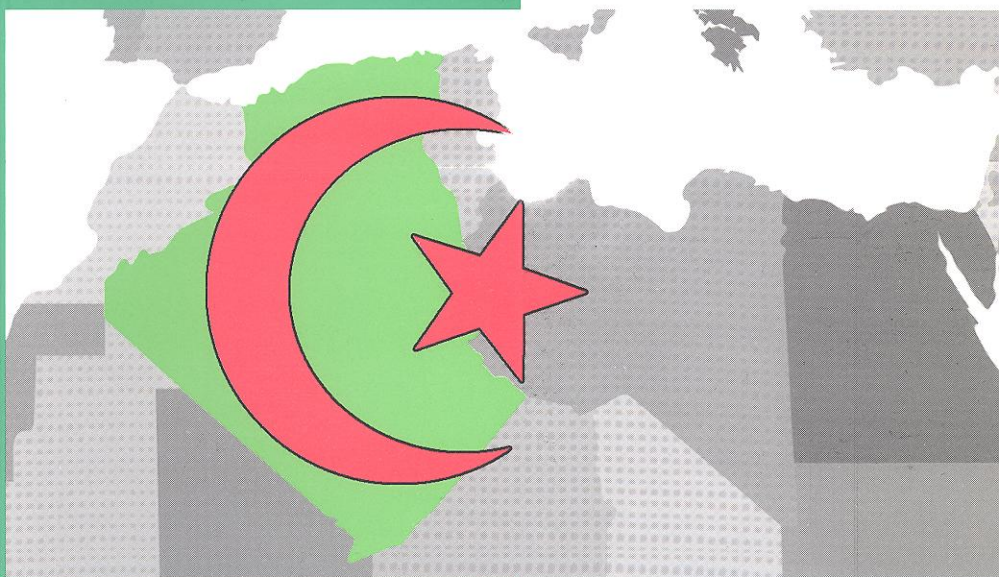


*Elite Change in an  
Authoritarian Regime:  
Co-opting an Islamic Movement in Algeria*



*Noura Hamladji*

**PASSIA**

Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs, Jerusalem

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**PASSIA**  
**Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs**

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This book represents the free expression of its author and does not necessarily represent the judgment or opinions of PASSIA. It is presented as part of the PASSIA Research Studies Program of 2003, which is kindly supported by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation (FES), Jerusalem

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January 2003

PASSIA Publication 2003  
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## List of Abbreviations

AIS	Islamic Army for Salvation
ALN	National Liberation Army
APC	Popular Assembly of Communes
APN	National Popular Assembly
APW	Popular Assembly of Wilayas
BTS	Batna-Tebessa-Souk Ahras
CNT	National Council of Transition
FFS	Socialist Forces Front
FIDA	Islamic Front of Jihad
FIS	Islamic Front for Salvation
FLN	National Liberation Front
GIA	Islamist Armed Groups
GSPC	Salafist Group for Preaching and Fight
HAMAS	Harakat al-Mujtama' lil-Silm
LIDD	Islamist League for Da'wa and Jihad
MEI	Movement for an Islamic State
MSP	Movement of Society for Peace
PT	Labor Party
RCD	Rally for Culture and Democracy
RND	National Democratic Rally

## List of Terms

<i>Caïds</i>	Tribal leaders co-opted by the French colonial authorities
<i>Colonels</i>	Fighters of the Algerian liberation army during the war of independence
<i>Corsairs</i>	Pirates in the Mediterranean sea in the pre-colonial era
<i>Emirs</i>	Fighters of the Islamist armed groups in the current civil war
<i>Harakat al-Mujtama' al-Islami</i>	Movement for an Islamic Society
<i>Harakat al-Mujtama' lil-Silm</i>	Movement of Society for Peace
<i>Al-Irshad wal-Islah</i>	Orientation and Reform
<i>Jihad</i>	Holy War
<i>Maquisards</i>	Term used for the French underground/resistance during WW II
<i>Moucharaka</i>	Participation
<i>Moudjahid</i>	Jihad fighters
<i>Wilaya (wilayat)</i>	Department (departmental)

## Abstract

By focusing on the emergence of an Islamist elite in Algeria, this paper identifies the conditions under which co-optation processes stabilize authoritarian regimes. It first provides an empirical assessment on the presence of MSP-Hamas<sup>1</sup> elite in state institutions, which reveals that their co-optation is symbolic in terms of power sharing. This in turn brings about the question of what were the expectations of the actors involved in the co-optation process. While MSP-Hamas leaders expected to strengthen their party in order to take over power, it appears that they failed in their attempts to gain more influence in the decision-making process. The analysis presented here shows that it is the very conditions under which this elite was co-opted that precluded it to undermine the authoritarian incumbents' hold on power.

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<sup>1</sup> The party's name was initially Hamas (until 1997) but then changed it to the Movement of Society for Peace (MSP), or *Harakat al-Mujtama' lil-Silm* (HAMAS) in Arabic. In this paper, the party is referred to as MSP-Hamas regardless of the period concerned.

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## Introduction

This paper provides an analysis of the emergence of a new elite in an authoritarian regime. In a seminal contribution to the study of authoritarian regimes, Juan Linz provides a path-breaking definition of such a regime (Linz 1970: 255). According to Linz, an authoritarian regime has four characteristics that differentiate it from a democratic or totalitarian regime: (1) a limited, not responsible pluralism, (2) no ideology, (3) neither intensive nor extensive mobilization, and (4) a leader or a small group, which exercises power within formally ill-defined limits.

Concerning one of these characteristics, limited pluralism, Linz states:

“In authoritarian regimes the men who come to power reflecting the views of various groups and institutions do not derive their position from the support of these groups alone, but from the trust placed in them by the leader, monarch or ‘junta,’ who certainly takes into account their prestige and influence. They have a kind of constituency, but this is not solely or even principally the source of their power.

The co-optation of leaders is a constant process by which different sectors or institutions become participants in the system.” (Linz 1970: 257)

According to Linz, the emergence of a new elite in an authoritarian regime is intrinsically linked with its limited pluralism. By including new leaders on the one hand, and repressing the illegal opposition on the other, the constant processes of co-optation and repression contribute to the durability of the authoritarian system.

Yet, the mechanisms by which co-optation of leaders stabilize the political regime, instead of destabilizing it, remain unclear. Linz does not address the many alternative possibilities of change that the process of co-optation allows for, and seems to assume *ex post* that such a process is a successful survival mechanism of authoritarian regimes.



In my view, combining co-optation with repression is not necessarily a stabilizing strategy for allowing authoritarian incumbents to keep their hold on power. In order to reach a better understanding, we need to also identify the conditions under which a process of co-optation works as a stabilizing mechanism of authoritarian regimes. For this purpose, this paper will examine in detail a specific case: the emergence of an Islamist elite in Algeria, namely the elite of the Movement for an Islamic Society party or in Arabic, *Harakat al-Mujtama' al-Islami* (MSP-Hamas<sup>2</sup>.)

Political change has affected Algeria since 1988. In October of that year, popular riots precipitated the authoritarian regime taking steps towards liberalization and, to a lesser extent, democratization. More than 60 parties were legalized.

MSP-Hamas was founded on 11 December 1990 by Mahfoud Nahnah and legally recognized on 29 April 1991. MSP-Hamas is the political wing of the non-political association *al-Irshad wal-Islah* (Orientation and Reform) founded in 1988 and legally recognized in 1989.

Mahfoud Nahnah, president of *al-Irshad wal-Islah*, decided to create MSP-Hamas as a political party after the sweeping victory of the Islamic Front for Salvation (FIS) in the local elections of 1990. His party participated in the first round of legislative elections in December 1991, which was won by the FIS. This victory was followed by the cancellation of the second round of elections and the army *putsch* in January 1992.

Afterwards, Algeria experienced a wave of escalating violence throughout the country. Various armed Islamic groups were met by repression from the Algerian armed forces and the country was driven into an increasingly savage civil war.

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<sup>2</sup> The party was named Hamas until 1997, when, following a new party law (see Enactment no. 97-09 of 6 March 1997 "portant loi organique relative aux partis politiques," in: *JORA* no. 12 of 6 March 1997, p. 24-28), Hamas changed its name to the Movement of Society for Peace - MSP (*Harakat al-Mujtama' lil-Silm*, HAMAS). In this paper, this party is called MSP-Hamas regardless of the period concerned.

While violence has notably diminished since the truce declared by the Islamic Army for Salvation (AIS) on 21 September 1997<sup>3</sup> and the implementation of the "civilian concord"<sup>4</sup>, the number of deaths since 1992 is officially estimated to have exceeded 100,000.

It is in this context of civil war that MSP-Hamas elite emerged in Algerian state institutions.

This paper is organized as follows: It first provides an empirical assessment, grounded upon selected data related to the presence of MSP-Hamas elite in state institutions. It then shows that the co-optation of this elite is symbolic in terms of power sharing, which in turn raises the question of what were the expectations of actors involved in this symbolic co-optation.

It is suggested that by co-opting MSP-Hamas leaders, military incumbents expected to appease part of the FIS electorate. Regarding MSP-Hamas leaders, the evidence gathered clearly indicates that they expected to strengthen their party in order to take over power, but failed in their attempts to gain more influence in the decision-making process. Their participation strategy allowed them to go only half way towards achieving power.

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<sup>3</sup> In an official statement dated 21 September 1997 and published in the newspapers on 24 September 1997, Madani Merzag, emir of the AIS, called for a truce.

<sup>4</sup> In 1999, newly elected president Bouteflika launched the project of a "civilian concord law" in order to pacify the country. In July 1999, this law was successively ratified by the National Popular Assembly, the Council of the Nation, and, in the referendum of 16 September 1999, by the Algerian electors. The law guaranteed an amnesty for all "terrorists" who wished to surrender before the ultimatum of 13 January 2000, including those who did not commit "bloody" crimes, or those who did under extenuating circumstances.

On 11 January 2000, Bouteflika issued a decree of free pardon for the AIS members (some 1000-2000 combatants), and the day after, the AIS declared its dissolution. Except for the AIS, all other Islamist armed groups rejected the "civilian concord" (GIA: Islamist armed groups, LIDD: Islamist League for Da'wa and Jihad, and GSPC: Salafist group for preaching and fight). This fact explains why, despite the "civilian law," violence persisted in Algeria, although to a lesser degree (between the ultimatum date of 13 January 2000 and June 2000, Algerian newspapers estimated there were around 1000 deaths).

In order to understand the deadlock that MSP-Hamas has reached, it is argued that it is the very conditions under which this elite was co-opted that precluded it to undermine the authoritarian incumbents' hold on power.

## Assessing the Emergence of MSP-Hamas Elite

The emergence of MSP-Hamas elite in state institutions has been a gradual process that began in the aftermath of the military coup of January 1992. This section will empirically assess the presence of an MSP-Hamas elite in the following Algerian institutions: the government, the parliament (assembly and upper chamber), and the local assemblies (Popular Assembly of Communes, APC, and of *wilayas*, APW).

### 1.1 Government

The emergence of MSP-Hamas elite can be traced back to the second Ghozali cabinet of 1992 when a member of the association *Al-Irshad wal-Islah* was nominated Minister of Religious Affairs (see Table 1). Although he was not a member of the MSP-Hamas party, the close link of the association *Al-Irshad wal-Islah* to MSP-Hamas allows such a conclusion to be drawn.

Table 1 shows that MSP-Hamas members were first nominated in the Ouyahia cabinet after the presidential elections of 1995 and they held two portfolios. The fact that the leader of MSP-Hamas, Mahfoud Nahnah, took second place in those elections with 25.58% of the vote seems to justify the entry of the party into the governmental coalition.

The presence of MSP-Hamas members in the government peaked in 1997 when the party was given seven portfolios following the legislative elections that year. The vote obtained by this party in the elections (1,533,185 votes and 69 seats) strengthened its position both in the second Ouyahia cabinet and in the Hamdani cabinet. However, the rejection by the Constitutional Council of Mahfoud Nahnah's candidacy for the anticipated presidential elections<sup>5</sup> marked a backward step for the party.

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<sup>5</sup> According to the law, candidates for the presidential elections who were born before 1 July 1945 are required to prove their participation in the War of Liberation (1954-1962). A National Commission of Recognition is in charge of assessing the proofs presented by each candidate and giving the status of *moudjahid*. This status was refused to Mahfoud Nahnah and his candidacy was thus rejected by the Constitutional Council.

Prevented from standing in the presidential elections, Mahfoud Nahnah decided to support the candidacy of Abdel Aziz Bouteflika, who eventually won. Bouteflika rewarded MSP-Hamas by allocating the party three portfolios.

**Table 1:**  
**MSP-Hamas Ministers in the Successive Cabinets Since 1992**

Second Ghozali Cabinet (22 February 1992 to 29 June 1992) and Abdessalem Cabinet (19 July 1992 to 21 August 1993):

A member of the association *Irshad wal-Islah* is nominated minister:  
- Sassi Lamour, Minister of Religious Affairs.

Malek Cabinet (4 September 1993 to 11 April 1994):  
Hamas has no portfolios

Sifi Cabinet (11 April 1994 to 31 December 1995)  
A member of the association *Irshad wal-Islah* is nominated minister:  
- Sassi Lamour, Minister of Religious Affairs.

First Ouyahia Cabinet (5 January 1996 to 10 June 1997):  
Hamas has two portfolios out of 31:  
- Abdelkader Hamitou, Minister of PME-PMI (small and medium firms and industries)  
- Bouguerra Soltani, Secretary of State in charge of Fishery.

Second Ouyahia Cabinet (24 June 1997 to 15 December 1998) and Hamdani Cabinet (15 December 1998 to 23 December 1999):  
Hamas keeps the same seven portfolios out of 39:  
- Abdelmadjid Menasra, Minister of Industry and Restructuration  
- Bouguerra Soltani, Minister of PME-PMI (small and medium firms and industries)  
- Abdelkader Bengrina, Minister of Tourism and Craftsmen  
- Sid Ahmed Boulil, Minister of Transports  
- Mohamed Noura, Secretary of State in charge of Craftsmen  
- Abdelkader Hamitou, Secretary of State in charge of Fishery (removed from office on 19 April 1999)  
- Bachir Amrat, Secretary of State in charge of Environment.

Benbitour Cabinet (23 December 1999 to 26 August 2000):  
Hamas has three portfolios out of 33:  
- Abdelmadjid Menasra, Minister of Industry and Restructuration  
- Bouguerra Soltani, Minister of Labor and Social Protection  
- Ghoul Omar, Minister of Fishery

Benflis Cabinet (26 August 2000 up to now):  
Hamas has three portfolios out of 35:  
- Abdelmadjid Menasra, Minister of Industry and Restructuration  
- Bouguerra Soltani, Minister of Labor and Social Protection (removed from office on 2001)  
- Amar Ghoul, Minister of Fishery

Table 1 also shows that the portfolios allocated by the president to MSP-Hamas were of secondary importance. The portfolios of the In-

terior, Defense, Foreign Affairs, Justice, Finance, and Commerce have always been reserved for either the military (the portfolio of Defense is usually held for the military) or to technocrats and members of the National Democratic Rally (RND) and the National Liberation Front (FLN), who are loyal to the military incumbents.

It follows that the co-optation of MSP-Hamas elite in the executive did not drastically change the main orientation of the Algerian executive. Economic, social and political goals were defined and implemented by authoritarian incumbents independent of Hamas-MSP elite's political opinions and positions.

## 1.2 Assemblies

The entrance of MSP-Hamas members to the Algerian parliament dates back to 1994 (see Table 2). In an attempt to legalize state institutions after the military coup of 1992, military incumbents organized a National Conference on 25 and 26 January 1994, inviting all political parties. However, the fact that the major political parties boycotted the conference deprived it of legitimacy.

Nevertheless, the non-representative members of the National Conference adopted a "platform of national consensus," in which the power of the three institutions of transition, i.e., the Presidency of the State, the Government and the National Council of Transition (CNT), were specified. The CNT was defined as a legislative chamber controlled by the executive branch of power and its members were to be nominated by the President of the State. The President of State, General Liamine Zeroual, was himself nominated by the High Security Council, a non-representative state institution, on 30 January 1994.

Despite both the non-legitimate character of the CNT and its control by the executive, MSP-Hamas agreed to participate in this institution and five of its members were nominated as members of the CNT. This participation marks both the first entry of MSP-Hamas elite in a state institution and the first 'act of participation' (*moucharaka*) by this party.

From this point on, regardless of the power acquired, MSP-Hamas has followed a *moucharaka* strategy, the main goal of which is to place its elite in as many state institutions as possible.

Following this strategy, MSP-Hamas participated in the legislative elections of 5 June 1997, the local and *wilayat* (departmental) elec-

tions of 23 October 1997, and the indirect elections for the upper chamber of 25 December 1997. Despite the vehement accusations made by opposition parties, including MSP-Hamas, about the unfair character of each of these elections, all opposition parties accepted their seats in parliament and in the Popular Assembly of Communes (APC) and Wilayas (APW).

Table 2 shows that MSP-Hamas obtained a relatively good result in the legislative elections of 1997, gaining 69 seats out of 380 in the National Popular Assembly (APN). However, its score in the local and *wilayat* elections of the same year was rather modest: 924 seats out of 13,123 for the APC elections, and 265 seats out of 1880 for the APW elections. The score for the indirect elections of December 1997 for the upper chamber was even more modest with only two senators elected out of 96 and no senator nominated out of 48. This tendency was confirmed in 2001 when half the upper chamber was renewed with MSP-Hamas having only three senators elected and no senator nominated.

These results can be explained by inequalities in power that the different state institutions wield. The legislative power of the popular assembly APN, in which the MSP-Hamas elite is numerous, is limited by the veto power of the upper chamber (the Nation Council). In the latter, the proportion of MSP-Hamas elite members is much lower, giving MSP-Hamas very limited legislative power. As for the APC and APW, while these have the advantage of relative autonomy at the local level, control over these bodies was mostly been bestowed via unfair elections to the parties loyal to the military incumbents, namely, RND and FLN. Consequently, it can be observed that the more an institution is powerless, the greater representation the MSP-Hamas has within it.

The unfair character of all these elections, a fact that allows the military incumbents to control the distribution of the seats, confirms this hypothesis. In other words, these elections are nothing more than a mechanism of co-opting elites.

In conclusion, although we can observe the emergence of MSP-Hamas elite in state institutions, this only corresponds to a marginal access to power for this elite. The previous discussion clearly suggests that in both the case of the successive governments and for the assemblies, access to state institutions is controlled by the military incumbents. Moreover, this co-optation is characterized by a high number of MSP-Hamas elite members in powerless institutions.

**Table 2:**  
**Distribution of Seats in Algerian Assemblies since 1991**

Political Parties/ Independents	Assembly of 1991 first round (out of 323 seats)	National Transition Council (CNT), 1994 (out of 200 seats)	Assembly of 1997 (out of 380 seats)	Senators elected at Nation Council of 1997 (out of 144; 96 elected)	Senators elected Nation council of 2001 (reelection of 48 senators out of 96)	APC of 1997 (out of 11,541 APC and a total of 13,123 seats)	APW of 1997 (out of 48 APW and a total of 1,880 seats)
FIS	182	-	-	-	-	-	-
RND	-	-	156 (20 dissidents)	80	76	7,007	959
FLN	15	-	62	10	13	3,020	391
MSP-Hamas	0	5	69	2	3	924	265
ENHanda	0	-	34 (8 dissidents)	0	0	307	131
FFS	25	-	20 (8 dissidents)	4	4	654	56
RCD	0	-	19 (5 dissidents)	0	0	450	50
Independents	-	-	11	0	0	508	17
Others	-	185	5	0	0	253	11

Sources: Table created on the basis of the Proclamation of 30 December 1991, "portant résultats officiels des élections législatives du 26 Décembre 1991 (1<sup>er</sup> tour)", JORA, No. 1, 4 January 1992, pp. 2-3; the list of CNT nominated members published in *Le Matin*, 18 May 1994; Proclamation No. 97-01 P-CC of 9 June 1997, "relative aux résultats de l'élection des membres de l'Assemblée populaire nationale", JORA, No. 40, 11 June 1997, pp. 3-21; Nation Council election results published in *Algérie-Informations Revue de Presse*, December 1997; *Le Quotidien d'Oran*, 2 January 2001; and 1997 local election results published in *Algérie-Informations - Revue de Presse*, October 1997.

**Notes:**

1. 1991 Assembly: the second round of the legislative elections was cancelled on January 1992. Consequently, this assembly never convened. Despite this fact, these numbers offer a good measure of comparison because it was the first time MSP-Hamas participated in elections.
2. 1994 National Transition Council: this Council is a legislative assembly that was established as part of the so-called "institution of transition" by presidential decree in June 1994, after the 1992 military coup, "Décret présidentiel portant investiture des membres du Conseil national de transition", JORA, No. 40, 22 June 1994, p. 4. It is composed of 200 members nominated by the state, political parties, and associations.
3. The Nation Council: the 1996 Constitution established for the first time in Algerian constitutional history an upper chamber, the Nation Council. Two thirds of the 144 senators of this chamber (96) are elected by indirect suffrage, and one third (48) are nominated by the President. The Enactment Nos. 7 to 97 of 6 March 1997, "portant loi organique relative au régime électoral", JORA, No. 12, 6 March 1997, pp. 3-22; Corrigendum JORA, No. 26, 8 April 1997, p. 6, states in articles 122 to 152 that senators are elected for six years according to the "first past the post" system at the *wilaya* (departmental) level. The mandate of half the Council members is renewed every three years. The Electoral College is composed of 15,003 APC and APW members.



Is it possible to conclude that the co-optation of an MSP-Hamas elite in state institutions is marginal in terms of sharing power? If it is not access to power that drove actors to accept this mechanism of co-optation, what were each party's expectations both in co-opting and accepting co-optation? These questions will be addressed in the next section.

## The Expectations Evolution of Actors Involved in the Co-optation Process

This section illustrates another aspect of the process of co-optation, i.e., the expectations of the actors involved in it. It can be assumed that actors' expectations are not fixed, but change over time according to the political context. Therefore, it is the evolution of the expectations of both the co-opters and the co-opted that are analyzed in this section.

### 2.1 The Co-opters' Expectations: the Benefits of Co-opting a "Moderate" Islamist Party

According to Luis Martinez, Algeria has been experiencing a civil war since 1992 (Martinez 1998a). Martinez argues that what forms the behavior of the actors is a common imaginative frame of reference in which war is a mode of social promotion. According to his view, "war is a mode of accumulation of wealth and prestige and is, for this reason, continually re-actualized by the local actors" (Martinez 1998: 26).

Moreover, he traces this imaginative frame of war (*imaginaire de guerre*) back to the Ottoman period. From the Algiers Regency in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century up to the current civil war, a series of "political bandits" from modest social origins have practiced war as a mode of climbing the social ladder. At the same time, they marked the imaginative frame of local actors by becoming historical models of success: the *Corsairs*, who practiced piracy in the Mediterranean sea in the pre-colonial era; the *Caïds*, tribal leaders co-opted by the French colonial authorities; the *Colonels*, fighters of the Algerian liberation army during the war of independence; and finally the *Emirs*, fighters of the Islamist armed groups in the current civil war (Martinez 1998a: 26-32).

In this perspective, war and violence in Algeria are an economic and political choice made by some actors because they expect an accumulation of resources. This line of thought leads Martinez to argue that none of the protagonists of the current civil war, i.e., the Algerian military and the Islamist armed groups, is likely to win.

A more probable outcome would rather be the fusion of the protagonists by “the progressive assimilation of Islamist *maquisards* in the wheels of state, in line with the reinvention of the *beylicat* model” (Martinez 1998a: 377). In short, since the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, war has been the mechanism not only of promotion to the status of leader, but also of access to state institutions via a co-optation process.

There are two main criticisms that could be leveled against Martinez’s thesis. First, although Martinez is careful to deny that Algerian society is a society of warriors (Martinez 1998a: 34), he nevertheless affirms the exact opposite when stating that war is *the* mode of social promotion in the imaginative frame of Algerians. It is thus difficult to ignore the cultural-essentialist side of such an argument, which led Hugh Roberts to conclude that

“the Martinez thesis boils down to a reformulation, within the trappings of academic sophistication, of that very old, and unmistakably cultural-essentialist, idea, to which the *pieds noirs* were so viscerally attached, that *les Arabes* are cut-throats” (Roberts 1999: 389).

Second, resorting to the notion of an operative “imaginative frame of war,” through which actors interpret war as an advantageous political and economic choice, is a rather simplistic way of understanding the modes of access to state power in Algeria since the 16<sup>th</sup> Century. It ignores the complexities of the Algerian Ottoman period, the colonization period, the war of independence and the current civil war.

Although to comment in detail on the history of each of these periods would require a discussion too long to be included in this paper, it is at least important to recall that each was characterized by diverse and complex mechanisms of co-optation and social promotion that cannot merely be reduced to the practice of violence and war.

In this respect, the current civil war is a good example. Not only has its evolution contradicted Martinez’s hypothesis, it has also been characterized by another mode of elite co-optation that Martinez neglects. It appears that since the unilateral and unconditional truce declared by the AIS on 21 September 1997 and the implementation in January 2000 of the “civilian concord,” launched by the newly elected president Abdel Aziz Bouteflika, both the Islamist fighters of the AIS

and the FIS political leaders in exile have been kept outside the wheels of the Algerian state.

Although Luis Martinez has interpreted each of these events in his most recent writings as eventual steps toward the absorption of Islamist *maquisards* in state institutions (Martinez 1997, 1998b, and 2000), it clearly appears that such a process is yet to occur. For the moment, the war has not produced a fusion of its protagonists. On the contrary, the Algerian military seems to have been able to reduce violence to a non-threatening degree without any sort of political concession to or co-optation of Islamist fighters.

Yet, the military elite has resorted to the co-optation of another Islamist elite, which has rejected violence, namely the MSP-Hamas elite. What could explain this process? What are the military incumbents expecting from the co-optation of the MSP-Hamas leaders?

No available data exist on the diverse expectations of military incumbents regarding this issue. Interesting and relevant information was gathered during interviews with a number of MSP-Hamas leaders, which this author carried out during her own field research and which will be discussed in the next section. However, interviewing military incumbents can be a difficult and dangerous task. The only way to overcome this restriction is to resort to indirect data, an approach that we adopt below.

As was shown in the previous section, the co-optation of MSP-Hamas elite in state institutions by military incumbents has been irregular. Indeed, the co-optation process has varied mainly along two dimensions.

First, it has varied over time. The process began in 1994 with the CNT, reached a peak in 1997 with the election of 69 MSP-Hamas deputies to the APN and the allocation of seven government portfolios to MSP-Hamas members, and then diminished with the attribution of just three portfolios in the Algerian cabinet since 1999.

Second, it has varied according to the nature of the state institutions to which MSP-Hamas members have been appointed. Even during the peak period of co-optation, the number of MSP-Hamas members was high in powerless institutions such as the assembly and very low in

institutions involved in decision making, such as the government and the Nation Council.

It can thus be deduced that the military incumbents were most interested in co-opting MSP-Hamas elite between 1997 and 1999 and only in powerless state positions.

Why was there such an interest in co-opting MSP-Hamas leaders in powerless state institutions and particularly during the period between 1997 and 1999?

An obvious answer to the first part of the question would be that the military incumbents had no intention of sharing power with an Islamist elite.

As to the second part of the question, i.e., the timing, the relationship between the Algerian military and the other Islamist groups provides a clue. Immediately after 1992, it was difficult to identify any eventual winner of the war between the army and Islamist armed groups, such as AIS and GIA. Yet, by 1995 it was clear that Islamist groups would be unable to take control of the state.

This realization led, in September 1997, to a unilateral and unconditional truce by the AIS, followed, in 1999, by the launch of the "civilian concord" by newly elected president Abdel Aziz Bouteflika, marking a definitive retreat from violence.

Although several Islamist groups, such as the GIA, the Movement for an Islamic State (MEI) and the Islamic Front of Jihad (FIDA), rejected the civilian concord and continued the *jihad*, the army was finally able to reduce the level of violence to a "residual level."<sup>6</sup> As the political leaders of the FIS are regarded, the army incumbents first attempted to negotiate with them between 1993 and 1995, but in 1996 finally excluded them from the legal political game.

These events have led some observers to argue that the army incumbents are divided between advocates of an eradication of Islamist groups (eradicators) and advocates of negotiation (negotiators) with

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<sup>6</sup> Although Algeria was experiencing an extreme and savage civil war culminating in the massacres of hundreds of civilians in August and September 1997, army propaganda affirmed that since 1995 "terrorism had been reduced to a residual level." In reality, the level of violence considerably diminished only from 1998.

Islamist leaders. Although never tested by an empirical study on the Algerian army, this hypothesis seems plausible. Yet, what is of interest for our puzzle is to relate these events with the parallel process of co-optation of the MSP-Hamas.

In this connection, it appears that the peak of co-optation of MSP-Hamas leaders between 1997 and 1999 corresponds to the period when the negotiation attempts with FIS leaders had been abandoned, and when the military showed their supremacy over the armed Islamist groups while at the same time failing to reduce the level of violence in the field. The military incumbents therefore co-opted a collaborationist Islamist group, MSP-Hamas, as a way of appeasing part of the FIS's social base and dissuading it from joining the Islamist guerrilla movement.

This strategy appeared to pay off as long as armed Islamist groups maintained a high level of violence in the field. However, from 1999 on, once the military's grasp on the state appeared consolidated and the violence was considerably reduced, co-optation of MSP-Hamas leaders was no longer advantageous for the military incumbents.

It could be that these variations are due to the pre-eminence at the head of the military hierarchy of negotiators or eradicators at different points in time. However, what is of interest for our analysis is that military incumbents, whether negotiators or eradicators, by co-opting MSP-Hamas leaders, expected to appease part of the FIS electorate in order both to consolidate its power and to reduce violence to a "residual level." Once this objective was fulfilled, this process of co-optation appeared less attractive and thus diminished without, however, being totally abandoned.

## **2.2 The Co-opteds' Expectations: Maximizing the *Moucharaka***

The MSP-Hamas elite has always rejected a confrontation with the army. It was a direct competitor of the FIS and defended a moderate interpretation of Islam that accepts democracy and female labor (Al-Ahnaf et al.; 1991: 37-42). Its strategy of *moucharaka* (participation) since the military coup in January 1992 has not changed. It consists of rejecting the recourse to violence in order to gain power, instead of advocating collaboration with the military incumbents. One representative of Hamas explains this strategy as follows:

“ Hamas has always advocated the alternative of participation, this is a moderate alternative. In 1989, people were thinking that the Islamic movement was a whole. While the FIS was the first Islamist party in Algeria, we understood right from the beginning that it couldn’t last as a party. We were right because it has given itself over to terrorism. Our party is not terrorist and we have faced the savage violence of terrorism since 1992. We have always rejected violence and for this reason some of our militants and leaders have been killed by the terrorists.<sup>7</sup> We have produced the proof of our political courage and have shown that we are an organization with solid political convictions different from those defended by the FIS. We remain the oldest Islamist organization in Algeria.”<sup>8</sup>

According to this view, the strategy of the FIS is limited to “terrorism” and the MSP-Hamas strategy is presented as the alternative. This alternative is based on a rejection of violence and willingness to participate in state institutions, as explained by another MSP-Hamas leader:

“We are against the strategy of the empty chair. The state is the state for all Algerians, that is why we defend the principle of participation in state institutions. The Arabic term *moucharaka* means participation but also implies collaboration and cooperation. We participate in the government while keeping our oppositional stand. We participate in the

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<sup>7</sup> The president of the association *Irshad wal-Islah* was kidnapped on 25 November 1993 and on 30 January 1994 his body was found buried in El-Affroun. A militant of the MSP-Hamas, Omar Khennouche, was killed on 7 March 1994. The chief of the Skikda executive bureau of the MSP-Hamas, Ali Laïb, was killed on 17 September 1994. The vice president of the association *Irshad wal-Islah* and director of the newspaper *El-Irshad*, Lahcene Bensaadallah, was killed on 12 October 1994. A leader of the MSP-Hamas, Mouloud Bezzaz, was killed on 25 January 1996. A militant of the MSP-Hamas, candidate in the local elections of October 1997 was killed in the city of Constantine on 8 October 1997. On 19 October 1997, during a shooting incident at the mosque of Magrane in the wilaya of El-Oued, four MSP-Hamas militants were killed, among them a candidate in the local elections of October 1997. This information was gathered in *Algérie-information-Revue de Presse* from 1992 to 1998.

<sup>8</sup> Interview in Algiers with MSP-Hamas leader No. 1 on 16 July 2001. The choice of numbers was made to keep the name of interviewees anonymous. The different interviewees are numbered 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5.

government of the Algerian state but not in the military regime. We oppose the military regime and say that it is time for the alternation of power.”<sup>9</sup>

In his view, collaboration with the regime does not preclude opposition to it. MSP-Hamas defines itself as an opposition party that seeks access to power. This begs the question of what the party’s elite expects from its participation in state institutions and how such participation would enable it to gain power.

First and foremost, the participation of MSP-Hamas leaders in diverse political dialogues and institutions organized by the military incumbents since their coup in 1992 has provided a great advertising campaign for their party. One of its leaders confirms this idea:

“Hamis advocates the principle of participation as a way out of the Algerian crisis because no single force can help Algeria to overcome the crisis. It is this principle of participation that led us to participate in the CNT in 1994 and in the National Conferences that prepared the electoral process initiated in 1995 with the presidential elections. This process was an alternative project to the National Contract signed at Sant’Egidio. Above all, the free elections of June 1995 were a way for the party to get known all around the country.”<sup>10</sup>

To understand this fact, it is important to recall that MSP-Hamas’ score at the first plural legislative elections held in December 1991 was very low (see Table 3) compared to its Islamist competitor, the FIS. Participating in the first elections since the military coup (the 1995 presidential elections) and as the only Islamist participant (the FIS being outlawed), gave MSP-Hamas leaders in general and Mahfoud Nahnah in particular direct access to media outlets, such as TV and radio, that were controlled by the military authorities. Therefore, while the military incumbents were expecting to use the participation of MSP-Hamas in order to appease part of the FIS electorate, MSP-Hamas leaders were expecting to gain a public audience and political importance.

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<sup>9</sup> Interview in Algiers with MSP-Hamas leader No. 4 on 9 July 2001.

<sup>10</sup> Interview in Algiers with MSP-Hamas leader No. 2 on 9 July 2001.



Furthermore, by taking over state functions, even with marginal power, it appears that MSP-Hamas leaders were hoping to start learning how to govern the state. This conception was defended by several leaders of this party in the following terms:

“The strategy of staying out of the governance of the country is not fruitful. By participating in the government and diverse state institutions, we are learning how to govern a country. Participation allows us to learn governance, it allows us to benefit from this *apprentissage* of governance that is essential to a political elite.”<sup>11</sup>

The notion of educating an elite is also present at lower levels of the party. An MSP-Hamas national leader explains:

“Our militants are organized in groups that we call *ousra* (family). This term has been chosen as it refers to both intimacy and brotherhood. We have organized diverse programs of education for our militants. This teaching is essential; it gives common political ideas to our militants around the territory. In this way, a militant coming either from the city of Algiers or Oran will defend the same ideas.”<sup>12</sup>

One militant of the city of Oran describes her experience in the MSP-Hamas in the following terms:

“It is at the university that I came to know the Hamas. This was between 1991 and 1994. During this period, I was questioning myself about the nature of this party: are they democrats? How do they conceive the role of women in society? I couldn’t answer these questions right away. It took me some time before I got integrated into the party in 1994.

Now, I am learning a lot with my work in the Hamas. Of course, it is impossible to be a hundred percent satisfied. Militants are different and I partly disagree with many of them. However, I have to admit that my militancy in the Hamas helps me shape my political and human experience.

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<sup>11</sup> Interview in Algiers with MSP-Hamas leader No. 1 on 16 July 2001.

<sup>12</sup> Interview in Algiers with MSP-Hamas leader No. 3 on 10 July 2001.

What I particularly appreciate about this party is its education program. We have a meeting each week in which we debate on a book dealing with political or social issues. Each militant has the obligation to read a book each week even if he is not a university student. Everybody has to participate in the discussion about a book every week.”<sup>13</sup>

Another advantage of participation that MSP-Hamas leaders emphasize is the socialization of political leaders. One MSP-Hamas leader described this in the following terms:

“Before the opening of the political system in 1989, the diverse political clans didn’t know one another and were evolving in isolation. After 1989, each political tendency developed a strongly aggressive pattern of behavior towards the others. All our party initiatives trying to build a dialogue with the other parties were in vain and this was largely because of passionate parties such as the FIS.

After 1995, the National Popular Assembly gave the leaders of political parties a real opportunity to be in direct contact with each other. In the beginning, contacts in the APN were quite difficult. We had to overcome passionate behavior of some deputies, especially from deputies of the RND (National Democratic Rally), En-Nahda, and the RCD (Rally for Culture and Democracy). Despite these difficulties, mutual comprehension has started to emerge.

Let me tell you an anecdote to illustrate this idea: in the APN, a friendship was born between the former chief of our parliamentary group, Amar Ghouli, and an RCD deputy who became Minister of Health, Amara Benyounes. Once Amara Benyounes said, joking with other deputies, that he was shaking out of fear for his friend Amar Ghouli each time that a deputy of his own party, Khalida Messaoudi, known for her scathing diatribe, began to speak in the Assembly ...

Another proof of a real improvement in the cooperation between parties is demonstrated by the participation of two drastically opposed parties, i.e. the Hamas and the RCD, in

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<sup>13</sup> Interview in Algiers with militant MSP-Hamas leader No. 5 on 9 July 2001.

the same governmental coalition. This collaboration is a way of stabilizing our political system.”<sup>14</sup>

Similarly, a second leader had the following to say:

“In Algeria, there is the problem of political culture. We are still in the process of learning democracy. I remember the first session at the APN on 15 June 1997. Deputies didn’t know each other, and they were intimidated by one another. Everybody was talking in a diplomatic way using *arabia l’fousha* (modern Arabic) instead of using *l’derdja* (Algerian Arabic). As time passed, we learned to know each other. We discovered that some of our ideas converged with those of parties that we had assumed to be completely opposite to Hamas.

This does not exclude some major differences and quite lively debates at the assembly. For instance, after the widespread electoral fraud during the local elections of October 1997, the debate was so intense that we almost insulted RND deputies. Another recent example is the virulent debate about the new penal code including restricting the liberty of the media. This developed into a major fight against deputies from the RND and the FLN in the Assembly. Despite these sharp differences, we respect all the other deputies and some have even become friends.”<sup>15</sup>

According to these descriptions, this aspect of socialization was one that MSP-Hamas elite was not expecting right at the beginning. Rather, it emerged gradually as they began to exercise their functions in diverse state institutions.

Finally, MSP-Hamas leaders believe they have, to some degree, gained the trust of the military incumbents. According to one leader, the aggressive behavior of the authorities towards the party has diminished:

“Before our emergence in state institutions, people in the circles of *Power* didn’t know MSP-Hamas elite. Our par-

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<sup>14</sup> Interview in Algiers with MSP-Hamas leader No. 1 on 16 July 2001.

<sup>15</sup> Interview in Algiers with MSP-Hamas leader No. 3 on 10 July 2001.

ticipation has been fruitful because they have learned to know us and the aggressive behavior of the *Power* towards our militants has drastically diminished.

Moreover, one can hardly do anything by remaining outside state institutions. Take the example of the FFS party (Socialist Forces Front). It is the oldest opposition party in Algeria. Its leaders have always refused any kind of compromise with the *Power* or participation in state institutions. We can see today that they haven't been able to have an impact on the political situation. Worse, the aggressive behavior of the *Power* against the FFS has been as important as that against the FIS since 1992<sup>16</sup>

By gaining the trust of military incumbents, MSP-Hamas leaders gained a certain degree of freedom. Although this liberty is still controlled and delimited by the military incumbents, MSP-Hamas leaders intend to use this margin of maneuver to reinforce the presence of their party both in society and in state institutions.

To conclude, MSP-Hamas leaders have collaborated with the military incumbents since the military coup of 1992 and have accepted their own co-optation into various state institutions. Aware of the limits of their co-optation in terms of power sharing, they were still expecting from this *moucharaka* strategy both the political emergence of their party and an education in the art of state governance for the elite of the party. Moreover, the advantages for them of this participation strategy were maximized through the socialization of the political class at large and by taking advantage of the trust bestowed on them by the military incumbents.

All these aspects are depicted as positive aspects for the reinforcement of the party as if the eventuality of access to power was not only probable but also imminent. Yet, if the participation strategy is explained as a way to reinforce the party in different ways, MSP-Hamas leaders remain elusive when asked about the next logical step of their reasoning, which can only be some kind of access to power. It is as if their participation strategy had allowed them to go only half the way towards power.

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<sup>16</sup> Interview in Algiers with MSP-Hamas leader No. 1 on 16 July 2001.

Why could the MSP-Hamas elite not take advantage of its legalized and protected status to reinforce their party to the extent of challenging the authoritarian incumbents? Is it due to the failure of this elite in implementing its strategy? Or is the answer rather to be found in the very mechanisms of co-optation?

The challenge is to understand why, despite their expectations, MSP-Hamas leaders seem to have come to a deadlock, and it is the task of the next section to address this question.

## The Mechanisms of Co-optation of MSP-Hamas Elite

In order to understand the deadlock reached by MSP-Hamas, it is necessary to go beyond the expectation of the actors and analyze the mechanism of the co-optation process.

It is safe to assume that the collapse of authoritarian regimes occurs either under pressure from below, or after a sharp division among authoritarian incumbents (pressure from the top), or even by a complex combination of both as described by the transitology literature.<sup>17</sup> It follows that, in order to challenge the authoritarian incumbents, any opposition has two options at hand: mass mobilization or the support of a faction of authoritarian incumbents.

Explaining the deadlock reached by MSP-Hamas is thus tantamount to explaining why this opposition was not able to find support neither from below nor from the top. In other words, it is the conditions of a successful co-optation that does not undermine the authoritarian regime survival that I seek to identify in this section.

### 3.1 The Impossible Mass Mobilization and the Over-valuation of a Minority Group

According to Linz, limited and not responsible pluralism maintained by a constant process of co-optation of leaders is one of the characteristics of authoritarian regimes (Linz 1970: 257). The co-opted leaders form a *semi-opposition* that he defines as “those groups that are not dominant or represented in the governing group but are willing to participate in power without fundamentally challenging the regime” (Linz 1973: 191). His description of semi opposition groups in Spain fits our case of MSP-Hamas elite in Algeria remarkably well:

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<sup>17</sup> According to this literature, a transition from authoritarian rule occurs when the opposition finds the right proportion of support both from the “soft-liners” in the incumbents elite, and from mass mobilization through the “resurgence of civil society” (O’Donnell and Schmitter 1986).

“Many semi-opponents claim to question the basic assumptions of the regime, to search for a way out of it, and/or to advocate basic social and economic changes, but in fact they do little or nothing of this kind. The fact that co-optation, rewards, and minor sanctions by those in power prevent any activity to achieve their professed goals leads me to speak sometimes of *pseudo-opposition*” (Linz 1973: 191)”

For Linz, the status of the semi-opposition is ambiguous. This ambiguous status of being partly “in” and partly “out” of the system makes it difficult for such a group to be credible as an effective opposition proposing an alternative to the authoritarian regime. While participating in power in the hope of reinforcing itself, its very cooperation by the regime discredits its oppositional stand. In other words, after having accepted to act in collusion with the incumbents and by implicitly sustaining the authoritarian regime, the pseudo-opposition is unable to present itself as a credible alternative to the regime.

Thus, these groups become, what Linz considers, one of the pillars of the authoritarian regime, allowing it to function as a kind of permanent coalition between different tolerated groups. Instead of opposing the regime, part of the weak opposition agrees to cooperate with it and becomes a semi-opposition which paradoxically plays the double role of supporting the regime (Zartman 1990: 220-246), by increasing its responsiveness, and sharing with it the responsibilities of unpopular policies. In other words, by making the authoritarian regime more flexible, the semi-opposition allows the authoritarian regime to survive, albeit in another form.

Linz’s conceptualization of the ambiguity of the semi-opposition in an authoritarian regime fits well with the case of the emergence of MSP-Hamas elite in Algeria. Yet, his explanation of the emergence and the role of a semi-opposition in an authoritarian regime is somehow tautological. According to his view, an opposition group discredits itself by participating in power and thereby becoming no more than a semi-opposition. It can thus no longer present itself as an alternative to the regime and is no longer able to challenge the authoritarian power. According to such a view, the very co-optation of the opposition will explain its inability to challenge the authoritarian regime.

If this assumption is correct, there remains the question of why an opposition group agrees to be co-opted. There are two possible answers

to this question. Either the opposition group is of an opportunist character that is more interested in the limited and short-term advantages of state functions than opposing the regime, or its weakness leads the group to choose collaboration instead of costly illegal opposition.

Although Linz does not give a clear answer to this question in his writings, the fact that he affirms that a semi-opposition is discredited by its participation in official power structures automatically implies that it had some form of credit as an opposition to the regime before that.

Therefore, Linz's reasoning leads to the following tautology. A "credible" opposition group opts for the strategy of participation in power via co-optation because it is too weak to oppose the regime directly, but once it participates it becomes discredited as an opposition, which in turn further weakens its capacity to oppose the regime. According to this line of thought, the weakness of the opposition is both the causal factor and the consequence of participation in power.

My own view is that the *weakness* and *over-valuation* of an opposition group are two conditions for the co-optation process to occur. Indicators of the weakness of an opposition group are its low electoral scores and its low mobilization capacity.

The only reliable data on electoral scores are the results of the first round of parliamentary elections of December 1991. Table 3 shows that the results for MSP-Hamas were particularly poor, while its Islamist rival, the FIS, gathered an overwhelming majority of votes.

As to the party's capacity to mobilize, this remains unclear, in part due to the party's refusal to disclose the number of its militants. However, MSP-Hamas has never organized a peaceful street demonstration as many other political parties have done in Algeria.

Asked about this aspect one MSP-Hamas leader gave the following answer:

"The number of our militants is confidential information that we do not disclose. Yet, you can assess our mobilizational capacity through the high participation by the population at all our political meetings. When we organize meetings at the Ibn Khaldoun and Harcha halls in Algiers that have a capacity of



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**Table 3:**  
**Results of Algerian Elections since 1991**

Political Parties/ Independents	Results of 1991 legislative elections (first round)	Results of 1995 presidential elections	Results of 1997 legislative elections	Results of 1997 local elections (APC)	Results of 1997 local elections (APW)
FIS	3,260,222 41.7%	-- --	-- --	-- --	-- --
RND	-- --	-- --	3,533,434 32.1%	5,453,787 50.96%	4,972,266 50.13%
FLN	1,612,947 20.6%	-- --	1,497,285 13.6%	2,026,200 18.93%	1,699,419 17.13%
MSP-Hamas	<b>368,697</b> 4.7%	<b>2,971,974</b> 25.28%	<b>1,553,154</b> 14.1%	<b>995,044</b> 9.29%	<b>1,203,929</b> 12.13%
En-Nahda	150.93 1.9%	-- --	915,446 8.3%	404,566 3.78%	744,730 7.5%
FFS	510,661 6.5%	-- --	527,848 4.8%	343,379 3.2%	311,095 3.13%
RCD	200,267 2.6%	1,115,796 9.60%	442,271 4.0%	265,844 2.48%	281,247 2.83%
Liamine Zeroul	-- --	7,088,618 61.01%	-- --	-- --	-- --

Sources: Table created on the basis of the Proclamation of 30 December 1991, "portant résultats officiels des élections législatives du 26 Décembre 1991 (1<sup>er</sup> tour)", JORA, No. 01, 4 January 1992, pp. 2-3; the 1995 presidential election results published in *Algérie Informations-Revue de Presse*, November 1995; Proclamation No. 97-01 P-CC of 9 June 1997, "relative aux résultats de l'élection des membres de l'Assemblée populaire nationale", JORA, No. 40, 11 June 1997, pp. 3-21; and the 1997 local election results published in *Algérie Informations - Revue de Presse*, October 1997.

**Notes:**

1. 1991: Law No. 91-71 of 15 October 1991, "modifiant et complétant la loi n° 13-89 du 7 août 1989 portant loi électorale", JORA, No. 48, 16 October 1991, pp. 1542-1547. Article 84 of this law states that MPs are elected according to a majority electoral system with two ballots. Participation in the 1991 legislative elections was 58.55%.
2. 1995: Law No. 89-13 of 7 August 1989, "portant loi électorale", states that the President is elected with a majority electoral system with two ballots. Participation in the 1995 presidential elections was 72.76%.
3. 1997: Enactment No. 97-07 of 6 March 1997, "portant loi organique relative au régime électoral", JORA, No. 12, 6 March 1997, pp. 3-22. Corrigendum JORA, No. 26, 8 April 1997, p. 6. Concerning the Popular National Assembly, articles 101 to 121 of this law state that MPs are elected for five years by a proportional electoral list system. Participation in the 1997 legislative elections was 65.60%.
4. 1997: Enactment No. 97-07 of 6 March 1997, "portant loi organique relative au régime électoral", JORA, No. 12, 6 March 1997, p. 3-22. Corrigendum JORA No. 26, 8 April 1997, p. 6. Concerning the APC (Popular Communal Assembly) and APW (Popular Wilaya Assembly), articles 75 to 100 of this law state that the members are elected for five years by a proportional electoral list system. The global participation for both APC and APW elections was 65.21%.

One could argue that the dramatic increase that occurred between 1991 and the subsequent elections is due to the absence of the FIS in the electoral contests of 1995 and 1997. This argument holds only to a certain extent, given that the FIS in exile called for a boycott of both elections. It is nevertheless plausible to argue that the FIS lost *part* of its electoral base, especially the petty bourgeoisie, after the violence of the civil war.

However, the hypothesis that the *majority* of its electorate, including the young masses from the cities, turned out to vote for MSP-Hamas - as the official voting figures would lead to believe - seems rather unlikely. Instead, it is more plausible that MSP-Hamas was discredited in the eyes of the public opinion because of its wishy-washy opposition discourse and its participation in government. It is therefore natural to conclude that the authoritarian incumbents who control the state bureaucracy have used electoral fraud as a way of inflating voting figures for MSP-Hamas. This *over-valuation* aims at presenting this party as a strong opposition party supported by a majority of former FIS followers and then including it as such in the governing coalition.

In conclusion, elections and electoral fraud have been a way of co-opting weak opposition groups, while at the same time repressing more threatening groups. This *co-optation* process has run in parallel with a process of *over-valuation*, which has taken place by inflating the electoral scores of MSP-Hamas.

Yet, co-optation into state institutions opens up the possibility of an alliance between some faction of the military incumbents and MSP-Hamas taking over control of the state. One MSP-Hamas leader indirectly suggested this possibility by saying that the aggressive behavior towards MSP-Hamas militants has almost disappeared and that circles of *the Power* even trust MSP-Hamas elite.

Is this scenario possible? In order to answer this question, we now turn to the issue of the authoritarian incumbents, namely the Algerian Army.

### **3.2 The Unobtainable Support from the Top and the Authoritarian Incumbents' Consensus**

The puzzle regarding civil-military relations can be characterized in the following terms: how "to reconcile a military strong enough to do anything the civilians ask them to with a military subordinate enough

to do only what civilians authorize them to do” (Feaver 1996: 149). In the Algerian case, the challenge would rather be how to displace existing military incumbents and establish civilian supremacy. Since the independence of Algeria in 1962, the Algerian Army has been a highly opaque institution, which has exercised political power.

Abdelkader Yefsah explains the intrinsic link between the Algerian Army and the state in terms of the historical conditions of the Liberation War and the first years of independence (Yefsah 1982, 1993, 1995). According to Yefsah, the link dates back to the Liberation War during which the leadership of the FLN/ALN (the National Liberation Front and its National Liberation Army) was conducting a war against the French colonizer while at the same time it was attempting to build a new Algerian state. He shows in great detail how military power supplanted political power (Yefsah 1993: 77-80). This trend continued after the country’s independence in 1962 and culminated with Houari Boumediene’s military coup of 19 June 1965. Since then, the Army has had a monopoly over political power. Yet, this control has never been as direct as it is a civilian government that runs the state bureaucracy. Therefore, a double bureaucracy emerged - civilian and military – with the latter controlling the former (Yefsah 1993: 84).

Samuel Huntington’s explanation of how to overcome military interference in affairs of the state is known as the objective civilian control theory (Huntington 1957). According to Huntington, it is necessary that the civilian authorities recognize the principle of autonomous military professionalism. The military should be independent, so that civilians cannot attempt to maximize their power by involving the military in political activity. The key concepts are *autonomy* and *professionalism*. An officer corps that focused on its own profession and that was granted sufficient independence to organize itself would be politically neutral.

The Algerian army is not a professional one. Since independence, it has been organized according to the model of a “popular army” based on conscription. Despite the army modernization project launched in 1984, few genuine reforms have been implemented<sup>19</sup> and its initial structure remains more or less unaltered. Nevertheless, the Algerian army appears *completely* autonomous from civilian control. No civil-

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<sup>19</sup> Since 1984, the main changes have been the establishment of new ranks in the military hierarchy, the reduction of the length of military service, and the reorganization of the secret services.

ian institution is capable of exercising any form of control over the Algerian military.

The political scientist Abdelkader Yefsah argues that “the Army is the only organized structure which is strong enough to control power” (Yefsah 1993: 77). Whether this statement is objectively true or not cannot be verified. However, it is striking to note that the army has been able to appear as such to most Algerian actors, including MSP-Hamas elite.

This can be observed in the political discourse of most Algerian political actors, even though discourses of the PT (Labor Party) and the FFS parties provide a partial exception to this rule. All these discourses reveal a great deal of confusion between the notions of regime, state, and power. The term *le Pouvoir* (the Power) is used interchangeably with reference to the army, the Algerian state and the political regime. This shows how strong the confusion is between the military institution and the exercise of power in Algeria.

A good example of such confusion is found in the belief shared by most political actors that the army is the only organization capable of preserving Algeria from chaos. Whether this chaos is embodied by the FIS acceding to power or by the Berber rioters of spring 2001, the army is perceived by political actors as the only solution. Interviews with two MSP-Hamas members illustrate this belief. The first one points out the danger posed by the FIS:

“In Algeria power comes from the hat.<sup>20</sup> The opening up of the Algerian political system began only ten years ago. Democratization is a long process. Look at France, it needed 200 years to arrive at democracy. Our problem in Algeria since the political system opened up has been the FIS. How could we manage to impede the formation of a FIS-like party? The only thing that I can say is that the answer is to be found with the military because they are the ones who hold the power.”<sup>21</sup>

The second member blames the Berber rioters of June 2001:

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<sup>20</sup> This is a reference to the military officer's hat, and it means that the Algerian army holds political power.

<sup>21</sup> Interview in Algiers with MSP-Hamas leader No. 3 on 10 July 2001.

“Some people like the Berber rioters attack the Algerian army and accuse it of all sorts of things. Of course some are right in their accusations. Yet, we have to ask ourselves if it is in the interest of Algerian citizens that the military organization may be weakened. What would happen if we asked the army to ‘go out and leave power?’ I think that another crisis like 1992 would occur, that is, another serious civil war.”<sup>22</sup>

In this view, the army exercises power because it represents the only organization strong enough and organized enough to preserve the state from collapse.

The exclusive control by the army of the Algerian state implies that the army has exclusive control over state revenues, the most important of which is oil revenue. Therefore, along with the claim to historical legitimacy, state control is also highly lucrative. This state of affairs is eloquently described by Lahouari Addi:

“The army lays down the major economic guidelines, but the government divides oil revenues between various ministerial departments, determines the structure of investment, and chooses trading partners in Algeria and abroad. The government thereby legalizes the transfer of some oil revenue to its network of clients, both military and civilians – an especially important dynamic now that the economy is moving towards privatization and joint ventures. Still, the government’s composition reflects the political line of the army, whose various factions nominate their *protégés* as ministers. Those appointed have two briefs: to stand up for the general interests of the regime and to show their loyalty to the faction that appointed them.” (Addi 1998: 48)

There exist different factions, or clans, within the military institutions, which are allied with civilian clients that share the oil revenue. Little is known about this issue since no sociological study has been carried out on the army as an institution and its links to civilian networks. It follows that what can be said on this question remains pure conjecture. However, it is worth recalling a few scholarly contributions to the understanding of this issue.

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<sup>22</sup> Interview in Algiers with MSP-Hamas militant No. 5 on 9 July 2001.

Abdelkader Yefsah argues that army clans were formed according to an ethnic criterion. He defines the Boumediene presidency as the “colonels” era<sup>23</sup> in which the Oujda clan (western-based officers’ clan) predominated. With the Chadli presidency, an eastern-based officer clan (the famous BTS, based on the three eastern cities of Batna-Tebessa-Souk Ahras) got the upper hand in the military institution (Yefsah 1993: 84-85).

Since 1992, according to Lahouari Addi, the civil war has changed the structure of clans within the Algerian army. He describes three main changes. (1) The relative autonomy of the diverse military branches that created several centers of power. (2) The rapid ascent of the commander-in-chief of the army, major-general Lamari, who in turn brought about the third change. (3) The domination of a clan based on political rather than ethnic criteria (Addi 1999). Moreover, Addi argues that the locus of decision-making within the army rests with military officers’ conclave:

“In time of crisis, the top military brass meets in conclave. It was they who decided to cancel the 1992 elections after the first round gave the lead to the FIS and to nominate instead Liamine Zeroual for the presidency in November 1995. The general’s informal meetings are not reported in the press - understandably since the constitution does not provide for them.

The criteria for taking part in these conclaves are unknown. The participants are thought to include officers from the general staff and the heads of the central services of the defense ministry, the military districts, the national police, and the domestic security force – in other words, men who have a certain autonomy in the way they use the forces of law and order. Given the importance of the decisions it makes, this informal assembly is, in fact, installing itself as a sovereign body. Increasingly, Algeria is run by a military caste.” (Addi 1998: 47)

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<sup>23</sup> Since the failed coup conducted by the commander-in-chief of army, Tahar Zbiri, in 1967, the rank of commander-in-chief was abolished by Houari Boumediene and the highest military rank was that of colonel. During the Chadli presidency, the rank of commander-in-chief was re-established along with the establishment of two higher ranks of major-general and general on 1 November 1984.

Verifying the existence of these secret conclaves is, for the time being, impossible. However, in line with Addi's description, one can formulate the following reasoning:

- (1) Since 1988, the claim of *historical legitimacy* and the *control and distribution* of oil revenue allow the military to claim *exclusive* control over the state. This exclusive control has been put in question by strong opposition movements embodied by the FIS at the beginning of the 1990s and the Berber movement in 2001.
- (2) In order to maintain its exclusive control over the state, the army has resorted to the repression of threatening groups, while at the same time co-opting minority groups such as the MSP-Hamas. However, such co-optation opens the possibility of a coup conducted by one military faction in association with the co-opted civilian group that would play the role of a civilian façade for the new power holders.
- (3) Only a strong consensus binding the different military factions could avoid this possibility. Addi's speculation on military conclaves suggests that the military officers may have agreed to keep their hold on power *together*. However, the temptation for a faction to cheat is always present. Therefore, there should be a *factor* binding conclave participants to honor their common agreement.

That there is a consensus between the different military factions is a plausible hypothesis. However, the factor binding this consensus remains unknown.



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## Conclusion

On the basis of a thorough analysis of the recent rise of the MSP-Hamas party in Algeria, I have identified two conditions for a successful co-optation, that is a co-optation that does not threaten the authoritarian incumbents' hold on power in the short term.

The first condition resides in the co-optation of an opposition weak in terms of its mobilizational capacity, and its over-valuation via electoral fraud. This insight leads to a new interpretation of the function of the elections in authoritarian regimes (Hermet et al. 1978).

In the case of Algeria, elections can hardly be interpreted as a competition for electors' votes. The competition takes place at another level, and consists in searching for military incumbents' trust. Elections, characterized by widespread fraud, shall rather be interpreted as co-optation mechanisms of a new elite.

The second condition for a non-threatening co-optation is found in the binding consensus of authoritarian incumbents. This conclusion is consistent with the hypothesis of the elite-based transition literature according to which the divide between hard and soft-liners is at the origin of the beginning of transition from authoritarian rule (O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986: 15-17). This process of co-optation excludes any possibility of an opening in the political system. It is through these mechanisms that the Algerian authoritarian regime has endured in the past few years.

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## Appendices

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## APPENDIX

### Algeria at a Glance

(from the World Fact Book 2002)

#### BACKGROUND

After a century of rule by France, Algeria became independent in 1962. The surprising first round success of the fundamentalist FIS (Islamic Salvation Front) party in the December 1991 balloting caused the army to intervene, crack down on the FIS, and postpone the subsequent elections. The FIS response has resulted in a continuous low-grade civil conflict with the secular state apparatus, which nonetheless has allowed elections featuring pro-government and moderate religious-based parties. FIS's armed wing, the Islamic Salvation Army, disbanded itself in January 2000 and many armed militants surrendered under an amnesty program designed to promote national reconciliation. Nevertheless, residual fighting continues. Other concerns include Berber unrest, large-scale unemployment, a shortage of housing, and the need to diversify the petroleum-based economy.

#### GEOGRAPHY

**Location:** Northern Africa, bordering the Mediterranean Sea, between Morocco and Tunisia

**Geographic coordinates:** 28 00 N, 3 00 E

**Area:** *total:* 2,381,740 sq km; *water:* 0 sq km; *land:* 2,381,740 sq km

**Land boundaries:** *total:* 6,343 km

*border countries:* Libya 982 km, Mali 1,376 km, Mauritania 463 km, Morocco 1,559 km, Niger 956 km, Tunisia 965 km, Western Sahara 42 km

**Coastline:** 998 km

**Climate:** arid to semiarid; mild, wet winters with hot, dry summers along coast; drier with cold winters and hot summers on high plateau; sirocco is a hot, dust/sand-laden wind especially common in summer

**Terrain:** mostly high plateau and desert; some mountains; narrow, discontinuous coastal plain

**Elevation extremes:** *lowest point:* Chott Melrhir -40 m; *highest:* Tahat 3,003 m

**Natural resources:** petroleum, natural gas, iron ore, phosphates, uranium, lead, zinc

**Land use:** *arable land:* 3.21%; *permanent crops:* 0.21%; *other:* 96.57% (1998 est.)

**Irrigated land:** 5,600 sq km (1998 est.)

**Natural hazards:** mountainous areas subject to severe earthquakes; mudslides and floods in rainy season

**Environment - current issues:** soil erosion from overgrazing and other poor farming practices; desertification; dumping of raw sewage, petroleum

refining wastes, and other industrial effluents is leading to the pollution of rivers and coastal waters; Mediterranean Sea, in particular, becoming polluted from oil wastes, soil erosion, and fertilizer runoff; inadequate supplies of potable water

**Environment - international agreements:** *party to:* Biodiversity, Climate Change, Desertification, Endangered Species, Environmental Modification, Hazardous Wastes, Law of the Sea, Ozone Layer Protection, Ship Pollution, Wetlands; *signed, but not ratified:* Nuclear Test Ban

## PEOPLE

**Population:** 32,277,942 (July 2002 est.)

**Age structure:** *0-14 years:* 33.5% (male 5,512,369; female 5,311,914)

*15-64 years:* 62.4% (male 10,175,135; female 9,950,315)

*65 years +:* 4.1% (male 610,643; female 717,566) (2002 est.)

**Population growth rate:** 1.68% (2002 est.)

**Birth rate:** 22.34 births/1,000 population (2002 est.)

**Death rate:** 5.15 deaths/1,000 population (2002 est.)

**Net migration rate:** -0.42 migrant(s)/1,000 population (2002 est.)

**Sex ratio:** *total population:* 1.02 male(s)/female (2002 est.)

**Infant mortality rate:** 39.15 deaths/1,000 live births (2002 est.)

**Life expectancy at birth:** *total population:* 70.24 yrs (*female:* 71.67 years (2002 est.), *male:* 68.87 years)

**Total fertility rate:** 2.63 children born/woman (2002 est.)

**Nationality:** *noun:* Algerian(s); *adjective:* Algerian

**Ethnic groups:** Arab-Berber 99%, European less than 1%

**Religions:** Sunni Muslim (state religion) 99%, Christian and Jewish 1%

**Languages:** Arabic (official), French, Berber dialects

**Literacy:** (age 15+, able to read and write) *total population:* 61.6%, *male:* 73.9%, *female:* 49% (1995 est.)

## GOVERNMENT

**Country name:** *conventional short form:* Algeria

*conventional long:* People's Democratic Republic of Algeria

*local short form:* Al Jaza'ir

*local long:* Al Jumhuriyah al Jaza'iriyah ad Dimuqratiyah ash Sha'biyah

**Government type:** republic

**Capital:** Algiers

**Admin. divisions:** 48 provinces (wilayas, sing.: wilaya); Adrar, Ain Defla, Ain Temouchent, Alger, Annaba, Batna, Bechar, Bejaia, Biskra, Blida, Bordj Bou Arreridj, Bouira, Boumerdes, Chlef, Constantine, Djelfa, El Bayadh, El Oued, El Tarf, Ghardaia, Guelma, Illizi, Jijel, Khenchela, Laghouat, Mascara, Medea, Mila, Mostaganem, M'Sila, Naama, Oran, Ouargla, Oum el Bouaghi,

Relizane, Saida, Setif, Sidi Bel Abbes, Skikda, Souk Ahras, Tamanghasset, Tebessa, Tiaret, Tindouf, Tipaza, Tissemsilt, Tizi Ouzou, Tlemcen

**Independence:** 5 July 1962 (from France)

**National holiday:** Revolution Day, 1 November (1954)

**Constitution:** 19 November 1976, effective 22 November 1976; revised 3 November 1988, 23 February 1989, and 28 November 1996

**Legal system:** socialist, based on French and Islamic law; judicial review of legislative acts in ad hoc Constitutional Council composed of various public officials, including several Supreme Court justices; has not accepted compulsory ICJ jurisdiction

**Suffrage:** 18 years of age; universal

**Executive branch:** *chief of state:* President Abdelaziz BOUTEFLIKA (since 28 April 1999)

*head of government:* Prime Minister Ali BENFLIS (since 26 Aug. 2000)

*cabinet:* Cabinet of Ministers appointed by the president

*elections:* president elected by popular vote for a five-year term; elections last held in 15 April 1999 (next to be held NA April 2004); prime minister appointed by the president

*election results:* Abdelaziz BOUTEFLIKA elected president; percent of vote - Abdelaziz BOUTEFLIKA over 70%;

**Note:** his six opposing candidates withdrew on the eve of the election citing electoral fraud

**Legislative branch:** bicameral Parliament consists of:

- *The National People's Assembly (Al-Majlis Ech-Chaabi Al-Watani)* (389 seats - 380 seats before the 2002 elections; members elected by popular vote to serve five-year terms)

- *Council of Nations* (144 seats; one-third of the members appointed by the president, two-thirds elected by indirect vote; members serve six-year terms; the constitution requires half the council to be renewed every three years)

**Elections:** In June 1997 Algerians elected their first multi-party National People's Assembly since the country's independence in 1962. A couple of parties boycotted the elections such as the *Front of Socialist Forces (FFS)* and the *Rally for Culture and Democracy (RCD)*.

*Election of National People's Assembly* - last held 30 May 2002 (next to be held NA 2007)

*Election of Council of Nations* - last held 30 December 2000 (next to be held NA 2003)

**Election results:** *National People's Assembly* - seats by party - National Liberation Front (FLN) 199, National Democratic Gathering (RND) 47, Movement of National Reform (El-Islah) (M.R.N. / M.I.) 43, Movement of a Peaceful Society (Hams) (M.S.P.) 38, independents (IND) 29; Worker's Party (P.T.) 21, Algerian National Front (F.N.A) 8, Nahda 1, Algerian Renewal Party (P.R.A.) 1, National Understanding Movement (M.E.N) 1.

*Council of Nations* - (96 elected members and 48 appointed by the president) Parties - National Democratic Gathering (R.N.D), National Liberation Front (F.L.N), National Reform Movement M.I. (M.R.N.), Society Movement for

Peace (Hams) (M.S.P), (Socialist Forces Front) E.F.S., National Party for Solidarity and Development.

**Judicial branch:** Supreme Court or Court Supreme

**Political parties and leaders:** Major political parties and leaders elected in the General People's Assembly, May 2002: National Liberation Front, (FLN), Ali Bin Flis; Democratic National Rally (RND), Ahmed Ouyahia; Movement of National Reform (al-Islah) (MRN/ MI) Abdellah Djaballah; Movement of a Peaceful Society (Hamas) (MSP), Mahfoud Nahnah; independents (IND), Worker's Party (PT), Louisa Hannoun; Algerian National Front (FNA), Moussa Touati; En-Nahda Movement, (Lahbib Adami); Algerian Renewal Party (PRA), Noureddine Boukrouh; National (Entente) Understanding Movement (MEN)

Some of the other parties and leaders include: Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) (outlawed April 1992), Ali Belhadj, Dr. Abassi Madani (imprisoned), Sheikh Rabeh Kebir (self-exile in Germany); Rally for Culture and Democracy (RCD), Said Saadi; Social Liberal Party (PSL), Ahmed Khelil; Socialist Forces Front (FFS), Hocine Ait Ahmed (secretary general, self exile in Switzerland); Progressive Republican Party, Khader Driss; Union for Democracy and Liberty, etc.

**Note:** Changes in these divisions are due to coalition possibilities and other political circumstances.

**Flag:** two equal vertical bands of green (hoist side) and white; a red, five-pointed star within a red crescent centered over the two-color boundary; the crescent, star, and color green are traditional symbols of Islam (the state religion)

## **ECONOMY**

**Overview:** The hydrocarbons sector is the backbone of the economy, accounting for roughly 60% of budget revenues, 30% of GDP, and over 95% of export earnings. Algeria has the fifth-largest reserves of natural gas in the world and is the second largest gas exporter; it ranks 14th in oil reserves. Algeria's financial and economic indicators improved during the mid-1990s, in part because of policy reforms supported by the IMF and debt rescheduling from the Paris Club. Algeria's finances in 2000 and 2001 benefited from the temporary spike in oil prices and the government's tight fiscal policy, leading to a large increase in the trade surplus, record highs in foreign exchange reserves, and reduction in foreign debt. The government's continued efforts to diversify the economy by attracting foreign and domestic investment outside the energy sector has had little success in reducing high unemployment and improving living standards. In 2001, the government signed an Association Treaty with the EU that will eventually lower tariffs and increase trade.

**GDP:** purchasing power parity - \$177 billion (2001 est.)

**GDP - real growth rate:** 3.8% (2001 est.)

**GDP - per capita:** purchasing power parity - \$5,600 (2001 est.)

**GDP - by sector:** *agriculture:* 17%; *industry:* 33%, *services:* 50% (2000 est.)

**Population below poverty line:** 23% (1999 est.)

**Inflation rate (consumer prices):** 3% (2001 est.)

**Labor force:** 9.4 million (2001 est.)

**Labor force - by occupation:** government 29%, agriculture 25%, construction and public works 15%, industry 11%, other 20% (1996 est.)

**Unemployment rate:** 34% (2001 est.)

**Budget: revenues:** \$20.3 billion - **expenditures:** \$18.8 billion (2001 est.)

**Industries:** petroleum, natural gas, light industries, mining, electrical, petrochemical, food processing

**Agriculture:** wheat, barley, oats, grapes, olives, citrus, fruits; sheep, cattle

**Exports:** \$20 billion (f.o.b., 2001 est.)

**Exports - commodities:** petroleum, natural gas, and petroleum products 97%

**Exports - partners:** Italy 23%, Spain 13%, US 13%, France 11%, Brazil 7%

**Imports:** \$1 billion (f.o.b., 2001 est.)

**Imports - commodities:** capital goods, food and beverages, consumer goods

**Imports - partners:** France 29%, US 9%, Italy 8%, Germany 6%, Spain 5%

**Debt - external:** \$24.7 billion (2001 est.)

**Economic aid - recipient:** \$100 million (1999 est.)

**Currency:** Algerian dinar (DZD)

**Fiscal year:** calendar year

## **MILITARY**

**Military branches:** Peoples National Army (ANP), Algerian National Navy (ANN), Air Force, Territorial Air Defense, National Gendarmerie

**Military manpower - military age:** 19 years of age (2002 est.)

- *reaching military age annually:* males: 388,939 (2002 est.)

**Military expenditures - dollar figure:** \$1.87 billion (FY99)

**Military expenditures - percent of GDP:** 4.1% (FY99)

## **TRANSNATIONAL ISSUES**

**Disputes - international:** part of southeastern region claimed by Libya; Algeria supports exiled West Saharan Polisario Front and rejects Moroccan administration of Western Sahara

### **Sources:**

World Fact Book 2002 (main source)

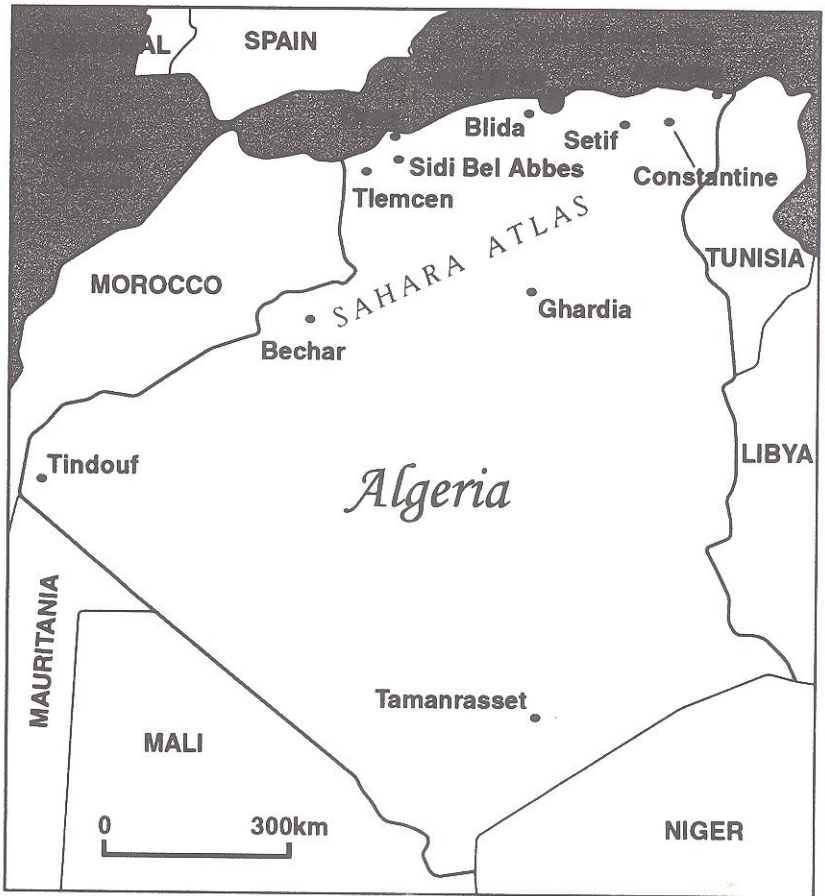
UNDP Pogar Program Website: <http://www.undp-pogar.org/countries/algeria/>

Algerian National People's Assembly Website: <http://www.apn-dz.org/>

Algerian Council of Nations' Website: <http://www.majliselouma.dz/>

APPENDIX

Map of Algeria





## APPENDIX

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