DIIS REPORT

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Algeria after the Revolts

Regime Endurance in a Time of Contention and Regional Insecurity

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Executive Summary

The present report analyses the stability of the incumbent Algerian regime. It concludes that the coalition of interest groups formed around the newly re-elected president Abdelaziz Bouteflika is likely to retain its dominance over the state and policy-making in the short- and mid term in spite of considerable challenges emerging from within the regime itself, from the social base, and from the regional environment.

Intra-regime power struggles have posed a challenge to the regime throughout president Bouteflika's third presidential term (2009-2014). Although the fracturing became particularly visible in the run up to the presidential elections in April 2014, Bouteflika's narrow electoral victory provides the coalition of interest groups formed around the president with an opportunity to identify a new candidate capable of ensuring a general consensus among members of the regime. At present, Bouteflika and his supporters seem likely to rely on the General Staff of the armed forces (*État-Major*) to ensure its endurance and, at the same time, marginalize the influence of the intelligence services, the DRS.

Street protests have been an additional challenge to the regime. Occurring regularly and massively throughout Algeria since the mid-2000s, street protests have typically not been accompanied by demands that the political system as such should be changed. In contrast, street protests were used as a tool to uphold the political order by ensuring that the government fulfilled what protesters saw as the duty of the regime to provide – e.g. access to low-cost subsidized basic food commodities, proper housing, electricity, water etc. In correlation with the fracturiing of the regime in the run-up to the presidential elections in April 2014, however, protesters began calling for a change of the political system and for Bouteflika to shy away from running in the presidential elections as a consequence of his long-term illness. The report concludes, however, that street protests and contentious politics are unlikely to seriously challenge the endurance of the regime in the short- and mid term.

Regional security dynamics have, since the collapse of Libya, favored a transfer of the security dynamics known from the Western Sahara conflict and Maghreb regional politics into the Sahel region. In particular, the Sahel region has experienced an unprecedented Moroccan-Algerian competition. In addition, however, the French-led international military engagement in Northern Mali has prompted the international society to pressure Algeria to increase its role in regional

security politics. The first step in this process has been the increased militarization of Algeria's southern frontiers to provide assistance to the international forces to contain rebel movements in the Sahel. These changes in regional security dynamics seem, however, not to pose a direct threat to the endurance of the regime. Rather, it seems to push for an increased militarization of the regime – a process that implicitly will reduce the political role of the security services, the DRS.

The likely survival of the incumbent regime in Algiers thus correlates with a likely strengthening of the role of the Algerian army's General Staff (*État-Major*) in politics. The increase in the role of the army in politics comes at the expense of the role played in politics by the intelligence services – the DRS – since the end of the civil war. Although the militarization reflects the survival strategy of the dominant coalition of interest groups formed around incumbent president Bouteflika, it is facilitated by current European and U.S. security strategies in the Maghreb and in the Sahel region, which are based on a pressure on Algeria to assume a more active role in stabilizing the Maghreb and the Sahel areas.

There are two negative scenarios that are likely to emerge from such a strengthening of the role of the Algerian military in politics.

First, a militarization of the regime is likely to correlate with a reduction of ways and means for peaceful civil engagement in politics. As seen in other contexts, such reductions in means of popular political participation may lead to an increase in social, ethnic and secessionist rebel violence. This again is likely to be met with increasingly harsh state repression launched in the name of national security.

Second, a militarization of the regime may have an escalating effect on the ongoing competition between Algeria and Morocco. If combined with increasing internal rebel violence – and, in particular, violence with a secessionist character in the South – it may possibly escalate into direct or indirect military confrontation between the two Maghreb great powers.

In view of the considerable risks that such a scenario presents to international, regional and local actors alike, the report recommends that these actors in partnership seek ways to:

(a) Strengthen the prerogatives and mandates of Algeria's existing civil political institutions within the framework of the Algerian constitution.

(b) Strengthen peaceful civil political participation by increasing the plurality of ways to engage in politics available for Algerian citizens.
(c) Downscale the regional and international pressure on the regime in Algiers to increase its role in assuring stability in the Maghreb and Sahel region via military means.
(d) Diversify the Algerian economy beyond the current dependency on a single public enterprise (Sonatrach).

Introduction

For decades, Algeria was perceived as the unstable neighbor in a relatively stable Arab North Africa. Youth riots in the mid- and late 1980s, military coup and civil war in the 1990s, and "residual terrorism" throughout the 2000s made the Algerian regime appear to struggle for its survival. Since the Arab uprisings in 2011, however, this perception of Algeria had been less compelling. While the regimes in Algeria's neighbor countries, Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Mali collapsed as a direct or indirect consequence of popular uprisings, the Algerian regime remained remarkably stable. There were self-immolations and protests in Algeria, but none of that sparked mass movements calling for a change of the political system. There were visible power-struggles between members of the interest groups that compete to dominate the Algerian state and policy-making, but there was no open split between the army and the civil elite. And while the changes in the regional security pattern in Maghreb and the Sahel region put the Algerian regime under pressure, it also provided new ways for the regime to consolidate itself.

The report, *Algeria after the Revolts: Regime Endurance in a Time of Contention and Regional Insecurity,* analyses the development of these challenges to the Algerian regime and the regime's ability to weather off these in the time since the Arab Spring.

Chapter one demonstrates how the coalition of interest groups formed around incumbent president Abdelaziz Bouteflika over the past years has managed to stay in power and exercise control over the various other interest groups that constitute the Algerian regime.

Chapter two demonstrates how the incumbent regime was able to contain protests from spinning out of control. It also demonstrates how recent Algerian experiences with contentious politics dissuade Algerian protesters from demanding that the political system as such should change and the regime should fall.

Chapter three demonstrates how the incumbent regime managed to capitalize on the changes in the regional security order in the Maghreb and the Sahel regions in the wake of the Arab revolts.

The report is based on desk studies, field research, and several public and private research seminars held in Denmark, France and Algeria during late 2013 and early 2014.

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The Regime

The chapter analyses the impact that internal power struggles inside the regime have on the regime's ability to endure. It argues that the coalition of interest groups formed around incumbent president Abdelaziz Bouteflika is likely to seek continued dominance over the regime by allying itself with prominent protagonists from the military General Staff (*État-Major*). Such a development would marginalize the secret intelligence services (DRS), which since 1991 has played a pivotal role in political decision making.

The regime as "interest group"

Understanding the political regime in Algeria requires a look beyond the formal institutions like parliament, presidency, courts etc. Algeria's legislative body, for instance, the bicameral parliamentary institution (*majlis al-shaab* and *majlis al-shura*) does not exercise its prerogative to any noticeable degree. Neither does it play a significant role in the public policy debates. While MPs participate only little in the public debates that occur in traditional media (newspapers, TV, radio) and the emergence of new "social" media platforms have provided new venues for social criticism, legislation is taken care of by presidential decree. The MPs, who in principle are accountable to their electorate, are best understood as clients of a patron who generously remunerates them for their loyalty with regular salary increases for MPs and Senators before important political events such as constitutional revisions and presidential elections.[1]

Rather than mapping such formal political institutions, the Algerian regime is in this report understood as the dominating coalition within a number of competing interest groups. These interest groups consist of a range of institutional actors who each has an impact on the political decision makers. A non-exhaustive list of the principal institutional actors that currently operate as interest groups in Algeria would include the General Staff of the army (*État-Major*), the intelligence services, the DRS (*Département du Renseignement et de la Sécurité*), the Military police

[1] Hence the 2008 amendment (the ordinance of September 1, 2008) contained a huge salary increase for the MPs and for Senators without an increase in their workload, in their mandate, or in their general prerogatives. The salaries of MPs were further increased prior to the legislative elections in 2009, prior to elections in 2013, and once again prior to the elections in April 2014. Hence the salaries of the MPs have multiplied by three within a short while reaching today a level of 300,000 dinars (3.000 Euros) a month. In comparison the minimum wage is 15.000 dinars (150 Euros).

called the DGSN (*Direction Générale de la Sûreté Nationale*), the former single party, the FLN (*Front de Libération Nationale*), the current governing party, the RND (*Rassemblement National Démocratique*), the FAP *(Fédération Algérienne du Patronat)*, the state-run union, UGTA (*Union Générale des Travailleurs Algériens*) and, finally, the state-run oil company, Sonatrach (*Société nationale de transport et de la commercialisation des hydrocarbures*).

Although these actors are competitors for influence over the leadership of the state, they have a shared understanding and vision for Algeria and remain unified in the face of any threat to the endurance and stability of the regime.

From 1960 to 1980, the General Staff of the army and DRS were the most influential of these interest groups. From 1980 to 1991, the General Staff and DRS were sharing the executive powers with the FLN, the UGTA and the broader state administration. From 1991 to 1999, during the so-called "civil war," the DRS imposed itself as a leader of the interest groups. In 1999, a coalition consisting of the presidency, the FLN, the RND, the UGTA, Sonatrach, and the "revolutionary family" (i.e. the generation of former mujahidin and their children) from within the army's General Staff *(État-Major)* aligned to reduce the power of the DRS.

Together the interest groups have, over the past decade, used a number of parallel strategies inside the state and towards society to redirect resources and to clientize collective actors and individuals in order to consolidate and expand their power. Rather than a bunker, cartel or another closed entity, the Algerian regime has, since independence in 1962, displayed a remarkable capacity to renew itself while at the same time reducing the risk that a more preferable alternative to itself should emerge. Its success in doing so is based on its tight control of the political opportunities, which manifests itself in the marginalization of political parties and political movements who do not share its vision of the nation or fail to show sufficient proof of loyalty. The interest groups share the idea that without them Algeria would be re-colonized or destroyed by its own people. They consider themselves as the defenders, the architects, the engineers and the construction-workers of post-colonial Algeria.

The interest groups rely on a widely rooted political apparatus. This includes the former single-party, the FLN, the governing party, the RND, and a series of small parties that mobilize in case of need and according to the context. For instance, the MPA party (*Mouvement Populaire Algérien*) and TAJ party (*Tajamou Amal al-Jazair*) were the most active supporters of the candidacy of Abdelaziz Bouteflika

during the electoral campaign prior to the April 17 presidential elections, while other parties that supported Bouteflika during the 2000s declined to support him. Furthermore, the UGTA supported the candidacy of Bouteflika. With a total of two million workers, the state remains the biggest work provider in Algeria. The popular support to Bouteflika and his government may thus, partially at least, be explained by the fact that the public spending for the period from 2000 to 2013 is estimated at a total of 500 billion dollars. Out of a similar logic, a lobby group like the Association of Moujahidin has seen the total financial support from the state to "former fighters" from the war of independence rise from 900 million dollars in 2000 to 2.3 billion dollars in 2013.

The interest groups also have clients in the "deep state" who do not want to see a change of the rules of conduct as long as they provide them sufficient profit. An example derived from the education sector reveals that 92 new universities were created over the past two decades leading to the creation of thousands of professorships, teaching positions, and scholarships for students. Through this policy, Algeria, in contrast to Tunisia and Morocco, successfully pacified the contentious inclination of educated unemployed youth.

The Algerian federation of employers, FAP (*Fédération Algérienne du Patronat*) also supported Bouteflika's candidacy. It did so for simple reasons: out of the 934,250 registered "economic units" in Algeria covering business and trade, 97% are composed of less than 9 employees and are often run as family businesses. Only 932 economic units have more than 250 employees. What matters here is that out of the 934,250 "economic units," 716,026 (76.6%) have been created during the presidency of Bouteflika and have been done so with financial assistance from the ANDI (*Agence Nationale des Investissements*) or the ANSEJ (*AgenceNnationale de Soutien à l'Emploi des Jeunes*). This means that a substantial number of the workers in the private sector are financially dependent on subsidies or on credit from the state – a fact that leads them to lend electoral support to a candidate whose general policy they do not necessary sympathize with. For the managers of public companies with more than 250 employees, the dependence on the interests groups of the regime is even stronger due to the lack of transparency in public procurement procedures.

Besides these relations with the political and the administrative branches, the unions and society, comes the pivotal role of the army, the police and the security apparatuses. Under the presidency of Bouteflika, the army and the police have been

considerably modernized and developed. The police force has been increased to a total of 200,000 well equipped men in uniform. The DGSN (*Direction Générale de la Sûreté Nationale*) had furthermore been created as a rival institution to the military-run security apparatus, the DRS.[2] As such the DRS no longer possesses the monopoly over the means and policies within the security sector that it did during the 1990s.

With regards to the military spending, SPIRI reported that it increased from an estimated 2.7 billion dollars in 2000 to an estimated 10.8 billion dollars in 2012, making Algeria the 8th biggest arms importer in the world in the period of 2006-2010. Under the leadership of the current Général de corps d'armée, vice-minister of defense and chef d'état-major de l'armée, Gaïd Salah, the military institution, in particular, has been boosted. This explains why the General Staff, with the exception of a few retired generals, prefers to continue its partnership with the political institutions that are run by the presidential entourage rather than entering into conflict and contestation with the leadership. In this context, the army keeps the sweet role for itself: it poses as the only rationally driven institution within the state apparatus. Due to the relative weakness of the other state institutions (presidency, parliament, state auditors etc.), the army does not meet a counter-power and remains free of any political control and oversight. It also displays a strong cohesion. In a context where political parties are discredited by their political maneuvering and where state institutions are weak, the army appears strong, capable and attractive. Observed across time, the key interest of the Algerian army appears to be to keep the political system relatively unaltered. The army seems thus to aspire to an ideal type of political regime along the lines of the Mexican PRI government that stayed in power for 70 years. To its disappointment, however, the former single party in Algeria, the FLN, has proven incapable of successfully imitating the Mexican model.

With the social upheavals in a number of Arab countries in 2011-2014, the army is forced to reconsider whether it finds Bouteflika's clientalist way to govern sufficiently effective in keeping the national cohesion and pacifying the country. Changing the rules of the political game and instating a representative government will necessitate a strong compromise and a number of political parties capable of bringing the country together during the complicated transition period. The civil society in Algeria seems ready for such a political change without directly signaling

[2] The DRS consists of the DCSA (military intelligence), the DCSE (foreign intelligence), the DCE (counter-espionage) and the analysis section of the spécial forces, the GIS (*Groupement d'Intervention spécial*).

its hopes for the army. Furthermore, the army is directly solicited by the political parties and commentators who call on it to intervene in order to change the rules of the political game.[3]

Mobilizing regime support against external threats

The regime in Algeria has, in the context of the post-civil war and the regional tensions that emerged in the Arab World and North Africa in the wake of the Arab Revolts, sought, with relative success, to mobilize support internally by identifying "external" threats to the country and to the nation. The trauma of the civil war in the 1990s continues to haunt the Algerian families who remain generally critical of engaging in a process of political contention that could lead to an increase in politically motivated violence. As such, the sectarian violence that emerged in the town of Ghardaïa on the border of the Algerian Sahara in early 2014 was, by many observers, seen as proof of the fragility of the national cohesion and pointed further to the risk of a renewal of the civil war.

The Algerian authorities have diligently exploited the fear of the consequences of violence and upheaval harbored by many ordinary citizens to maintain status quo. Exhausted by the civil war, civil society in Algeria has been receptive to the security discourse of the authorities throughout most of the decade of the 2000s. In the wake of the Arab Spring, the authorities have turned the internal security discourse away from the fear of the civil war and instead point to the unstable regional environment as the major security threat for the Algerian nation and state.

The new narrative proposed by the regime is based on the dual notions of stability and security. The narrative presents the regional instability as a reality and Algeria as an actor that is capable of securing its territory with military means. What is more, the regime presents the situation as if Algeria is in need for stability: having been the region's most unstable country during the 1990s, Algeria is presented as the country in North Africa that today, after the Arab revolts of 2011, offers the most stable climate for the international partners in the energy sector.[4]

The regime's discursive focus on security furthermore links Algeria's survival to the notion of external complots. According to the regime, Algeria faces existential

[3] See e.g. the comment by Ali Yahyia Abdenour. *El Watan*, 6 avril, 2014.

[4] See e.g. the idea statement by Bouteflika's spokesperson, Amara Benyounes. *Reuters*, April 7, 2014.

threats from outside powers and the citizens have a duty to rally behind the state against its external enemies. According to the representatives of the regime, the Arab Revolts constitute a complot orchestrated by Qatar and its Arab and Western allies with the aim to destabilize the region. In response, the Algerian regime has wowed to act firmly, as suggested by prime minister Abdelmalek Sellal when he in March 15, 2014 wowed that "the Arab Spring is a bug that we will eliminate with a *fly tox*." This reading has been picked up by a number of Algerian intellectuals and public figures who have come out in favor of the idea that, after escaping the Arab Revolts, Algeria faces a campaign by its external enemies inside and outside of the Arab region.[5] For instance, the influential French-language daily *El-Watan* used the terrorist attack at the Gas exploitation site in In Amenas in January 2013, to question whether there was "an external threat against the country?" and "Who in reality were behind the attack in In Amenas?"[6]

According to the Algerian regime, the country is surrounded by states in chaos and close to collapse: Libya is threatened by armed terrorists. In Tunisia, terrorist groups operate on the Algerian frontier. And the Sahel region has fallen victim of an international complot to destabilize the region through the French-led Operation Serval in Mali. The military intervention is, indeed, far from being understood – let alone supported – by the public opinion in Algeria as illustrated by a comment published by the venerated Algerian author Yasmina Khadra, who while running for president in April 2014 stated that the crisis in Mali is a French rather than an Algerian problem.[7]

Mobilizing regime support with petro-rent

Since 2003, the Algerian government has spent 50% of the total rent generated from petro export (or 770 billion Algerian Dinars or approximately 13% of the BNP) on social welfare policies with the aim to level the negative effects of the collapse of the petro market in the 1990s (1986-2001). The results of this policy are tangible: the level of poverty had dropped from 12% of the population in 2000 to 4.9% today. This reduction in poverty has not, however, alleviated the economic vulnerability of the population as such where half of the active population (or about 4 million people) remains without social protection, generating their

[5] *Algeria-focus.com*, March 15, 2014.
[6] *El Watan*, January 21, 2013
[7] *www.Algerie1.com*, September 28, 2012

income from the informal economy (notably in the sectors of services, agriculture and construction).

In parallel, an estimated 500,000 young people have left the education system since 2010 before obtaining a degree, realizing perhaps that the level of unemployment rises proportionally with the level of education.

Due to the increase in oil prices between 2003 and 2013, the Algerian regime today boasts a reserve fund of 200 billion dollars – an unprecedented situation in the history of the young state. The increase in oil prices has thus permitted the government to repay its debts quickly,[8] to reopen a number of large scale civil infrastructure projects and, notably, to address the implosion of the national cohesion that occurred during the civil war in the 1990s. This has all happened in a context of economic growth and renewed financial muscle: the BNP per capita has passed from 1,600 dollars per year/inhabitant in 1999 to 4,593 dollars in 2010 – without including the massive reduction in unemployment, which during the same period dropped from 30% of the workforce to 10%.[9]

Although the interest groups of the regime have been the first beneficiaries of the increase in the petro rent, broad segments of the Algerian population has equally benefited directly or indirectly. Due to the petro rent, a new middle class has emerged, which enjoys rising living standards. In order to counter the potential popular revolts, the Algerian government has distributed tens of billions of dollars out to the population in the form of increased salaries and favorable loans.[10] Most Algerians have appreciated these gifts and hope that this generous economic policy will continue even if it results in a two-digit inflation rate (15%) and a tangible increase in imports.

Handling regime dissidence

Political struggles in Algeria do not play themselves out as confrontations among political parties. Rather, they emerge as confrontations between representatives of different interest groups. In spite of the closed nature of political life in Algeria, a number of debates have emerged over the past few years, which provide some insight

[8] *Economist Intelligence Unit*, July, 1, 2008.

[9] Office national des statistiques, Algérie

[10] See e.g. comment by the economist Kouider Boutaleb in *El Watan*, May 20, 2013.

into the power struggles among the political and security actors that constitute or challenge the incumbent regime from within.

When incumbent president Bouteflika during his third mandate (2009-2014) vanished from political scene due to his deteriorating health condition, a wave of attacks on the president emerged. On May 23, 2013, the retired general and former commander of the naval forces, Mohand Taha Yala, accused the president of "high treason" and demanded his immediate withdrawal from office. The attack was not limited to the president, but encompassed his entourage and his possible bid for a fourth mandate in power as well as the absence of a successor candidate. Hence a number of commentators called for the Constitutional Council to implement Article 88 of the constitution, which holds that a president incapable of governing may be removed from power. The same commentators have called openly on the president of the Senate, Abdekader Bensallah, to assume a role as interim president while presidential elections were being prepared. According to the Algerian press such a solution is, however, jeopardized by the fact that Bensallah is of Moroccan origin (naturalized in 1965) and therefore constitutionally unfit to function as interim president of the Algerian republic.

Most importantly, however, Bouteflika's health problems jeopardized the scenario developed by his coalition of interest groups to ensure control over the regime through a smooth re-election in 2014. It was expected that the president's entourage would implement a sweeping constitutional reform process that he himself had promised in early 2011 as a way to pre-empt the negative effects of the Arab Revolts after a prolonged delay. And it was expected that this would serve as a way to position Bouteflika as a candidate capable of ensuring a stable political transition that the electorate aspired for, away from the current authoritarian model.

In contrast to this planned scenario, Bouteflika's sudden health problems reoriented the attention back towards army and, in particular, to the DRS (*Département du Renseignement et de la Sécurité*), which since 1990 has been directed by the 71-years old military chief of staff, Mohamed Liamine Médiène, nicknamed "Tawfiq." In April 2013, rumors held that the DRS had decided to sideline Bouteflika's brother, Said, from his post as principal advisor to the president. With the president in hospital in France, the rivals of Bouteflika within the regime tried to dry out the financial sources of the president and his close allies with the aim to pre-empt the risk that a candidate for the post as president could emerge from outside the confines closely controlled by the DRS.

One way this happened was with the revelations by the Algerian press in January 2010 that the DRS had launched a number of investigations into what turned out to be one of the country's biggest ever cases of corruption.[11] While the Algerian population was impatiently awaiting one of the biggest construction projects ever implemented in Algeria, the 927 kilometer long East-West highway, it was revealed during autumn 2009 that this construction project run by the Chinese consortium CITIC-CRCC,[12] had generated the biggest ever acts of corruption, amounting to a total of 200 millions Euros.

Shortly after the corruption scandal of the East-West highway, the Algerian press reported that the state-run oil company, Sonatrach, had experienced an equally big corruption affair. On January 13, 2010, the director of Sonatrach, Mohamed Meziane, was suspended from office and put under judicial control. Once again the press reported that the affair concerned accusations of corruption in particular when handling foreign partners. The former vice-president of Sonatrach, Hocine Malti, proposed in an open letter addressed to the "investigators in the DRS,"[13] that they should push the case even further and investigate an unspecified number of "very high ranking military and political personalities" rather than stopping short at the level of the technocrats in the organization. He furthermore encouraged the DRS to look into the gas exploitation project in Gassi Touil and in El-Merk.

On May 28, 2013, as the number of presumed corruption cases within the petro-exploitation sector increased, then Minister of Energy and Mining, Chakib Khelil who had served since Bouteflika came to power in 1999 including a period as director of Sonatrach, stepped down and was replaced by Youcef Yousfi. During an investigation of a corruption affair in Italy it was revealed that the Khelil was the leader of what seemed to be a generalized corruption system.[14] After the public constructions works and the petro exploitation sectors, it was the state-run company that operates the harbor of Algiers, EPAL (*Entreprise portuaire d'Alger*) that attracted the attention of the press with a string of corruption cases leading to the arrest of several members of its direction. Through these corruption cases, the DRS have sought to taint the president since, for the most part, it is his close allies that have been singled out in the cases occurring in a system of generalized corruption.

[11] *El Watan,* January 18, 2010 and *Liberté*, April 24, 2010.
[12] *Le Quotidien d'Algérie*, April 26, 2010
[13] *El Watan*, 31 janvier 2010.
[14] *Corriere Della Sera*, February 8. 2013

While Bouteflika's options seemed limited in late 2012, his return to Algiers in the spring of 2013 kick-started a counter-attack from his own coalition of interest groups within the regime.

The newspapers that brought the story about the deteriorating health of the president in March 2013 were administratively harassed or even, as it was the case with the journals, *Mon journal* and *Djaridati,* banned. In September 2013, Bouteflika issued a unpublished decree in which he put the officers and the assistants in the judicial police who had revealed the corruption scandals that implied Chakib Khellil and the president's brother, Said, under the jurisdiction of the military courts. These courts no longer report to the DRS, but to the General Staff of the Army (État-Major) – more precisely to general Gaïd Salah a close supporter of the president and former vice-minister of Defense.

In spite of his physical weakness, the president was encouraged by his entourage to continue and opt for a fourth mandate in order to consolidate the leadership that he had acquired within the regime over the past decade. This strategy was not without risk since many Algerians had a fresh memory of the speech given in Setif by the President in May 2012 in which he pledged to leave the government to "the youth." But this risk was counterbalanced by the risk of exclusion from the state apparatus that the president's coalition of interest groups faced if Bouteflika abandoned the presidency. The heated public debate that emerged during 2013 and 2014 between Bouteflika's coalition of interest groups and the DRS was a consequence of this power struggle: while the Presidency denounced the DRS-state, the DRS denounced Bouteflika's corruption.

The first counter-attack against the DRS was launched by Amar Saâdani, the general secretary of the FLN who publicly declared that the DRS was both omnipresent in all aspects of political and social life in Algeria but at the same time incapable of fulfilling its task of protecting the citizens. He finished this by calling for it's the director of DRS, "Toufik" to resign.[15]

Saâdani's attack on the DRS constituted a turning point that brought the rivalry between the interest groups of the regime to a previously unseen level. In February 2014, General Hocine Benhadid, who is known for his loyalty to the DRS, responded to the allegations by affirming that the DRS stayed loyal to the army and

[15] See e.g. article in *TSA*, February 3, 2014.

to the Algerian people. He also accused Bouteflika and his supporters of forming a "clan" within the regime who jeopardized the future of Algeria in a way that he claimed amounted to treason.[16]

The physical weakening of Bouteflika has also paved the way for the emergence of new alliances among the interest groups of the regime. In this process, a circle consisting of the presidency, the General Staff and FLN now aims to preserve and consolidate their positions against competitors from within the regime. In contrast to the "transition" that was arranged when Bouteflika took over power after president Liamine Zéroual withdrew from power in 1999, the key players among the interest groups of the regime had in spring 2014 failed to identify a common candidate. It is in this perspective that we should also understand the emergence of a third coalition of interest groups formed around Bouteflika's former prime minister (2000-2004) and two-times presidential candidate (2004 and 2014), Ali Benflis. This coalition aims to mobilize the disappointed members of both of the two first circles while making explicit appeals to an intervention from the army.

Shifting power balances inside the regime?

In the wake of the electoral victory of incumbent president Abdelaziz Bouteflika in April 2014, the supporters of the president are expected to seek a new candidate for the presidency who can stabilize the regime by reestablishing the consensus among the interest groups of the regime. The president's health problem does not allow them more than two or three years. In that perspective Bouteflika's fourth mandate will most likely serve as a means to overcome the period of power struggle between the interest groups of the regime and as a means to pave way for a political solution based on a symbolic replacement of Bouteflika with a figure like the secretary general of the governing party, RND, and several times head of government, Ahmed Ouyahia. In that perspective, the fourth mandate of Bouteflika also potentially constitutes an end of a two decades long dominance over the political scene by the DRS and a gradual shift of power towards the army as the future new kingmaker in Algerian politics.

In a rather symbolic way, two events emphasize this shift in the power of the army: the French intervention in Sahel and the In Amenas terrorist attack. Bouteflika's decision to support to the French military intervention in Mali by allowing the French military to fly over Algerian territory has undermined and destabilized the

[16] *El Watan*, February 12, 2014.

strategy of the DRS in the Sahel region. A first sign of this is the dismissal of the two DRS generals, Tartag from the department of internal security (DSI) and Attafi, from the department of external security (DDSE). In fact, the decision to allow the French air force to fly over Algerian territory constitutes quite a humiliation of the DRS, which for the past 15 years has "punished" France for its lack of support for the military coup in January 1992 by refusing to import French military equipment.[17] Hence, the French military intervention in Mali exposes what appears to be a failure of the DRS to secure the regional environment in which Algeria pretends to play a major role.[18]

The In Amenas attack in January 2013 also constituted a blow to the DRS by ending the agency's decade long claim for expertise on AQIM, Al-Qaida in Islamic Maghreb. Simultaneously it provoked a major fear for the future security of the petro infrastructure in the South of Algeria. In the south, the threat of terrorist attacks is complemented with a threat of a broader social upheaval. In 2006, a study conducted by ANAT (*Agence Nationale de l'Aménagement du Territoire*) on behalf of the ministry of work and national solidarity revealed that out of Algeria's total of 1,200 communes, 177 are considered impoverished. 36% of these are located in Algeria's sparsely populated South. This is in flagrant contrast to the well-known fact that the South is the region in which most gas exploitation sites are located. According to witness-accounts taken by journalists in the aftermath of the In Amenas terrorist attack, the youth in Tiguentourine displayed remarkable indifference to the attack explaining that they did not care whether the site was set ablaze since "in any way we never had anything from Sonatrach."[19]

From the perspective of the army, the Arab revolts has brought another even more problematic issue to the forefront: the question of territorial integrity of the nation state. In Libya, in Iraq, in Sudan and in Mali separatist ideas have developed into real political challenges for the incumbent and for the new regimes. From this perspective the Azawad Berber movement in the Sahel region and its affiliated "Tuareg question" is seen by the army as a tentative ploy to deprive Algeria of its Saharan territory. Since the creation of the OCRS in 1957 (*Organisation Commune des Régions Sahariennes*) and the non-participation of the Tuareg tribes of the

[17] *La Tribune*, May 17, 2013.

[18] Chena, Salim: "Portée et limites de l'hégémonie algérienne dans l'aire sahélo-maghrébine", *Hérodote*, 2011/3, n°142.

[19] "Les notables et les élus d'Illizi remontés contre Sonatrach". www.tsa-algerie.com/politique/les-notables-et-les-elus-d'illizy-remontes-contre-sonatrach_23750.html.

Hoggar region in Southern Algeria in the war of independence against colonial France (1954-1962),[20] through the Tuareg Revolts between the 1960s and the 1990s, the Algerian regime has perceived the Tuareg demands as a threat to the territorial integrity of the state. The deployment of the Algerian army into the south with the assistance of France and the United States illustrates well this new power relation that favors the army at the expense of the DRS.

The Algerian military assistance to the French and US intervention in Sahel has shown itself as even more crucial because of the Moroccan monarchy's parallel diplomatic activism in the region. The Moroccan monarchy has, through its subtle diplomatic initiative, managed to harvest a series of diplomatic successes from the Operation Serval as illustrated by Rabat's recent hosting of the Second *Conférence Ministérielle Régionale sur la Sécurité des Frontières*. While Algeria has declined to enter fully into the regional politics, possibly considering itself to have been cheated by the international community, Morocco has displayed an strong ambition to play a key role in both Mali and in Libya. For instance, the recent creation of the *Centre Regional de formation et d'entrainement au profit des officers en charge de la sécurité des frontières dans les Etats de la region* has provided Morocco with an instrument to expand its influence into the Sahel region while simultaneously putting in question the Algerian regional security strategies. Furthermore, the Moroccan kingdom's declared willingness to respond to the "specific needs of the population groups in the frontier zones" is seen by the Algerian's as a potential support to the separatist vision of the Tuareg tribes in Algeria. In this way, the latest developments have provided Morocco with a new tool to counter the Algerian support to the Sahraoui movement and Polisario in Western Sahara: if Algeria tries to make Morocco lose the Western Saharan territory, Morocco may respond by raising the "Tuareg Question" and the Tuareg tribal demands for an independent Azawad which will include parts of Southern Algeria. With strong influence in Mauritania and Senegal, Morocco is thus expanding its regional influence towards Mali and Libya in the wake of the Operation Serval. In contrast to Algeria, Morocco benefits from a strong popular and diplomatic sympathy in Libya because of its early support to the toppling of the regime of Gaddafi in 2011. Furthermore, the Moroccan monarchy has good relations with the Golf Monarchies where certain states, like Qatar, have indirect links to the Islamist rebels in Libya. In time, Morocco may even hope to play a mediating role between the Libyan government and the militias in the country.

[20] See e.g. *El Moujahid*. May 27, 1982

Obviously, these developments have caused great concern in Algiers and prompted an increasing conflict between the two Maghreb countries. The key point, however, is that the secret services and the General Staff in Algeria may quite easily come to consider the Moroccan foreign policy meddling in the neighborhood as a threat to the territorial integrity of Algeria. That would hold a potential to escalate the situation into a more open conflict.

Bouteflika's support to the French Operation Serval may thus be seen as a strategy employed successfully by the most influential coalition of interest groups of the regime to reinforce the army's position in handing the security challenges by sidelining the rivals in DRS who cater to the position as the dominant actor within the regime.

The impact of intra-regime fracturing and power struggles

The successful re-election of the possibly terminally ill incumbent president Abdelaziz Bouteflika in April 2014, after eight months of absence from the public, demonstrates the scope of the capacity of the dominant coalition of interest groups to mobilize support for their candidates within the regime. Incapable of identifying another, less physically weakened candidate for the post, the interest groups provided their support to the weakened Bouteflika. His fourth term in office seems, however, to open the way for a shift of power back to the interest groups of the regime that favor an enlarged role for the military in politics and disfavor the intelligence services, the DRS. The DRS has, in parallel, lost its control over the regional politics in the Sahel region in the wake of the war in Mali, which has brought the Algerian army into the Sahel region. Having figured as leader of the regime since 1991, the DRS, seems today increasingly marginalized in political decision-making in Algeria. Hence the most likely scenario is an endurance of the current governing coalition's dominance over the presidency combined with an increased militarization of the regime.

Contentious Politics

The chapter analyses the impact of contention on regime endurance in Algeria. It does so by scrutinizing two key events in the recent history of contentious politics in Algeria: the inability of protesters to transform the political claims made in Algeria in 2011 from their previous system-preserving orientation into one that challenges the system, and the successful, yet marginal, politicization of protests during the presidential electoral campaign in spring 2014. These two key events are used to illustrate how contentious politics forms an integrated part of the current political order in Algeria while at the same time posing a constant threat to rooted regime interests. Although the chapter suggests that Algeria does experience an upsurge in contentious politics , it concludes that this does not, at present, seriously threaten the survival of the incumbent authoritarian regime.

Big numbers – small demands

Over the past decade, Algerians – and in particular Algerian young men – developed a culture of contentious politics that differ from the armed confrontations of the civil war in the 1990. On an almost daily basis, crowds of citizens have spontaneously taken to the streets somewhere in Algeria to call for their government to take action on an issue that they believed was threatening essential aspects of their livelihoods. They have set themselves ablaze. They have blocked roads, they have engaged in sit-ins in front of local governmental buildings, they have gone on strike and even hunger strikes, they have marched on police stations and public buildings, and they have gathered for long hours and days in town squares and streets. Regularly, they have also destroyed objects and looted places that in one way or another were taken to symbolize the issues they called on their government to act upon: government buildings, police stations, and privately owned shops. According to the Algerian press, the riot police intervened against street protesters 112,878 times during 2010 and made almost 13,000 arrests.[21] That number had been steadily on the rise since 2007, when Algerian police had announced a total of 7,318 arrests of persons who had disturbed public order. In 2008, the number climbed to 12,822 where it stabilized throughout 2009 and 2010 before climbing even a few thousand higher in 2011.[22]

[21] *Liberté*, December 5, 2010 and *Le Monde*, December 31, 2010.

[22] See also http://berthoalain.com/documents/emeutes-en-algerie/ (accessed in May 2014)

Although results of football matches has been a key issue generating street protests in Algeria, the large bulk of the arrests were made by the police in connection with protesters refusing to accept what they saw as neglect by the public administration to fulfill its duties towards the citizens: on the top of the agenda were inadequate housing, unemployment and unsafe employment conditions, unreliable delivery of electricity and heating gas during the cold months, or car accidents provoked by lacking repair of street pavements etc.

That such issues were systematically addressed through street protests rather than banal administrative complaints and reporting speaks long lengths about the inefficiency and corruption that Algerian public administration is reputed for. Had formal institutional procedures been effective ways to address these issues, street protests would most probably not have been as predominant. But it also provides an important contextualization of the specific way Algeria entered the turbulent period of uprising and revolt in the Arab World known as "the Arab Spring" in early 2011.

Indeed it was, on the surface at least, neither shocking nor new when young, angry, Algerians descended onto the streets of the western suburbs of Algiers and parts of Oran in late December 2010 to call for their government to act against price fluctuation on basic consumption goods. Following hikes in world market prices in early December 2010, local price setting in Algeria on sugar, cooking oil, wheat, vegetables, and fruits had increased as much as 40% in a matter of weeks, pushing low-income households to the brink of their purchase capacity. In the following week, from 3 January to 7 January 2011, protests, rioting, looting and other forms of contentious politics spread from the regions west of Algiers and from Oran to a number of towns and villages all over Algeria, sparking fears that rioting could spin out of control of the police. Although Algerian police on Friday 7 January managed to rid most of the capital of protesters, rioting continued after Friday's prayer in a number of other cities. Over the weekend of 8 and 9 January, however, protests died out as suddenly as they had erupted.

Comparing the short-lived and spontaneous eruption and disappearance of mass protests in Algeria in late December 2010 and early January 2011 with the simultaneous emergence of persistent revolutionary political movements in Tunisia and Egypt – and later during spring 2011 also in Libya, in Yemen, and in Syria – has prompted observers to suggest that the Algerian population was either "traumatized" by the violence of the civil war in the 1990s or "de-politicized" by

the corruption of the state administration. Both these claims overlook, however, that the protest sequence was a standard operating procedure of Algerian public politics under Bouteflika. As protesters looted shops and destroyed outlets for luxury goods (car vendors were for instance targeted in January 2011 – possibly because it represented an Algerian middle class consumerism that low-level income groups were incapable of joining), they were in at least two ways following a well-established model of contentious claim making on their government.

First, the protesters who conducted the thousands of events of contention over the past decade have generally, as far as the Algerian press has reported, refrained from making demands for political reform or political systemic change. Yes, they would call for government action in a broad variety of areas: repairing a broken water pipe that provided their neighborhood with potable water, installing a steady supply of electricity to the street, fixing a broken main road etc. They would not always just call for the local administration to fulfill its presumed "duties" towards the citizens, but would in a number of cases also demand that a governor, a mayor, or other members of the local administration should step back from office. But protestors would most often refrain from making demands for political reform let alone systemic change.

When Algerian men descended into the streets in December 2010 and January 2011, they followed this pattern. According to the Algerian press, only a few isolated incidents of the protests gave way to claims of a direct political nature and most often this was in rather indirect ways – as when, for instance, rioters assaulted police stations, when protestors marched on government offices and buildings, or when they called for the minister of commerce to step down. In the large majority of other reported cases, the core claim presented by protestors was that the government should take action and ensure the ability of the citizens with low incomes to purchase basic food products – thereby confirming the decade-long tradition for non-revolutionary claim making through street protest. This was not a revolutionary movement, but spontaneous and highly targeted wave of protests calling for the government to resolve a particular strain – rapid inflation of basic commodities – that in a matter of weeks had made the livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of Algerians perilous.

Second, protesters in Algeria have over the past decade grown accustomed to responding to limited and targeted government intervention within the specific policy areas they mobilize around. And the far most typical response to this has

been demobilization once the demand is fulfilled – electricity restored, water flowing, a main road repaired. This was also the case in early January 2011. Over the weekend of 8 and 9 January as Tunisia's Ben Ali prepared to flee his country, the Algerian government publicly wowed to stabilize the food prices and increasing subsidies and proceeded with purchasing a large quantity of wheat and other basic commodities on the world market. Having had their demands heard and fulfilled, the Algerian protestors returned home – just as they used to do.

As such the short-lived, non-revolutionary protests in Algeria followed a well-known local logic of contentious claim making by Algerian citizens in the major cities on their local and central government. It neither started nor ended with revolutionary aspirations and demands. It touched a single policy issue without aspiration to change the "system" or "order" of the country as it was the case with other Arab Revolt countries where protesters quickly or even directly passed from social policy protest to revolutionary claims under the calls for the downfall of the regime (*suqūṭ al-niẓām*). Contention in Algeria was by early 2011 firmly inscribed in a logic where small political demands were presented through big numbers of protests and protestors.

The failure to generate a revolutionary movement

There was, however, two novelties that distinguished the protests in Algeria in late December 2010 and early 2011, which over the following months prompted a number of established and tolerated political opposition forces in Algeria to attempt, in vain, to sustain and render the protests into a revolutionary movement.

First, the protests in 2010-2011 were, in contrast to the previous decades' protests, *national* rather than local and neighborhood-based. In contrast to a broken water pipe that may deprive a neighborhood from water, the fluctuations in word market prices had hit nationwide as a quick inflation all over Algeria. As a consequence, the mobilization, rioting and looting had hit nationwide, putting the strongly inflated police force at odds in and around Algiers in particular.

Second, the contention in December 2010 and January 2011 occurred in correlation with the two peak events in regional politics that set entirely new standards for how to think and act contentiously in Arab politics: the Jasmine Revolution in Tunisia which toppled Ben Ali and the ensuing 25 January Revolution in Egypt that led the military to topple president Mubarak. The symbolic spillover from the Tunisian

revolutionary movement was seen, for instance, in the wave of almost 40 cases of self-immolations performed inside or in front of local administration buildings all over Algeria as copycat actions of the trigger event that sparked the Tunisian protest political movement that toppled Ben Ali – although the first self-immolations in Algeria predated the Tunisian case with a few years.

This combination of a previously unseen synchronic national mobilization with a strong momentum for revolutionary contention in the Arab world would, over the following weeks and months, prompt a number of established oppositional forces to attempt to capitalize, sustain and politicize the protests.

In late January, a group of tolerated opposition forces including independent unionists and human rights activists convened a meeting in Algiers to constitute a new coordination body to capitalize on the momentum of political protest.[23] Under the title CNCD (*Coordination Nationale de Changement et la Démocratie*), they teamed up in a previously unseen alliance between civil society forces and a political party, the secularist and Berberist party RCD. The CNCD organized two peaceful marches that gathered around one thousand protestors united under the call for an end to the state of emergency imposed since 1992 and for a change of political regime in early and mid-February 2011. From mid-February, however, political party activists and civil society activists in the CNCD split into two diverging camps, with the so-called "Party CNCD" which continued to push for street protests in both Algiers and the Kabyle city of Bejaia to the east of the capital assembling a few thousand supporters. In parallel, the civil society-borne "Barakat CNCD" withdrew from the protests prompting a broad number of civil society activists to dissociate themselves from the protests in an attempt to stay out of political stigma.[24] By late March 2011, the initial momentum created by the national character of the riots and by the regional revolutionary ideology of the Arab Revolts had, however, passed Algeria without giving way to a revolutionary political mass movement.

[23] The group included the four autonomous unions: SNAPAP (Syndicat national autonome des personnes de l'administration publique), CLA (Comité des lycées d'Algérie), CNES (Conféderation nationale de l'enseignement supérieur), SATEF (Syndicat autonome des travailleurs de l'éducation et de la formation) as well as the human rights organization LADDH (Ligue Algèrienne de la défense des droits de l'homme).

[24] Bamaara, Layla "Quand les protestataires d'autolimitent. Le cas des mobilizations étudiantes de 2011 en Algérie" in Allal, A. & T. Pierret (2013): *Au Coeur des révoltes arabes, devenir revolutionaries*. Paris: Armand Collin

A restricting context

The failure of the CNCD to sustain the protests and generate a revolutionary mass movement in spring 2011 did, however, not signify that Algerians do not wish to see a transition away from the current authoritarian model of governing imposed by the interest groups of the incumbent regime. Opinion surveys back up what anyone making a short field trip to Algeria will immediately perceive: that Algerians are highly aware and opinionated observers of politics, that they hold abstract values such as "justice" and "right" high, and that young Algerians, as already demonstrated, have no trouble reacting to this, and even running the risk of police repression when doing so. It is simply counterintuitive and against the empirical evidence to claim that whatever traumas may have occurred during the terrible years of the civil war should collectively paralyze Algerians from participating in politics. Rather, the lack of success with the attempts made by the established and "tolerated" oppositional forces to sustain and politicize the protests during spring 2011 seems linked to a combination of a general disregard of the potential of protest, with the opaque nature of the political system itself, and with the well-developed ability of the government to exploit these conditions for its own profit.

The disregard of the potential of protest to generate positive change in the political order reflects Algeria's own experiences with the types of protest and contention that Tunisians, Egyptians, Yemenites, Libyans, Syrians, and other Arabs engaged in during the "Arab Spring." In early 2011, Algerians had a relatively recent experience with almost exactly the same types of contention that were used by their Arab neighbors to call for revolutionary "downfalls" of their autocratic governments. The idea that persistent, defiant, popular mobilization in an urban centre like Tunis' Avenue Bourguiba, Cairo's Midan Tahrir, Homs' Clock Square, or Bahrain's Pearl Square, could bring an autocratic army- or police-backed regime to fracture, had already been tested. In October 1988, it had been the politicization by key Islamist activists of the spontaneous youth protests that led the regime of Chadli Bendjedid to initiate a series of political reforms between 1989 and 1991 – a phenomenon that some observers beck then dubbed the "Algerian Spring" and which many Algerian still perceives as a "golden age" in the country's recent political history.

But in contrast to most other Arab populations, Algerians had an additional experience with the further effects of such revolutionary change on the basis of contention and protest. They had seen how entrenched elites in the "deep state" swung back into politics after less than three years orchestrating a military coup that annulled the bulk of their recently acquired political liberties and, in the name

of "security," rolled back the freedoms, the rights, the liberties and the privileges that had been introduced in the constitution on the basis of contentious politics. Algerians had also seen how the indiscriminate repression of opponents of the new military-backed regime in the wake of the coup ignited a mass rebellion that succeeded in little besides claiming thousands of lives and in closing down social and political life before bringing about even more ferocious state repression. And they had seen that the regime remained intact. As such, Algerians were most probably better prepared than many of their fellow Arabs to comprehend that the opportunities for political change presented by the mass contention of the Arab Spring simultaneously opened up tremendous risks for political and social life by possibly generating a mutual exchange between repression and rebellion. For many Algerians, the odds in favor of a positive political development on the basis of mass contention are simply outweighed by the odds in favor of a repressive and violent aftermath.

The failure to generate a revolutionary protest movement also seems linked to the opaque nature of the political order in Algeria. As pointed out in the previous chapter, it remains obscure for most Algerians who actually governs the country. While the presidency as an institution is generally recognized as an important actor in politics, president Abdelzaiz Bouteflika himself is less so – and his recent long-term illness does nothing to counter this impression. Furthermore, the two chambers of the parliament seem at best irrelevant for political decision-making. This absence of a personalized or institutionalized political culture and an opaque notion of "interest groups," a "cartel" and "le pouvoir" as the real political decision-makers makes it difficult for Algerians to pinpoint exactly *who* they would wish to topple if turning revolutionary. Indeed, most Algerians would probably expect that "the system" would simply replace incumbent president Abdelaziz Bouteflika with someone else of his character if he were, indeed, to be toppled.

A third contextual factor that restricts the emergence of revolutionary movements in Algeria is the fractured nature of the opposition – a fracturing that reflects a broader fracturing of the Algerian public in the aftermath of the civil war. When contentious politics emerged in independent Algeria in the late 1970s and early 1980s, it pitted a nascent Islamist mass movement emerging from dissident movements in private mosques in the semi-urban areas of the capital and major cities against both the socialist and secularist policies of the nationalist regime of the FLN-single party as well as a number of smaller movements based on ethnic (Berber) and gender (women) claims. The opening of the political system in

1989 and the subsequent mass victories of the Salafi Islamist party, FIS, pushed numerous activists from the small movements to seek protection within the state apparatus against the potential power grab by the Islamist movement. The military coup in January 1992 and the ensuing harsh repression of the FIS that set in motion the "civil war" epitomized this development and led to a collapse of collaboration between the major oppositional parties on the civil political scene in Algeria during most of the 1990s and 2000s.

When the CNCD, in the wake of the toppling of Tunisia's Ben Ali and Egypt's Hosni Mubarak, organized its first protests in February 2011, they did so by collaborating closely with the radical secularist Berberist party RCD, which in 1992 had endorsed the military coup against the FIS electoral victory – and in consequence had been duly punished by the Islamist terrorist groups during the 1990s. Hence, the presence of a small delegation of Islamist protesters under the leadership of the former Salafi firebrand preacher Ali Belhadj during CNCD's first protest in Algiers in early February prompted, in particular, the social base to withdraw from the initiative, refusing to stand side by side with the former enemies from the civil war.

The combination of a depressing outcome of recent initiatives to enforce change from below, an opaque political system that is neither personalized nor institutionalized, with a deeply fractured political opposition and public, has so far provided the incumbent Algerian regime with a favorable position when attempts are made to politicize and sustain revolutionary political movements.

Government containment

Besides its persistent reference to the Arab Spring and contentious politics as "terrorism" and "international complots," the Algerian government has addressed contentious claim making with a raft of responsive and proactive policies ranging from classical police repression to policy accommodation of the demands pushed forward by the protestors.

The Algerian repressive agencies have, over the past decade, built up a strong ability for and experience with handling protest that, due to the massive nature of contentions in Algeria since the mid-2000s, outmatches the ability and experience of most other repressive agencies in the Arab World. Tactically, the government policing of protest relies on a number of the same tactics seen in other Arab countries. It is reported to rely on civilian "thugs" (*baltagiyyas*) to infiltrate protests

and instigate violent behavior that then justifies a general police repression of otherwise peaceful marches and demonstrations. It is reported to orchestrate the usual large-scale counter-protest in favor of the regime by bussing in supporters from towns outside the capital. It is reported to contain the sealing off of the capital for protesters coming from other neighborhoods. And it is reported to rely on massive police presence. During the protests organized by the CNCD in February and March 2011, the police force was reported to number almost ten times as many as protesters (35,000 police officers versus 3,500 protesters).

The government also relies on more subtle and "soft" repressive measures such as "cloning" and "harassment" as illustrated by the government's relation to the tolerated independent union, SNAPAP (*Syndicat national autonome des personnes de l'administration publique*). SNAPAP was created in 1990 as Algeria's first autonomous syndicate for public employees in the so-called "non-economic sector" – a restriction that excludes the union to reach out to employees within the profit driven "economic sector" of the state such as the oil and gas extraction giant, Sonatrach, or the state's powerful public airline, Air Algérie. Created by "dissidents" from the regime-loyal trade union, the UGTA (*Union Générale des Travailleurs Algériens*), which had been created under president Houari Boumedienne as a tool with which the single party regime of the FLN could engage with and control the Algerian workforce, SNAPAP carved out a room for itself throughout the 1990s and 2000s by calling for strikes and sit-ins – something the UGTA has never done. Over the past decade, SNAPAP has persistently called for improvement of workers' conditions including an improved protection of "vulnerable" employees such as women and short-term contractual employees without pension agreements. It furthermore coordinates with and supports a number of students' unions and activists working in the intersection between workers' and more general human rights.

In 2004, SNAPAP was, according to its leadership, "cloned" by the government. Having refused to cede to a call presented by the government to support a second mandate to the incumbent president Abdelaziz Bouteflika in April 2004, the government created its own loyalist "clone" SNAPAP. The "clone" SNAPAP, which lies idle most of the time consisting of little more than its president – a former member of the original SNAPAP who after entering into politics in the 2000s had left SNAPAP – has emerged as a public actor in election times calling for the electorate to support the president in the name of SNAPAP. This was also the case during the presidential elections in April 2014 where the "original" SNAPAP refused to express a public opinion about whether president Bouteflika

should run for a fourth term, while the "clone" SNAPAP issued a declaration in support.

SNAPAP furthermore claims to be the target of a series of administrative harassment measures. In particular, this includes what active members of the union claim to be a systematic policy within the public administration of marginalizing and omitting to promote known members of SNAPAP who refuse either to cease their activities or to collaborate with the state. The same group of activists also complain about false and trumped up cases against them claiming that they operate disloyally etc.

Finally, the government has employed a tactic of accommodation of protest demands. When nationwide mass protests broke out in parallel with the toppling of Tunisian and Egyptian presidents, the Algerian regime took steps to symbolically accommodate a raft of issues expressed by the protesters. On the one hand, it tactically bowed to a number of the wishes put forward by protestors and other contentious actors. Just as it did with the protests against hikes in basic food commodities, the government continued during spring 2011 to increase the salaries of the professional groups that had taken to the streets or engaged in sit-ins during January: teachers, police officers and physicians, and went on to distribute large scale welfare gifts. In February 2011, the government launched a wave of social welfare policies by allocating a sum of two million Euros to social development projects including 25 years 0% interest bank loan to young "entrepreneurs" and invested heavily in job creation.

On the other hand, the government has, as was the case during the protests in 2011, quickly and symbolically addressed a number of key reform areas within which protesters called for action. Hence, president Bouteflika lifted the 19-years-old state of emergency in February 2011. In April 2011, the president furthermore announced a raft of reforms touching the core areas of governance in Algeria: the law on associations, the law on political parties, the law on media and, eventually, the constitution itself. These initiatives provided the political public in Algeria with a sufficient alleviation of the most immediate systemic strains on political actions – although the following years of slow implementation of these "reforms" were accompanied by a significant "watering down" of the reformist potential of almost all of these policy proposals: final laws either upheld government control, as in the case with the continued ban on public meetings and demonstrations in the capital based on a governmental decree from 2001, or they increased government control over society, as it was the case with the NGO law – perhaps with the information law that

de facto rather than de jure permitted a genuine expansion of the media freedoms by introducing the right to own and run private TV and radio for the first time ever.[25]

By late 2011, the combination of the deterring effect of Algeria's recent history of protest, combined with the opaque nature of the regime and the successful repressive policies and *ad hoc* accommodation of the demands presented by protesters, permitted the Algerian government to ride out the tide of the early phases of the Arab Spring.

The call for change in 2014

In the wake of the increasingly visible fractures of the interest groups of the regime in the run-up to the presidential elections in spring 2014, protest and contention reemerged in Algeria as a potentially political force. In parallel with the positioning for and against a potential fourth term for the possibly terminally ill incumbent president Bouteflika, various initiatives were taken by civil society actors. The so-far most persistent of these initiatives has been the grassroots campaign known as *Barakat* – "enough" in Algerian colloquial.[26] Created on 22 February 2014 by a group of Algerian intellectuals in their 20s, 30s and 40s, journalists, writers, medics etc., Barakat aimed until the presidential elections of April 2014 to create a non-partisan civil movement against Abdelaziz Bouteflika's possible decision to run for a fourth term in office. During the first demonstrations organized by Barakat in central Algiers in March 2014, police intervened quickly, dispersing the crowds and arresting the leaders of the movement even before any real popular momentum had emerged. From early April 2014, the police repression was, however, relaxed and the group's members were allowed both to demonstrate – gathering typically some few hundreds or a couple of thousands supporters – and to tour the country in an attempt to capitalize upon the numerous contentious events in provincial towns such as Bejaia and Batna where protests erupted during April 2014. In contrast to the CNCD, however, Barakat did not team up with the established political forces, neither political parties like the RCD nor civil society actors like the LADDH, the SNAPAP or the RAJ, thereby, initially at least,

[25] Boserup, Rasmus Alenius: *Authoritarianism and Media in Algeria*. Policy report, International Media Support, 2012.

[26] The term both has a deep historical reference to the civil protests in Algiers in July 1962 under the slogan *sabaa sinin barakat* ! (Seven years is enough!) in which civilians in Algiers expressed their contempt for the infighting between FLN's so-called "external army" and the "internal guerillas". It also, however, has a more récent reference to the civil society base of the CNCD – a base known as "CNCD Barakat"

avoiding to be categorized along the fracturing that divides the Algerian political public. In the wake of Abdelaziz Bouteflika's re-election in late April 2014, Barakat has attempted to redefine its former key mobilizing issue, the refusal of a fourth term in office for Bouteflika, with a broader project aiming for creating social change in Algeria. It has done so by attempting to capitalize on the political public's refusal of what the activists represent as a humiliating non-solution to the succession crisis within the political system and on what the group presumes to be the political public's unwillingness to reconcile the status-quo with the presumed aspiration of the majority of the Algerians to live and develop an alternative and prosperous post-civil war society.

The impact of contention

In spite of continued and massive protest over the past decade, the obstacles to the emergence of a political protest movement demanding radical change in Algeria are considerable. They include the contextual factors of the deterring experience that the Algerian population has had since 1988 with contentious politics. They encompass the inability of potentially revolutionary protesters to convincingly identify a person or an institution to topple in Algeria's opaque political system. They embrace the fracturing of the political public that occurred during the civil war. They also include the constraining policies of the government that draws on years of practice with handling protesters by a police force that is proportionally one of the biggest in the world and has a well-developed and already-tested palette of "soft" and "hard" containment tactics to employ against any contentious actor that may be seen as an existential threat to the regime.

A new opportunity for contentious politics and protest movement activities may, however, have occurred recently in correlation with the increasingly visible fracturing of the interest groups that constitute the Algerian regime. Observing the collapse of the consensus that over the past decade and a half has permitted the interest groups of the regime to control policies and political debates, civil society and political opposition has demonstrated an ability to collaborate across the traditional fracturing lines of politics in Algeria. Whether this still fresh process that dates back only to the final hours of the presidential campaign in April 2014 will come to signify a deep repositioning of the political forces in Algeria or end up as short-lived conjunctural deviation will to a large extent depend on the regime's ability to reestablish a consensus among its interest groups – in the first run for a succession candidate for Bouteflika.

If the interest groups do not establish a new consensus within a relatively short time span, initiatives to pressure for system challenging political demands may overcome the challenge of fracturing of the political opposition and manage to further politicize the protest that continue to occur on an almost daily basis in Algeria. In that case, police agencies may not be able to contain protests and a possible call for the army to intervene repressively cannot be ruled out.

Regional Security

The chapter analyses the impact of regional instability and foreign intervention in the Maghreb and the Sahel regions on regime stability and endurance in Algeria. It examines the rivalry for regional leadership between Morocco and Algeria and argues that the current competition in the Sahel region replicates the conflict pattern known from the Western Sahara conflict. It furthermore argues that the pressure from the E.U. and the U.S. on Algeria to become the pivotal military security provider in the Sahel region may result in increased militarization of the Algerian regime. Such an outcome is, however, in itself unlikely to destabilize the regime.

Maghreb security after the Arab Spring

Algeria is positioned within two overlapping security complexes: the Maghreb and the Sahel. The Maghreb region consists of the two regional great powers, Morocco and Algeria, and the currently insignificant small power countries of Libya and Tunisia.

Since 1975, the core security problem in the Maghreb region has been the Moroccan occupation of Western Sahara. This occupation continues today with the Moroccan claim for integration of Western Sahara into the Moroccan state and Algerian support for a sovereign Western Sahara state presented by Polisario (*Frente popular de liberacíon de Saguía el Hamra y Río de Oro*). Hence for Algeria the frozen Western Sahara conflict serves as a strategic tool to contain what Algiers perceives as the Moroccan quest for leadership in the Maghreb and Algiers will oppose itself to any solution that does not imply the creation of a state under the control of Polisario and thereby indirectly of Algeria.

Prior to the fall of Gaddafi, Libya regularly tried to play off Morocco and Algeria against one another in an attempt to position itself as a competitor for regional influence – in particular with regard to influencing the Tuaregs in northern Mali and Niger.[27] Algeria and Gaddafi's Libya both considered the Sahel as their hinterland

[27] Haddad, Saïd: "La politique africaine de la Libye: de la tentation impériale à la stratégie unitaire", *Monde arabe Maghreb Machrek*, no 170, La Documentation francaise, octobre – décembre 2000, pp. 29 – 38. & Ammour, Laurence Aïda: *Algeria, The Sahel, and the Current Mali Crisis*, Notes internacionals, January 2013, 67, CIDOB: Barcelona

and replicated their Maghreb rivalry into the Sahel. They both acted as mediators in the Tuareg conflicts and Algeria sometimes supported Tuareg armed groups in Mali and Niger as part of proxy rivalry with Libya.[28] Libya under Gaddafi would for its part support Tuaregs' ambition to build an empire that would encompass their communities from different Sahel states.[29] Libya furthermore intervened in local conflicts in the countries located on Algeria's southern periphery, like Mali, Niger, Chad and Sudan. Although Libya under Gaddafi was an unpredictable competitor in regional politics, Algeria was staunchly opposed to NATO's toppling of the Gaddafi regime. Although being under the government of the Libyan General National Congress (GNC) has made Libya into a 'non-actor' in regional politics, the partial Libyan state collapse in the wake of the Arab Revolts is seen by Algeria as a threat to its own internal stability in the south. This is linked to the trans border flow of arms, drugs, rebels and to the violent clashes between Arabs, Tuaregs and Mzabites.

As a small state, Tunisia has never counted in regional politics in the Maghreb. Before the Arab uprisings in 2011, Tunisia bandwagoned behind Algiers and Tripoli in an attempt to balance its way through the squeeze from the Algerian regional power struggle with Libya under Gaddafi. Seen from Algiers, the toppling of Tunisia's President Ben Ali in 2011, and the ensuing turbulent political transition, had a troubling side-effect of producing an Islamist government and a Salafi-inspired rebel movement. Since the Algerian regime repressed its own moderate Islamists and fought a costly civil war against Islamist rebel groups in the 1990s, it has noted with relief that Tunisia's Ennahda in the wake of the military coup in Egypt increased its willingness to compromise with political interests from secularist and nationalist actors and, in parallel, sanctions the repression of Islamist rebel groups on the border with Algeria.

Algeria needs Tunisia in its struggle against terrorism and trans-border flows. Tunisia needs Algeria for the same reasons but also needs Algerian oil, gas and investments. They are are mutually dependent. Close collaboration between Tunisia and Algeria with regard to securitization of borders currently takes place. As a sign of the rapprochement, the new Tunisian Prime Minister Mehdi Jomaa visited Algeria on February 3, 2014, a few days after the formation of the new Tunisian

[28] Arieff, Alexis: *Maghreb Facing New Global Challenges. U.S: – Algerian Security Cooperation and Regional Counterterrorism*, Note de l'IFRI, Programme Moyen-Orient/Maghreb, July 2011, Paris.

[29] Hamchi, Mohammed: "Libya as a Collapsed State and Security in the Sahel: More Fuel to the Fire?" in *Algerian Review of Security and Development*, Issue no 3, July 2012, pp. 232-250

government. Seen from Algeria this interdependence has the advantage of being a possible alliance balancer to Morocco thereby reducing Moroccan influence in the Maghreb. Furthermore, Tunisia is seen as a 'safe haven' in comparison with Libya. Algeria therefore has an interest in keeping close ties to Tunisia, which might serve as a buffer-zone against the security vacuum in Libya.

Algeria also needs Morocco to revitalize the regional Maghreb organization AMU (*Union Maghreb Arabe*) that has been nonoperational since 1994 when the borders were closed. The main reason for the non-functioning of the AMU is the Western Sahara problem. As long as the two countries are not willing to find a compromise in that conflict, the AMU cannot function. However, the two countries are in dire need of the establishment of a Maghreb security community because of the threats inside the Maghreb and threats stemming from the Sahel.

The attempt at circumventing the conflict on Western Sahara is mirrored in the way Algeria tries to attract the Sahel states to the Algerian concept of security. However, the conflict looms in the relationship between Algeria and the Sahel because the rivalry between Algeria and Morocco is replicated in the Sahel.

Sahel security after the Arab Spring

Algeria's vast Sahara desert borders the three Sahel countries: Mauritania, Mali and Niger. In official presentation, Algeria sees this area both as its backyard and as a part of its territorial identity. Over the past decade, however, the external powers operating in West Africa such as the U.S., France and the E.U. have encouraged Algeria to increase its role as security provider in the Sahel region and, in particular, for anti-terrorism collaboration. The strategy of pushing Algeria towards assuming an increased role in regional politics has further increased in the wake of the toppling of Gaddafi in 2011 and with the ensuing disappearance of Libya as a security provider in the Sahel. And it increased further with the French military intervention in northern Mali and the continuation of Islamist rebel responses to the intervention.

For the E.U., in particular, Algeria seems to be the best suited partner to deliver security on its two main security concerns in the Sahel: illegal immigration and Islamist terrorism. With its successful repression of an Islamist mass rebellion in the early and mid-1990s, Algeria remains the most capable actor to combat Islamist terrorism. It has also over the past years, along with the other Maghreb countries,

participated in readmitting clandestine immigrants back to their countries of origin in the Sahel or elsewhere.[30]

The U.S. has, since 2001, considered Algeria, which has the largest military budgets in the Maghreb and boasts the most experienced anti-terror forces in Africa, a key partner in combating Islamist terrorism.

Together the initiatives to counter terrorism and illegal immigration have profoundly affected the relationship between the U.S., the E.U. and Algeria. In particular, the Sahel has become a part of the Maghreb security complex and the Sahel security dynamic now penetrates profoundly back into the Maghreb also to an extent where it becomes hard to separate events occurring in the Maghreb from those taking place in the Sahel region.[31]

The challenge of intervention

In the span of less than two years following the outbreak of the Arab uprisings, two military interventions took place within the security complexes that Algeria perceives itself as leading: Libya in March 2011 and Mali in January 2013.

Historically, Algerian security and foreign policy is marked by the country's revolutionary past. References to non-interference in other states' domestic affairs, people's right to self-determination and inviolability of borders are permanent features of Algerian foreign policy identity, and the principle of military non-interference is endorsed in the Algerian constitution.[32] This translates both into a refusal of military intervention in other countries and a refusal of other forms of foreign interference in domestic Algerian, Maghreb and Sahel affairs.

[30] Oukazi, Ghania: "L'UE veut impliquer l'Algérie sur le terrain', *Le Quotidien d'Oran,* 18 janvier 2014. Since the French military intervention in Mali did not end the terrorist activities in the Sahel region, the EU elaborated in early 2014 a 'global agreement on security' for the Maghreb and Sahel regions with the aim to provide Algeria with a key role in ensuring the security of the so-called 'pays de champs' (Mali, Mauritania and Niger).

[31] Dessì, Andrea: "Forword", Dessì, Andrea, Christiani, Dario, Mühlberger, Wolfgang, Musso, Giorgio (eds.): *Africa and the Mediterranean. Evolving Security Dynamics after the Arab Uprisings*. The German Marshall Fund of the United States, Mediterranean Paper Series 2014: Washington, pp. lll-Vl.

[32] Article 26 of the constitution states that "Algeria does not resort to war in order to undermine the legitimate sovereignty and the freedom of other peoples. It puts forth its effort to settle international disputes through meaningful means" Quoted from Chena, Salim: "L'Algérie: de la puissance idéologique à l'hégémonie sécuritaire" in Mokhefi, Mansouria & Alain Antil (eds): *Le Maghreb et son Sud: vers des liens renouvelés*. CNRS, 2012, Paris.

As a consequence, Algeria opposed both of these interventions. It voted against the Arab League's resolution on Libya in March 2011 and sought to mobilize the African Union (AU) for a political solution rather than a military one. It furthermore took a long time to recognize the Libyan interim government that replaced the Gaddafi regime in the wake of the NATO intervention.[33]

There was, however, more than principle and history to Algeria's position. Algiers both feared a spillover from Libya and Mali into Algeria and it saw the potential disappearance of Gaddafi as a threat to Algiers' Western Sahara policy. A militaristic solution to the security problems in the Sahel region would also, however, imply a shift in the responsible agencies and institutions of the Algerian state that were responsible for Sahel security. In the years prior to the Arab revolts, Algeria had, in contrast to the militaristic interventionist solution that external actors implemented in Libya and Mali, formed its engagement in upholding Sahel security through mediation. Hence Algiers had brokered the peace agreements in 1991 in Tamanrasset, in 2006 in Algiers, and in 2008 between the Tuaregs and Bamako. In 2011, Algeria defended a political and not a military solution to the Islamist and Tuareg violence in northern Mali. This reflected Algiers' principal refusal to endorse what was perceived of as the French former colonizer's neo-imperialist behavior in the Sahel as well as fear felt in Algiers of subjugation to French domination with regard to threat perception.

Bouteflika would, however, in parallel with the refusal to endorse the military intervention in Mali allow France to fly over Algerian territory – in practice endorsing the military solution in the Sahel region.[34] Thereby the president, *de facto*, endorsed a shift away from a mediation-based policy in Sahel security implemented by the intelligence agencies under the command of the DRS, towards a military solution relying on the General Staff if the army (*État-Major*) and its military force.

Regional competition and mutual exclusion

The enlargement of the Maghreb security complex into the Sahel has not changed the pattern of amity and enmity between Algeria and Morocco. Rather, it has produced increased competition between the two states with regards to handling security and gain influence in the Sahel region.

[33] Haddad, Saïd: "La politique africaine de la Libye: de la tentation impériale à la stratégie unitaire", *Monde arabe Maghreb Machrek*, no 170, La Documentation francaise, octobre – décembre 2000, pp. 29 – 38.
[34] Tinti, Peter: "Understanding Algeria's Northern Mali Policy", *Think Africa Press*, 5 October 2012

Morocco has, much like Algeria, projected itself into the Sahel as a prolongation of its competition with Algeria in the Maghreb. Morocco's Sahel strategy is, much like its Western Sahara policy, based on cooperation with African countries and by high-profile cultural politics at the global level.[35]

The competition between Algeria and Morocco is epitomized in their relation to conflict in Mali where the two countries combine policy initiatives and offers of collaboration with diplomatic efforts. In contrast to Algeria, Morocco openly supported the military intervention and, in the wake of it, King Mohammed VI promised to invest in developing both Mali and Mauritania socio-economically. Morocco also promised to provide training of Malian and Mauritanian religious scholars (*imams*) in an attempt to counter Salafi radicalism.

Seen from Algiers, Morocco is a malignant power attempting to harm Algerian interests in the Sahel and Algeria has even accused Morocco of supporting the Islamist rebel movement MUJAO (*Mouvement pour l'unicité et le djihad en Afrique de l'Ouest*).[36]

In the wake of the French intervention in Mali, Algeria has sought influence in the Sahel by offering to share its expertise in counterterrorism. In response to the successful Moroccan diplomacy, the Algerian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ramtane Lamamra, proceeded with a visit to Mauritania, Mali and Niger, meeting also the head of the U.N. mission in Mali to discuss security co-operation. Algeria has also offered to contribute to the negotiation between Bamako and the Tuaregs in northern Mali and has iterated the same proposal as Morocco to invest in the formation of moderate imams. Algeria has also for years supplied the Malian army with military material and the two countries have a shared interest in combating the trans-Sahara smuggling of gasoline, weapons and drugs.

Besides the diplomatic competition, the competition between Algeria and Morocco has an institutional character that reflects the policy of mutual institutional exclusion in the Western Sahara conflict. The mutual exclusion is seen, for instance, in Morocco's non-participation in AU and in Algeria's exclusion of Morocco from participating in the anti-terror organizations, the Joint Military staff Committee

[35] Chena, Salim: "Portée et limites de l'hégmonie algérienne dans l'aire sahélo-maghrébine", *Hérodote: Géopolitique du Sahara*, 2011, no 142, pp. 108 – 124, Paris

[36] Benchiba, Lakhdar: *La guerre du "Sahelistan" aura-t-elle lieu?*, Le Monde diplomatique. January 2013.

Headquarters (CEMOC) in Tamanrasset. Algeria perceives CEMOC as its own tool for combating threats and is not willing to take into consideration the other three countries' threat perceptions.[37]

It is, however, not clear whether CEMOC will get a chance to materialize because neither Mali nor Mauritania are pleased with having Algeria as the leading security provider in the Sahel. Before the intervention in Mali, there was a rather high degree of distrust between Algeria, Mali and Mauritania. Algeria has criticized Mali's lack of interest in combating AQIM. Mali on its side lobbied for Morocco to be a part of the CEMOC, but Algeria vetoed this proposal. Algeria has been suspicious of the military cooperation that Mali, Niger and Mauritania have with France. Mali has pointed to links between the Algerian intelligence service and some Algerian terrorists and to the support that Algeria gave to various Tuareg rebels. The greatest weakness of CEMOC is, however, the absence of Morocco. The U.S. has urged Algeria to include Morocco, but in vain. Algiers also keeps Morocco excluded from the Algiers-hosted African Center for Research and Studies on Terrorism (CAERT).[38]

In contrast, Algeria is not a member of the 28 country strong Community of Sahel-Sahara States (CENSAD) that was established by Libya in 1982 with the aim to deal with economics and culture.

The U.S. has, in vain, tried to overcome the rivalry between Algeria and Morocco in order to build up counterterrorism and security assistance to the Sahel states. The U.S. Trans Sahara Counter Terrorism Partnership (TSCTP) from 2005 is a prolongation of the Pan-Sahel-Initiative (PSI) from 2003-2004. The initial objective of the PSI was to support border control capabilities, control illicit trade and enhance regional security. It comprised Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Chad. The TSCTP involves, in addition, all the Maghreb states, as well as Burkina Faso, Senegal and Nigeria, and was incorporated in the AFRICOM. In reality, TSCTP does not function well because of the inter-state problems and because Algeria only participates to a minor extent preferring bilateral security cooperation.

The U.S. and Algeria depend on each other with regard to counter-terrorism. However, even if the U.S. and Algeria work closely together for security cooperation,

[37] Simon, Luis, Mattelaer, Alexander, Hadfield, Amelia: *A Coherent EU strategy for the Sahel*. Directorate – General for External Policies. Policy Department. European Union, Brussels, 2011.

[38] Oukazi, Ghania: '"L'UE veut impliquer l'Algérie sur le terrain", *Le Quotidien d'Oran*, January 18 2014.

the U.S. has not succeeded in convincing Algeria to integrate its counterterrorism policy in a strong regional framework where policy decisions are taken in common. Neither has the U.S. managed to convince Algeria about placing the American-led AFRICOM on Algerian soil. American-Algerian anti-terror cooperation has to be invisible in order not to be in opposition to the 'deep structure' of Algerian foreign policy identity.

In the wake of the Arab Revolts, the basic structure of Algeria's foreign politics remain largely unaltered. It is still constituted by a mixture of Africanism in the AU-institution, internationalization via the U.N., Algerian dominated security organizations such as CEMOC, bilateralism towards Libya, Tunisia, Sahel-countries and invisible anti-terror cooperation between the U.S. and Algeria.

Western Sahara and the persistence of the security order

In the wake of the Arab revolts, Algeria and Morocco launched a number of initiatives that symbolically sought to open the frontier by revitalizing the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU). Hence in 2012, the Moroccan Minister of Foreign Affairs paid a visit to Algeria for the first time in 9 years. And, in February 2012, Algeria and Morocco signed a memorandum concerning the establishment of a mechanism dealing with politics twice a year especially with regard to economic integration and revitalization of the AMU. Both countries have also sought to increase sector cooperation – for example university cooperation.

The optimism was, however, quickly superseded with resignation and, instead, the conflict over the Western Sahara and the notions of self-determination and autonomy continued to dominate Maghreb and Sahel security politics. Algeria furthermore added observance of human rights in Western Sahara to the demand of self-determination. In 2013, President Bouteflika called for the establishment of an international mechanism to monitor the status of human rights in Western Sahara. Bouteflika accused Morocco of massive and systematic violations of human rights in the occupied territory.[39]

Morocco withdrew its ambassador from Algeria in November 2013 over what it saw as a provocation by Algeria. At the same occasion, Morocco called for bilateral negotiations with Algeria to resolve the conflict. In November also, the

[39] JOL Press: "Dans quelle mesure les droits des Saharaouis sont-ils en effet bafoués". December 20, 2013.

king declared that the Western Sahara was 'the African prolongation of Morocco'. Linking Africa and Sahara together is a blow to Algerian perceived leadership in the South. Seen from Morocco, this geographical linkage has the advantage of circumventing the AU.

In a message to Mohammed Abdelazis, the leader of the Polisario Front, President Bouteflika urged the international community to assume its responsibilities towards the Saharawi and to accelerate its resolution within the U.N. framework.[40]

In April 2014, the U.N. passed resolution 2152, creating a compromise between the Algerian request for an international mechanism with regard to human rights and the Moroccan refusal of these. Algerian and Moroccan civil society actors ask still for more opening up of the Algerian-Moroccan frontiers and for decoupling of the Western Sahara question from the question of frontiers. Officially, Algeria does not consider the Western Sahara an impediment to the development of bilateral policy with Morocco and eventually the opening of the frontier but, in reality, the conflict rubs off onto economic and cultural sectors to the disadvantage of civil society.

As long as Algeria and Morocco continue to securitize the question of Western Sahara. However, there will be no solution to the conflict. A solution requires a politicization of the future of the Western Sahara. This means that the Western Sahara will no longer be seen as a security threat to the survival of the two states. It also means that there will be a pressure from below not to securitize because people desire the Maghreb region to be a cross-border entity. It would mean that the Algerians themselves questioned the legitimacy of the Algerian ruling elites' securitization of the Western Sahara.

The impact of regional security on Algerian regime endurance

In the wake of the Arab revolts, the configuration of security politics in Maghreb and the Sahel region has undergone some considerable changes. In particular, the toppling of Gaddafi's regime in Libya led to a collapse of the prior strong Libyan engagement in regional security in the Sahel. In the absence of Libya, Algeria and Morocco have been given an opportunity to impose themselves as regional great powers in the Sahel region. This process has been implemented on the one

[40] See e.g. statement by Bouteflika quoted in "Bouteflika renews Algeria's commitment to the Western Sahara", *Middle East Monitor*, February 28, 2014

hand as a prolongation of the ongoing rivalry over the Western Sahara based on diplomatic competition and mutual institutional exclusion. On the other hand, it has been accompanied by an increasing demand from external actors, notably France, for Algeria to assume a greater role as regional politics – and, in particular, in militarizing the border with Libya and Mali.

The French encouragement of Algiers to play a firmer role in Sahel security is, however, not without its consequences and risks. First of all, the army will run a risk by deploying in a region that was previously the fiefdom of its historical rival to power in Algeria, the intelligence agencies of the DRS. A French-Algerian military partnership would, in an international perspective, signify that future Algerian military interventions in its neighborhood would possibly be seen as legitimate. This opens the strongly possible scenario of a future Algerian military engagement in the Sahel region. This scenario seems further underpinned by the ongoing debates in Algerian media, which seems to prepare the public for a possible role of the Algerian army as a stabilizing actor in the Sahel region in collaboration with France. In a regional context, where the frontiers still are not fully recognized and accepted by the neighboring states and where separatist movements are operating (Sahraoius, Azawadi, Toubous etc.), the deployment of the Algerian army would most probably in itself increase tensions. Combined with the Algerian-Moroccan rivalry in the Sahel region, a confrontation between these two regional great powers – possibly in the form of proxy actions – cannot be excluded. This would mean a renewal of the militaristic nationalism in Algeria. And it would provide the military with an opportunity to impose itself as the leader of the different interest groups that constitute the regime in Algeria. By encouraging the army to take up a greater role in regional politics, external actors like France and the E.U. thus run the risk of initiating a process in which the Algerian army could use the Sahel dossier to impose its will on its historical rival for the regime, the DRS. Such a scenario is difficult to imagine without a return of violence in a variety of directly or indirectly instrumentalized forms.

Conclusion

The present report analyzes the threats and challenges to the endurance of the incumbent regime in Algeria in the aftermath of the Arab Revolts. The report has scrutinized these threats and challenges on three levels: intra-regime competition and power struggles, contention and protest emerging from the social base, and security threats and challenges emerging from outside Algeria's borders.

The report demonstrates that, although the challenges are considerable on each of the three levels, the regime, the coalition of interest groups that presently controls it, and the broader authoritarian political order in Algeria is likely to endure in the short and mid-long run.

Intra-regime power struggles do pose a considerable challenge to the stability of the incumbent regime. The long-term illness of the incumbent president Abdelaziz Bouteflika, which culminated in the second half of 2013 when the president disappeared from public during almost nine consecutive months, including during the run-up for presidential elections in April 2014, undermined the ability of the dominant coalition of interest groups of the regime to smoothen out the power struggles inside the regime. As a consequence, the Algerian public was presented with an unprecedented insight into the intra-regime power struggle between protagonists of the coalition affiliated with DRS and protagonists of the coalition formed around the incumbent president and backed by the General Staff (*État-Major*). The coalition formed around incumbent president Abdelaziz Bouteflika has, so far, managed to weather the storm by assuring a narrow re-election of the incumbent president for a fourth term in office. The poor physical health of the president pressures, however, the protagonists of this coalition to relatively quickly identify a new candidate for presidency as a way to contain intra-regime conflict by reestablishing a minimum of consensus among the protagonists of the different interest groups from inside the regime and on its sidelines. The most likely outcome of such an alliance between the presidency and the military high command is a further weakening of the already marginalized and clientized civil political institutions in the upper and lower houses, the courts, and the state auditors.

Contentious politics and social protests have, for now, been contained, but do have a potential to spread and politicize. While mass street protests have occurred regularly in Algeria for almost a decade, it only recently that established political actors have

attempted to provide these with an aim to challenge the system. The politicization of the social protest occurred in correlation with the increasingly visible fracturing of the regime between protagonists of the security services (DRS) and the military high command *(État-Major)* during president Abdelaziz Bouteflika's third mandate (2009-2014). Since the politicization of social protests seems closely linked to exposure of the regime fracturing, rather than spillover effects of the "Arab Spring," either in the form of instrumentalization and "manipulation" of specific protest groups by the conflicting interest groups of the regime or in the form of protesters themselves viewing a possible tactical alignment with one or another interest group from within the regime, the politicization is unlikely to sustain itself if a new consensus candidate for the presidency emerges. For contentious politics, the most likely scenario of such a development would be massive depoliticization correlating with a continuation of the past decade's massive and recurrent usage of street protest as a means to claim certain "rights" without putting in question the endurance of the regime and the broader political order that underpins it.

Regional politics pose a continuing challenge and opportunity for the Algerian regime in the wake of the partial state collapse in Libya and in Northern Mali. On the one hand, it presents an opportunity for the army's General Staff (*État-Major*) to boost its ability to sideline its rival, the secret services (DRS). The boost of the capacity of the General Staff emerges, in part, from the current European and Western security policies in the region, which emphasized the need for Algeria to take up a position as a "responsible" regional great power and engage actively in solving security problems outside its borders in its regional neighborhood.

On the other hand, the collapse of the pre-Arab Revolts security order in Maghreb and the Sahel has paved the way for an increase in the competition between the two remaining regional great powers in North Africa and the Sahel: Morocco and Algeria. A possible scenario is that the conflict, which is currently political and diplomatic, if linked to territorial secessionist rebel activities in Southern Algeria, may be interpreted as a security threat and thus escalate into armed confrontation between the two great powers. None of these two scenarios, however, seem to directly threaten the possible endurance of the coalition of interest groups that currently controls the presidency and dominates the regime.

Since neither of the three levels of threats and challenges to the incumbent regime under scrutiny in the present report are likely to produce a sufficiently sustained and hard pressure on the regime to provoke full or partial collapse in the short term or

mid-term, the only way that the regime could be seriously in danger would be in the case of international intervention. In particular, two variables are of key importance here. The first is the current regime's reliance on distribution of petro-rent to uphold regime coherence, institutional support, social support and to contain politicization of the social base. With known current reserves estimated to last for several decades, only a collapse of world market prices of crude oil and exportable natural gas would seriously affect the regime. In the light of the current conflict between NATO and Russia, European natural gas consumption seems, however, more dependent on Algerian natural gas than ever before. The second variable of importance is the boost of military collaboration between NATO countries and Algeria in the wake of the Arab Revolts. This not only paves the way for an increased role for the military in politics in Algeria, but also rules out any speculation about regime changing military interventions in Algeria along the lines of the NATO action in Libya in 2011 or even more soft "sanctioning" policies of the Algerian regime.

The likely endurance and militarization of the Algerian regime points, however, to two alternative scenarios of possible destabilization of Algeria and its regional environment:

First, the militarization of politics in Algeria is likely to produce a general increase in violence and repression. An increasingly militarized regime in Algeria would most likely lead to a further weakening of the current civil political institutions and a further repressive closure of the opportunities for engaging peacefully in politics in Algeria. Under such conditions, the opposition is likely to rely on violent rebel strategies as an alternative means of political claim making around, for instance, the question of regional autonomy for the Berber Azawad population in the South, and the question of the role of Islamist politics. Since the members of the interest groups of the regime generally consider these two topics as security threats rather political challenges, the development of violent claim-making is likely to be met with massive state repression, possibly opening up a nexus of repression-rebellion that Algerians last experienced on a mass scale in the 1990s.

Second, the combination of the above scenario of rebellion and repression with the current international pressure on Algeria to militarize its southern frontiers is likely to facilitate a further escalation of the current conflict between Algeria and Morocco. Emerging from the collapse of the Libyan security politics in the Sahel region after the NATO-sanctioned toppling of Gaddafi, the current political and diplomatic conflict between the two remaining regional great powers in the Maghreb and in the

Sahel, may escalate into a possible proxy warfare or direct confrontation between the two states. While the consequences for the stability of the Algerian regime in light of such a scenario are hard to predict, the negative consequences are many – ranging from regional destabilization, increased radicalization of the political base, to the collapse of an emerging economic market and the destabilization of Europe's import of natural gas.

Recommendations

The international society, regional actors, and Algeria itself have a common interest in avoiding the development of a militarized Algeria during Abdelaziz Bouteflika's fourth term (2014-2019). To avoid this, action must be taken within, at least, the below four areas.

1. Political-institutional

- International, regional and local partners should seek to strengthen the existing civil political institutions in Algeria within the framework of the Algerian constitution. This should include the independence of the judicial system and the accountability of state institutions in general. In particular, partners should find ways to bolster the role, mandate and prerogatives of the state auditors, which has been reduced over the past decade and a half.
- Partners should seek to strengthen regionalization of non-military cooperation in Maghreb and the Sahel with the aim to reduce and appease the growing tension, rivalry, and institutional exclusion between Algeria and Morocco in handling Sahel security.

2. Civil society

- International, regional and local partners should seek to strengthen the opportunities and means for Algerian civilians to engage peacefully in politics.
- They should seek ways to assist political parties in adapting to the expectations and wishes of the electorate with the aim to increase the chronically low level of political participation in Algeria.
- They should seek ways to strengthen the emergence of a political public in Algeria that remobilizes Algerians for political participation by actively discussing and criticizing the policies of the incumbent regime. In particular, actors should seek ways to bolster the development of independent private media, autonomous syndicates, NGOs, and nonviolent social movements.
- They should seek ways to build and educate a critical mass capable of formulating political alternatives and solutions for Algeria. In particular, they should seek ways to develop the educational sector in Algeria possibly with qualitative lifts of the rapidly expanding higher education sector.

3. Economy

- International, regional and local partners should seek to strengthen economic reform in Algeria in an attempt to reduce the size and impact of the informal economy.
- Partners should furthermore seek ways to strengthen and assist the diversification of the Algerian economy in order to decrease the economic dependency of the regime on a single public enterprise (Sonatrach).

4. Security

- International, regional and local partners should reconsider the current international security strategy in the Sahel which, by calling on a militarization of the Algerian frontiers, risks facilitating a broader militarization of political decision-making in Algeria.
- Partners should, in general, consider ways to balance the need for stability and security with mechanisms that decrease the role of the Algerian military in politics.