the 1980s, had failed.

HOW TO RECONCILE PRAETORIANISM AND NEOLIBERALISM (DURING AN “ORGANIC CRISIS”)?

Antonio Gramsci coined his famous concept of “organic crisis” to capture these configurations that differs from “ordinary” financial or political crises. For the Marxist theorist, such a crisis should not be understood as “events” but rather as “processes”. Encompassing the totality of the political order, they mostly lead to the denunciation of the established politics, policies and values of the system. These “comprehensive crises” uncovered “fundamental contradictions” in the system of domination that the ruling elites are unable to resolve. Gramsci superbly describes these historical configurations as “interregna” in which “the old is dying and the new cannot yet be born” and during which “a great variety of morbid symptoms” can emerge.¹³⁹ While revolutions are rare, reform may be even scarcer. In his *Journeys Toward Progress*, Albert Hirschman apprehended the concept of reform as change in which “the power of hitherto privileged groups is curbed and the economic position and social status of underprivileged groups is correspondingly improved”.¹⁴⁰ Two broad strategies are available to the Reformer: the Fabian and its alternative, the Blitzkrieg.¹⁴¹

published in January 2020 in *Le Quotidien d’Oran*, that is to say at the time when the mobilizations and union struggles against the pension project in France reached a historic threshold, Akram Belkaïd resorted to the reactionary rhetoric of perversity to stigmatize “Paris, ses grèves, son chaos” (Paris, its strikes and chaos): Belkaïd, 2020.

¹³⁴ Hachemaoui, 2012a.

¹³⁵ I borrow the concept of “protection pact” from Slater, 2010b.

¹³⁶ This processual approach is attentive to the conflicts that structure the institutional formation of the state-regime complex: as such it challenges the standard variable-centered model with, to quote Abbott (p. 183), its “just-so stories justifying this or that relation between the variables”. Using a variable-centered model, Martinez (2012) compares the weakly institutionalized and military dominated FLN to the revolutionary Mexican PRI to sustain the official thesis of the party-state political formula.

¹³⁷ Aklouf, 1964; Guérin, 1973.

¹³⁸ Inter alia, Huntington et al., 1973; Harvey, 2005; Peck, 2010; Krippner, 2011.

¹³⁹ Gramsci, 1971.

¹⁴⁰ Hirschman, 1963, p. 267.

¹⁴¹ Huntington, 1968, p. 346.

Toward a “Polish Model”? The Political Economy of a Transformation

Engaged in a “war of position”,¹⁴² from the assassination of the central figure of the Algerian opposition Ali André Mécili¹⁴³ in April 1987 in Paris and the conspiracy one year later of the October riots,¹⁴⁴ the guardians orchestrated a controlled political opening to perilous economic liberalization. Advised by his closed ally Abdelhamid Mehri (1926-2012)—former member of the central committee of MTLD, Minister of GPRA and ambassador in France from 1984 to 1988—, the “liberalizer” President Chadli supported the promotion of a small group of reformers (Mouloud Hamrouche and Ghazi Hidouci) at the head of the government.¹⁴⁵ But it was a “fools game”¹⁴⁶ from the outset. The praetorians conceded some leverage to the regime’s “liberalizers”, expecting them to implement the socially destabilizing and politically unsafe Structural Adjustment Program in their place. The reformers thought they represented the last chance for the praetorians and preferred strengthening state extraction and regulation institutions to the neoliberal agenda of the IMF,¹⁴⁷ refusing to limit openness to cosmetic measures. Adopted for three years by the Assemblée Populaire Nationale in September 1989, the program of the “government of reforms” broke with the established rules of the game in striving for the “powerful takeover by the state of the prerogatives of public power and economic regulation”, the fight against “the bureaucratic apparatuses and the oligarchies”, a “fair distribution of income which realizes the social justice”, the “mobilization and the participation of the social forces”.¹⁴⁸ Indeed, the institutions set up by the government of the reformer Mouloud Hamrouche (9 September 1989 to 4 June 1991) were subversive, among things suppressing the extraordinary courts and security clearances required for appointments to key state positions, closing the Ministry of Information and the Ministry of Former resistance fighters to signal the end of propaganda and of historical legitimacy, and putting new emphasis on genuine political representation.¹⁴⁹ “The way of the Reformer is hard”.¹⁵⁰ The Algerian “reform monger”¹⁵¹ mixed two approaches that are difficult to reconcile: “make all his goals known at an early time”¹⁵² while refusing the Blitzkrieg. The guardians of the garrison state, to reduce the political support for the reformers, quickly preempted the political process through cultural polarization. While a compromise was reached at the top of the state on the creation of “associations of political nature” in the aftermath of the October 1988 riots, the praetorians created two political parties three days before the appointment of the reformer chief of Government Hamrouche. These parties were created in violation of the February 1989 Constitution: the berberist RCD (Rassemblement de la culture et de la démocratie) and the religious FIS (Front Islamique du Salut). Despite the polarization¹⁵³ they later engaged in, the radicals attacked reformers and advocated neoliberal “shock treatment”—thus playing the game of praetorians.

¹⁴² Gramsci defined the “war of position” in his notebook 6 as follows: “in politics the ‘war of position’, once won, is decisive definitively. In politics, in others words, the war of maneuver subsists as long as it is a question of winning positions which are not decisive, so that all the resources of the state’s hegemony cannot be mobilized. But when, for one reason or another, these positions have lost their value and only the decisive positions are at stake, then one moves to siege warfare; this is concentrated, difficult, and requires exceptional qualities of patience and inventiveness. In politics, the siege is a reciprocal one, despite all appearances, and the mere fact that the ruler has to muster all his resources demonstrates how seriously he takes his adversary”, Gramsci, 1971, p. 239.

¹⁴³ Aït Ahmed, 1989.

¹⁴⁴ Interviews with Ghazi Hidouci (Paris, 2008, 2011, 2012), Abdelhamid Mehri (Algiers, November 2010), Khaled Nezzar (Algiers, November 2010). Several senior leaders, as former President Chadli Bendjedid, General Medjedoub Lakehal Ayat (head of the Sécurité Militaire from July 1981 to November 1987, then Délégué Général à la Prévention et à la Sécurité from November 1987 to October 1988) and General Mohamed Betchine (head of the Direction Centrale de la Sécurité de l’Armée from November 1987 to October 1988) have publicly confirmed the thesis of the conspiracy. For Betchine, the plot was called Potemkine, its preparation dates back, according to Lakhel Ayat, to 1987. For President Chadli, who has multiplied the signs of liberalization since his cooptation in 1979, the October 1988 plot was aimed to prevent him from carrying out the political liberalization of the regime. The assassination of the moderate opponent André Mécili in Paris, where Abdelhamid Mehri—former comrade of the leader of the secular opposition Hocine Aït Ahmed—worked as ambassador, intervened a few days before the officialization, by the presidency, of the Algerian Human Rights League. Cf. Semiane, 1998; *Le Matin*, 2 October 2000; *Liberté*, 4 October 2010.

¹⁴⁵ Interviews with Ghazi Hidouci (Paris, November 2008, March 2011) and Abdelhamid Mehri (Algiers, November 2010, May 2011).

¹⁴⁶ “Jeu de dupes”. Interviews with Abdelhamid Mehri (Algiers, November 2010, May, 2011) and Ghazi Hidouci (Paris, November 2008, March 2011).

¹⁴⁷ See *El Moudjahid*, 28 September 1989. For a theoretical discussion of this puzzle see Evans, 1992.

¹⁴⁸ See *El Moudjahid*, 27 September 1989.

¹⁴⁹ Hachemaoui, 2009.

¹⁵⁰ Hirschman, 1963.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² Huntington, 1968, p. 346.

¹⁵³ On this concept, see McCarthy, Pool, Rosenthal, 2006; Schaffner, 2011.

The method implemented by the reformers quickly revealed lines of conflict.¹⁵⁴ Since this critical moment, the neoliberals have not ceased to promote the agenda, claiming that “there is no alternative” to “Washington Consensus”¹⁵⁵ because of the “end of ideology and history”.¹⁵⁶ An influential newspaper, spokesperson of the praetorians, set the tone: considering the FLN (of the reformers) as “the father of the FIS”, it summoned the government to “de-politicize the economy” and “decriminalize the relationship Algerians have with money”.¹⁵⁷ In this context former Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdelaziz Bouteflika, renowned for his propensity for “infatih” (the first regional translation of the neoliberal agenda) declared: “Those who doubted socialism a few years ago were marginalized. Today, it is those who doubt liberalism who are marginalized”.¹⁵⁸ Later that year, the secular neoliberal Saïd Saadi also echoed the alleged “liberal” wing: “No more welfare-state, that has proven its failure everywhere, while elsewhere the market-focused approaches have been more performance”.¹⁵⁹ And the doctor dictated the prescription in a Thatcherian vein: “put the Algerian back to work because it is first of all about this”.¹⁶⁰

In this context, the religious right occupied a place of choice. In his very first interview, 32-year-old fundamentalist preacher Ali Benhadj—propelled to the front of the stage on the last day of the October plot—outlined the economic doctrine of pious neoliberalism. Instead of redistributive taxation, he advocated charity: “In the economic field, Islam is for the right of property provided that it is not exercised from *haram* activities and that it is beneficial to the individual and society by the payment of *zakat*”.¹⁶¹

A fragment of the “hidden transcript”¹⁶² of the praetorian oligarchy was revealed to the media war machine headed by a military security commander: *L’Hebdo libéré*. The speech, cast in a Hayekian vein, gave a missing piece of the puzzle:

“Refusing to engage in a Polish style logic,... the government condemned itself to manage the unmanageable... The transition to a market economy in Poland has resulted in massive privatizations, a million unemployed, 100% inflation and congratulations from the IMF and international creditors ... The debate covers the nature of the remedies to be brought to the Algerian economic disease. After having made her sick by socialism will we not complete it with the Hidoucian market economy? ... The risk is great to see Ghazi Hidouci invent for Algeria what nobody in the world has: a ‘market economy without the market?’”¹⁶³

¹⁵⁴ In the press conference he gave the day after the adoption of his program for a period of three years, Prime Minister Mouloud Hamrouche affirmed: “a rescheduling of the debt is not envisaged. Such a decision leads to acceptance of IMF conditions”. Cf. *El Moudjahid*, 28 September 1989. The government newspapers, which remained in the hands of the political police, has been very skeptical from the beginning of the “reform government” preferring the neoliberal policy agenda of the IMF. Inter alia, Sbaâ, 1989. In this article, the editorial director of the mouthpiece of the so-called “liberal” wing of the authoritarian regime, responds to the reformers: “Le pays a-t-il besoin de discours ? Assurément non. Y a-t-il des recettes miracles ? Certainement pas”, Ibid. The same mantra is rehashed in the editorials and political pages of the government daily *El Moudjahid*. Cf. Bahmane, 1989. The main journalists and editorialists of the government newspapers *El moudjahid* and *Algérie Actualité* launched a few months later the daily newspapers *El Watan* and *Le Quotidien d’Algérie*, and the weekly newspaper *Le Nouvel Hebdo* and *L’Hebdo Libéré*, which will be distinguished by their enmity against the Reformers of the regime (Mehri, Chadli, Hidouci, Hamrouche), harsh hostility against the Moderates (Madani and Hachani in the Islamist movement, Aït Ahmed in the secular one), legitimization of the militarization, last but not least, their common advocacy in favor of the “shock therapy”, etc.

¹⁵⁵ Babb, 2013; Centeno, Cohen, 2012.

¹⁵⁶ See the interview given by Saïd Saadi to the governmental magazine *Algérie Actualité* n°1265, 11 to 17 January 1990 and the report of the conference that he co-animated with the “organic intellectual” Lahouari Addi—then regular collaborator to the RCD party newspaper (*L’avenir*)—in February 1990 in Oran (Hadj Slimane, 1990).

¹⁵⁷ Belkacem, 1989, p. 5. The author of the editorial is the director of the authoritative weekly *Algérie Actualité*. The trope of “Le FLN père du FIS” (FLN father of the FIS) was taken again by two leading experts: Harbi, 1990 and Addi, 1994. The French orientalist Gilles Kepel resumed in turn this trope in his *Jihad. Expansion et déclin de l’islamisme*.

¹⁵⁸ See *Algérie actualité*, 28 September - 4 October 1989, p. 9. The government daily *El Moudjahid* (21 September 1989) also described the intervention of the “liberal” Abdelaziz Bouteflika as “remarkable”.

¹⁵⁹ See *Algérie Actualité*, 21-27 December 1989, p. 9. The congress of the RCD, the second in less than a year, coincided with the day of the return of the opponent Hocine Aït Ahmed in Algeria after more than twenty years of political exile. Among the distinguished guests of the Algerian RCD, there were among others the president of the Constitutional Council, Abdelmalek Benhabyles.

¹⁶⁰ *Algérie Actualité* n°1242, 3-9 August 1989, p. 7.

¹⁶¹ See *Horizons*, 23 February 1989, p. 4. The author of the interview (Fouad Boughanem) presented Ali Benhadj as “the imam of the young people”. Not a word was said in this long interview about torture by the secret police, nor about the more than (officially) one hundred people killed by the army during the riots of October 1988...

¹⁶² Scott, 1990.

¹⁶³ Nedjar (pseudonym), 1991.

Lahouari Addi, who was member of the editorial staff of the insider weekly *L'hebdo libéré*, slipped these neoliberal recommendations in 1990: “The regulated market of the administered economy is now making history; it is illusory to want to resuscitate it. If the state made commercial premises available to buyers, it would distribute the speculative rent among several traders, which would have the advantage of reducing income inequalities”.¹⁶⁴ The same year, a film that had a huge success¹⁶⁵ conveyed the neoliberal cliché according to which the popular classes favored market capitalism and the “entrepreneur of the self”.¹⁶⁶ The film, which featured a family from the lower classes climbing the social ladder thanks to their self-employed daughter, ended with praise for French private television TF1, advertising and consumption...

Attacked on his right by religious and secular neoliberals, as on his left by heirs of the Algerian stalinists who supported the praetorian solution, reformer Prime Minister Mouloud Hamrouche responded: “We defend a democratic socialism, not a socialism of apparatus behind which an unbridled state capitalism hides [...] Those who make eye-checks to the IMF or who threaten to ally with other political forces [i.e. the FIS] have only one idea in mind: a bureaucratic alliance of apparatus with the business bourgeoisie for a seizure of power”.¹⁶⁷ The leftist Minister of Economy Ghazi Hidouci, who considered that “the reforms are a break, not a correction or continuation” was equally clear: “We must avoid South American drifts”.¹⁶⁸ Moderate leader of the democratic and leftist opposition Hocine Aït Ahmed brought support to reformers. The president of the Socialist Forces Front (FFS) rejected the IMF agenda as well, by recalling the “disasters suffered by the developing countries that opted for this solution”.¹⁶⁹

The reformers revealed that there was more than meets the eye: the praetorians aspired to operate the neoliberalization of the authoritarian-populist formula with the help of the Islamist movement—if the reformers’ government refused to execute the agenda of structural adjustment. This was the “Plan A” of the praetorian oligarchy.¹⁷⁰ Gone unnoticed, this political step helped to uncover the blind spot of the conventional narrative. The enigma of the “indefinite strike” launched by the FIS just a few weeks before the legislative elections of 27 June 1991—in which he was engaged—to demand an early presidential election, elucidates here. Realizing later how the strike imposed by the radicals of the FIS had served as a pretext for the army to regain control over the political process, Abassi Madani declared on 19 June 1991 that the state of siege declared two weeks earlier was in fact a “military coup”.¹⁷¹ The moderate president of the Islamist movement was violently attacked by three senior FIS leaders close to the DRS (among them Ahmed Merani and Hachemi Sahnouni) in the state television evening news. The “sheikhs”, who were careful to save radical Ali Benhadj, treated Abassi Madani as a “dangerous man who threatens to drop the country into a *fitna* (a civil war)”.¹⁷² The moderate leader was to be jailed in a military prison a few days later for “undermining the security of the state”. But if this really were the case, why did the military not dissolve the FIS—otherwise supposed to set up an “insurrectional atmosphere”—¹⁷³ in the aftermath of the incarceration of the president of the so-called “religious totalitarian party” and the exit of government reformers in June 1991? Aligned on the praetorian positions, *El Watan*—who described the sheikhs opposed to the moderate leader of the Islamist movement as “wise”—¹⁷⁴ was categorical:

It is absolutely out of the question for the power, if we stick to the political strategy it has pursued, to declare the dissolution of the FIS. The military command also said in a statement that no political

¹⁶⁴ Addi, 1990, p. 153-162. The author does not hesitate to adopt the Thatcherian anathema of “nany state”. Addi, 1994.

¹⁶⁵ Tribeche, 1990.

¹⁶⁶ Foucault, 2008.

¹⁶⁷ See *Algérie actualité*, 8-14 March 1990. Read also the dubious answer given by the praetorian oligarchy to Prime Minister Hamrouche in the editorial of the same edition of this state newspaper under the eloquent title: “Virage à haut risque”. Abdelaziz Sbâa, the author of the article and editorial director of *Algérie Actualité*—the loudspeaker of the authoritarian neoliberals—was appointed soon after to a high state office before becoming ambassador in Doha. *Journal Officiel de la république algérienne*, n°24, 26 April 2020.

¹⁶⁸ *El Moudjahid*, 6 February 1990, p. 3.

¹⁶⁹ See *El Moudjahid*, 15 February 1990.

¹⁷⁰ See also Nezzar, 1999, p. 226.

¹⁷¹ *El Watan*, 20 June 1991.

¹⁷² Direct observation of the author. *El Watan*, 26 June 1991.

¹⁷³ Belhouchet, 1991, p. 3; Nezzar, 1999, p. 221.

¹⁷⁴ *El Watan*, 26 June 1991.

party would be suspended from its activities. The message is clear, the FIS as a party will not be affected. The military command has therefore prepared its coup and calculated all the risks according to a well-developed tactic. While curbing the extremist elements, the power will try to promote by all means the emergence of the moderate wing within the Majliss Eshûra suffocated by the authoritarianism of Abassi Madani. Dissidents of the Majliss Eshûra could strengthen the ranks of the opponents of Abassi Madani and lead the FIS in the path of moderation.¹⁷⁵

It is in application of “plan A” that the short-lived successor of Madani at the head of the FIS, the close ally of the DRS, Saïd Guechi—who was the chief of the “totalitarian” party’s organization—participated, together with Saïd Saadi of the RCD, in a “national dialogue” with the praetorian government. The absence of Mehri’s FLN, Aït Ahmed’s FFS and the newly elected leader of the FIS Abdelkader Hachani was notable in this regard.

In fact, the days of the reformers were counted from the very moment they unveiled the stakes of the real politics. It is from this turning point that the conflict began to harden: in addition to calls for the dissolution of the Assemblée Populaire Nationale,¹⁷⁶ acts of political violence occurred in the winter of 1990. The first was a shooting in front of a court, killing three. Prime Minister Hamrouche brought to light the hidden issues of conflict: “Democratization... disturbs the illegitimate interests of the occult forces that dominate the country’s foreign trade. It is these forces that are behind the acts of violence aimed to divert the state from the implementation of the reforms”.¹⁷⁷

War of Siege or War of Maneuver?

“Liberalization is a situation or, when it involves a series of steps, a process of instituting civil liberties, most importantly the right of autonomous association, and of allowing or even creating some political organizations through which conflicts can be processed in an open fashion, but without transforming the power apparatus and undermining its capacity to control outcomes *ex post*”.¹⁷⁸ While “democratization is a process of subjecting all interests to competition, of institutionalizing uncertainty”, political liberalization is “a controlled opening of the political space, continually contingent upon the compatibility of the outcomes of politics with the interests or values of the authoritarian power apparatus”.¹⁷⁹ The political liberalization engaged in Algeria between February 1989 and January 1992 revealed the real political forces operating in society: the FIS, the FLN (led since November 1988 by reformer Abdelhamid Mehri) and the Socialists Forces Front of the moderate Hocine Aït Ahmed. Abdelkader Hachani, who removed from the FIS leadership those identified as secret police agents in July 1991,¹⁸⁰ emerged as a moderate leader, anxious to avoid the violent confrontation with hardliners and to build an anti-authoritarian alliance.

Since “in a democracy substantive compromises cannot be binding”, agreement concerning “exclusively substantive issues excludes the possibility of democracy”.¹⁸¹ The problem of democratization is, therefore, to establish an “institutional compromise among the forces which are allied to bring down the authoritarian regime, not only to bring this regime down”.¹⁸² The praetorian propaganda took special care to obscure this crucial step since the emerging political society had reached such an institutional compromise before the military coup of 11 January 1992. While the reformer secretary general of the FLN (Abdelhamid Mehri)

¹⁷⁵ *El Watan*, 2 July 1991, p. 3. See also the interview of Hachemi Sahnouni in *El Khabar* of 1 July 1991.

¹⁷⁶ *Algérie Actualité*, n°1267, 25-31 January 1990, p. 7. The “organic intellectual” Madjid Bencheikh, who was careful to specify that his association of human rights did not seek to document the cases of torture, called to dissolve the Assemblée Populaire Nationale in February 1990. *Algérie Actualité*, n°1271, 22-28 February 1990.

¹⁷⁷ See *El Moudjahid*, 19-20 January 1990.

¹⁷⁸ Przeworski, 1988, p. 61.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 61, p. 63.

¹⁸⁰ As Saïd Guechi, Ahmed Merani, Hachemi Sahnouni, etc. The first, head of the organic apparatus of the FIS, became minister in the 1992 praetorian government and Ambassador to Saudi Arabia soon after. The second, head of the social service of the FIS, entered the cabinet of the Prime minister Ghazali in June 1991, became minister of religious affairs in 1995 and senator appointed by the Presidency. The third was the leader of the Algerian Salafist current, a close friend to Ali Benhadj, the objective ally of the praetorian force.

¹⁸¹ Przeworski, 1989, p. 64. See also Rustow, 1970; Bermeo, 1992.

¹⁸² Przeworski, 1989, pp. 63-64. The “procedural consensus”, which concerns the “rules of the game or the procedures”, does not exclude disagreement on the “ultimate values” or the “public policies”. Also, moderation is understood here as the ability to negotiate a “procedural compromise”: see Sartori, 1987, pp. 90-91.

called several weeks before the first round of the parliamentary elections of 26 December 1991 / 16 January 1992 for a “coalition government between the main forces”,¹⁸³ the head of the FIS Abdelkader Hachani led an electoral campaign rejecting any recourse to violence¹⁸⁴ as had done before him the moderate leader of the Islamist Front, Abassi Madani.¹⁸⁵ Two days before the critical ballot, democratizer President Chadli confirmed “encourag[ing] the alliance of the parties for the formation of the next government”.¹⁸⁶

While the first round polls gave a large majority of seats at the Assembly to the Islamic Salvation Front, Abdelhamid Mehri reiterated his proposal for a democratic compromise: “We are willing to work with the sons of the same people, who certainly have different political thoughts, but can nonetheless form a national coalition in the service of the people and the higher interests of their country”.¹⁸⁷ Although weakened by the assassination of his close adviser Ali André Mécili, the leader of the secular opposition Hocine Aït Ahmed also committed to democratization: “We are legalists, what interests us the most is the consolidation of the democratic process and civil peace. In any event, we wish that there will be a second round”.¹⁸⁸ Concealing the fears of the so-called “Iranianisation of Algeria”, the moderate leader of the Islamists Abdelkader Hachani was categorical on 29 December 1991: “the Algerian people have been the leader of the oppressed peoples since 1954. Algeria will not mimic any other country”.¹⁸⁹ He in turn reaffirmed his attachment to a democratic compromise immediately after the first-round victory of his party: “cohabitation with the FLN and the FFS will not pose any problem because we have to open the doors to all the skills of the country regardless of their political affiliation. Also, there should be no problem with the President of the Republic”.¹⁹⁰ And the latter declared: “It was my choice to continue the electoral process... I did not want to abdicate the will of an aging system”.¹⁹¹

Also, moderate Islamist leader Hachani addressed President Chadli on 4 January 1992, through the former minister of Foreign Affairs Ahmed Taleb (son of Sheikh al Bashir al Ibrahim of the Association of Algerian Oulemas), the following historic political perspective: the FIS would leave the position of Chief of Government to Hocine Aït Ahmed, occupying only the ministerial portfolios of justice and education, leaving those of Defense, Interior and Economy.¹⁹² An influential praetorian propagandist weekly said Abdelkader Hachani believed he could “thwart the trap” of the overwhelming Islamist electoral victory by proposing a “coalition government” in which the FIS would only occupy the Ministry of Justice.¹⁹³ Faced with either violent conflict (potentially beneficial but risky) or a democratic solution (requiring compromise but offering security), political forces involved in regime transformation could opt for the democratic compromise.¹⁹⁴ Such an institutional compromise was not, as proclaimed by media expert Lahouari Addi, a “regression”—¹⁹⁵ however “fertile” it may have been in its theological temporality—but quite the opposite: the condition of possibility of the process of democratization.¹⁹⁶

¹⁸³ Interview of Abdelhamid Mehri to *Le Soir d'Algérie*, 9 December 1991.

¹⁸⁴ *El Moudjahid*, 18 December 1991. On 29 November 29 1991, the Guemar military barracks (El Oued, south-eastern Algeria) was attacked by a terrorist group. The latter, who killed three soldiers, stole a great number of weapons. The official and unofficial media of the praetorian government who reported this information specified that the terrorist group was linked to the FIS. The moderate FIS leader, who was hesitant about whether or not his party would participate in the legislative elections, challenged the defense ministry to provide any evidence of the FIS involvement in the attack. Fearing, by choosing to boycott the legislative elections of 26 December 1991, to give pretext for the slide towards violence, Hachani decided to participate in the elections and to abandon the prerequisite of the democratization of the political life he had posed (*El Watan*, 10 September 1991, p. 3). It was only after the coup that the praetorian government hammered out the story of the involvement of the FIS in the Guemar attack. On this episode, see Samraoui, 2003.

¹⁸⁵ Waterbury, 1994, p. 115.

¹⁸⁶ *El Moudjahid*, 25 December 1991.

¹⁸⁷ *El Moudjahid*, 30 December 1991.

¹⁸⁸ *El Moudjahid*, 29 December 1991.

¹⁸⁹ *El Moudjahid*, 30 December, 1991.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ *Le Matin*, 13 January 2001.

¹⁹² See the interview given by Ahmed Taleb to *Al Jazeera* in May 2008: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=swK2Fep8QUQ> (accessed 12 November 2017).

¹⁹³ Khelladi, 1992a, 1992b. The author is a well-known officer of the Algerian political police apparatus.

¹⁹⁴ Przeworski, 1988, p. 70.

¹⁹⁵ Addi, 1994.

¹⁹⁶ Inter alia, Rustow, 1970; Przeworski, 1980; Sartori, 1987; Bermeo, 1992.

The conventional account of the Algerian military response to the victory of the Islamists in the parliamentary elections of December 1991 is not only deficient and partisan. Apprehending the political sequence occurring from 1989 to 1992 in a “historical provincialism”, the standard scholarship of the “institutional choice” made by “republican officers” completely taken aback by an electoral storm introduced another harmful bias, with its increasingly restricted temporal structure: that of limiting the cases and considering an “incomplete sequence”. In its search for explanations, it focused on the immediate, looking for “causes and outcomes that are both temporally contiguous and rapidly unfolding”.¹⁹⁷ Contrary to the official narrative, the parliamentary elections of 26 December 1991 were not a tornado—“modifying the perceptions of the risks”. The military coup orchestrated in January 1992 was part of a praetorian process that proceeded, to use Stinchcombe’s category, from a “historical causation”, the very one that defeated, during the foundational juncture of the war of independence, Messali’s project of a democratically elected Constituent Assembly.

As nicely captured by Eric Schattschneider, “a conclusive way of checking the rise of conflict is simply to provide no arena for it or to create no public agency with power to do anything about it [...]”.¹⁹⁸ The praetorian oligarchy, which has foreseen neither the rise of Abdelkader Hachani, nor the resistance of the FLN’s reformers, even less the moderation of Hocine Aït Ahmed, is trapped by the democratic compromise negotiated *despite* the “trap” of the results of the first round of the legislative elections—that were organized by the authoritarian apparatus. Also, the praetorian forces had no choice but to activate “Plan B”: the militarization of conflict as a mechanism for coercing the neoliberal transformation of the populist-authoritarian formula. The army, that preserved its “power of control outcomes *ex post*” during liberalization executed its “substantive control over decisions”. Indeed, the 11 January 1992 veto coup had to avoid the “crossing of the threshold beyond which no one could intervene to reverse outcomes of the formal democratic process”.¹⁹⁹ Confronted by this “devolution of power over outcomes”, the hardliners released a major authoritarian learning reminiscent of the “3B” founders: never again did the college of praetorians have to give room for maneuver to the president.

Samuel Finer, a political scientist who took history seriously, was right: “[...] if the armed forces are not to intervene, they must believe in an explicit principle—the principle of civil supremacy[...] The reason is that the very nature of the professionalism on which Huntington sets such store and which he regards as ‘politically sterile’, in fact often thrusts the military into collision with the civil authorities”.²⁰⁰ Indeed, “[t]he armed forces have three massive political advantages over civilian organizations: a marked superiority in organization, a highly emotionalized symbolic status, and a monopoly of arms. They form a prestigious corporation or Order, enjoying overwhelming superiority in the means of applying force. The wonder, therefore, is not why this rebels against its civilian masters, but why it ever obeys them”.²⁰¹ Actually, on his appointment as Minister of Defense in July 1990 (following the first and last democratic suffrage of the country) Major-General Khaled Nezzar, whom the partisan account presented as the artisan of the “professionalization-depoliticization of the army”, affirmed without makeup: “‘The army in the barracks?’ [...] We reject categorically again this pejorative formula because it also expresses an imported concept that does not correspond in any way to our military history”.²⁰² This long interview of the Minister of Defense, which caught the attention of *Le Monde*,²⁰³ suffices by its clarity and weight to invalidate the biased report that put forward the so-called “historical decision of disengaging the military from the political power” after the Constitution of February 1989.²⁰⁴

¹⁹⁷ Pierson, 2004, p. 79.

¹⁹⁸ Schattschneider, 1975, p. 69.

¹⁹⁹ Przeworski, 1988, p. 62.

²⁰⁰ Finer, 1962, p. 25.

²⁰¹ Ibid, p. 5.

²⁰² The interview is fully reproduced in Nezzar, 1999, p. 182.

²⁰³ *Le Monde*, 12 September 1990. Despite its importance, the long interview of the minister of defense was neglected by mainstream expertise.

²⁰⁴ In French, “décision historique de désengager l’armée du pouvoir politique”, Aït Aoudia, 2016, p. 123.

The “Global Strategy”: Hidden Transcripts of Praetorian Oligarchy

There is another questionable omission. An official document drafted by the military high command in autumn 1990 specifies the praetorian “global strategy”²⁰⁵ and shows the scope of the praetorian counter-revolution. The standard scholarship of Algerian politics failed to reconstitute the logic of aggregating ideas, institutions and interests. Also, it fails to capture the mechanisms of institutional and political transformation that has affected the state-regime complex since 1987. Also, “without a set of ideas to diagnose the nature of the (crisis) facing agents, institutional change [...] can only be understood theoretically as a random ‘shot in the dark’”.²⁰⁶ As Marc Blyth put it, “(w)hile the reduction of uncertainty and the generation of collective action create the necessary conditions for institutional transformation, the sufficient conditions lie in the subsequent roles that ideas play as weapons and blueprints with which agents can contest and replace existing institutions”.²⁰⁷

This is surely the case of the Algerian praetorian “global strategy”. Inspired by the “total strategy” doctrine developed by General Beaufre²⁰⁸ in France, it insists on the following structural logics: erasing the boundaries between civil and military; the “synchronization, combination and interdependence of tasks”; the “centralization of the command of the strategy”; the “global” dimension of such “strategy” which must cover a field ranging from Mediterranean “security issues” to the “control of mosques”, through “psychological action”. Delivered after the publication of “The roots of Muslim Rage” by the leading orientalist Bernard Lewis,²⁰⁹ the praetorian breviary engraves the mantra: the “totalitarian theocratic majority”²¹⁰ will “inevitably cause a civil war”²¹¹ opposing “territorial, political and ideological groups”²¹² against each other, “threatening the destiny of Algeria as a nation and a republic”²¹³ as much as the “internal security of the countries of the

²⁰⁵ General Khaled Nezzar, minister of defense from July 1990 to December 1993, published this document in his *Mémoires* (Nezzar, 1999, pp. 217-230). This US conception of “global security” finds its institutional translation in Algeria through the creation, in 1980, of the Haut Conseil de Sécurité, then the establishment in 1984, of the Institut National d’Etudes de Stratégie Globale (INESG), closely controlled by the secret police. *Journal Officiel de la république algérienne*, 1 April 1980, pp. 363-364. Available online: <http://www.inesg.dz>

²⁰⁶ Blyth, 2002.

²⁰⁷ Blyth, 2002, p. 45, p. 39.

²⁰⁸ Beaufre, 1966. A separate discussion with two senior intelligence officers confirmed to the author their perfect knowledge of Beaufre’s works.

²⁰⁹ Lewis, 1990.

²¹⁰ Quote from the praetorian “global strategy” of autumn 1990: Nezzar, 1999, p. 222.

²¹¹ Nezzar, 1996, p. 2.

²¹² Quote from the praetorian “global strategy”: Nezzar, 1999, p. 222.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 217, 218, 230. The doctrinal document mentions the following in its conclusion: “In any event, the issue at stake in the situation that Algeria is currently experiencing is of a historical dimension, because it calls into question the country and its destiny as a sovereign nation called on either to continue its economic and social development, or to plunge into an obscurantist and medieval state”. *Id.*, pp. 229-230. My own translation. The books of Rédha Malek and Mohammed Harbi, published under the respective titles *Tradition et révolution, le véritable enjeu* (Algiers: Bouchène, 1991) and *L’Algérie et son destin. Croyants ou citoyens ?* (Paris: Arcantère, 1992) fit in this wake. The first book was republished in France (under the title *Tradition et révolution. L’enjeu de la modernité en Algérie et dans l’Islam*) two years later by Sindbad—a publishing house that has published several Algerian officials and organic intellectuals—at a moment when Rédha Malek was minister of foreign affairs and member of the Haut comité d’Etat. The book of Mohammed Harbi *L’Algérie et son destin. Croyants ou citoyens ?* was republished in Algiers (by Médias associés) in 1994. In this influential work, the author advances the following culturalist argument (pp. 217-218): “The Islam of this [Islamist intelligentsia is] strongly marked by totalitarian thought [...] The Islamist movement is a movement of the millennial type. Its force of attraction, its dazzling successes can be explained by this hypothesis”. My own translation. Throwing overboard the proletarian and communist legacy of the ENA, the PPA and Messali Hadj, the former FLN organic intellectual continues his story strongly marked by the seal of “presentism”: “As in the PPA-MTLD of the years 1946-48, the millennial impetus is reflected in the setting of a deadline for the collapse of the system and the belief in the possibility of a sudden change following a few sudden clashes, regardless of a patient strategy of power control”. Without documenting his work, the historian asserted (*Id.*, p. 217): “The activist and paramilitary sphere of influence has long been pushed into the background. It is inspired by the nationalist tradition, the Afghan and Iranian experiences. Heads of large families abound there, testifying to a rare involvement in paramilitary organizations. Of the 208 supporters of Bouyali, there were forty-nine business workers, twenty-two agricultural workers, twelve teachers, twenty-two traders and artisans, eight students, nine employees, three entrepreneurs and other professions that we were unable to identify. All social groups are represented there”. Repeating the praetorian mantra, the author of *L’Algérie et son destin* diagnosed the crisis of 1988-1992: “The state-FLN policy did not correspond to the needs of the society or to those of the forces that the post-October had revealed. The FLN, undermined by successive purges, undermined by scandals, was unable, despite the return to the fold of the old figures of the movement (Bouteflika, Boumaaza, Belaïd, Yahiaoui) to regain the free membership of the community (sic). The prospect of “rigged” elections provokes a stiffening of the FIS [...] The radical sectors which controlled the streets and imposed by violence the moral order on the middle classes in search of a savior had taken over the elements “Infiltrators”, object of the solicitude of the power and its services”. While the process initiated by Abassi Madani and Abdelkader Hachani completely contradicts this biased account, the expert maintained the following idea: “The only topic for reflection was on the means to confront the state. The memory of the FLN ‘8 days strike’ in 1957 inspired Abassi Madani. He rallied behind him all the forces that made violence a fetish and wanted to fight with the army, finally giving it the opportunity to respond to the wishes of the middle classes (sic)”. Using the official storytelling, he stated that: “The paralysis of the state apparatus after the victory of the FIS, foreshadowed an irrepressible push in its favor and precipitated military intervention [...]”. Ignoring the role of the secret police in spreading rumors, the public intellectual avouched what follows: “Public rumor already compared

Maghreb and Europe”.²¹⁴ Borrowing a rhetoric forged by military dictatorships during the Cold War, the regime of Colonel Boumediene had already stirred the so-called specter of Marxism to justify the process of the 1965 coup. *France Observateur* could title “Algeria: the Military or the Marxist?”²¹⁵ Colonel Boumediene’s heirs renewed this strategy to adapt it to the post-Cold War context. “To prevent the [“Islamic totalitarianism”] ‘threat’, the army will put itself in a favorable position [...]. The choice of the moment for this posture must be meticulously fixed because it irremediably signifies the pursuit, until the end of the new strategy”.²¹⁶ The message was well understood in Paris, Rome and Washington, who supported the coup. President François Mitterrand expressed confidence the day after the coup: “there is a hypothesis on which it is forbidden, for the moment, to think: the establishment of democracy”.²¹⁷ Inescapable trope structuring the official mantra as well as the conventional scholarship, the analogy with the fall of the Weimar Republic by the democratically elected National-Socialist party in 1933 reveals all its emptiness. While the political liberalization in place in Algeria between 1989 and 1992 is by definition a political situation, the Weimar Republic (1919-1933) was a political regime²¹⁸—more democratic than authoritarian. Hitler, whose party had not won the parliamentary majority in the November 1932 legislative elections, did not come to power thanks to universal suffrage but because of a deal orchestrated by the conservative right to block the formation of a coalition government of left-wing parties that held the majority of seats in parliament.²¹⁹

Also, despite its immense importance, the Algerian military document of the autumn 1990 was disregarded by the prevailing scholarship.²²⁰ The “emotion” that the praetorian propaganda sought to generate by waving the scarecrow of the “theocratic totalitarian government”, provided the “opportunity”²²¹ to execute the long prepared coup. In a speech broadcast on 2 June 1991 on the Algerian public television, President Chadli reiterated both his will to go to the parliamentary elections on 27 June 1991 and his enthusiasm to work with the democratically elected parliament. But the army’s praetorian command imposed the state of siege the next day.²²² Despite this praetorian counter-process at work since the implementation of the political liberalization by the reformers, the rising “organic intellectual” Lahouari Addi affirmed in *Le Monde diplomatique*²²³ that the new military command embodied by Minister of Defense Khaled Nezzar and the boss of the strategic Direction Centrale de la Sécurité de l’Armée (DCSA) Mohammed Mediène²²⁴ are “more and more attracted by the republican model, loyal to the institutions that the country gives itself”. And to affirm about the state of siege of June 1991 that “the army intervened to mark the limits not to cross without questioning the march towards democracy...” Saïd Saadi of the RCD is of the same opinion: “for the first time, an army in a third world country did not seize power when it could do so. This is a salutary political development that Algeria can be proud of”.²²⁵ On the other hand, the reformist minister of the Interior spoke of a “sound of boots” (“bruits de bottes”) and “Chilean scenario”, just one day before the state of siege.

The coup reached its final stage a month before the forced resignation of Chadli Bendjedid. It had begun after the praetorian state of siege of 4 June 1991 that had led immediately after to the release of the reformers. In other words, this meant the dispossession of the president of the republic, who was also (formally) the

the fate of the rulers to that of the *Pieds noirs* [...] play its place and perhaps its survival. Together with the middle classes, she felt she had saved the country”. Id, pp. 223-224. My own translation.

²¹⁴ See also Nezzar, 1999, pp. 226-230.

²¹⁵ Delisle, 1964.

²¹⁶ Nezzar, 1999, pp. 226-230.

²¹⁷ Védrine, 1996; *Financial Times*, 18 January 1992. The US State Department considered that the creation of the Haut Comité d’Etat three days after the coup was in conformity with the Constitution. *Le Monde*, 16 January 1992.

²¹⁸ For a conceptual clarification, read Linz, 1973.

²¹⁹ The conventional scholarship, which takes up the trope of the analogy with the fall of the Weimar Republic, takes liberalization for democratization, thus falling into the transitology traps of the blank page and the electoralist fallacy.

²²⁰ Inter alia Martínez, 2012; Mundy, 2015; McDougall, 2017; Roberts, 2003; Lowi, 2009; Werenfels, 2007; Aït Aoudia, 2016; Arezki, 2018.

²²¹ See Finer, 1962.

²²² Interviews with Khaled Nezzar, Algiers, November 2010; interviews with Abdelhamdi Mehri, Algiers, November 2010. “Décret présidentiel du 4 juin 1991 portant proclamation de l’état de siège”, *Journal Officiel de la république algérienne*, n°29, 12 June 1991, pp. 903-904.

²²³ August 1991, p. 6.

²²⁴ “Décret du 5 Décembre 1988 portant désignation dans les fonctions de directeur de la direction centrale de la sécurité de l’armée”, *Journal officiel de la république algérienne*, n°50, 7 December 1988, p. 1299.

²²⁵ *El Watan*, 24 September 1991. The eve of the state of siege of 4 June 1991, the “démocrate” Saïd Saadi declared prophetic: “the army is called for the second time in three years to make up for the bankruptcy of a system condemned by history”, *El Watan*, 30 May 1991.

commander-in-chief of the armed forces. The power to order troop movements was given to the minister of the interior (Major-General Larbi Belkheir) and the head of the government (a civilian client of the military oligarchy) instead in violation of both the letter and the spirit of the 1989 Constitution.²²⁶ Unnoticed by the conventional scholarship notwithstanding its critical implications, the low-key institutional dispositif adopted on 6 December 1991 shows clearly that the organization of the coup was ready as early as one month prior to the results of the parliamentary elections—the “meticulously chosen moment for orchestrating the posture of the army” to quote the praetorian global strategy released in autumn 1990.

Seeking to co-opt the prestigious leader of the democratic opposition, Minister of Defense Khaled Nezzar met Hocine Aït Ahmed just after the first-round of elections.²²⁷ Publicly arguing for the continuation of the electoral process, the moderate opponent reminded the hardliner of the constitutional prerogatives of the President, including the ability to dissolve the Assembly. The Guardian’s response resembles the one advanced by the “3B” some thirty years earlier: “I replied that there was no presidency in the real sense of the word”.²²⁸ Abdelkader Hachani was incarcerated on 22 January 1992. Not only was the moderate leader of the FIS not calling for violence²²⁹ but he was actively working to build an anti-authoritarian alliance with the FLN and the FFS since the military coup.²³⁰ Also, the praetorian command released at the same time Rabah Kebir, who was willing to “establish the Islamic Republic to save the Algerian people”²³¹ in Annaba on 15 November 1991. Knowing that as Gramsci put it, “in politics the ‘war of position’, once won is decisive definitively”, the praetorian oligarchy choose the form of war in which the garrison state it ran had an overwhelming superiority: the “war of maneuver”.

The orthodox account considers that “only the army could cope” with the “situation of establishing an Islamic republic” and that what happened on 11 January 1992 was a “military defense of democracy”...²³² But this kind of report does not only take over the official storytelling, it is above all biased. It ignored the famous interview of Khaled Nezzar in September 1990, in which he reaffirmed the praetorian nature of the Algerian army, rejecting categorically its return to barracks; it overlooked the document of the military high command in which the praetorian “global strategy” of militarizing the polity was developed during the autumn 1990; it confused liberalization and democratization, political regime and political situation; it finally disregarded the historic institutional compromise proposed by the moderate leader of the Islamic Salvation Front Abdelkader Hachani to the President Chadli.

Mentioning neither the praetorian dispositif launched during the autumn 1990 nor the democratic compromise of the political society exhumed above, the leading figure of the Algerian intelligentsia Mohammed Harbi echoed the official story. Suggesting a parallel with Marshal Pétain and the Vichy government, the former FLN’s “organic intellectual” asserted on the one hand that “any compromise with the FIS becomes impossible” and on the other that the president “Chadli was ready for all compromises to stay in power”. Conversely, his judgment on the army was wholehearted: “Boudiaf is in the situation of General de Gaulle after 13th May 1958. The Algerian army does not seek to take center stage and therefore needs a political boss”(sic).²³³ Affirming that “the new leaders’ clear concern to assert their respect for

²²⁶ *Journal officiel de la République algérienne*, 63, 7 December 1991, pp. 1961-1962.

²²⁷ This meeting was confirmed by Ali Haroun (former executive in the “Fédération de France du FLN”, well-established lawyer, minister of Human rights and member of the Haut comité d’Etat) and Hocine Aït Ahmed in Labat and Aït-Aoudia, 2003 (sequence from 42:23 to 47:00) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yKqTP8nlwGg>

²²⁸ Nezzar, 1999, p. 238.

²²⁹ In his international press conference of 29 December 1991, the leader of the Islamic Front of Salvation insisted on several points: the respect by his political party of the constitutional framework; to refrain from calling for an early presidential election as long as the assembly was not stripped of its prerogatives; the change of the Constitution can only be done in compliance with the Basic Law, which reserves this prerogative to the President of the Republic; the commitment of the FIS to work with all the forces of the country regardless of their ideological inclinations. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WgHug0DgACY> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NjDnnp0oQjw>. In a communiqué published on 13 January 1992 in which he denounced the “conspiracy” of the “junta”, Abdelkader Hachani “calls the people to arm themselves with patience and prudence”. *Le Monde*, 15 January 1992, p. 3.

²³⁰ *Le Monde*, 18 January 1992, p. 3.

²³¹ *El Moudjahid*, 16 November 1991.

²³² Aït-Aoudia, 2016, p. 298, p. 288.

²³³ Harbi, 1992a.

constitutional legitimacy” stems from a “desire for the rule of law that inhabits Algerians”,²³⁴ the authoritative intellectual asserted the following: “To leave the democratic game under the pretext of unlimited popular sovereignty, subject to the versatility of any conjunctural expression, is nothing but a populism undisclosed behind the screen of ultra-democratism”.²³⁵ This argument resembles that which Friedrich August Hayek had set in stone in support of the Chilean military junta in the aftermath of the 1973 military coup.²³⁶ The founding secretary of the Society for Algerian Studies,²³⁷ Hugh Roberts, reproducing an argument advanced by an Algerian minister to *Le Monde*,²³⁸ declared the following: “In cancelling Chadli’s mandate and thereby precipitating the suspension of the electoral process, the Algerian officers’ corps were not flouting the democratic will of the people, they were arguably reflecting it”.²³⁹

A week before the pronunciamiento however, an influential newspaper (directed by a senior officer) recalled the *Zeitgeist* of the epoch: “to be reliable, in 1992, a coup can only be placed in the perspective of the defense of the democracy”.²⁴⁰ Also, the praetorian propaganda promoted the story according to which Algeria was, as the so-called independent press put it, a “democracy without democrats”.²⁴¹ Such a narrative reached intellectual dignity less than two years later as *Democracy without Democrats*,²⁴² edited with sponsorship of a foundation of ENI, an oil company strategically linked to the core of the praetorian state power through TransMed, the pipeline supplying Algerian natural gas to Italy.²⁴³ In his contribution, a well-known economist and deputy director at ENI understood as the “linchpin of the project”,²⁴⁴ made the following prophecy *urbi et orbi*: “There will always be opposition, but it will never be more democratic than the power [...]”.²⁴⁵ *Ite missa est*.

The manifesto, which ignores the literature on democratization as well as the democratic compromise reached before the reactionary coup, resumed after the book’s release in France in the pages of *Le Monde* with the story of the “Algerian tragedy of a democracy without democrats”.²⁴⁶ Written by an authoritative Algerian intellectual just as the praetorian government launched the “shock therapy”, the prophet actually condemned Algeria to the “tragedy”—of “civil war”. His judgement is all the more important as he had claimed elsewhere that the “intervention of the army on 11 January 1992” was dictated by “the justified fear of the breakup of the country”²⁴⁷ and painted a dithyrambic portrait of Ali Kafi, the successor of (the assassinated) Mohammed Boudiaf at the head of the HCE.²⁴⁸ Essentialist, he opposed the “Citizen to the Believer”.²⁴⁹ Also, three days only after the assassination of human rights activist Youssef Fathallah on 18 June 1994, the trustworthy expert published an article in *Le Monde* in which he affirmed *ex cathedra* that it was the Islamists who had killed Fathallah.²⁵⁰ The former FLN intellectual omitted to remind the readers of the French newspaper three crucial information: Youssef Fathallah had refused to endorse the report of the official commission of inquiry on the assassination of the head of state Mohammed Boudiaf of which he was a member; three weeks prior to his murder the lawyer took part in an Amnesty International meeting in Berlin in which he described

²³⁴ Harbi, 1992b, p. 146.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 147.

²³⁶ Cf. Hayek, 1978a, 1978b; Farrant and McPhail, 2014; Cladwell, Leonidas Montes, 2015. On the imprint of Carl Schmitt’s thought on that of Friedrich A. Hayek, see Cristi, 1984, 1998; Scheuermann, 1997; Chamayou, 2018.

²³⁷ The Society for Algerian Studies, as stated on its website, “established and maintained (since its foundation in 1993) good relations with the Algerian Embassy in London”: <http://algerianstudies.org.uk/theSociety.html> (last view 31 January 2019).

²³⁸ *Le Monde*, 14 January 1992, p. 3.

²³⁹ Roberts, 2003, p. 121.

²⁴⁰ Khelladi, 1992b, p. 5.

²⁴¹ See “Démocratie sans démocrates”, *L’hebdo libéré*, 1-6 January 1992, p. 11.

²⁴² Salamé, 1994. For a critique of this kind of scholarship, see Heydemann, 2002.

²⁴³ The “mani pulite” investigations revealed the payment by the Italians of a \$ 30 million bribe at the end of the 1980s to an “institutional intermediary”.

²⁴⁴ Interview with Jean Leca, one of the contributors of the book (Paris, 18 October 2018).

²⁴⁵ Luciani, 1994. Also Salamé, 1994.

²⁴⁶ Harbi, 1994a.

²⁴⁷ Harbi, 1992a, pp. 57-60. While the editorials of Bachir Ben Yahmed, the director of the flourishing press group *Jeune Afrique*, were reproduced in the pages of the *L’Hebdo libéré*, a journalist-officer of the Algerian weekly, moreover led by a senior officer, publishes in the Parisian magazine under pseudonym.

²⁴⁸ Harbi, 1992c. Harbi failed to specify to the readers of his hagiographic article devoted to Ali Kafi that the latter is none other than his maternal uncle.

²⁴⁹ Harbi, 1992.

²⁵⁰ Harbi, 1994b.

“extrajudicial executions, killings and other human rights violations”;²⁵¹ the human rights activist was killed with a silent pistol. While no “jihadist” group claimed responsibility for the assassination, no investigative commission or trial has been set up since.

Was There Really a “Civil War” in Algeria? The Genealogy of a Discourse

Machiavelli famously unearthed the logic of survival in his *Discourses on Livy*:

If one wishes a sect or a republic to live long, it is necessary to draw it back often toward its beginning [...] They called regaining the state putting that terror and that fear in men that had been put there in taking it, since at that time they had beaten down those who, according to that mode of life, had worked for ill. But as the memory of that beating is eliminated, men began to dare to try new things and to say evil; and so it is necessary to provide for it, drawing [the state] back toward its beginnings.²⁵²

As an enterprise used for “perverting the significance of events and (...) insinuating false intentions”, propaganda can never reveal its true projects and plans or disclose government secrets. That “would make the projects vulnerable to enemy action”. Propaganda “must serve instead as a veil for such projects, masking true intentions”.²⁵³ The genealogy of the “Algerian civil war” discourse is a relevant analyzer of the efficiency of the power/knowledge dispositif of the praetorian ideological power—an issue completely neglected by mainstream scholarship.²⁵⁴ While the FIS leader Abdelkader Hachani reiterated in the aftermath of the coup the “commitment of his political party to respect the Constitution” and build an anti-authoritarian alliance with the leaders of the FLN and the FFS²⁵⁵, the praetorian propaganda machine, anxious to justify militarization shortly before the coup, spread a narrative describing Algeria as a polity already divided, through a *summa divisio*, between “two peoples” engaged in a “civil war”.²⁵⁶ The hegemonic story of the “Algerian civil war” that structures the doxa had already been disseminated by propaganda in June 1991 to justify the exit of the Reformers’ Government, the postponement of legislative elections (initially planned for 27 June 1991) and the establishment of a renewed praetorian infrastructural power in the wake of the state of siege. “Will Algeria be a second Lebanon?” wondered *El Watan*, an influential daily close to the DRS, in an editorial dated 26 June 1991. Again, it is *L’hebdo libéré*, a major newspaper led by a Commander who spread this story at a time when reformers and moderates had reached a democratic compromise.²⁵⁷ That this war machine the importance of which has been completely neglected by the conventional scholarship²⁵⁸ did not hesitate to deliver, a few months earlier, an anti-Semitic campaign²⁵⁹ against the reformer Minister of Economy Ghazi Hidouci, says a lot about the propaganda deployed by the praetorian regime—in the shadow of the Kuwait war.

In *Le Monde* (of 4 June 2004), Mohamed Benchicou, a celebrated figure of the “Algerian independent press”, acknowledged having defended the army during the 1990s by relaying the official thesis concerning the crimes of the second counterrevolution. Indeed, one of the first promoters of the “Algerian civil war” thesis in the social sciences was a well-known propagandist of the Algerian political police, Aïssa Khelladi.²⁶⁰ After receiving a scholarship from the army to study psychology, the secret agent became captain of the Sécurité Militaire. With the political opening of 1989, he converted to journalism, officiating in a praetorian propaganda machine—led by an army commander and financed by a former director of information at the Presidency turned crony capitalist, furthermore very close friend of the head of the DRS²⁶¹ who had wholesaled the “civil war” story even before the coup. From 1994 the officer-journalist became an established

²⁵¹ Amnesty International, 1996.

²⁵² Machiavelli, 1996, p. 209.

²⁵³ Ellul, 1996.

²⁵⁴ Roberts, 2003; Werenfels, 2007; Lowi, 2009; Martinez, 2012; Mundy, 2015; McDougall, 2017.

²⁵⁵ *Le Monde*, 17 January 1992, p. 6; *Le Monde*, 18 January 1992, p. 3.

²⁵⁶ Khelladi, 1991; Mahmoudi, 1991. The first author was a captain, the second a commander.

²⁵⁷ Mahmoudi, 1992; Metref, 1992; Aït Larbi, 1992.

²⁵⁸ Martinez, 2003; Ait-Aoudia, 2016.

²⁵⁹ *Le Nouvel Hebdo*, n°31, 23-29 January 1991; *Le Nouvel Hebdo*, n°33, 6 February, 1991.

²⁶⁰ Aïssa Khelladi published *Les islamistes algériens* under the pseudonyme of Amine Touati.

²⁶¹ Mohamed M’gueddem.

essayist-novelist-publisher in France (with political refugee status) and director of a journal that published several Algerian so-called “republican” authors²⁶² (i.e, favorable to the military coup) for which he was rewarded by becoming an adviser to the Algerian Presidency in 2004.²⁶³

This trajectory is far from being idiosyncratic. The one borrowed by Arezki Aït-Larbi participates in a similar logic. Berberist activist and human rights defender, the journalist wrote in *L'hebdo libéré* on 13 January 1992: “The leaders of the FIS must understand that every time a citizen is beheaded [...] the blows will be multiplied by eight! Resistance to tyranny is not only democratic but also an Islamic duty”. The son-in-law of Amar Ouzegane, the author of this article is a member of the leadership of the RCD, the secular party that called for a military coup just after the first round of parliamentary elections. The journalist became the correspondent of French daily newspapers *Le Figaro* and *Ouest France* during the second counter-revolution.²⁶⁴

The career of Malik Aït-Aoudia follows a similar path. Close parent to Mohand Akli (alias Daniel) Benyounes, a former member of the FLN's *fédération de France* commandos and brother-in-law of General-Major and Minister of Defense Khaled Nezzar, Malik Aït-Aoudia began his career as communications officer of the RCD. Collaborating with French media, he produced “*Ce que j'ai vu en Algérie. Carnet de route d'André Glucksmann*”, a 75-minute television documentary in which he filmed a complacent observation conducted by the “embedded-philosopher” on the massacre committed in Sidi Hamed (Mitidja) on 11 January 1998—the day after the arrival in Algiers of the “nouveau philosophe” as Glucksmann called himself—in a context where the praetorian government forbid any independent inquiry into mass killing.²⁶⁵ The insider journalist also produced “*Le martyre des moines de Tibhirine*”, a 75-minute propaganda television documentary broadcast by French national TV channel France 3 on 23 May 2013 at prime time—some weeks before judge Marc Trévidic arrived who vainly projected to exhume this file buried by the Algerian and French governments.²⁶⁶ Malik Aït-Aoudia, who broadcast the praetorian regime propaganda, is the brother of a wealthy comprador who got rich in the shadow of the “civil war” before becoming the exclusive local representative of a major luxury jewelry brand. The man died in 2015 and the Tizi-Ouzou press house now bears his name.

The Re-Invention of Tradition: The Second Counterrevolution and the Metamorphosis of the Garrison State

Far from being a “defense of democracy”, as “military” as it was, 11 January 1992 constitutes a reactionary coup that killed the possibility of democratization and renewed the militarization of the polity. As an “attitude and a set of institutions that regard war and the preparation of war as a normal and desirable social activity”,²⁶⁷ the militarization of politics, with its state of exception²⁶⁸ and armed counterinsurgency²⁶⁹ allowed the dictatorship to launch nothing less than its second praetorian counterrevolution. Manufactured by the “ideological power” of the garrison state even before the military coup, the discourse of the “Algerian civil war” proceeds from a mystification that seeks to “obscure and secure”²⁷⁰ the praetorian counterrevolution.²⁷¹ In his *Jihad*, the Lewisian orientalist Gilles Kepel took up the official thesis of “Islamist guerrilla” and the “civil war” too.²⁷² The former author of *La revanche de Dieu*²⁷³—neglecting the fact that the FIS leaders

²⁶² Among them the editorial director of *L'Hebdo Libéré*, Arezki Metref.

²⁶³ He later reedited in Algeria a book that takes up this thesis. See Martinez, 2003.

²⁶⁴ The man founded a publishing house (Koukou) at the end of the 2000s.

²⁶⁵ Communicated some hours after the mass killing, the official record reports one hundred and three deaths. 20 heures, France 2, 12 January 1998: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aqKTgYrmBRQ>

²⁶⁶ <https://www.la-croix.com/Actualite/France/Moines-de-Tibhirine-le-juge-Marc-Trevidic-est-en-Algerie-2013-11-26-1066506>

²⁶⁷ Mann, 1987, p. 124.

²⁶⁸ Scheppele, 2010.

²⁶⁹ Khalili, 2010.

²⁷⁰ Burawoy, 1979.

²⁷¹ Inter alia, Amnesty International, 1996; Bedjaoui, 1999; Samraoui, 2003; Tincq, 1998; Veilleux, 2003.

²⁷² Kepel, 2000. Gilles Kepel, several times invited by the DRS controlled Institut d'Etudes de Stratégie Globale during the 1990s, was sent to Algiers by the French Prime Minister Manuel Valls in September 2014 as ‘chargé de mission’ at the same time as the historic visit of the chief-of-staff of the French armed forces in Algeria. *El Watan*, 15 Septembre 2014.

²⁷³ Quoted by Huntington, 1993.

(Madani and Hachani) had repeatedly denied having created any armed group²⁷⁴—did not consider the hypothesis of an armed “counterinsurgency without insurgency”²⁷⁵ despite the legacy of praetorianism and the proven manipulation of the so-called “jihadist” groups in Algeria.²⁷⁶ However, the Algerian press reported, in the context of the bloody conflict that precipitated the resignation of President Liamine Zeroual in September 1998, of the creation in January 1992 of “death squads of some 300 elements for the central region alone”.²⁷⁷

Social scientist Stathis Kalyvas does not escape this mystification either in his widely quoted article relative to “the logic of massacres in Algeria”.²⁷⁸ Even if this specialist of the Greek civil war is right to stress the existence of a rationality in the conflict that caused bloodshed in Algeria, the scholar is wrong about its content. Indeed, his article shows multiple biases: a “sociological antihistoricalism” (to use Calhoun’s and Somers’ felicitous expression),²⁷⁹ the non-critical use of sources. However, most of the documentary sources mobilized by Kalyvas in his second-hand study are produced by “organic intellectuals” of the praetorian regime, such as Hassan Zerrouki, correspondent for *L’Humanité* in Algiers and editorial director of a presumed left-wing newspaper (*Le Matin*) that promotes—while benefiting from the generous “public” advertising windfall—shock therapy.²⁸⁰

Contrary to a legend, the Algerian state was never on the verge of collapsing in the 1990s. Two indicators are indeed sufficient to refute this cliché: the solid geopolitical support it had enjoyed in Paris and Washington since the reactionary coup of 1992; and the strengthening of its oil and gas infrastructures and their preservation from the supposed “jihad”.²⁸¹ On the contrary, the alarmist discourse on the threat of the “collapsed state” makes it possible to snatch diplomatic support from Western powers. The “global strategy”, promoted by the praetorian doctrinal document of 1990, emphasized this geopolitical issue.²⁸²

The success of this “global strategy” lies in the cohesion and effectiveness of the coercion apparatus,²⁸³ itself dependent on the security services’ know-how. The strategic redeployment carried out by the DRS necessitated as a first step the praetorian elite taking control of the entire state apparatus, from its technostructures to the municipalities; the institutions of coercion to the legal apparatus; the intelligentsia to the diplomatic apparatus; official publications to the “independent press”; and from crony capitalism to the “investigation of corruption scandals”. This redeployment, strongly emphasized in the praetorian “global strategy” issued in 1990, allowed the secret police to organize purges and extend its control. It resulted in a re-configuration of the institutional arrangements thanks to the innovative distribution of resources and authority. This gradual and hidden change, which mainstream scholarship has had difficulty capturing, was caused by a transformation within security services. The politics of this metamorphosis went hand-in-hand with what Charles Tilly called the formation of the “state as organized crime”,²⁸⁴ operating—much more than an “upgrading”—a transformation of security services into the so-called deep state. I have defined the latter as a diffuse system of government reaching to the heart of the institutional arrangements of the political formula, which, in syphoning off state power, has been able to neutralize competing segments of the ruling bloc, pre-empting decision-making and achieving autonomy from other components of the polity. While the state power is the keystone of the state-regime complex, the deep state constitutes the supporting structure of

²⁷⁴ For the testimonies of Abdelkader Hachani and Abassi Madani, see respectively: *Libération*, 16 September 1999, 9; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lgBqew3FxRo> (from minute 36).

²⁷⁵ Harcourt, 2018.

²⁷⁶ Inter alia, Amnesty International, 1996; Tincq, 1998; Bedjaoui, 1999; Samraoui, 2003; Veilleux, 2003.

²⁷⁷ *Demain L’Algérie*, 7 September 1998. Dropped by a newspaper officially close to Zeroual-Betchine group a few days only before the resignation of Head of State Zeroual, the “coup” targeted Larbi Belkheir, who was actively preparing his return to power via the co-opting of Abdelaziz Bouteflika. Ammar Belhimer, the director of the daily *Demain L’Algérie* was appointed director of advertising in the public agency ANEP between 2000 and 2003 and minister of communication and government spokesperson since January 2020.

²⁷⁸ Kalyvas, 1999.

²⁷⁹ Somers, 1996.

²⁸⁰ Zerrouki, 1993. *Le Matin*, 15 September 1993.

²⁸¹ Mamdani, 2004.

²⁸² Nezzar, 1999, p. 222.

²⁸³ Andrzejewski, 1954.

²⁸⁴ Tilly, 1986.

the authoritarian system.²⁸⁵ Knowing that “the exercise of authority is not just the exercise of power but also potentially a way of generating power”, not only did the DRS gain control over political authority; the real holder of state power successfully managed to use political authority to institutionalize advantage: i.e., to “lay the groundwork for future victories”.²⁸⁶ The formation of the Algerian deep state has proceeded from a “conversion” mechanism, in other words “the transformation of an already-existing institution or policy through its authoritative redirection, reinterpretation, or reappropriation” which “requires active reinterpretation of existing formal rules to serve new ends”.²⁸⁷ The legal measures that made this possible included the reestablishment, following the release of the reformers on 4 June 1991, of the system that made all appointments to key posts in the state apparatus conditional on “security clearances” provided by the DRS.²⁸⁸ By including the state of exception in the legal order, the repressive paradigm of government also included the so-called presidential decree of 9 February 1992 establishing the state of emergency, the “legislative decree on the fight against subversion and terrorism” of 30 September 1992, and the inter-ministerial order of 25 July 1993 that transformed the state of emergency into a state of siege.²⁸⁹

The Missing Link: “Shock Therapy” and “War of Maneuver”

While the fall of the Berlin wall almost immediately enshrined the “Washington Consensus” as the only way forward, mainstream international press was increasingly praising the Chilean model. So it was with *The Economist* published on 22 December 1990 on “Mikhail Sergeevitch Pinochet?”

In an article on “free market and the generals” published in *Newsweek* less than ten years before this neoliberal moment of hegemony, Milton Friedman, running to aid an economy ruined by the Chicago Boys,²⁹⁰ put forward the myth of the “Chilean model”:

Chile is an economic miracle... Many state enterprises have been denationalized and motor transport and other areas deregulated. A voucher system has been put into effect in elementary and secondary education. Most remarkable of all, a social-security reform has been adopted that permits individuals to choose between participating in the government system or providing their own retirement privately. Chile is an even more amazing political miracle. A military regime has supported reforms that reduce sharply the role of the state... The political miracle is the product of an unusual set of circumstances.²⁹¹

In a now famous passage from his bestseller *Capitalism and Freedom*, Friedman highlights the role of crises in the implementation of neoliberalism:

(...) keep options open until circumstances make change necessary. There is enormous inertia—a tyranny of status quo—in private and especially governmental arrangements. Only a crisis—actual or perceived—produces real changes. When that crisis occurs, the actions that are taken depend on the ideas that are lying around. That, I believe, is our basic function: to develop alternatives to existing policies, to keep them alive and available until the politically impossible becomes politically inevitable.²⁹²

The praetorian oligarchy concerned since the beginning of the 1980s by the neoliberal transformation of the populist-authoritarian formula, has operated much more than a “re-equilibrium” since the coup of January

²⁸⁵ Hachemaoui, 2015, p. 661. I advanced the definition of “the deep state that emerged during the praetorian and neoliberal counterrevolution” in Hachemaoui, 2014, 2015. In his *Généralux, Gangsters et Jihadistes. Histoire de la contre-révolution arabe* (Paris: La Découverte, 2018), Jean-Pierre Filiu, a former diplomat, expert and adviser sometimes to the ministry of defense sometimes to the ministry of foreign affairs of the French state, claimed that Algeria constitutes ‘the matrix’ of the ‘Arab counterrevolution’ without making the slightest reference to works that document and theorize the mechanism and the process of formation of the Algerian deep state in the wake of the second praetorian and neoliberal counterrevolution in Algeria. Indeed, none of the specialists of Algeria mobilized by this prolific author in support of his second-hand work on the Algerian case advance the interpretation of counterrevolution and the deep state. The works mobilized by the expert are, moreover, part of the orthodox scholarship.

²⁸⁶ Pierson, 2015.

²⁸⁷ Hacker, Pierson, Thelen, 2015, p. 185.

²⁸⁸ Author’s interview with former Chief of Government Sid Ahmed Ghazali, Algiers, November 2010.

²⁸⁹ Hachemaoui, 2011.

²⁹⁰ Valenzuela and Valenzuela, 1986; Constable and Valenzuela, 1992 ; Solimano, 2012.

²⁹¹ Friedman, 1982a.

²⁹² Friedman, 1982, pp. viii-ix.

1992.²⁹³ Worried about gaining the support of the institutions of the “Washington consensus”, the praetorians undertook a counterrevolution, the second after that carried out by their predecessors during the founding moment of the war of independence. Hence the cooptation of Mohammed Boudiaf, Ali Kafi, Rédha Malek, Ali Haroun, etc., for assuming formal government of the garrison states. After the failure of the “passive revolution” of the “infitah”, the October 1988 *Blitzkrieg* and the “war of position” of the liberalization of 1989-1991, the second counterrevolution can only be done now through a “war of maneuver”. However, it was not only praetorian in character; it was also neoliberal. Particularly fierce in form, it followed a logic of “creative destruction”²⁹⁴ since while the militarization required the tight control of the polity, the “protection racket” politics that was also underway allowed the government to carry out the neoliberalization of the authoritarian-populist formula, something that had been on pause since the “infitah” of the beginning of the 1980s and that the reformers had jeopardized between 1989 and 1991. The government justified the agreement of a structural adjustment program with the IMF in April 1994 by pointing to a “cessation-of-payments”. However, nothing of the sort had taken place since Abdesselam Belaïd (the head of government from July 1992 to August 1993) had left behind him a surplus in the country’s balance of payments of some 2 billion US dollars before being removed after his refusal to follow the neoliberal agenda recommended by the praetorian oligarchy.²⁹⁵ While the conditionalities imposed by the IMF served as a useful pretext to accomplish the privatization of state owned enterprises and to make well-connected crony capitalists, the terror made the cost of any opposition to such structural adjustment very high indeed. Simultaneously with the *Blitzkrieg* of shock therapy, the praetorian government launched the notorious watchword: “*la peur doit changer de camp!*” (fear must change sides).²⁹⁶

Eager to obscure the processes that had been at work since 1992, the DRS strengthened pseudo-politics. While a military dictatorship had been behind waves of political assassination, forced disappearances, sporadic raids and concentration camps, the security services were at the same time redoubling their efforts to promote the narrative of “Algeria: the next fundamentalist state”²⁹⁷ to go hand-in-hand with the established culturalist discourse of the “clash of civilizations”.²⁹⁸ To get closer to the United-States some days before the conclusion of the Structural Adjustment Program with the “Wall Street-Treasury-IMF Complex”,²⁹⁹ the Algerian garrison state 2.0 broke diplomatic relations with Iran on 27 March 1993 on the dubious pretext that the “Ayatollah finance[d] the FIS”.³⁰⁰ At the same time however, the DRS installed the former senior executive of the Sunni neo-fundamentalist Islamic Salvation Front (Saïd Guechi) as ambassador to Saudi Arabia.³⁰¹ The praetorian government, offering a laboratory for orientalism and economicism, propagates through its “ideological power” the story of a “civil war” opposing so-called “republicans” to “islamo-fascists”.³⁰²

However, was it simply a coincidence that professionals of pseudo-politics from “democrats” to “fundamentalists” including “experts”, defended the “shock therapy”? Implacable, the new praetorian neoliberal counterrevolution led its agents from the “trotskyists” still profoundly anti-internationalist to

²⁹³ Lowi, 2009.

²⁹⁴ Inter alia Harvey, 2005; Mirowski and Plehwe, 2009; Brown, 2015.

²⁹⁵ Interviews with Abdesselam Belaïd (Algiers, October 2000) and Abdelouhab Keramane, (Paris, February 2012).

²⁹⁶ This infamous phrase, originally used by Marcel Bigeard during the “Bataille d’Alger”, was taken over by Prime Minister Rédha Malek during the funeral of the assassinated leftist dramatist Abdelkader Alloula in March 1994. This slogan had already been the subject of an editorial of the commander Abderrahmane Mahmoudi in *L’Hebdo Libéré* (n°23, 29 May 1991) some days before the imposition of the state of siege.

²⁹⁷ Fuller, 1996

²⁹⁸ Lewis, 1990; Kepel, 1992; Huntington, 1993.

²⁹⁹ Wade, Veneso, 1998.

³⁰⁰ Rédha Malek was then the Algerian garrison state’s minister of foreign affairs. *El Watan* prefigured this decision some months before. See the editorial of Tayeb Belghiche, “Isoler Teheran” (*El Watan*, 30 November 1992).

³⁰¹ Immediately after the invasion of Kuwait, Ali Benhadj publicly denounced the ‘secular’ Saddam Hussein and defended Saudi Arabia—in contrast to Abassi Madani. Nonetheless, noting the support of Algerians to Saddam Hussein, Benhadj executed a turnaround.

³⁰² The “organic intellectual” Rachid Boudjedra launched the term of ‘fascislamism’ in his well-diffused pamphlet *Le Fis de la haine* (Paris: Denoël, March 1992). Bernard-Henry Lévy, who promoted the ideological crusade against “fascislamism”, was invited by the Algerian establishment to visit Algeria in 1997 following the massacres of civilian populations. In his articles in *Le Monde* (8 and 9 January 1997), the ‘embedded’ philosopher exculpated *ex cathedra* the Algerian military from the massacres of the second counterrevolution. While the Algerian ‘independent press’ warmly congratulated the French intellectual for his testimony, in his *Mémoires*, former Minister of Defense Khaled Nezzar did not fail to express his gratitude to Bernard-Henry Lévy.

“NATO’s Islamists”. This included incorporation into the country’s institutions of pseudo-politics (elections, parliament, government, “commissions of reforms”, etc.), the demobilization of the population, the defense of policies of impunity and amnesia, and backing joining NATO’s security architecture. The sophisticated institutional arsenal launched after the country’s first democratic election of June 1990 invalidate the orthodox narrative that denies the neo-praetorian and neo-liberal counterrevolutionary strategy— whose paradigm is well-known since the “Chilean Miracle” touted by Milton Friedman and the mainstream international press. Thanks to this “cumulative bureaucratization of violence”,³⁰³ the DRS managed to coercively discipline the entire polity under its control through a repertoire including political assassinations, torture, massacres of civilian populations, blackmail, corruption, etc.

HOW TO CONSOLIDATE THE PRAETORIAN NEOLIBERALIZATION

The collective power commanding the garrison state perceived the danger that international justice represented to the security community when Spanish judge Baltasar Garzón issued a warrant against Augusto Pinochet in 1998. The urgency of “civilianizing” the praetorian formula became clear, especially since the Algerian “pivotal state”³⁰⁴ had recently hosted a senior NATO official—Commander-in-Chief of the United-States Naval Forces in Europe and Commander-in-Chief of NATO’s Southern Command—for the first time since the independence of Algeria but a few months only after the massacres of civilian populations.³⁰⁵ However, this visit invalidates the official story of the “quarantining of the Algerian state”.³⁰⁶ It reinforced relations with the US and came just one month before the resignation of general-president Liamine Zeroual, who did not receive the NATO official—a conjuncture neglected by experts on Algerian politics who attribute this geopolitical achievement to Bouteflika.³⁰⁷

Civilianizing or Camouflaging the Garrison State?

In this context, established US expert William Quandt published *Between Ballots and Ballets. Algeria’s Transition From Authoritarianism*. Staff member of the National Security Council during the Nixon and Carter administrations before becoming Senior Fellow at Brookings Institution, then Professor at Virginia University, Quandt concluded his report as follows: “For the moment, Algeria should be thought of as a country in the early stages of a difficult transition away from its authoritarian past. But it will not be surprising if Algeria reaches the goal of accountable, representative government in advance of many others in the region”.³⁰⁸

This accurately describes the link between the key geopolitical move of the ex-“revolutionary state” and the launch of the civilianization of the praetorian regime as not being the result of a fortuitous hazard. While General Liamine Zeroual did not even finish the third year of his presidential term, the “independent press” began to talk about “succession”³⁰⁹ in August 1998 just a few days after this highly crucial sequence,

³⁰³ Malešević, 2017, p. 96.

³⁰⁴ Chase, Hill, Kennedy, 1996. The authors of this *Foreign Affairs*’ article define the “pivotal states” as the “small number of countries whose fate is uncertain and whose future will profoundly affect their surrounding regions”. The conceptors of the “conservative doctrine” emphasize the idea that “a preventive assistance” for these “new dominoes” to “reduce the chance of collapse would better serve the American interests”. Considering Algeria as a “pivotal state”, they stress the following, in echo to the Algerian praetorian blueprint of autumn 1990: “A civil war and the replacement of the present regime by extremists would affect the security of the Mediterranean sea-lanes, international oil and gas markets, and, as in the case of Egypt, the struggle between moderate and radical elements of the Islamic world”. See Chase, Hill, Kennedy, 1998, p. 8.

³⁰⁵ « L’OTAN se rapproche des Algériens », *El Watan*, 11 August 1998, p. 1 and 3.

³⁰⁶ Roberts, 2007; Martinez quoted by Werenfels, 2007, p. 58.

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

³⁰⁸ Quandt, 1998b, p. 164. *El Watan* published a translation of the conclusion of Quandt’s book five days after the visit of the US and NATO higher officer to Algiers. Quandt’s book was translated into French soon after and published by the insider and well-established Casbah Editions in Algiers. Robert Malley, Special Assistant to President Clinton for Arab-Israeli affairs and Director for Near East and South Asian affairs at the National Security Council, subscribed to the orthodox narrative too in his *Call from Algeria* (Malley, 1996). International Crisis Group, the organization of which Robert Maley was to become president in 2018, co-opted the former Algerian Ambassador to Washington (1996-1999) and Foreign Minister of the Algerian garrison state (2013-2017), Ramtane Lamamra, in its “board of trustees” (until March 2019) alongside Lawrence Summers, former director of the US National Economic Council and secretary of the U.S. Treasury in the Clinton Administration.

³⁰⁹ *El Watan*, 19 August 1998, p. 2. In his contribution to the edited book *The Pivotal States*, Quandt writes the following: “It is probably fair to say that as of early 1998 Washington’s hopes that Zeroual would turn out to be an effective president (...) have been disappointed (...)”. Quandt, 1998a, p. 212.

launching a fierce campaign against Zeroual's right-hand man. The state-controlled trade union (UGTA) was not far behind: the "administered mass organization" threatened to recourse to a "general strike"³¹⁰ as it had in the last days of the reformer government—a threat that this apparatus of pseudo-politics withdrew immediately after President Zeroual's unconstitutional announcement on 11 September 1998 to shorten his mandate and organize a presidential election six months later:³¹¹ an artifice to dissimulate the resignation and dress up the constitutional void dug by the praetorian process.

Operationalizing agenda control, the deep state built by the DRS moved on to a new stage: supplanting the discredited formula of the turnover of presidents (1992-1998) by a new one, namely the longevity of the *raïs*. Led by Major-General Mohamed Mediene, it coopted Abdelaziz Bouteflika, the pro-western foreign minister during the Boumediene regime and supporter of the "infatih", on the basis of a policy agenda made quasi-public at the time. It included: whitewashing the international image of a state that had been blackened by the massacres and political murders of the second counterrevolution; the lock of political space; the implementing of a policy of impunity and forgetfulness; the subordination of the official authorities to the secret police; the consolidating, in a post-conflict and depolitized peaceful time, of the market;³¹² the deepening of the neo-liberalization through the lenses of embeddedness; the strengthening of the integration of the Algerian state into the US Empire, including integration into NATO's security architecture and close collaboration with Washington in counterterrorism.³¹³

These were the enduring legacies that constrained Bouteflika since his co-optation in 1999. The successor of Zeroual did not take long to get to work. In an international press conference held in Algiers in the aftermath of his authoritarian election, the "civilian president" Abdelaziz Bouteflika—who the intellectual Mohammed Harbi proclaimed in *Le Monde* was "not manipulable"³¹⁴ swept away the issue of torture, saying: "Our house is made of glass!"³¹⁵ Some weeks later, he shook hands with the Israeli prime minister at the funeral of King Hassan II, capturing thus the attention of the French and international media. While the Algerian foreign minister was received by his American counterpart in Washington some days after the historic NATO senior official's visit to Algeria,³¹⁶ Bouteflika was in turn received at the White House by the freshly installed George W. Bush Jr. administration. The myth of Bouteflika's "brilliant" leadership was born.³¹⁷ For the influential expert Lahouari Addi—who claimed in *El Watan* (24 August 1992) that the "the army", which constituted according to him, "the main achievement of the national liberation movement ... should not be touched by austerity measures to allow it a maximum level of combativeness"^(sic)—the "election of M. Bouteflika to the Presidency of the Republic" in April 1999 "gave rise to formidable hopes". For this "organic intellectual", the "conditions [for a political resolution of the Algerian crisis] are now more favorable, under the auspices of Mr. Bouteflika, of whom it is to be hoped that he will be able to send the soldiers back to their barracks".³¹⁸

One final great obstacle, however, thwarted the agenda of the garrison state 3.0. Released after five years in pre-trial detention, Abdelakader Hachani, 42 years old, strongly opposed the policy of impunity and amnesia. Multiplying the interviews to the international press—only to stretch him the microphone—he insisted in September 1999: "All those who have committed crimes in the camp of power, like the other camp, should be trialed".³¹⁹ The FIS popular leader was assassinated two months later in Algiers by a silent pistol—a Benjaminian historical moment reminiscent of the assassination of Filali and Bekhat in 1957, Mécili in 1987, Boudiaf in 1992 and Fathallah in 1994.

³¹⁰ *El Watan*, 27 August 27 1998.

³¹¹ *El Watan*, 16 September 1998.

³¹² The established expert William Quandt indicated the Algerian politics of Washington in 1998: "In brief, we will support a program of economic and political reform but will find it difficult to back a purely military solution to the problem of internal violence". Quandt, 1998a, p. 213.

³¹³ For the last issue, see Keenan, 2009.

³¹⁴ *Le Monde*, 17 April 1999, p. 8.

³¹⁵ Participant observation.

³¹⁶ *El Watan*, 19 August 1998.

³¹⁷ Roberts, 2007; Werenfels, 2007; Lowi, 2009.

³¹⁸ Addi, 2001.

³¹⁹ *Libération*, 16 Septembre 1999, p. 9.

In exchange for carrying out the agenda of the garrison state 3.0, the “civilian president” enjoyed some margin of maneuver and above all, longevity. Not having and being unable to constitute infrastructural power, the coopted “president”, as “shrewd” as he was supposed to be, was unlikely to threaten the consolidated praetorian state-regime complex.

Who Governed the New State-Regime Complex?

The cumulative power of the deep state, working to extend its domination, made the longevity of the *raïs* a key objective. Promoting this story from the outset, the “independent press” assigned responsibility for the military reshuffle of February 2001 to Bouteflika, when evidence suggests that the praetorian elite in the wake of Zeroual’s resignation had initiated this.³²⁰

Realizing, a year after Bouteflika’s cooptation, the extent of state power that the head of the DRS managed to capture during the second counter-revolution, the rivals of the patron of the deep state constituted a praetorian coalition. This alliance was formed around the director of the presidential cabinet Larbi Belkheir, the director of the counterintelligence Smaïn Lamari and Chief of staff Mohamed Laamari. Three months before the official visit of the Algerian head of state to the United-States, the coalition launched an unprecedented public attack against General Major Mohamed Mediene (alias Toufik), who had succeeded in weaving a strategic alliance with Washington. The blow was delivered via the Algerian “independent press”³²¹ and went so far as to accuse the dreaded boss of the DRS of having sponsored the political assassination of moderate leader of the FIS Abdelkader Hachani! The newspaper *El Watan* (dated 23 April 2001) published for the first time a photo³²² of the head of the DRS and considered its exit.

Toufik’s counterstroke was however much more dissuasive. Mediene’s client, the former chief of staff of the Délégué Général à la Prévention et à la Sécurité (1987-1988) published a resounding interview in the columns of the *Nouvel Observateur* in which he accused General Larbi Belkheir, the influential director of the Presidential cabinet during the 1980s, of having sponsored the political assassination of the Algerian opponent Ali André Mécili in Paris on 7 April 1987.³²³ By bringing the conflict to France, this new testimony resumed the Mécili case in court. Indeed, the trial *launched* in Paris by Khaled Nezzar, former Defense Minister and loyal and sure ally of the head of the DRS, against a deserting second lieutenant made the hypothesis of the judicial reopening of the Mécili case even more likely than ever. This threat is all the more serious as Larbi Belkheir is accused, in the columns of the deeply controlled daily *Le Matin*, of the assassination of Head of State Mohammed Boudiaf on 29 June 1992 in Annaba.³²⁴

The exchange of blows did not stop there, however. As in every tense conflict, the protagonists resort to violence. It is precisely in this context that the very obscure cycle of repression that struck down Kabylia from 18 April 2001 arose. The commission formed by the praetorian government to investigate this state violence which caused more than a hundred dead, by ruling out any involvement of the DRS in this sequence, stresses the responsibility of the command of the 1st and 5th military regions and therefore the Head of Army chief of staff. The verdict of the president of this official commission was as follows: “We did not meet with the DRS during our investigation. The DRS has no interest in doing this. Some circles may have accounts to settle with the DRS...”³²⁵

Understanding that the tenant of the El Mouradia Palace was the hostage of the head of the DRS, the army chief of staff decided to publicly oppose Bouteflika’s reelection for a second presidential mandate, in the authoritative daily *El Khabar*.³²⁶ Contrary to what the AFP, the French and the Algerian press wrote, General

³²⁰ Addi, 2001.

³²¹ *L’Authentique*, 13 and 14 April 2001.

³²² The publication, of the photo of Kasdi Merbah for the first time in the press had preceded the fall of the hitherto head of the secret police apparatus.

³²³ *Le Nouvel Observateur*, n°1910, 14 June 2001.

³²⁴ Cherif, 2001, 2002.

³²⁵ *Algeria Interface*, 8 May 2003.

³²⁶ *El Khabar*, 15 January, 2004, p. 3.

Mohamed Laamari did not resign but was severely dismissed.³²⁷ The humiliating removal of the army chief of staff and his allies in the wake of the 2004 presidential election is an indisputable indicator: the DRS siphoned the infrastructural power of the garrison state.³²⁸ Mohamed Laamari was not only dismissed from his post of chief of staff. Indeed, TONIC, his “private” economic empire built in the early 2000s thanks to crony capitalism, collapsed like a house of cards just after his release.

El Khalifa bank, the conglomerate whose meteoric rise dates back to 1998-1999 foretold in truth the decline of Larbi Belkheir and his group,³²⁹ when he brutally began his fall from the autumn of 2002.³³⁰ Though he remained director of the presidential cabinet after the 2004 electoral coup, Larbi Belkheir had no choice but to leave the Presidency.³³¹ A week before the exit of the former Minister of the Interior (October 1991-July 1992), an interview of the widow of Mohamed Boudiaf—who was assassinated in June 1992—declared on *Al Jazeera* television that Boumaarafi was not the assassin of the head of state and that she had the video recording this state crime!³³²

Also, it was the second term given to Bouteflika thanks to the secret police infrastructural power, that facilitated (less “a crucial moment in the restoration of the presidency as the substantive and not merely formal apex of the Algerian power structure”³³³ than) the ejection of praetorian rivals by the DRS.³³⁴ In short, Abdelaziz Bouteflika who was maintained in office for a third term despite his illness, less “gently shepherded” the praetorians “back toward the barracks”³³⁵ than he was a hostage of the deep state. This is similar to Mohamed Laamari’s successor as army chief of staff (Gaïd Salah) since after 2004 the boss of the DRS, who controlled the Direction Centrale de la Sécurité de l’Armée since December 1988,³³⁶ had been able to impose his grip on the entire military command chain, consolidating its position as an army above the army. With the humiliating dismissal of the chief of staff and his allies in 2004, the DRS managed to control the “military power”, i.e. “the social organization of concentrated lethal violence”.³³⁷

The final confrontation opposed the group formed by Abdelaziz Bouteflika and his minister of the Interior, former number two of the Sécurité Militaire, Nourredine Yazid Zerhouni, to the powerful general of the army corps Mohamed Mediène. Carefully concealed behind the smoke screen of an “anti-corruption campaign” launched by the “DRS investigators” (sic),³³⁸ the issue of the crisis actually concerned the replacement of the head of the DRS. The declarations of Chafik Mesbah, a “retired” secret service senior officer converted into a quasi-official expert of the army offer some clarification. Indeed, an interview granted at the heart of this conflict to *El Watan* by this well-known unofficial spokesperson of the patron of the DRS, identifies the real issues at work beyond the screen of pseudo-politics:

³²⁷ Garçon, 2004. “Décret présidentiel du 3 août 2004 mettant fin aux fonctions de chef d’état-major de l’armée populaire nationale exercées par le général de corps d’armée Mohamed Lamari”, *Journal officiel de la république algérienne*, n°49, 8 August 2004, p. 24.

³²⁸ Hachemaoui, 2015.

³²⁹ Hachemaoui, 2011.

³³⁰ Beau, 2002; Rivoire, 2003. In the documentary devoted to the “Khalifa affair” which Canal + broadcasted during President Jacques Chirac’s state visit to Algeria (2-4 March 2003), the director presented Larbi Belkheir as “the No. 2 of the regime” and the real conductor of the Khalifa empire. In support of his story, Rivoire broadcasted exclusive videos of official and private receptions showing Larbi Belkheir at work. On the day of the first broadcast of this documentary, the very controlled Banque d’Algérie decided to appoint a provisional administrator at the head of El Khalifa Bank. The ban on transfers abroad issued by the Algerian central bank against El Khalifa bank followed shortly after the publication of articles in the French weekly *Canard enchaîné* (October 23, 2002) announcing the fall of the “Khalifa empire”. It is allowed, at this stage, to put forward a hypothesis, not taken into account by the expertise, to elucidate the unpunished crime of the monks of Tibhirines: a war of the services opposing the apparatus of the head of the DRS Mohamed Mediène to that of the counter-espionage of Smain Lamari. The beheading of monks aimed to discredit General Smain Lamari (and Larbi Belkheir) whose links with the French DST was open secrecy.

³³¹ “El Khalifa Bank ou le scandale des scandales”, *Algeria Interface*, 13 June 2003; Mahmoudi, 2003; Aggoun, Rivoire, 2004.

³³² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BAfBZVpcE54> (last view 12 January 2019).

³³³ Roberts, 2007, p. 14.

³³⁴ Among them, Generals Mohamed Laamari, Larbi Belkheir and Brahim Fodhil-Cherif, respectively army chief of staff, director of the presidential office and chief of the 1st military region. Hachemaoui, 2015.

³³⁵ Lowi, 2009, p. xi.

³³⁶ Nowadays, no decree has appeared in the *Journal Officiel* confirming the appointment of so-called successors to Mohamed Mediène at the head of the immensely strategic Direction Centrale de la Sécurité de l’Armée. The most recent is the one published on 7 December 1988 certifying, we saw it, the installation of Mohamed Mediène at the head of the DCSA.

³³⁷ Mann, 2009, p. 351.

³³⁸ This story was sold by the so-called independent press and a number of experts, including a former top manager of SONATRACH. See “Lettre ouverte à Messieurs les enquêteurs du DRS”, *El Watan*, 30 January 2010, pp. 1 and 8-9.

Mesbah: [...] notwithstanding all the Byzantine discussions, the power of the head of state rests on a main pillar, the DRS...

El Watan: However, it would seem that the project lent to the President of the Republic to bring together all the security and intelligence services under a single supervision, a great minister of security, have precipitated the current investigations by the DRS.

Mesbah: [...] It is politically ingenuous to assume that the head of state, in his current position, is thinking of cutting the branch on which he is sitting.³³⁹

The conflict was far from ending there. A week later, it rose to extremes with the political assassination “behind closed doors” of Ali Tounsi, the head of the police, colonel and former comrade of Yazid Zerhouni in the Sécurité Militaire. Struck with tactical paralysis, Zerhouni neither succeeded in constituting a great minister of security nor in appointing his candidate for the head of the police; losing his power struggle with the fearsome boss of the DRS, he left his functions as minister of the interior in May 2010.

The resignation of President Zeroual, the dismissal of Chief of staff Mohamed Laamari, the successive exits of Larbi Belkheir and former Minister of the interior Yazid Zerhouni reveal, in negative, the winner-take-all politics pursued by the all-powerful DRS in the shadow of the neo-praetorian and neoliberal counter-revolution.

The Military-Capitalist Complex

It was in the shade of Bouteflika’s presumed “regime” that the army increased its military spending by 176% between 2004 and 2013.³⁴⁰ Supported by such financial flows, the Algerian military captured 46% of arms imports in Africa between 2006 and 2010 and became the ninth largest arms importer in the world.³⁴¹ Strengthening this trend, the Algerian garrison state ranked fifth among the world’s largest arms importers in the world between 2014 and 2018.³⁴² With its elevated ratio of military spending/GDP (5.7 in 2017), its 130 000 active soldiers and high numbers of paramilitary forces, the Algerian garrison state 3.0 was “the most heavily militarized in Africa”, ranking fifteenth in the Global Militarization Index of 2018.³⁴³ The quantity and dimension of barracks crisscrossing the territory, starting with Algiers, are as impressive as they are dissuasive.³⁴⁴

Parallel to this structuring logic towards militarization, another no less structuring trend was doing its work: the consolidation of “crony capitalism” in the shadow of the cliché of the “bazar economy”. This universal type of capitalism intended to apprehend such systems in which those tightly connected to the hierarchical power of the state gained highly valued economic favors.³⁴⁵ The most frequent scheme consists of: 1) providing capital very cheaply to politically connected cronies through government-controlled banks; 2) awarding protected monopoly or oligopoly to crony capitalists that allowed them to set high prices and earn monopoly rents. But what retained the despotic power of the state from changing the arrangements? The solution lies in “collusive corruption”: actors of the despotic power share the “high rates of rents generated in short time horizons” by crony capitalists. Crony capitalism thus generates “misallocation of public resources”. Politically rather than economically created, the ‘private’ monopolies and oligopolies cannot survive without the backing provided by those who hold the hierarchical power of the state.³⁴⁶

Karl Marx uncovered the “secret of primitive accumulation” in his chapter 26 of *Capital*:

³³⁹ *El Watan*, 17 February 2010, pp. 6-7.

³⁴⁰ <http://www.sipri.org/research/armaments/milex/milex-graphs-for-data-launch-2014/the-countries-that-doubled-military-spending-between-2004-and-2013.png> The issue of rising military expenditures is surprisingly neglected by Roberts in his influential “Demilitarizing Algeria”.

³⁴¹ <http://www.strategicdefenceintelligence.com>

³⁴² <https://www.sipri.org/media/press-release/2019/global-arms-trade-usa-increases-dominance-arms-flows-middle-east-surge-says-sipri>

³⁴³ https://www.bicc.de/uploads/tx_bicctools/BICC_GMI_2018_e.pdf

³⁴⁴ Personal observations in and around Algiers, Blida, Kabylia, Tipaza and Oran, during the spring and summer 2019.

³⁴⁵ Haber, 2003; Dawisha, 2014; Pei, 2016.

³⁴⁶ Ibid.

This primitive accumulation plays in political economy about the same part as original sin in theology. Adam bit the apple, and thereupon sin fell on the human race. Its origin is supposed to be explained when it is told as an anecdote of the past. In times long gone-by there were two sorts of people; one, the diligent, intelligent, and, above all, frugal elite; the other, lazy rascals, spending their substance, and more, in riotous living. (...) Thus it came to pass that the former sort accumulated wealth, and the latter sort had at last nothing to sell except their own skins. And from this original sin dates the poverty of the great majority that, despite all its labour, has up to now nothing to sell but itself, and the wealth of the few that increases constantly although they have long ceased to work. Such childishness is every day preached to us in the defense of property... In actual history it is notorious that conquest, enslavement, robbery, murder, briefly force, play the great part. In the tender annals of Political Economy, the idyllic reigns from time immemorial. Right and “labour” were from all time the sole means of enrichment, the present year of course always accepted. As a matter of fact, the methods of primitive accumulation are anything but idyllic.³⁴⁷

In Algeria, it was in the shadow of the so-called “war against jihad” that this primitive accumulation of capital took place. The golden legend of businessmen like Issad Rebrab, Arezki Idjerouidene, Mustapha Ait-Adjedjou, Abdellah Hasnaoui or Mohamed M’gueddem illustrates perfectly this structuring logic. According to Abdesselam Belaïd, head of government between August 1992 and September 1993, three cronies had been co-opted at the end of 1991 by decision-makers to capture through the controlled Conseil du crédit et de la monnaie, the monetary authority of the Banque d’Algérie,³⁴⁸ bank credit lines of \$200,000 each: Rebrab, Ait-Adjedou and Idjerouidene.³⁴⁹ Exclusive representatives in Algeria of global firms (Nissan, Daewoo, Hyundai, Komatsu, Sanofi, GSK, Samsung, etc.), the deep-rooted Algerian crony capitalists supply military and civilian institutions of the garrison state (Army, Gendarmerie, Police, Sonatrach, etc.) with vehicles, equipment and logistics.³⁵⁰ Unsurprisingly, these individuals and their families are among the wealthiest in the country—if not in North Africa.

The third oil boom made it possible to reconnect with social redistribution and broaden the social bases of the regime. Hence the increase of minimum wages, the granting of housing subsidies, etc. But far from making a return to the policy paradigm of the 1970s, in a Polanyian “second movement”³⁵¹ this policy rather proceeds from an embedded neoliberalism. Indeed, public spending benefits not only the middle and popular classes but also, if not especially, private oligopolies.³⁵² Another mechanism disregarded by conventional economic expertise reveals the deepening of neoliberalization: household debt. This new phenomenon has experienced a vertiginous growth in Algeria, reaching 3 billion US dollars six months after the fourth re-election of the impotent Bouteflika in the context of the Arab collective mobilizations.³⁵³

WHAT KIND OF POLITICAL LEARNING HAS THE PRAETORIAN GOVERNMENT DRAWN FROM THE ARAB UPRISINGS?

The popular uprisings that precipitated the ousting of “presidents for life” Ben Ali and Mubarak³⁵⁴ further weakened Bouteflika. Controlling the ideological power of the garrison state, the DRS gained an important “diagnostic learning”³⁵⁵ from this critical juncture.

³⁴⁷ <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch26.htm>

³⁴⁸ « Loi n°90-10 du 14 avril 1990 relative à la monnaie et au crédit », *Journal officiel de la république algérienne*, n°16, 18 April 1990.

³⁴⁹ Interview with the author, Algiers, November 2000. Information confirmed by a former banker.

³⁵⁰ Hachemaoui, 2011, 2012b.

³⁵¹ Polanyi, 1983 (1944).

³⁵² Hachemaoui, 2012b, 2015.

³⁵³ *El Khabar*, 24 November 2014; *Le Quotidien d’Oran*, 13 December 2008. For the political economy of debt in the authoritarian Tunisia of Ben Ali, see Hibou, 2011.

³⁵⁴ Inter alia Achcar, 2013; Beinin, 2015.

³⁵⁵ Levy, 1994.

Redefining the Situation

Jack Levy defines the “political learning” as such “changes in beliefs about the definition of the situation or the preferences, intentions, or relative capabilities of others”.³⁵⁶ The first analytically constructed political lesson drawn by the DRS was that the anger of those millions of “losers” of neoliberal authoritarianism had been channeled into the denunciation of the “*raïs*” and his “clan” since they embodied authoritarianism-and-corruption in popular representation.³⁵⁷ In Egypt, the praetorian army managed to preserve its powerful institution in a context of revolutionary process by sacrificing *raïs* Mubarak.³⁵⁸ This explains why the command of the Algerian deep state played the Bouteflika IV card at the same time as the western-accepted coup carried out by the Egyptian army since it allowed the very useful fiction of the “sultanistic”³⁵⁹ drift of the Algerian praetorian regime to be reinforced thanks to pseudo-politics. The second political learning was that in the hypothesis of a popular turmoil the “presidential clan” could be forgone in order to preserve the real structures of the Algerian authoritarian system. The third political lesson regarding the “change in beliefs about the definition of the situation” troubled the call for the dissolution of the *mukhabarat*. At a time when the secret police had been formally dissolved in neighboring revolutionary Tunisia, the DRS had then to announce its deceptive disbanding, preempting and underlining the “futility of revolution”.³⁶⁰ A simulacrum of “dissolution” of the DRS could then be propagated through false reports to avoid having to endorse the farce of Bouteflika IV. The fourth lesson in this learning process concerns the role of youth in the revolutionary processes in Tunisia and Egypt. Additionally, the praetorian government that was more than ever under the control of the DRS had launched a new wave of “political parties” and “civil society associations” in Algeria in 2012—as well as in France were an important Algerian community lives. These include “Jil Jadid” (New Generation) of Sofiane Djillali: former executive member of the PRA (Boukrouh’s Parti du Renouveau Algérien, a professional of pseudo-politics who supported the praetorian and neoliberal process since 1989) and former campaign director of Ali Benflis during the 2004 authoritarian election, Bouteflika’s alleged challenger; UPC of Zoubida Assoul, former member of the designated parliament during the shock therapy and adviser of the president of a rubber stamp parliament during the 2000s. “NABNI” is another product of this fabric: formed essentially by young educated “heirs” and crony capitalists, the neoliberal think-tank benefited from its launch by an outstanding media coverage in both “private” and “public”, Algerian and French media; the government interlocutor, who recycled the orthodox neoliberal policy prescriptions, proceeded from a smooth depoliticization of the economy.

Exacerbated by the popular Arab uprisings, the urgency to take care of the young Algerians appeared also in the field of culture, the apparatus of the praetorian government (ministry of culture, the Agence Algérienne pour le Rayonnement Culturel, the Centre National de la Cinématographie et de l’Audiovisuel, the Centre Algérien du Développement du Cinéma, etc.) promoting new musicians, humorists and filmmakers; the latter having in common the promotion of the praetorian narrative from its origins to the “civil war”. *Maintenant ils peuvent venir* (2015), the film directed by Salem Brahimi, the son of the former foreign minister of the praetorian government and grandson of a Bach-Agha of the colonial makhzen, is emblematic. Generously funded by governmental agencies, the film conveys the official narrative of the war against “Islamist terrorism”.³⁶¹

Last but not least, noting the key role played by the media in the revolutionary emulation, the DRS launched private television channels in 2014 with the strategic objective of “chasing *Al Jazeera* in the audiovisual space of Algerians”—to quote a journalist-and-military high officer, editorial director of *Liberté* and co-producer of propaganda documentaries. “Ennahar” is one of the most successful of them. The “private” TV

³⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 285.

³⁵⁷ Hachemaoui, 2012b.

³⁵⁸ Achcar, 2013; Beinin, 2016; Abul-Magd, 2017.

³⁵⁹ Chehabi, Linz, 1998.

³⁶⁰ For an illustration of such reactionary rhetoric, read the article of the “organic intellectual” Kamel Daoud in *Le Point*, the magazine of the global luxury industry mogul. Daoud, 2014.

³⁶¹ <https://www.kgproductions.fr/maintenant-ils-peuvent-venir>; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mxpelAgk_No

station, which is located near a famous DRS garrison in Algiers³⁶², is owned by Mohammed M'gueddem: the main shareholder of *L'hebdo libéré* having become, thanks to his deep connections with the head of the DRS, a powerful comprador capitalist representing major German automotive brands. The car fleet of the higher public institutions is mainly made up of luxury cars provided by the “private” oligopoly.

Having reached the height of his power, the—shadow—leader of the deep state was forced to come up with a narrative that emphasized the “DRS as the loser of the Bouteflika presidency” to avoid being seen as the real government of the polity. However, even if obscured by pseudo-politics the facts refute this story. The formal “dissolution” of the military’s judicial police in no way damaged the apparatus of the deep state specializing in cases of grand corruption, the security services having enjoyed, since 1966, the privilege of appointing officers from among its ranks. The so-called re-attachment of the Central Direction of Military Security—under the grip of General Mediène since December 1988—and the press service to the army chief of staff, of which the DRS is anyway a part, in no way meant that these apparatuses had been captured by the nominal head of the armed forces either. The praetorian configuration of state power in fact drains influence away from the country’s formal institutions. The neutralization of the chief of staff during the October 1988 plot by the “professional officer” Khaled Nezzar³⁶³ or the humiliating dismissal of Mohamed Laamari in 2004 illustrate this phenomenon.

In the Shadow of the Simulated Simulacrum: The Meticulous Preparation of the Peaceful Counterrevolution

The façade of Bouteflika’s autocracy allowed the deep state, controlling the political, ideological, economic and military powers, to consolidate and extend its hold on the polity as a whole. For example, presidential decree no. 14-183 (dated 11 June 2014) on the “creation, missions and organization of the judicial investigations department of the internal security section of the DRS”—silenced the hegemonic narrative despite the enormous political resources it concealed—formalized its scope, encompassing a spectrum that can be expanded at will from “security of territory” to “subversion” and “organized crime”.³⁶⁴ As a result, the DRS had four decisive prerogatives: the setting up of mobile brigades, the implementation of judicial police operations, the requisitioning of courts and the handling of mutual legal assistance cases.³⁶⁵ Further, the decree stipulated that “the organization of the judicial investigations department of the internal security service, along with the roles of its various components, shall be determined by the head of the DRS”,³⁶⁶ and not, as in the earlier 2008 text, by decree of the minister of defense.³⁶⁷

This overlooked extensive power shatters the thesis of the “loss of leadership of the DRS” put forward by conventional expertise.³⁶⁸ This is all the more the case in that the “law” of 5 August 2009 also formalized the use of surveillance tools that the deep state was already using. This dispositif, quietly adopted by parliament and ignored by the conventional scholarship, stipulated that “for reasons relating to the maintenance of public order, equipment to carry out the surveillance of electronic communications and to collect and record their contents in real time can be employed, as can searches and seizures of electronic information systems”.³⁶⁹ A dense network of surveillance cameras reinforced the Orwellian arsenal.³⁷⁰ As noted by a close ally of the praetorian oligarchy, Sid-Ahmed Ghazali (former CEO of Sonatrach, former minister of foreign affairs, former prime minister and former ambassador in Paris)—a few months before the French military

³⁶² Personal observation.

³⁶³ The commander of Land forces Khaled Nezzar, whom conventional expertise presents as a “professional officer” (Aït-Aoudia, 2016), proudly claimed his insubordination during the military repression of October 1988: “...the chief of staff was much more of a brake on our work flow. His action seemed so suspicious that I had to keep him away”. Nezzar, 1998, pp. 65-93.

³⁶⁴ *Journal officiel de la république algérienne*, n°32, 12 June 2014, pp. 4-5.

³⁶⁵ Ibid.

³⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 5.

³⁶⁷ *Journal officiel de la république algérienne*, n°8, 13 February 2008, pp. 5-6.

³⁶⁸ Martinez, 2015; Roberts, 2015.

³⁶⁹ *Journal officiel de la république algérienne* n°47, 16 August 2009, pp. 4-7. See also the BBC documentary on the cyber-surveillance tools purchased by the Algerian garrison state: <http://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-middle-east-40281963/how-bae-sold-cyber-surveillance-tools-to-arab-states>.

³⁷⁰ Personal observations in Algiers. See Parkinson, Bariyo, Chin, 2019.

intervention in Mali: “If you count all those who officially work for the services, those who work informally with them, out of fear, out of interest... you will discover the existence of a clandestine party of two million members”.³⁷¹

Despite the obvious weakness of the hegemonic narrative, army general Mohamed Mediene’s “retirement” in 2015 was nevertheless taken as final proof of its veracity. “Sixteen years after his election, Bouteflika is now in power alone” wrote *Le Figaro*.³⁷² Yet, why had the presidency not published the decree relating to this alleged “retirement”, as it had with the retirement of the army chief of staff in 2004?³⁷³ Why had the *Journal officiel* not published the appointment of the alleged new head of the DRS as it had when Mohamed Liamine Mediene was made chief of the Central Security of the Army in December 1988³⁷⁴ and when Larbi Belkheir was appointed as the effective chief of the Haut Conseil de Sécurité³⁷⁵ in April 1980?

Such inconsistencies reveal the structure that conventional scholarship has not allowed to reveal, namely that the deep state controls a strategic resource worth more than almost any other: information and its counterpart “ideological power”. Using journalists, experts, organic intellectuals and novelists, the DRS fabricated and promoted stories of “Islamic totalitarianism”, the “sultanate of Bouteflika” and the “new oligarchs”, etc. In this way, rational arguments attempting to establish the truth counted for less than the narrative codes used to tell a story and gain general assent for it.

“*Much ado about nothing*” could be the title of this episode of pseudo-politics. Indeed, the “dissolution of the DRS”, far from signifying a “political earthquake”, proceeded from a politics of dissimulation. Moreover, the story of the “weakening of the DRS” is a myth, a “depoliticized form of speech” that works to “evacuate the real”.³⁷⁶ The supposed retirement of Major General Toufik was orchestrated ten days after the visit to Algeria of the US intelligence community head.³⁷⁷ It was also a form of storytelling related to the regional context since Tunisian president Béji Caïd Essabsi had earlier put pressure on the DRS by declaring on a French TV station that “every time a terrorist group is uncovered in Tunisia there is an Algerian leader” behind it.³⁷⁸ Two months later Essabsi publicly asked for US help in intelligence gathering. Following this move, US President Obama awarded Tunisia the privileged status of “a major non-NATO ally”.³⁷⁹

Pushed into a corner, the DRS orchestrated the quarantining of the head of the Groupe d’Intervention Spéciale (GIS), the DRS elite force, General Abdelkader Aït Ouarabi, a.k.a. Hassan, with a story about a “clash of clans” to create a diversion. The announcement in the controlled “independent press” that Aït Ouarabi had been “incarcerated” in a “military prison” at the same time as the visit that would have been made by the head of the US intelligence services to Algiers was far from a coincidence.³⁸⁰

The circle was complete with a *New York Times* article about the “removal of the head of the Algerian secret services” that appeared at the same time. The author of this article did not hesitate to proclaim in the headline that “Algerian president fires the head of the secret services”,³⁸¹ but forgot to mention the role the “private press” had played in the Algerian authoritarian system since the “fight against islamo-fascism” had begun. He wrote, “Mr. Mediene’s removal came just a few weeks after the arrest of Abdelkader Aït Ouarabi” for, quoting a newspaper close to the DRS, “forming an armed group”, and reflects processes that “have been viewed in Algeria as the fulfillment of Mr. Bouteflika’s long-stated aim to exert more civilian control over the military”.³⁸² Posted from Tunis, this article concluded by quoting an expert who candidly asserted that

³⁷¹ Hachemaoui, 2015, p. 662.

³⁷² *Le Figaro*, 5 September 2015, p. 9.

³⁷³ *Journal officiel de la république algérienne*, n°49, 8 August 2004, p. 24.

³⁷⁴ *Journal officiel de la république algérienne*, 7 December 1988, 1299.

³⁷⁵ *Journal officiel de la république algérienne*, 6 May 1980, p. 519.

³⁷⁶ Barthes, 2014, pp. 252-253.

³⁷⁷ While the deeply controlled *Le Soir d’Algérie* was the sole that reported on the supposed visit, the APS did not report it.

³⁷⁸ See, among others, the virulent editorial published by *El Watan* on 29 March 2015.

³⁷⁹ *France24*, 25 May 2015.

³⁸⁰ Tlemçani, 2015; <https://www.courrierinternational.com/article/algerie-le-general-hassan-monsieur-antiterrorisme-mis-en-prison>

³⁸¹ Gall, 2015. The article of *NYT* does not mention the visit to Algiers which would have occurred two weeks before by the director of US national intelligence.

³⁸² *Ibid.*

“Bouteflika has now succeeded”. “[T]his act is very positive [...] It signifies to people that no one is immune and that no one is above the law”.

However, if this had really been the case, how can one explain the fact that a professional of pseudo-politics, who worked ardently in favor of impunity and the amnesia of the second counterrevolution, was not in the least bothered by the judicial apparatus when she announced on 1 September 2015 that General Hassan had been arrested for “forming an armed group”³⁸³ when in fact the official charge made by the relevant military court had been the “destruction of documents and disobeying orders”? Why had the army tried General Hassan behind closed doors?

The deep state was suddenly exposed by Bouteflika’s stroke in April 2013. The DRS was forced to create a diversion to avoid revealing the mechanics of government at a time of presidential infirmity. The effectiveness of the winner-take-all politics³⁸⁴ executed by the DRS is no longer in doubt, however. This is evidenced by the “consensus” of the whole civil-and-military establishment concerning the politics of impunity and forgetfulness that criminalizes any search for truth about the crimes perpetuated by formal and informal coercive forces during the second counterrevolution. This keeps off the agenda fundamental issues, ranging from the massacre of Melouza in 1957 to that of Bentalha in 1997, from the assassination of Abdallah Filali to that of Abdelkader Hachani through André Mécili.³⁸⁵

The Algerian praetorian high command has also taken a crucial authoritarian learning from the impressive success of “Tamarrud”: the gigantic mobilization orchestrated by the Egyptian deep state in June 2013 to bring down Islamist elected president Mohamed Morsi and regain control of the political process with the military coup on 3 July 2013.³⁸⁶

The *hirak* (“movement”, in colloquium Arabic) launched on 22 February 2019 has several prophets—and all of them have strong ties to the DRS. The very first is a “retired” DRS colonel, Dr. Chafik Mesbah. A former journalist and correspondent for a governmental media in Paris during the seventies, he climbed the ladder and held several management positions, notably at the head of the influential Institut d’Etudes de Stratégie Globale³⁸⁷ during the 1990s. Successfully converted into a leading expert the following decade, Mesbah multiplied interviews in the Algerian and French media. Unofficial spokesperson for the head of the DRS who played, as we have seen, an important role in the crisis that shook the regime during the first quarter of 2010, his analyzes were followed with a fine-tooth comb by Western chancelleries. In a conference given at the invitation of a Spanish think-tank at a time when NATO fighter planes started bombing Gaddafi’s forces, the quasi-official expert of the Algerian garrison state asserted that: (i) “everything happens as if the [Algerian] political authorities [have] no longer any alternative to an alignment with NATO”; (ii) in “the immediate term, the rapprochement with NATO is reflected, precisely, in a gradual transformation of the military chain of command”; (iii) the “new military leaders” who, from now on, hold the reality of the control levers, are distinguished by their “adherence” to “the imperatives of good governance”; (iv) “all in all, this intrinsic state of mind and the institutional principles defended by NATO should protect these new military leaders against the temptation of an untimely eruption in the political sphere”.³⁸⁸

In total contradiction with the soldierly message he had launched via the Algerian press during the terminal conflict of 2010, the “former” intelligence senior officer, drawing the strategic lessons from the Arab popular

³⁸³ See the editions of *El Watan* and *Liberté* for 1 September 2015.

³⁸⁴ Hacker, Pierson, 2010.

³⁸⁵ The “Ordonnance of 27 February 2006 implementing the Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation” stipulates: “Anyone who, by speech, writing, or any other act, uses or exploits the wounds of the National Tragedy to harm the institutions of the Democratic and Popular Republic of Algeria, to weaken the state, or to undermine the good reputation of its agents who honorably served it, or to tarnish the image of Algeria internationally, shall be punished by three to five years in prison and a fine of 250,000 to 500,000 dinars”. *Journal officiel de la république algérienne*, n°11, 28 February 2006, p. 7.

³⁸⁶ See Barth, 2013; Achcar, 2016; Marfleet, 2016.

³⁸⁷ It is not excluded that the “global strategy” revealed by the praetorian command of the army in the autumn of 1990 was drawn up at the Institut d’Etudes de Stratégie Globale (INESG).

³⁸⁸ Mesbah, 2011.

uprisings that brought down “presidents for life” like Ben Ali and Mubarak, set in stone the new storytelling relating to the “decline of the DRS”:

President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, by replacing—without paying any significant political cost—the generation of “Janvieristes” generals with [...] “professional warriors”, has eliminated all possible sources of contestation of his approach from the armed forces [...] In the long term, President Abdelaziz Bouteflika has succeeded in decoupling, almost completely, the intelligence services and the armed forces, depriving the former of the ostensible support, which made their strength, and the latter of the interface with society that allowed them to act politically [...] President Abdelaziz Bouteflika [has] a real desire to reform the intelligence services, in the sense of annihilating the nuisance capacity that is attributed to them. He is clever enough, however, to want to continue to maintain the myth surrounding this instrument, which he does not want to suddenly deprive himself of [...] Should the dismantling of the Algerian intelligence services be a prerequisite for the implementation of a democratic transition process? [...] For the time being, there is no point in quibbling over the DRS deemed excessive influence on national political life [...] What is much more essential is the end of the role of interface with the political society that they played throughout the Algerian crisis on behalf of the army chief of staff. This cut with the army chief of staff of the ANP undoubtedly dates the beginning of a decline in the power of the intelligence services.³⁸⁹

Informed by the strategic learning developed by the intelligence services from the “Arab spring”, the “organic intellectual” of the DRS revealed the road map of “Bouteflika’s regime” for the years to come:

What, ultimately, could be the behavior of the Algerian army in the face of a major popular uprising? What role could it play subsequently in a process of democratic transition? [...] Mostly from disadvantaged social stratum [...] the new military leaders are not far from disconnected from social reality [...] The current deterioration of the situation in the country, tending to become chronic, can only challenge them.³⁹⁰

But the “former” DRS senior officer is not only a policy expert from the inside, he is also a prophet. Following is the prophecy of the “disaster” he pronounced eight years before its supposed occurrence:

All these considerations should lead the Algerian army to refuse to suppress possible popular demonstrations. Military leaders, however, will not put themselves in a situation of rebellion vis-à-vis the legal political authorities of the country. It will be, as a last resort, when they feel a chaotic situation, fatal to the country, that they could [act], identically, to the Egyptian armies [which sacrificed the *rais* Mubarak in order to preserve the garrison state].³⁹¹

Giving a lecture in the newspaper of well-established crony capitalist Rebrab, less than a month before the 2014 presidential election, the very active retired DRS senior officer was a little more precise, going as far as to give the contours and texture of what was to be called *hirak* five years later.

There are sufficient financial resources to avoid resorting to restrictions on [...] social subsidies. This should remove, all the more, a risk of social explosion. There is, however, an impressive potential for contestation but the society is lacking a structure. The scattered centers of incentive which appear every day in this or that locality are intended to aggregate. The Algerian people is not a “digestive tract”, it is a “injured conscience” waiting to manifest itself [...] A popular protest movement would mainly manifest itself, essentially, in towns.³⁹²

A little more precise, the “organic intellectual” of the DRS evoked the decisive Arab counterrevolutionary episode of Tamarrud:

³⁸⁹ Ibid.

³⁹⁰ Ibid.

³⁹¹ Ibid.

³⁹² Mesbah, 2014c.

Internally, the Egyptian army took advantage of a particular political situation in which the exasperated population demonstrated, massively, against the blunders of a president [...].³⁹³

And the prophet of the DRS to deliver the oracle:

In the spirit of national public opinion, within the public administration and hierarchies of intelligence services and the army, from the lowest to the highest, four major concerns are omnipresent. Red lines, in a way, that it would be risky to overtake. Refusal of the advent to power of a radical and violent Islamism, condemnation of grand corruption, rejection of essentially regionalist approaches, finally hostility to a disguised family succession at the head of the state [...]. If there were a serious blunder in the country [...]? [...]. Coming from a majority of disadvantaged social strata, the current military leaders in Algeria are far from being disconnected from social reality [...]. It is unlikely that they will agree to shoot the crowd [...]. The police, by social origin and the similarity of living conditions, are very close to the population.³⁹⁴

Mobilizing “presentism”—the favorite historicity regime of the political police—, the prophet of the intelligence services announced, five years before the D-day of 22 February 2019, the advent of a new historical break comparable to that operated by the insurrection of 1 November 1954:

On the eve of the start of the national liberation war, although the premises of the armed insurrection were already looming, [colonial leaders persisted in their blindness]. French officials in the intelligence and security world had sounded the alarm at the time [...]. Our officials are, today, in the same frame of mind.³⁹⁵

Writing in 2016 in the columns of a daily newspaper known for its strong ties to the army, the “organic intellectual” of the DRS was even more explicit about the Algerian replica of Tamarrud; in order to be well understood by Western chancelleries, the insider military expert of the Algerian garrison state certified the forthcoming process:

Faced with a situation of potential chaos, the Algerian army adopted a behavior similar to that of the Egyptian armed forces. This behavior could even lean more towards popular expectations [...]. The only case in point that could arise is therefore the Egyptian scenario where the army, without taking the initiative itself, would support a popular uprising that has become manageable.³⁹⁶

Obviously, the prophecy given by the “organic intellectual” of the DRS in the aftermath of the Arab popular uprisings found its most dazzling realization in the *hirak*: a “popular movement of protest” provoked by the crossing of the “red line” of the “disguised family succession”; a (peaceful) “historic break” rather than a (violent) “social explosion”; the police and the army, acting “identically to the Egyptian armed forces” who sanction the “blunders of a president”, rank behind the people and “lean even more towards popular expectations”!

The *hirak* had another prophet. Colorful, it remained nonetheless very linked to the secret police apparatus through Nouredine Boukrouh. Beginning his career in the early 1970s as journalist and public intellectual writing in the closely controlled government daily *El Moudjahid*, Boukrouh was sent to Iran to cover the revolution—a mark which, by itself, betrays the ties linking the “organic intellectual” with the garrison state’s secret police apparatus. Accompanying “the infitah”, the proto-neoliberalization carried out by the pseudo-socialist regime in the early 1980s in the wake of what was being undertaken by Sadat’s Egypt, the “second-hand dealing in ideas”—to use Hayek’s famous expression—³⁹⁷ distinguished himself by his articles published in the government press stigmatizing, in a Thatcherian vein, the “socialism of the udder” (“socialisme de la mamelle”). Leader of a “party” that had been shattered by the country’s first and last

³⁹³ Mesbah, 2014b.

³⁹⁴ Mesbah, 2014a.

³⁹⁵ Mesbah, 2014c.

³⁹⁶ *Le Soir d’Algérie*, 16 May 2016.

³⁹⁷ Hayek, 1949.

democratic elections, he participated in the ferocious campaign orchestrated by the praetorian force against the reformers of the regime in the forefront of which were Mehri, Chadli, Hidouci and Hamrouche. And there was also Boukrouh, the “modernist muslim” in the improbable group of “7 + 1” alongside former head of Boumediene’s secret police Kasdi Merbah, the “pan-Arabist” Ahmed Ben Bella, the neoliberal “secular and berberist” Saïd Saadi and the “trotskyst” (still anti-internationalist) Louisa Hanoune—who supported the “unlimited strike” launched by the “religious fundamentalists” of the Islamic Front of Salvation in order, as we have seen, to bring down the reformist government before the legislative elections of June 1991. Fervent promoter of the reactionary coup of January 1992, Boukrouh’s party sat in rubber-stamp parliaments that approved the legislative arsenal of the neo-praetorian and neoliberal counter-revolution.

But it was in the bloody summer of 1998, that is to say when the praetorian coalition led a frontal assault to dislodge President Liamine Zeroual and his influential right-hand man Mohamed Betchine, that the career of the client of the regime took off. Indeed, inaugurating a ruthless media campaign against the short-lived chief of the Direction Centrale de la Sécurité de l’Armée (1987-1988), Nourredine Boukrouh multiplied, this time in the “independent press”, the attacks against the alleged “strong man of the regime” and his “economic empire”—not without comparing it with the “revenant” Larbi Belkheir.³⁹⁸ Successful dealer, Nourredine Boukrouh entered the government of the “civilian president” that the praetorian oligarchy had coopted in 1999. A wealthy neoliberal, the man occupied until 2005 in turn the functions of minister of small and medium-sized enterprises, and of trade.

Withdrawn from the government at a time when neoliberalization was entering its “roll-out” phase, Nourredine Boukrouh returned ten years later to the center of the scene when the deeply consolidated garrison state was actively preparing for the post-Bouteflika assumed “era”. This time he returned in the new clothes of the “thinker” and under the cameras of “private televisions” which were created by the praetorian government in the context of the “Arab Spring”—as recommended by the authoritative DRS expert immediately after the fall of Ben Ali.³⁹⁹ After three years of assiduous media promotion, the very smooth praetorian client Nourredine Boukrouh launched a “Call” to the Algerian people in September 2017 to lead a “peaceful citizen revolution”. Interviewed from pacific Switzerland by *Le Point*, the neoliberal Boukrouh—to whom no question relating to his past was raised—brings the last stone to the prophetic storytelling posed by the DRS since the Arab popular uprisings:

Le Point: You have launched an “Appeal for a peaceful citizen revolution”. What was the impact of this call in Algeria and among Algerians living abroad?

Noureddine Boukrouh: I must clarify that this “Appeal” does not constitute a solitary political process, but expresses what millions of Algerians think. This is why its impact inside, outside and on social networks is constantly increasing. But to understand its motivations and its objectives, a retrospective is essential.⁴⁰⁰

Rewriting the past in terms of presentism, the experimented neoliberal intellectual of the garrison state made the class conflict disappear from a sleight of hand:

Algeria is the first country affiliated to the Arab-Muslim sphere to have tried the experience of political pluralism after a social revolt with economic motivations in October 1988. Taken in panic, the government promulgated a pluralist constitution to be eligible for external financial aid. There followed free municipal and legislative elections, at the end of which the Islamist current won the bet like what we have seen in the countries affected by the Arab Spring. This phenomenon, which was not of political but cultural-religious essence received a military treatment that plunged the country in a decade of terrorism from which it emerged with the rise in oil prices from 2001. This windfall allowed

³⁹⁸ Garçon, 1998a, 1998b.

³⁹⁹ Mesbah, 2011a.

⁴⁰⁰ https://www.lepoint.fr/afrique/nour-eddine-boukrouh-bouteflika-s-agrippe-au-pouvoir-comme-harpagon-a-sa-cassette-10-10-2017-2163413_3826.php

to restore the state and heal the wounds of society, but was also used by Bouteflika to restore the spirit of the single party and the practices of the authoritative economy.⁴⁰¹

Perfectly complementary with the prophecy of the officious expert of the DRS, the “non-solitary political process” popularized by the smooth and loyal client of the praetorian regime called for the fraternization of the army with its people:

While the Constitution only allowed him two terms, [Abdelaziz Bouteflika] amended it to offer four, totaling twenty years, and is preparing for a fifth, despite his vegetative condition. It was to counter this intention or a succession arranged for the benefit of his brother that I launched a Political Initiative, of which the ‘Appeal’ to citizens is only the first sequence. The second appeared a few days ago and consists of an ‘Appeal’ addressed to the army so that it does not use its manpower and its armament against the people in the event that the latter comes to rise up as a result of the bankruptcy of Bouteflika’s economic policy.⁴⁰²

But, like the quasi-official expert of the DRS, professional of pseudo-politics Boukrouh did not want a class conflict. Also, the neoliberal “organic intellectual” of the garrison state 4.0 advocated the panacea:

The alternative can only come from a peaceful and legalistic citizen reaction during the next presidential election in 2019.⁴⁰³

In a private television show, he offered a precious clue: the “citizen mobilization” that took place in the south of Algeria during 2015 “against shale gas” represented in his prophetic eyes a model to follow.⁴⁰⁴ This “social movement” was all the more interesting since its representatives, who “refused any politicization”, had chosen to entrust their grievances to senior police and military officials.⁴⁰⁵

The counter-revolutionary process, covertly prepared by the deep state since 2011, entered its final phase in 2017: the call launched in the French media by a smooth and disciplined client of the praetorian regime formalized the start of the “Egyptian scenario” of Tamarrud in Algeria.

While the not appealing “organic intellectual” of the garrison state was promoting his call for a “legalistic, peaceful and citizen reaction” in the media during the presidential election of 2019, a distinguished group took over. Labeled “Mouwatana”, which means “citizenship” in colloquium Arabic, it is made up of smooth and notable clients of the praetorian regime: a former finance minister and senator appointed during the bloody years of the praetorian and neoliberal counter-revolution (Ahmed Benbitour); an earlier minister who pleaded in favor of shock therapy “without any soul searching”⁴⁰⁶ moreover business banker involved in the major corruption case of Khalifa Bank (the Algerian-Swiss citizen Ali Benouari);⁴⁰⁷ a member of designated parliament coopted during the dictatorship’s years of the 1990s (Zoubida Assoul); last but not least, the former companion of fortuneteller Nouredine Boukrouh, now turned president of Jil Jadid, a “party” legalized by the Interior Ministry in 2012, i.e., at a time when the garrison state’s government had formalized the strategic learning that it had drawn from the Arab popular uprisings.

Safeguarding the political and institutional fiction of Bouteflika IV, the “Mouwatana” society launched a call to the “President of the Republic”, in perfect harmony with the roadmap stretched-out by the authoritative expert of the garrison state. Presented in French media, from now on, in light of a “collective that brings together politicians and civil society”,⁴⁰⁸ the call of the praetorian regime’s well-disciplined clients involves the following artificial and fallacious diagnosis:

⁴⁰¹ Ibid.

⁴⁰² Ibid.

⁴⁰³ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wCgA81nJes> (53:59 – 54:07. Last view: 30 January 2020).

⁴⁰⁵ *El Khabar*, 20 January 2015; *Le Soir d’Algérie*, 20 January 2015.

⁴⁰⁶ In French, « sans état d’âme ». Quoted in *Le Matin*, 15 September 1993, p. 2.

⁴⁰⁷ Hachemaoui, 2011, pp. 118-119.

⁴⁰⁸ *Inter alia* the story given by Soufiane Djilali, during a Parisian tour at the end of January 2019, alternately to *France 24* and *Mediapart*: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YTff8qI_n05s (from the 13th minute); El Azzouzi, 2019.

We appeal to you in favor of the one and only decision that can open a new era for the country [...]: your renunciation of the fifth term! [...] No doubt, another term would be a nightmare for you and for the country.⁴⁰⁹

However, it remains to articulate the junction between the storytelling of the “chaos” that would allegedly ensue from the assumed fifth term of Bouteflika and the prophecy of the bifurcation—analogue to that operated on 1 November 1954 that the “popular uprising”, called for by the prophet of the garrison state 4.0, would not fail to produce.

Engraved in the masterful storyline instituted by the authoritative expert of the DRS, this narrative coupling will be highlighted, a few days before the advent of the *hirak*, by an influential press editor, also member of the celebrated neoliberal Mouwatana society. Son of an executive of the MALG,⁴¹⁰ the prominent apparatus of the secret services formed by the triumvir Boussouf in 1957, the heir Ihsane el Kadi is one of the most influential Algerian journalists. Correspondent for the leftist catholic French newspaper *La Croix* since the beginning of the second praetorian and neoliberal counterrevolution, he became electronic press editor⁴¹¹ in the early 2000s, that is to say during the terrible conflict opposing the boss of the DRS to its praetorian rivals. The established journalist subtly distills the propaganda of the DRS: whether it concerns the conventional “civil war” story, the assassination of Tibhirine’s monks, the Bentalha massacre,⁴¹² the pointed attacks against Larbi Belkheir and Mohamed Laamari, the myth of the “dissolution of the DRS” or the sultanistic fiction of “Bouteflika’s house”.

Engaged in the beginning of Chadli’s first term with a “trotskyst” Pablist small group⁴¹³ in support of the Berberist cause, the influential editorialist now displays without complex its conversion to neoliberalism. Manager of a successful communication agency that exhibits, from its list of partners, heavyweights of the well-controlled Algerian crony capitalism, such as DP WORLD Djazaïr, the Emirati-Algerian joint-venture that managed the port of Algiers officially until September 2019, Sheraton whose Algerian luxury resorts and hotels are managed by a governmental structure, Lafarge, or global companies flooding the Algerian televisions with advertising as Ooredoo, Danone and Coca Cola, etc.⁴¹⁴ Thus, the well-connected communication agency “organized during the summer of 2017, in the pleasant setting of the fishery of Algiers, the press lunch of Société Générale Algeria”:⁴¹⁵ the Algerian-French bank, whose supervisory board was chaired by Ali Benouari—the very one who stirs the neoliberal and distinguished “civil society” of Mouwatana had concluded a fraudulent transaction with El Kahlifa Bank.⁴¹⁶

The successful entrepreneur is also a tireless neoliberal “second-hand dealer in ideas”. In his multiple press organs, the established editorialist sponsored the policies recommended by dominant neoliberal economists on the occasion of their trips to Algiers at the invitation of the official institutions. So it is with economists

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁴¹⁰ Mohamed Gazou alias Bachir El Kadi led the MALG intelligence base in Tripoli until independence before being elected to the Assembly and the FLN’s Central Committee in 1964.

⁴¹¹ Algeria Interface.

⁴¹² Kadi, 1997 and 1999; Ficatier, 1997.

⁴¹³ In reference to Michel Pablo alias Raptis who provided invaluable assistance in setting up an arms factory for the MALG in Morocco before becoming adviser at the presidency in the pseudo-socialist regime between 1962 and 1965. The very controversial secretary general of the Fourth International during the 1950s was a fervent defender of the “Arab revolution” which would have been at work by the praetorian regime of Nasser; before his exclusion at the beginning of the 1960s from the international Trotskyist organization, Michel Pablo had also pleaded in favor of a “critical support” for the Eastern bloc.

⁴¹⁴ <https://interfacemedias.dz:partenaires/> (last view: 11 January 2020).

⁴¹⁵ Ibid.

⁴¹⁶ *Les échos*, 10 May 2004. It is not uninteresting to note that a “veiled article” published in May 2000 in a mainstream French magazine by an Algerian insider journalist (Gacemi, 2000) “announced the color”. Suffice to say that the thesis—presented by Nicolas Beau in *Le Canard enchaîné* a few days before the launch of the very official “Djazaïr 2003, the year of Algeria in France”—according to which an “alarmist report of the [French intelligence apparatus] DGSE” was behind the fall of El Khalifa group, should be taken with a grain of salt. In his book *La République des Mallettes* (Paris, Fayard, 2011) investigative journalist Pierre Péan revealed that the sulfurous Franco-Algerian intermediary Pierre Djouhri who played a key role in the ‘Libyan funding’ of Nicolas Sarkozy’s presidential campaign had paid 400,000 euros to Bakchich.info, Nicolas Beau’s electronic media. After denying Pierre Péan’s information, Beau admitted the funding in his book *Les Bourgeois de la République* published five years later (Paris, Seuil, 2016). See <https://www.mediapart.fr/journal/france/141116/comment-djouhri-manoeuvre-la-presse-pour-etouffer-l-affaire-libyenne>

such as Hernando De Soto,⁴¹⁷ Jean Tirole⁴¹⁸ or Philippe Aghion.⁴¹⁹ While the ailing head of state has not addressed his people since 2012 and the stroke that struck him one year later has irreparably damaged his health, the experienced press editor asserts, last 2015, that the “President Bouteflika, who is preparing a Constitution, wants to remain the eternal hyper-president that Algeria has known since October 1988, his successors having to share power with the Assembly and the Chief of Government...”⁴²⁰ Maintaining skillfully the fiction of Bouteflika IV, he goes so far as to consider, last 2015, whether “Bouteflika will make us a democracy in the back?”⁴²¹

Engaged three years later with the neoliberal Mouwatana club in the opposition to the presumed fifth term of Bouteflika, the embedded press manager will establish, less than one month before the advent of the prophesized historical bifurcation of 22 February 2019, the narrative linking the situation prevailing in Algeria in January 2019 and that of the day before the insurrection of 1 November 1954. This resembles what the endorsed expert of the DRS did in 2014 in the welcoming newspaper of an unshakable crony capitalist. Indeed, ignoring the reform process initiated between 1989 and 1991 by the reformer and former FLN Secretary General, the neoliberal manager and member of Mouwatana society severely criticized Mouloud Hamrouche for his alleged affiliation with “the centralist”—that means the earlier member of the MTLD’s Central Committee—Abdelhamid Mehri who died in 2012. The situation in Algeria early 2019 required less a “diagnosis paralyzing the action” than an “activist process leading to achievement”, exactly as in 1954 with what the official story presented as the historical break executed by the celebrated “group of the 22 (historical activists)”.⁴²²

Two items are needed to complete the DRS discursive dispositif of the “peaceful and legalistic citizen revolution”; they will be brought by the same successful manager and deep-rooted editorialist only a few days before the announced advent of the “popular uprising” in his leading media, Radio M.

The first concerns the driving force of the supposed “revolution”. In a praetorian polity in which political parties are feeble and devoid of social roots—as underlined by Chafik Mesbah, the trustworthy expert of the DRS since 2011⁴²³—the dynamic vigor of the operational “popular uprising” could not come from the “political actors” or even from the fêted “civil society”. But then where could it come from? The answer is given less than a month before the advent of the prophesized “popular protest” by the successful neoliberal communication agency manager, who did not fail to articulate it with the “activists vs centralists” 1954 anachronistic debate: football club supporters.⁴²⁴ In the same much-followed radio show, broadcast on 21 February 2019, insider expert specializing in Algerian military acquisitions⁴²⁵ stressed that the “spontaneous” anti-5th presidential term process that began in Kherrata and Khenchela⁴²⁶ came from the “underworld of football which is organized, supervised and hierarchical”.⁴²⁷ Foreshadowing for a few hours the storytelling of the *hirak* singing the fraternization between the army and its people, the notorious propagandist of the Algerian army asserted that the “mobilization” which would have taken place in El Tarf, a city very close to Tunisia, was not led by football supporters but by retirees from the army, just like him.⁴²⁸

⁴¹⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DKpZLurb7Xk>; El Kadi, 2012.

⁴¹⁸ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_PEN4K0IFRs&t=66s (Last view: 10 January 2020).

⁴¹⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-TMN3tm1GVc> (Last view: 10 January 2020).

⁴²⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wn1gs16ZrtE&t=1747s> (The sequence 12:15 to 12:45. Last view: 10 January 2020).

⁴²¹ Ibid.

⁴²² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DGGHbBKfxzk> (from the 24th minute). On the canonical narrative of the “22 historical”, see inter alia Harbi, 1980; Meynier, 2002.

⁴²³ Mesbah, 2011a.

⁴²⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DGGHbBKfxzk>

⁴²⁵ <https://www.menadefense.net/algerie/la-saga-du-boxer-ivf-en-algerie/>; <https://www.menadefense.net/algerie/la-delegation-algerienne-a-maks-a-visite-deux-fois-le-su-57/>; <https://www.menadefense.net/algerie/lalgerie-teste-les-systemes-hardkill-de-rheinmetall/>; <https://www.menadefense.net/algerie/le-dernier-kilo-de-la-marine-algerienne-en-route-pour-rejoindre-son-port-dattache/>; <https://www.menadefense.net/algerie/premiere-image-du-nimr-isy-made-in-algeria/>; <https://www.menadefense.net/afnord/tavor-chez-la-police-marocaine-des-preuves-et-des-explications/>

⁴²⁶ Just as was, according to official historiography, the process of the war of liberation starting with the massacres of Setif-Guelma-Kherrata in 1945 before taking root in the Aurès in November 1954.

⁴²⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hCljUHnc4JM&t=2138s> (11:37 to 11:51. Last view: 12 January 2019).

⁴²⁸ Ibid.

Trained at the KGB school, the Algerian secret police have made sport in general and football in particular a political playground, a valuable instrument of propaganda, an effective spring of nationalist mobilization, an anti-programmatic mode of politicization. Hence the longevity of the powerful head of the Algerian football federation, Mohamed Raouraoua, from 2001 to 2017. The patron of the DRS had imposed him as “commissaire de l’année de l’Algérie en France” instead of a protégé of Larbi Belkheir. Hence also the air bridge set up during 72 hours by the garrison state’s infrastructural power to transport, free of charge or at a very subsidized price, some 10,000 Algerian supporters to encourage the Algerian selection against its Egyptian counterpart in the last qualifying round for the 2010 football world cup, in Sudan.⁴²⁹ Hence also the mobilization, occurring during the celebrated *hirak*, of 38 civil and military planes to transport thousands of supporters to encourage the Algerian football selection in the final of the African Cup of Nations.⁴³⁰

The last steppingstone of the official discursive dispositif concerns an extremely important feature of the Algerian Tamarrud. As foretold by the prophets of the *hirak*, the latter should be an “offended consciousness”, a “peaceful, legalistic and citizen reaction” and by no means a “social burst”, to quote Docteur Mesbah’s and Boukrouh’s verses.

Artificially mobilized in the Algerian “public debate” (by a neoliberal expert and former shock therapist under the title “pays riche, peuple pauvre”) during the bloody year of 2007, during which obscure terrorist attacks targeted inter alia the ministry of the interior, then occupied by Noureddine Yazid Zerhouni, and a presidential procession, the conflict over the distribution of wealth has been the subject of a systematic deletion from the Algerian problems and issues deemed legitimate, especially after the popular uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt. Let us recall the prediction made by the prophet of the DRS in 2014 in the media of a crony capitalist: “There are sufficient financial resources not to resort to restrictions on spending on food imports or social spending. This should further remove the risk of social explosion [...] The Algerian people is not a ‘digestive tract’, it is an injured conscience waiting to manifest itself”.⁴³¹

It is easier to understand why the critical problem of household indebtedness sneaked into the highly controlled private press in 2009 and 2014, that is at the start of the third and fourth presidential terms.⁴³² Also, according to the renowned serious Arabic-speaking newspaper *El Khabar*, which relies on indicators from the Bank of Algeria, the Algerian households debt has reached some 3 billion dollars⁴³³ twenty years after the launch of the neoliberal shock therapy. However, access to debt is hardly egalitarian; it translates multiple inequalities: clientelist, social, geographic, sexual, generational, etc. And even the very controlled Office National des Statistiques (ONS), which cautiously does not deliver any measure for the household debt, the share of national income captured by the richest 10% of the population or the “conspicuous consumption” of the mushrooming multimillionaires,⁴³⁴ provides an indication, moreover very euphemistic, concerning social inequalities: the richest 20% of the population spend 12 times more on housing than the most disadvantaged 20% of the population.⁴³⁵ However, the World Inequality Report 2018 specified for its part that in the Middle East—the most unequal region in the world—the top decile captures 61% of the national income.⁴³⁶ Although widely publicized around the world, this report, like the Global Wealth Report of the Credit Suisse, remains little or not at all disclosed in the Algerian “independent press”. While the issue of social inequalities is increasingly discussed globally, as reflected by the growing echo received by the

⁴²⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7cB8rl7zmLE>; « Équipe nationale: les supporters algériens de retour de Khartoum », *APS*, 20 November 2009.

⁴³⁰ https://www.eurosport.fr/football/coupe-d-afrique-des-nations/2019/finale-can-2019-28-avons-pour-transporter-les-fans-algeriens_sto7375441/story.shtml

⁴³¹ *Liberté*, 25 March 2014.

⁴³² *Le Quotidien d’Oran*, 13 December 2009; *El Khabar*, 24 November 2014.

⁴³³ *El Khabar*, 24 November 2014.

⁴³⁴ Each *wilaya* (department) of the country now has its tycoons and multimillionaires: see Hachemaoui, 2013.

⁴³⁵ « Enquête nationale sur les dépenses de consommation et le niveau de vie des ménages 2011. Dépenses en logement & charges », Algiers, ONS, 2011. The director of the ONS was appointed general secretary of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research by “presidential decree”, in April 2020.

⁴³⁶ <https://wir2018.wid.world/files/download/wir2018-summary-french.pdf>

books of Klein, Milanovic, Stiglitz and Piketty⁴³⁷ in the Algerian “public sphere”, a deafening silence reigns on the problem.

This understandable apprehension to erase the class conflict is found in the writings of the third *hirak*'s prophet, the successful press director whose media sponsored an international meeting planned by the Algerian oil and gas company SONATRACH.⁴³⁸ Former leftist, the neoliberal “organic intellectual” went so far as to propose a theorization of the alleged obsolescence of the class conflict. In an influential editorial on the assumed “alliance” crafted by the well-established oligopoly of the celebrated multi-billionaire Isaad Rebrab between employers and workers, the “second-hand dealer in ideas” affirmed, somewhat sententiously, the following Heritage Foundation style assertion: “Marxist theory is shaken in Algeria. Employers and working class are allied against a common enemy [...] bureaucracy”.⁴³⁹ In perfect harmony with the prophecy revealed by the authoritative expert of the deep state and realizing “how Algerians are addict to subsidies”, the entrenched neoliberal press manager reported on the waves of his influential web-radio the following prescience, some hours before the “sudden appearance” of the “popular uprising”: “Algeria is the paradise of the Gilets Jaunes !” And his well-experienced colleague and partner—director of Al HuffingtonPost Algeria⁴⁴⁰ and *Le Monde* correspondent in Algiers, who sold the story of the “stripping of the DRS by Bouteflika”—went on to elucidate the prophecy: because of state subsidies, “Algeria is the country where there will be no Gilets Jaunes”.⁴⁴¹

And as if to further erase the class conflict, a new touch was brought to this discursive dispositif just a few days before the *hirak*: the sudden discovery of the agony of the left in Algeria! Many “organic intellectuals” spread the story in a remarkable synchronization.

The first man to do so is a regular collaborator at Radio M and www.maghrebemergent.info, the media led by the successful neoliberal press manager Ihsane El Kadi. Taking up the official diagnosis of an “Islamic State peril” hanging over Algeria in January 1992, the journalist cautiously disregarded the praetorian and neoliberal counterrevolution of the 1990s. Remaining on the surface, he noticed that the “left is not capable of proposing a way out of the crisis”.⁴⁴²

A few days before the advent of the “citizen, peaceful and legalist revolution” promised by the neoliberal prophet Nouredine Boukrouh, the second “organic intellectual” discovered the “bewilderment of the Algerian left”. Arezki Metref was the former editorial director of the *Nouvel hebdo* turned *L'Hebdo libéré*, the awful propaganda machine launched by the secret police to bring down the reformers, even with anti-Semitism. *L'Hebdo libéré* was also the one who propagated—following the prophetic praetorian doctrine released in 1990—the narrative of “civil war”⁴⁴³ as well as the need for a Polish model of privatization.⁴⁴⁴ Practicing the “amnesia of genesis” as well, the professional propagandist carefully disregarded the “destruction” of the USTA unionists by the FLN and presented the latter as a “movement dominated by a leftist ideology” (sic).⁴⁴⁵ Guardedly neglecting the massive neoliberal shock therapy led by the military dictatorship during the 1990s—though he was writing for the leftist *Le Monde diplomatique*—, the former editorial director of *L'Hebdo libéré* revealed again in perfect harmony with the new prophecy preached by the “organic intellectuals” of the garrison state since 2014, that current Algeria resembled what it was of the eve of November 1954.⁴⁴⁶ The very efficient neoliberal press manager Ihsane El Kadi—who was reverently quoted in the first lines of this timely article discovering the “confusion of the Algerian left” in February

⁴³⁷ Klein, 2007; Milanovic, 2010; Piketty, 2013; Stiglitz, 2015.

⁴³⁸ <http://www.napec-dz.com/mediaparteners.aspx?lg=fr> (Last view: 13 January 2020).

⁴³⁹ « Algérie : alliance inédite patronat-travailleurs chez Cevital sous régime spécifique », *Maghreb émergent*, 6 June 2017.

⁴⁴⁰ Al HuffingtonPost Maghreb was founded and directed from June 2013 until December 2019 by an insider Algerian expert—a close parent of the General turned crony capitalist Kamel Abderrahim.

⁴⁴¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hCljUHnc4JM&t=2138s> (3:40 to 4:07. Last view 13 January 2020).

⁴⁴² Charef, 2019.

⁴⁴³ Metref, 1992.

⁴⁴⁴ *L'Hebdo libéré*, n°1, 4-10 April, pp. 12-13.

⁴⁴⁵ Metref, 2019.

⁴⁴⁶ Arezki Metref, 2019.

2019—resorted almost simultaneously to this concordance of historical times, as set in the stone of propaganda by the ideological power of the garrison state since the start of the simulacrum of Bouteflika IV.

The *hirak* did not have intellectual prophets only. On the contrary, the most important prophecy of the “sudden appearance of the popular uprising” was played on a very popular ground: that of the humorous sitcom broadcast on prime time during the sacred month of *Ramadhân* shortly after the breaking of the fast; that of the satirical television series in which the language used is that of *darija*, the embodied and alive Algerian dialect rather than the academic Arabic. And it is through the most followed of them⁴⁴⁷ that the prophecy of the *hirak* was played out on a deeply controlled “private” television in 2017. In sustained allusions to Bouteflika IV, a very popular sitcom called Sultan Achour el Acher (Sultan Achour the Tenth) unfolded the functioning of Achour’s absolutist monarchy, which was, to quote it’s producer, an “allegory of Algeria today”.⁴⁴⁸ In an episode of the second season titled “demos cratos”, the sitcom portrayed a people, unified beyond their generational, sexual and economic cleavages, rising peacefully against the palace.⁴⁴⁹ The show was broadcast by a “private” television channel that made the now ubiquitous neoliberal prophet of the “peaceful and legalist revolution” Nouredine Boukrouh one of its regular political guests in 2017.⁴⁵⁰ Less than two years later, the believed sudden popular uprising, willing to invest the Presidential Palace (of El Mouradia), chanted loudly one of its flagship slogans: “The people do not want Bouteflika or (his brother) Saïd”; “Bouteflika, the Moroccan, there will be no fifth term”, “A republic, not a monarchy!”⁴⁵¹

The very popular sitcom, which staged a reversal of roles between the king and the crown prince just when the DRS’ storytelling presented Bouteflika’s younger brother as the holder of the reality of power,⁴⁵² made other intriguing predictions. One of them relates to an episode broadcast in 2017 depicting the illegal entry of drugs across the country’s borders; the mafia network going back to the heir to the throne.⁴⁵³ It turned out that an obscure episode, revealed in chorus by the Algerian “public” and “private” media, reported less than one year later some and days only after a rowdy military exercise carried out by the Algerian naval forces on the west coasts of the country under the biblical banner of “Deluge (2018)”⁴⁵⁴ the seizure of a huge amount of cocaine at Oran’s port in 29 May 2018. Speaking the same evening, between two former senior army officers, on an alleged “opposition” television channel,⁴⁵⁵ Ali Benhadj⁴⁵⁶ affirmed that the “president’s brother”, who the praetorian propaganda described as the “vice-king” and the real ruler of the country, took part in this “disaster”.

The much watched television series is not only broadcast by a “private” TV channel over-indebted to state institutions.⁴⁵⁷ The successful director, who had previously distinguished himself by the smooth and depoliticized sitcoms he produced in the shadow of the policy of impunity and amnesia,⁴⁵⁸ did not fail to thank the police in the credits of his comedy.

447 « Algérie: ‘Achour el Acher’, la série la plus regardée pendant le ramadan », *Jeune Afrique*, 20 June 2017.

448 « Algérie: les séries télévisées du ramadan, un miroir de la société », *Jeune Afrique*, 12 June 2018.

449 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sLqFK5To1zI> (last view: 2 July 2020). The episode generated more than 3 million views on Youtube.

450 Here with the neoliberal banker and the Algerian-Swiss Mouwatana citizen Ali Benouari: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_h72MEfUrI8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_h72MEfUrI8;); there alone: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bMIEMS9FOZs>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KjKcB7Auw4w>

451 Participant observation, Algiers, 1 March 2019.

452 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U99Ap3qgnOY> (Last view: 2 July 2020).

453 The 13th episode of the second season of Achour el Acher: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U5QfN4nPguY> (Last view: 2 July 2020).

454 See the official organ of the Algerian Army *El Djeich*, May 2018, and the unofficial menadefense.net: <https://www.menadefense.net/algerie/toufane-2018-un-exercice-de-grande-envergure/> (Last view: 5 July 2019).

455 Al Magharibiya. Direct observation.

456 The very one who, although refraining from taking part, called for the demonstration of 10 October 1988, thus giving the pretext for the bloody repression which barely preceded President Chadli’s speech; called for “jihad” few days before the arrest of the FIS leadership when the moderate Abbassi Madani reiterated, in late June 1991, the party’s respect for the Constitution of February 1989; supported the very obscure terrorist GIA when the head of state Liamine Zeroual engaged a serious dialogue with the moderate leader of the dissolved Islamic Front of Salvation in 1994. While Abbassi Madani declared that the AIS was never created by the dissolved FIS and that the Islamist movement was not only infiltrated but completely controlled by the secret services, Ali Benhadj appeared publicly, during the deepening of the policy of impunity and amnesia, with a former terrorist leader. See, for the last point, *El Watan*, 14 March 2006.

457 <https://maghrebemergent.info/algerie-les-imprimeries-publiques-revelent-les-gros-chiffres-de-la-dette-du-journal-echourouk/>

458 This is “Ness Mlah City” (“the city of good people”), a humorous and smooth sitcom broadcast on the state TV channel between 2002 and 2005 with the sponsor among others of the Police and the companies of two strong crony capitalists Rebrab (Hyundai and Cevital) and

Another soap opera broadcast during *Ramadhân* 2017 and 2018 by a “private” television channel espoused perfectly the dominant storytelling produced by the ideological power of the garrison state: the one relating to the assumed rise of a “new pole of power” made up of “new oligarchs”. Indeed, the melodrama “El Khawa” (The brothers),⁴⁵⁹ featured powerful businessmen engaged in influence peddling (inter alia with a central banker) and cocaine trafficking which the republican and incorruptible DRS, army and police are actively working to undo. The hype over the very obscure case of “dismantling the cocaine trafficking network” that was staged by the deeply controlled Algerian media after the military exercise “Deluge 2018” specifically depicts a businessman who managed to buy a clientele made up of senior officials and sons of the nomenclatura, just like “El Khawa” that was broadcast at the same time. The credits of the soap opera, chanting the nostalgia of the bonds-between-brothers, did not fail to thank the police. Visibly shaped by praetorian propaganda, the show ends with a hymn celebrating a patriotic and incorruptible army hunting down a mafia threatening the homeland. Eight months later, the so-called popular uprising *hirak* chanted loudly: “Bouteflika, there will be no fifth mandate/ bring back the BRI”, “the police and the people are brothers”. The BRI is an elite unit of the judiciary police.

A Crisis or a Moment of Hegemony?

The Algerian deep state came at the apex of its power after the humiliating dismissal of the army chief of staff in 2004. It launched its “Egyptian scenario” at the end of Bouteflika’s fourth term. Meticulously prepared, as we have seen, since the impressive success of the praetorian counterrevolution in Egypt in 2013, the Algerian deep state has been orchestrating in perfect conformity with the projections made by its recognized prophets, a “peaceful and legalistic revolution”. Looking back, the *hirak* far from being a “popular movement” or a “historic disruption”⁴⁶⁰ as it was sacred some hours only after its launch by the “sociology of exclamation”,⁴⁶¹ is more like a momentary opening of public space arranged from above. This control is all the more effective because it circumscribes the limit of the authorized protest to the rejection of “Bouteflika V” and his “band”, thus guardedly sparing the very structures of the authoritarian domination. After having humiliated Algerians during the catastrophe of the 1990s, which left more than 100 000 dead, the secret police, alongside its well-experimented propaganda machine, sold the images of the revolution of smiles to the entire world via complacent French media. This cleared the affront of Bouteflika IV and reinvigorated the Algerian praetorian nationalism. The flagship slogan was used to stage a historic block linking the people to their army. Sung in chorus during the three first months of the *hirak*, the watchword “the Army and the people are brothers” (“*al shaysh-al shaab khawa khawa*”) sought to obtain that—to quote Gramsci—the “force appears based on the consent of the majority”—enforcing by the way the garrison state 4.0.

This is why professionals of pseudo-politics, the very ones who implemented the neoliberal shock therapy during the second counterrevolution and relayed reactionary rhetoric have given their warm support to this “movement” from the very beginning. Among them: the shock therapists and Mouwatana citizens Ahmed

Idjerouiden (GoFast-Aigle Azur). Djemii Family is his second successful sitcom; like the previous one, it was broadcast by the state television channel from 2008 to 2011. On Arezki Idjerouiden, read the hagiographic article published in the economic supplement designed by *Maghreb émergent* (of which the neoliberal El Kadi Ihsane is the manager): « Les aigles d’Arezki Idjerouidène », *Le Quotidien d’Oran*, economic supplement in partnership with *Maghreb émergent* and *Les Afriques*, 20 April 2010, p. 13.

⁴⁵⁹ « Algérie: les séries télévisées du ramadan, un miroir de la société », *Jeune Afrique*, 12 June 2018.

⁴⁶⁰ Nezzar’s electronic media, www.algeriepatriotique.com, reported on it in an article: <https://www.algeriepatriotique.com/2019/03/17/harbi-qualifie-les-manifestations-de-rupture-majeure-dans-notre-histoire/>. Harbi’s piece was published on 11 March 2019, the anniversary of the creation of the Parti du Peuple Algérien by Messali Hadj and Abdallah Filali. In this article, the FLN’s former organic intellectual who described the *Hirak*, a few days after its “sudden appearance” as a “major historical rupture”, omitted to mobilize his structuring concept of “plebeian populism”, the very one he had used to identify the characteristics of “Messalism” as “islamo-populism”. The trope of the “sequence of times” (in French, “concordance des temps” translates, literally, as ‘sequence of tenses’) was instituted from the beginning of the *Hirak* by organic intellectuals: “l’avant et l’après 22”—to quote the editorial of *El Watan* of 24 February 2019—as would have been, according to the canons of the official narrative, the “rupture” initiated by the “group of 22” (who would have decided to start the war of independence); 11 December 1960-11 December 2019, the independence of 1962—the “new independence” of 2019. This alleged “concordance des temps” fails to explain why no mention was made, on Friday 2 August 2019, of the historic speech given at the municipal stadium of Algiers by Messali Hadj on 2nd August 1936. Participant observation of the author on the street demonstrations of the 2nd August 2019 in Algiers. On the discordance of times, read Bensaïd, 1995.

⁴⁶¹ In French, « sociologie de l’exclamation », Passeron, 2006.

Benbitour and Ali Benouari; the professionals of pseudo-politics and praetorian allies like Saïd Saadi and Ali Benhadj; the propaganda machine formed by the “independent press” and the “private” televisions; multi-billionaire Issad Rebrab; organic intellectuals like (former colonel) Yasmina Khadra, Kamel Daoud and Arezki Aït Larbi -the organic intellectual of the RCD who, on the eve of the coup d'état of 11 January 1992, threatened the Islamists, on the pages of *L'hebdo libéré* (n°41, 7-13 January 1992), to execute eight “fundamentalists” for each “republican” killed. The deep-rooted crony capitalist Rebrab, who already financed this praetorian propaganda machine, is one of the very first supporters of the alleged “popular movement”. The extremely privileged and wealthy crony capitalist, whose name was quoted in the Panama Papers and whose personal fortune was estimated at \$3.7 billion by *Forbes* in 2019⁴⁶² took part in the supposed “movement from below” of Friday 1 March 2019 in Algiers in the middle of a group of supporters singing forcefully “the army and the people are with you Rebrab!”⁴⁶³ After several months allegedly spent in prison in the second half of 2019, Rebrab saw his personal fortune jump considerably to \$4.4 billion in the *Forbes* 2020 ranking—the latter’s annual publication coinciding with the release of the multi-billionaire.⁴⁶⁴

Well experienced, the propaganda machine could, the day after 22 February 2019, widely disseminate the storytelling professed by the “organic intellectuals” of the deep state five years earlier. So it is with *Liberté*, the newspaper of multi-billionaire Rebrab, which compares the public performance of 22 February 2019 to a “day of independence”.⁴⁶⁵ This is also the case with *El Watan* who speaks of several hundred thousand protesters—while they were a few tens of thousands on the whole of the territory—, speaks accurately like the prophet of the DRS: a “serious political fault” concerning the “fifth term”, a “renewed pride” regarding the public performance and a “historic turning point” about the 22 February 2019.⁴⁶⁶ Ratifying Boukrouh’s prophecy, the daily newspaper that supported the praetorian counterrevolution and the violent neoliberal restructuring, wrote: “A group finally succeeds in breaking through the seat of the men in blue towards the island formed around the water jet. The demonstrators let them know that they have nothing against them: “*echorta wa chaab khawa khawa*” (the police and the people are brothers). The chants of the stadiums come back resonating in force: ‘no fifth term Bouteflika, bring back the BRI and the gendarmerie’...”⁴⁶⁷

In an article on the “the avatars of the sociology of mobilizations applied to the African continent”, Johanna Siméant drew attention to the common confusion between “protest”, “mobilization” and “not consenting”.⁴⁶⁸ This conceptual vigilance is all the more recommended since, in the case of praetorian regimes like those of Algeria and Egypt, pseudo-politics was instituted as an art of government. The historical examples that plead in favor of this conceptual awareness are numerous. The most important of them are: the manipulation, by the Egyptian *mukhabarate*, of the “street” to support Nasser in the aftermath of the mortifying debacle of 1967⁴⁶⁹ or to bring down the Islamist president Mohamed Morsi in 2013; the “plot” of the October 1988 riots orchestrated by the secret police in Algeria or the “spontaneous marches” in support of the praetorian regime during the brutal second counterrevolution.

“The cult of the eye prevents us from seeing what pierces the eyes”.⁴⁷⁰ So, rather than packing the analysis with purely exclamatory concepts (“historical break”, “new independence”, etc.) let us perceive, beyond the received idea of significant transparency of the image,⁴⁷¹ what is blatantly obvious. Hence these multiple blind spots: Why does an assumed “popular movement”, which intends to make a “major historic break”, choose to take over the name of a Moroccan protest that did not intend to challenge the legitimacy of the monarchy? How can a “radical movement” make a “break with the system” while resuming the historic narrative contrived by the latter? How is it that a “movement”, which defines itself as peaceful, gives itself

⁴⁶² <https://www.forbes.com/profile/issad-rebrab/#53fed7d738c8>

⁴⁶³ Algiers, participant observation. The slogan sung in Arabic was: “*Jaysh sha'b m'ak ya Rebrab !*”

⁴⁶⁴ <https://www.forbes.com/profile/issad-rebrab/?list=africa-billionaires#6524843138c8> (last view: 9 March 2020).

⁴⁶⁵ *Liberté*, 22-23 February 2019, p. 3.

⁴⁶⁶ *El Watan*, 23 February 2019, p. 3. Also the editorial of the same edition.

⁴⁶⁷ *El Watan*, 23 February 2019, p. 2

⁴⁶⁸ Siméant, 2013.

⁴⁶⁹ Kandil, 2012; Kasza, 2015.

⁴⁷⁰ Passeron, 2006, p. 415.

⁴⁷¹ Gombrich, 1983.

as tutelary figures the very symbols of the extreme violence of the foundational praetorian counter-revolution, such as Ramdane Abane and Colonel Amirouche? How can a “movement” establish an alleged “new republic” by observing a resounding silence on the massacres of the second counter-revolution? Why has the class conflict, which structures the discourse of the subalterns participating in the public performances,⁴⁷² not appeared in the regulated *hirak* chants? Why did the denunciation of state terror of the 1990s and 2000s, which structures the quasi-official transcript of the subordinate groups⁴⁷³, not find its way into the *hirak*’s conventional discourse? Why, after a year of public performances, was there not the slightest demonstration in front of the imposing ministry of defense of the garrison state?

Dedicating in *Le raisonnement sociologique* beautiful pages to the sociology of the reception of the image, Jean-Claude Passeron disclosed how the “polymorphic concept” of image produces and reproduces two false ideas: “that of the *indecomposable unity* of visual evidence and that of the *universal accessibility* of the resemblance exhibited by the image, or rather the illusion that concentrates them both in the *religion of the eye* conceived as a miraculous double of the image and an infallible sensor of its meaning”.⁴⁷⁴ Indeed, by broadcasting through its skillful propaganda machine a flattering still artificial image of a “consensual people” united beyond its socio-economic and political polarizations, it offers a cheered symbolic fulfillment, in a context of a deep slump, urges the participation to the military protected “peaceful and legalist revolution” and allows pushing back the return to real life.

Besides propaganda, a second mechanism seems to be at work in this political and social game: what Marcel Mauss called “social lie”.⁴⁷⁵ The powerful deep state, which has meticulously prepared the “Egyptian scenario” since 2013 as we have seen, encourages Algerians to celebrate their misleading “new independence” by fraternizing with “their” army through slogans as prearranged as those of October 1988; the participants, looking for symbolic gratification and reasons for hope, internalize the political vetoes coercively imposed by the praetorian system. Therefore, the *hirak*’s game becomes an end in itself: inverting the conditions of its emergence; obscuring domination and manufacturing consent.

Beyond the “descriptive euphoria” of “sociology of exclamation” quick to “crown as a major break in history any change that catches the eye”,⁴⁷⁶ the *hirak* appears more as organized through the systematic avoidance of the structures of domination. Under an apparent radicality, the *hirak* is fundamentally antipolitical as evidenced by its structural escaping of the class conflict as well as the massacres perpetrated with impunity by the praetorian forces including during the alleged “reign of Bouteflika”: the very ones that structures the neopraetorian-and-neoliberal domination without hegemony. By making the current renewal of the praetorian regime’s institutional camouflage for a “new independence”, the *hirak*, as an application of the “Egyptian scenario” in Algeria, allows the garrison state 4.0 to increase its “caging” of people.

In this hyper-publicized sequence where the live and the replay “rehash a perpetual instant without historical depth”,⁴⁷⁷ the alleged judicial prosecution of the head of the deep state (Général de corps d’armée Mohamed Mediène) by military justice purportedly under the orders of Gaïd Salah—who was co-opted at the head of the army staff after the dishonoring dismissal of Mohamed Laamari in 2004—or that of the DRS Boy Ahmed Ouyahia by a civilian court are less a matter of real politics than of wrestling. Roland Barthes finely explored the “spectacle of excess” of the latter in his insightful text “Le monde où l’on catche”:

The boxing match is a story which is constructed before the eyes of the spectator; in wrestling, on the contrary, it is each moment that is intelligible, not the passage of time. The spectator is not interested in the rise and fall of fortunes, he expects the transient image of certain passions. Wrestling therefore demands an immediate reading of the juxtaposed meanings, so there is no need to connect them... What is thus displayed for the public is the great spectacle of Suffering, Defeat, and Justice. The wrestler

⁴⁷² Interviews conducted by the author with several participants in the *hirak*, from last February to mid-August 2019 in Algiers.

⁴⁷³ Ibid. See Hachemaoui, forthcoming and Scott, 1990.

⁴⁷⁴ Passeron, 2006, pp. 414-415. Emphasized in the original.

⁴⁷⁵ In French « mensonge social » : Marcel Mauss, 2013.

⁴⁷⁶ Passeron, 2006, p. 280.

⁴⁷⁷ Bensaïd, 1997, p. 59.

who suffers in a hold which is reputedly cruel (an arm-lock, a twisted leg) offers an excessive portrayal of Suffering; like a primitive Pietà, he exhibits for all to see his face, exaggeratedly contorted by an intolerable affliction... In wrestling, unlike Judo, Defeat is not a conventional, abandoned as soon as it is understood; it is not an outcome, but quite the contrary, it is a duration, a display, it takes up the ancient myths of public Suffering and Humiliation: the cross and the pillory. It is as if the wrestler is crucified in broad daylight and in the sight of all... But what wrestling is above all meant to portray is a purely moral concept: that of justice. The idea of ‘paying’ is essential to wrestling, and the crowd’s ‘Give it to him’ means above all else ‘Make him pay’. This is therefore needless to say, an immanent justice. The baser the action of the ‘bastard’, the more delighted the public is by the blow which he justly received in return... Naturally, it a pattern of Justice which matters here, much more than its content: wrestling is about all a quantitative sequence of compensations.⁴⁷⁸

This staging of justice, by a praetorian regime fully engaged in the renewal of its institutional storefront, resembles a circus. As studied by Paul Veyne in his monumental *Le pain et le cirque*, “the government does not provide the circus to the people to depoliticize them, but, certainly, they would be politicized against the government if it refused them the circus”.⁴⁷⁹

CONCLUSION: THE ALGERIAN CASE IN A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

Praetorianism was not the fated destiny of Algeria. Although remarkable, its durability was not inevitable. The democratic solution—of a “sovereign constituent assembly elected by universal suffrage by all the inhabitants of Algeria without distinction of race or religion”—carried by Messali Hadj and his fellow unionists represented a strategic threat for the nascent praetorianism during the years 1956-1958. The combined action carried out by the supporters of colonial repression on the one hand and those of the praetorian solution on the other had defeated this democratic alternative even before independence. Praetorianism found itself very seriously threatened a second time: by the political liberalization led by the reformers of the regime between 1987 and 1992. This threat reached its climax with the democratic compromise stressed by the leaders of the main forces of the nascent political society (President Chadli, the leader of FIS Hachani, the secretary general of FLN Mehri and the leader of FFS Ait Ahmed).

Threatened by the perspective of democratization, in the aftermath of the country’s first democratic election the guardians of the praetorian regime developed a “global strategy” for reinventing praetorianism and set up a centralized coercive institution, the DRS, to execute it. This is probably where one of the main theoretical issues of the study of praetorianism in Algeria resides. While the institutions of coercion are most often designed by dictators to ensure control over their respective polities, in Algeria, the centralized institution of coercion was planned by the college of praetorians to bring down the president and regain control on the political formula as a whole. This strategy could no longer accommodate a real president. The DRS, which is not just an up-dated legacy, draws its impetus from there. Designed to respond to a threat that linked, via democratic elections, legal political elites and their constituencies, the strategy of the coercive institution was based on putting forward the storytelling of the false Islamist threat in order to legitimize the military coup and camouflage the cumulative institutional development of the DRS. Unlike the multi-ethnic and multi-confessional Syria ruled by the Assad minority clan, the threat to the Algerian praetorian force came less from a popular uprising (like that of Hama in 1982 and the Syrian spring of 2011) than from a political compromise between respected political elites. It is the perception of this threat that explains the centralization of the coercive institution, as at independence. However, unlike the Boumediene period or the Pinochet regime, Algeria has had a formidable centralized organization of coercion since the establishment of the DRS in 1990 without ever having had a visible dictator to design and direct it.

The conventional scholarship condemns Algerians into a false dichotomy: consent or revolution. Yet, between these two extreme poles, a whole continent unfolds, as superbly brought to light by James Scott, in

⁴⁷⁸ Barthes, 1972 (1957), pp. 16-22.

⁴⁷⁹ Veyne, 1995 (1976), p. 104.

which the subordinate groups, who do not have the luxury of confronting the praetorian machine head-on, practice the arts of political disguise behind the backs of the powerful. Euphemisms, ambiguity, grumbling, jokes, cynicism, clientelism, corruption,⁴⁸⁰ etc. fall under this rich repertoire. But there is more: one of the significant marks of the ideological resistance of the subordinates is revealed through the resilience of their “hidden transcripts” relating to the state terror of the 1990s.⁴⁸¹ Also, the policy of impunity and amnesia that the powerful praetorian elite has managed to impose translates, in hollow, this system of domination without hegemony: in the absence of ideological hegemony, the praetorian domination has no choice but to coercively enforce an official amnesia.

The Algerian case contains another theoretical relevance. The long-run reconversion to neoliberalism of the authoritarian-populist system ongoing in Algeria since the 1980s is not a replica of a catalog for standard neoliberalization. Although it borrows from the Chilean model, critical features do distinguish it. The first concerns state power. The Algerian military junta conducts the neoliberalization of the authoritarian-populist formula without the “despotic power” having been captured by a strong man, as was the case in Chile with Pinochet, in Indonesia with Suharto, or in Egypt with Sadat. Although fighting among themselves for the capture of state power, the main praetorian groups were no less favorable to shock therapy. The guardians of the Algerian praetorian formula understood the Structural Adjustment Program of the IMF first and foremost as a strategic leverage for gaining valuable geopolitical support from Washington and the major western powers at a time when the political formula was going to renew dictatorship and protection racket politics. The praetorian oligarchy, too narrow in the worn-out framework of pseudo-socialism, apprehended the neoliberal credo as a boon allowing, as in Sadat’s Egypt, to build crony capitalism legally. Unlike that set up by the Communist Party in post-Tiananmen China with partial reform of property rights and a decentralized control over state-owned assets,⁴⁸² Algerian crony capitalism has had to reconcile praetorianism and roll-back, the guardians controlling the re-engineering of the state at their profit. The control it exercises over the financial and banking circuits has enabled the secret police to allocate resources to the praetorians in order to better neutralize them. The meteoric rise and fall of the Khalifa and Tonic conglomerates on the one hand and the secure and remarkable growing of Cevital and GoFast (now Weaving) groups on the other perfectly illustrate this rule that governs the Algerian political economy. As an economic counterpart of the deep state, Algerian crony capitalism is closer to that taken up by Vladimir Putin thanks to its “vertical of power” and “militocracy” than to that, ephemeral, of Boris Yeltsin’s Russia.⁴⁸³

Far from the South American geopolitical context of the 1970s cold war, the authoritarian Algerian regime did not need an armada of Chicago Boys⁴⁸⁴ to carry out the neoliberal restructuring, the 1990s having been ultimately that of Milton Friedman. Unlike the Chilean seminal experience that had given neoliberal policies a strong ideological charge, that undertaken in Algeria from the reactionary coup of January 1992 was in the technocratic way of depoliticizing the economy. Also, the co-opted technocrats, having no room for maneuver, hardly developed public policies; by assuming these, they gave a semblance of civilian outfit to an agenda decided, well upstream, by the leadership of the military secret police. The conjunction of these two structuring logics, those of the reinvention of praetorian domination and neoliberalization, required, in the context of the crisis of legitimation, a strong infrastructural power. Designed from the outset to carry out this “global strategy”, the DRS reached this goal after a process of terror, political assassinations and massacres of civilians now covered by the official policy of impunity and amnesia.

Carefully concealed behind the official storytelling of the “civil war” opposing the so-called republican state to a supposedly Islamist guerrilla, the Blitzkrieg of shock therapy was all the more effective given that neoliberalization was not even supposed to exist in Algeria at the time. Indeed, the lexicon used to analyze Algeria in these years banished the very formulation of the term neoliberalism. This link between the state

⁴⁸⁰ Hachemaoui, 2013.

⁴⁸¹ Participant observation in different social groups and different regions of the country from the 1990s to mid-August 2019.

⁴⁸² Pei, 2016.

⁴⁸³ Kryshstanovskaya, White, 2003 and 2005; Dawisha, 2014; Miller, 2018; Åslund, 2019.

⁴⁸⁴ Valdés, 1995; Dezalay, Garth, 2002.

as organized crime and authoritarian neoliberalization, which conventional analysis has failed to theorize,⁴⁸⁵ is at the heart of this research. Reversing the causality, this investigation has aimed to show that the authoritarian neoliberalization, in the making since the infitah of the early 1980s, imperatively needed the “conditionalities” of the “Washington consensus” to finally be able to manage: the “cessation of payment”, a fallacious argument fabricated in the North as in the South by a number of governments eager to lead or deepen the neoliberal agenda, having served as an alibi for a military junta, moreover heavily struck by a deep crisis of legitimacy, to carry out the politically destabilizing and socially costly shock therapy. However, and contrary to a somewhat reductionist vision, the neoliberal agenda did not borrow a single and uniform dispositif; long and tortuous, the process of neoliberalization comprehended different moments and took more than one mechanism: if shock therapy dictated a bloody Blitzkrieg, roll-out neoliberalism required passive, slow and gradual change.

From “social market economy” to “Thatcherism” and “Reaganomics”, as a “parasitic form of political practice”, neoliberalism can exist, to paraphrase Jamie Peck, only in “messy hybrids” forged through practice.⁴⁸⁶ The hybridization process underway in Algeria has given birth to a more or less identified political object: neoliberal praetorianism. Different from the neoliberal experiments carried out from Chile to Egypt, the one at work in Algeria is rather disguised. Led by a praetorian regime as heavy with a deep crisis of legitimization as it is attached to the institutional camouflage which it obtains from pseudo-politics, neoliberalization is all the more unassuming. It is masked as much as possible behind a state capitalism seemingly as hegemonic as before. However, and contrary to a naive discourse, neoliberalization is less about the withdrawal of the state than about the re-tasking and the re-engineering of the latter according to new types of intervention and regulation favorable to oligopolistic crony capitalists. Also, the hybrid neoliberalism which has been deeply at work in Algeria since 1994 combines roll-back and strong garrison state, social spending and crony capitalism, expansion of the public service and philanthropy, salary increase and households debts.

The concept of state-regime complex has proven to be effective: attentive to the process as much as to the change of configurations, it allows capturing the articulations and the interpenetrations between state and regime, politics and policy, economy and polity without having to confuse them. The conceptual tools mobilized here have also made it possible to uncover, beyond the myths of transitology and the inanity of change, the temporalities, the mechanisms and the configurations of the multiple metamorphoses espoused by the Algerian political formula. While the old school praetorianism of the colonels was less professionalized and officially engaged in the authoritarian-populist formula, the new praetorianism, although more professionalized and better institutionalized, remains nonetheless strongly committed to the control of the whole political formula: thanks to the buttress of the deep state, it is deeply intricated with the oligopolistic crony capitalism as well as to the state capitalism. It is careful to hide however, thanks to politics of dissimulation, behind an institutional camouflage including “private media”, “opposition”, “civil society”, “new independence” and a “transition” toward a “second republic”.

Any study of authoritarianism that takes over the narrative forged by the ideological power of the same system that it claims to criticize elsewhere is simply doomed to miss its target. By uprooting the doxa, the sociological history of the praetorian process engaged in this study has proved fruitful. Apprehending seriously the deeply embedded institutional arrangements on which the authoritarian state-regime complex is structured, that is to say beyond the fallacies of “presentism”, “historical provincialism”, “electoralism”, “institutional choices” and “economicism”, this historical and theoretical reappraisal has managed to uncover a long-term process and the causal chain that supports the reinvention of the praetorian domination over the polity. By highlighting the mechanisms of crisis, coercion, learning, war of position, war of maneuver, Blitzkrieg and incremental institutional change, this research has documented the long-term processes that made possible the formation of the praetorian state-regime complex, the predominance of the secret police

⁴⁸⁵ Ghilès, 1998; Benderra, 2003; Martinez, 2003 and 2012; Kervyn & Gèze, 2004; Werenfels, 2007; Lowi, 2009; McDougall, 2017.

⁴⁸⁶ Peck, 2010, pp. 7, 30 and 33.

as centralized coercive institution, the planned defeat of the democratization of the regime, the implementation of an authoritarian neoliberalization and the fabric of a historic bloc supporting the neopraetorian and neoliberal domination.

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