

The Impasse of Political Transition in Algeria:: Three Generations and Two Scenarios

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RESEARCH PAPERS

# The Impasse of Political Transition in Algeria: Three Generations and Two Scenarios

Dr. Abdel Nasser Jabi | April 2012

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Series: Research papers

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## Introduction

The qualitative political dynamic experienced by Arab societies since the beginning of 2011 has engendered political transformations with demographic dimensions, starting from Tunisia, passing through Egypt and Yemen, all the way to Libya, Syria, and even Morocco. In each of these countries, discussions have abounded regarding the young generation and their political role, following the flaring up of events that led to the destabilization and the overthrow of aging political regimes, along with their schemes to bequeath power to the second generation of the rulers' offspring. The majority of these political regimes saw the clear hegemony of the "family" over official political action, and the "family" monopolized wealth, arms and politics; such was the situation in Egypt, Yemen, and Libya, which were preceded by the Syrian regime, a forerunner of the project of political inheritance to the second generation of rulers in the Arab region. The youth population appeared to take the initiative in the ongoing qualitative political movement, and it was able to garner strong political mobilization from broader and more diverse social groups. These young activists featured certain sociological and cultural characteristics, such as belonging to the urban middle class, as was noticeable in the Egyptian case. They benefited from their higher education and their fluency in foreign languages, which prepared them to reap maximum benefit from new media technologies, which were strongly employed for the purpose of assuring the success of the protest movements, and to launch these initiatives away from the gaze of the repressive state apparatus and the official position, which long discussed change and reform without presenting the least achievement on the ground.

The spread of education, as a major variable, also became a demographic and political component of this Arab dynamic, even in the case of Yemen where much was written on the limited penetration of education compared to the norm in the Arab world.

We are being faced with qualitative repercussions of these demographic transformations that have been experienced by Arab societies in the last decades due to the spread of education and its known ramifications, such as the employment of women, family planning, urban migration, the breaking down of traditional social values, and the spread of the nuclear family model. These combined repercussions allowed for the advancement of the "me" value among the young generation, which initiated the political action in more than one Arab case. This dynamic took place outside of the "patriarchal" political institutions, best represented by the Arab official political regimes and the Arab political parties, with their patriarchal values and despotic

practices. These characteristics have even afflicted the opposition parties calling for change.

## Transition: The Algerian way

This article will attempt to examine the Algerian case regarding political transition, starting from this demographic issue, taking into account the specificities of the phenomenon in the Algerian case in terms of its characteristics and political outcomes. In studying this demographic issue, the writings of Karl Mannheim on the problem of political generations are of particular importance.<sup>1</sup> Equally significant are the works of Emmanuel Todd on the question of the influence of the spread of education and its accompanying changes, specifically women's literacy, and the lowering of fertility rates, leading to the destabilization of the traditional family values, which in turn causes the emergence of a new political behavior among the young generations.<sup>2</sup> In his chapter devoted to the transformations experienced by the Arab world on the demographic level and their political repercussions, Emmanuel Todd states that transformation in Algeria, compared to the rest of the Arab world, has not always been easy.<sup>3</sup>

According to Emmanuel Todd and Youssef Courbage:

"... cultural advancement confuses the population; a society must be imagined where education spreads to a great extent, as to become a general rule. However, any society experiencing the spread of education will soon witness a destabilization in the relations of authority inside the family, with the son becoming literate while the father remains illiterate. Similarly, the birth control methods that appear following the spread of education usually lead to a revision of the traditional relations between man and woman, especially in terms of the power a husband exerts over his wife. This multi-level rupture in relations of authority eventually leads to a general confusion in society, and even to a temporary collapse of political authority ... which could be a violent one. In other words, the era of ending illiteracy and spreading education and birth control is the era of revolution."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Karl Mannheim, *Le Problème des générations* (1928), French trans. Gérard Mauger (Paris: Nathan, 1990).

<sup>2</sup> Emmanuel Todd and Youssef Courbage, *Le Rendezvous des Civilisations* (Paris: Seuil La République des Idées, 2007); Emmanuel Todd, *La Diversité du Monde: Famille et modernité* (Paris: Seuil, 1999).

<sup>3</sup> Todd and Courbage, 73.

<sup>4</sup> Todd and Courbage, 32.

The two authors conclude, according to their interpretation and deductions, that the English, Russian, and Chinese revolutions provide clear examples that perfectly apply to the direction of events in the Arab world.

On the other hand, in his study of the generational problem, Karl Mannheim focuses on the differences between generations on the biological, historical, and sociological levels. Mannheim speaks of what he terms "the generational moment" which distinguishes one generation from another; furthermore, it is:

"... a moment that constitutes a collective experience for a specific generation, prompting it to take a specific path, and to be distinguished by a specific political culture. Thus, this is an experience that differentiates the generation from other ones, especially if we link this to the formation of social movements. As such, the generational question remains an important issue that must be seriously addressed as one of the necessary concepts for understanding the formation of social and intellectual moments. As for the practical aspect, this requires little argumentation once we accurately understand the fast transformations embedded in current events."<sup>5</sup>

Karl Mannheim inquires about what establishes the unity of a certain generation, and about the elevated intensity in relations extending between the members of the generation; he states, " ... when imagining the unity of a certain generation, the first noticeable feature is a deep similarity of the components shaping the consciousness of each individual. These components are significant from a sociological viewpoint not only due to their meaning and content, but also because they create, out of isolated individuals, a group endowed with social power."<sup>6</sup> From this perspective, Algeria would feature three main political generations which are involved in the process of political transition and will not only be political, but also demographic, making it more difficult. A smooth transition in Algeria would mean the transfer of political power from the generation that led a revolution for liberation and achieved national independence to the ones that followed it.

The generation which brought liberation has remained at the head of the national state since independence and until today. This generation, referred to in this study as the first generation, was born in the second and third decades of the last century. As such, political transition should be in favor of the second generation, born during the final

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<sup>5</sup> Mannheim, 7.

<sup>6</sup> Mannheim, 19.

years of the War for Liberation (1954-1962) and the beginnings of independence. However, this generation remained different from the first on several levels because it is better educated and more urban than the first generation.

The political transition of power in favor of the second generation would represent the calm and smooth transition from the first generation to the second; the two generations know each other and have a positive outlook on each other which eases the process of transition, making it a positive one, propelling the situation of Algeria forward. The process of political transition between the two generations would keep Algeria within the bounds of patriotism, where patriotism is defined as a dominant and hegemonic political idea, even if it were somehow altered during this transition; however, this alteration could only be in a manner that is more in tune with the age and more acceptable by society.

Contrary to this positive scenario, another scenario could be imagined that would include more turbulence and a more acute rupture. It is the scenario of power transition from the first generation to the younger third generation, which is different in terms of its upbringing and the characteristics of its political moment, to use the terms of Karl Mannheim. This is a generation of direct action, born and raised in the post-independence era, a period when the projects of the national state began suffering from fissures and old age. This is the generation that has led protest movements, expressing through them its rejection of current conditions, and its opposition to the ruling groups, their political authority, institutions, and political discourse. This study assumes that the first generation has now reached the end of its career, having become elderly, in addition to other political considerations related to its management of public affairs, all of which necessitates the transfer of political power to a younger generation.

Regardless of the shape of the transition and its repercussions, and whether the first or the second scenario takes place, Algeria, from this study's perspective, is in a situation that is quite similar to the last phase of the Soviet era, when the entire political leadership reached old age at the same time, since most of them were the offspring of the same generation. This is the phase of the biological end of an entire generation, with all the expected political and institutional repercussions, sharply affecting the projects of political transition, similar to the last days of the Soviet experiment.

The political history of Algeria informs us that this type of political demographic problem, related to political generations and their specific role in the processes of political transition from one political era to another, was clearly experienced in Algeria



at the outbreak of the liberation revolution in the early 1950s. The generation of direct revolutionary action<sup>7</sup> and the military resolution of the national question was led by the youth, specifically the 22 group,<sup>8</sup> which stood behind the founding of the Liberation Front and the launching of armed action in 1954. That revolutionary dynamic represented an effective reversal against the previous generation, which was represented by the leader of the national movement Messali Hadj and his generation of activists who had struggled for national independence since the 1920s via party politics and other political tools, specifically the elections that took place following the Second World War.<sup>9</sup>

The first generational struggle witnessed by Algeria was thus the one that took place between the generation of the founding fathers of the national movement and the younger generation oriented toward direct revolutionary action, which accused the first generation of kowtowing to the colonial leaders and not undertaking the rupture required by the path of armed struggle, which was adopted by the younger generation on November 1, 1954.<sup>10</sup> This conflict between the two generations has clearly influenced the content of national politics, which became loaded with many of the notions engendered by this conflict, and which were transformed, during the revolution after independence, into a "national political culture". These notions include the rejection of individual leadership, the preference for collective political leadership, and the priority of the people over the elite. As a reminder, the hostility toward elites had reached its apex during the revolution of liberation in some states. Among the other

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<sup>7</sup> Represented by the figures who organized the 22 group when the liberation revolution was declared in November 1954. Among the members of this group were Mohammad Boudiaf, Karim Belkasim, Didoch Murad, and Larabi Ben Lmheidi. Other figures could not attend the meeting since they were abroad such as Houssein Ayt Ahmad and Ahmad Ben Bella.

<sup>8</sup> A crisis flared up within the "Movement to Support Democratic Freedom" (formerly the People's Party), reaching its apex during the second party conference in April 1953. The conflict escalated between the party's central committee and the party president Messali Hadj and his followers, in what would be called the struggle of the centralists and the Messalists. A group of activists who believed in the military solution to achieve independence remained on the side during this conflict, determined to surpass the stasis caused by this conflict, organizing a meeting that joined 22 of these figures in which they decided to prepare for the outbreak of the revolution.

<sup>9</sup> Several Algerian historians have discussed this phase of the history of the national movement, including Mohammad Harbi and Mahfudh Qadach.

<sup>10</sup> This conflict did not remain limited to politics, turning into armed clashes between the two sides after the declaration of the revolution, especially on French land, where Messali's supporters were heavily represented. For more details see Benjamin Stora, *Messali Hadj: Pionnier du nationalisme algérien* (Paris: Hachette, 2004).

manifestations of the struggle were the dominance of the military over the political, the reshaping of the intellectual into something akin to a hired writer, and the avoidance of public political and intellectual debate in favor of personal and clique-based agreements based on ephemeral power balances. These were some of the outcomes of this foundational stage in the history of Algerian nationalism and its intellectual content.

Returning to the question of political transition and its relationship to political generations in the current Algerian case, it could be said that a deeper analysis of the characteristics of each generation, and of the conditions of the transition process embedded in each scenario, would be useful in understanding this transition in the Algerian context, which became a matter of heated debate starting in January 2011 and the following events witnessed by Algeria and the Arab world, in many variations.<sup>11</sup>

### **The First Generation: Generation of revolution and the national state**

This generation has been identified with the most important political achievement in Algeria's modern history: the attainment of independence and the building of the national state. In that sense, what Karl Mannheim termed "the generational moment" would apply to the achievements of this generation with the national movement and the liberation revolution, followed by the building of the national state and its management for a long period. This generation has had a long-lasting political life, and has witnessed critical junctures in Algeria's modern history – it is a political generation in the full sense of the term.

The first generation experienced the national movement from the political angle, founding national political parties before the Liberation War, which were quickly abandoned when it became clear that the colonial situation in Algeria could not be ended with peaceful political action and the mechanisms of elections, leading to the decision to resort to armed struggle. This generation has lived in the embrace of the national idea with all its well-known Algerian characteristics and the stages of its historical formation. The national movement had witnessed its labor-based phase in its early beginnings at the start of the last century when the first independent political

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<sup>11</sup> In reality, no consensus exists in Algeria, even after the January 2011 events, on the necessity of transition to a different political system. Some official political powers, such as the leadership of the Democratic National Assembly, maintain that Algeria achieved its transition from unity rule to pluralism in 1998, and, therefore, Algeria is not in need of a second transition, since it is endowed with political parties, regular elections, and an independent media. It is not required to engage in a transition process.

party was founded in Paris under the name of "the North African Star" in 1926. The party's main base of support was composed of immigrant laborers, and in its first phase it was marked by intellectual and organizational closeness with the French Communist Party. Later on, the national movement spread inside Algeria itself beginning in the late 1930s; the movement featured the dominance of a rural popular movement, and some urban popular forces, including the petty bourgeoisie that rose on the shoulders of the national movement.<sup>12</sup>

Despite the hegemony of the national idea, with its popular coloring, and in terms of its religious content and practices, the movement witnessed a level of intellectual and political diversity that was the contribution of the reformist religious current, represented by the Association of Muslim Scholars. This current focused on matters relating to cultural identity and religion.<sup>13</sup> Added to that, though to a lesser extent, one can see the effect of the liberal<sup>14</sup> and communist<sup>15</sup> currents in urban areas, and the

<sup>12</sup> See the works of historian Mohamed Harbi, including *Aux Origines du FLN: le populisme révolutionnaire en Algérie* (Paris: Christian Bourgois, 1975), and *Le FLN: Mirage et réalité, des origines à la prise du pouvoir 1975-1962* (Alger: NAQD/ENAL, 1993).

<sup>13</sup> The Association was founded in 1931, focusing in its work on the cultural, religious, and educational dimensions; and despite the conflict and competition that characterized its relationship with the independent current within the national movement (the People's Party followed by the Movement to Support Democratic Liberties), it has had a great influence on the intellectual and political content of Algerian nationalism, especially after independence.

<sup>14</sup> The liberal current was represented since the 1930s by the parties founded by Ferhat Abbas. Its intellectual and political influence was weak especially after independence due to its elitism and lack of popular depth. During this period, national and populist political currents dominated to the point where all the main figures of Abbas' party joined the new rulers who took the reins of power, beginning with Ferhat Abbas' joining of the Tlemsan group, which ended the conflict over power emerging directly after independence in 1962. Abbas' move was followed by similar ones by Ali Boumangal, and even Qayid Ahmad at a later stage. However, participation in the regimes did not prevent these elements from expressing their dissatisfaction with policies and decisions, causing their majority to distance itself from the regime and express its opposition at different stages and in various ways. Abbas resigned from the presidency of the Legislative Council in 1963, Boumangal withdrew from the political scene, and Qayid Ahmad defected from the Boumediene camp in the early 1970s.

<sup>15</sup> Communists attempted to preserve their political and organizational independence even during the liberation revolution, without much success. The communists were influential on the level of labor and unions, and among some educated urban middle classes after independence. The communists supplied the national state with many cadres, granting them an effective presence in some fields (the unions, the university and the media, for example) during the phase of one-party rule when they adopted positions that were generally supportive of the political regime, despite some occasional criticism. However, the presence of the communists was more influential during the underground and one-party phases, experiencing a great decline after the announcement of political plurality in Algeria at a time when the socialist camp was collapsing.

contribution of certain institutions to increasing the level of political awareness of the people, such as unions<sup>16</sup> and parties. The locations of work and living, which represented, to varying extents, a space for coexistence between some Algerians and Europeans (or what French historian Annie Rey-Goldzeiguer termed “the world of contact”<sup>17</sup>), had a role in the shaping of this awareness. These points of contact can be clearly seen in many family and personal biographies of Algerians and Europeans who lived in the large and mid-sized urban spaces;<sup>18</sup> this mixture afforded a measure of variety and diversity to Algerian nationalism, becoming the main framework for the political action of the first generation, which continued until the post-independence phase.

“Nationalism” experienced a retreat as conservative forces gained the upper hand. This took place with the aging of the ruling elites and the domination of rural forces during the experiment of national state management, with all the accompanying intellectual and political degradation due to the autocratic method that reigned within the national state directly following independence. That should be compared to the phase of the early beginnings and ascension, when Algerian nationalism borrowed greatly from the French labor and union movement, which permitted several generations of Algerian laborers to fall into direct contact with the French political scene, leading to the formation of the first national independent party and, later, a central union (an association of unions).<sup>19</sup>

On the other hand, the Algerian national movement was experiencing daily contact with its Maghrebin environment; during its phase of ascension, the movement was able to benefit from elements of strength in this intellectual and political space, which it enriched, in turn, with its own experience. However, this contact was quickly reduced to a minimum following the independence and the national elites’ control over the state in the countries of the Arab Maghreb. Thus, these elites were quick to stand in the face of

<sup>16</sup> Nacer Djabi, *Kaidi Lakhdar: Une Histoire du syndicalisme algérien; entretiens* (Paris: Chihab, 2005).

<sup>17</sup> Annie Rey-Goldzeiguer, “Le monde du contact: une fausse charnière,” in *Aux origines de la guerre d’Algérie 1940-1945. De Mers-El Kebir aux massacres du nord constantinois* (Alger: Casbah 2002), 75-102.

<sup>18</sup> See René Galissot, ed., *Algérie: Engagements sociaux et question nationale: De la colonisation à l’indépendance de 1830 à 1962. Dictionnaire biographique du mouvement ouvrier: Maghreb* (Paris : L’atelier le Maitron, 2006).

<sup>19</sup> Despite the rich unionist experience of the Algerians, compared to the Moroccans and the Tunisians, the formation of national Algerian unions was delayed until the second half of the 1950s due to the crisis of the national movement.

the Maghrebin union, which remains, on more than one level, one of the possible and needed solutions to overcome the failures of the national state.<sup>20</sup>

Despite the fact that the generation of the national movement and independence came from popular and rural origins, the class position of its members witnessed significant changes after independence. This generation was directly linked to the running of the affairs of the rentier national state, which moved to adopt a developmental model relying on a central role for the state-owned public sector; as a result, this generation was among the main beneficiaries of the rentier character of the national state and its centrally planned economy. This generation began to exhibit signs of wealth and luxury, despite coming from popular origins and receiving little education from the colonists.

The fate of the first generation was organically linked to that of the national state, after it monopolized its management and centrally controlled its political decision-making. Consequently, the perception of the two successive generations toward the first was positive when the experiment of the national state was in an upward trend, especially in its first post-independence phases, for at least two decades, and before that with the experience of the liberation revolution. However, this positive image was blemished by the escalating difficulties of managing the national state beginning in the second half of the 1980s.

The first generation (of rural origins and which entered the city only after independence)<sup>21</sup> continued to employ its conservative, isolationist national discourse despite all the changes witnessed by Algerian society, led by the national state, with the liberation generation at its helm. This generation imposed one-party rule, despite having a short-lived pluralist experiment prior to the liberation revolution, after which the concept of party pluralism was abandoned. Even when the experiment of the public management of the economy was given up, the first generation continued to reject

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<sup>20</sup> The North African Star Party, which was formed in France in the second half of the 1920s, was originally a Maghrebin party in its leadership, structure, and base, before it fell under the control of the Algerians due to their strong presence in France. However, this did not prevent the continuation of direct contact between those stemming from the Arab Maghreb within the labor, student, and national movement in general, until the countries of the Maghreb gained their independence and isolationist patriotisms took hold over the national state in the free countries.

<sup>21</sup> Many television and film productions depicted the personality of the peasant who entered the city, witnessing a clear advancement in his economic situation without truly adapting to his new world, engendering an unhealthy behavior in some instances.

pluralism which equaled, in its eyes, discord and conflict, and therefore weakness. That was the lesson learned from this generation's experience as a product of the rural-dominated populist national movement, as well as the experience of the generations that preceded it. This generation led the liberation revolution and took the reins of power at an early age,<sup>22</sup> only to rule for a long period without considering giving up authority. That may have been the result of a conviction that the younger generations were still incapable, and devoid of the revolutionary legitimacy upon which the first generation had built its political glory.<sup>23</sup> In its eyes, the young generations have doubtful allegiance to Algeria, and are not endowed with the experience which would allow them to reach the centers of political decision-making, as was the case with the first generation. These generations would remain, according to the first generation, young in age and experience, regardless of their actual biological age. The liberation generation, like parents, will always perceive its sons as children, no matter how much they mature and gain in experience and knowledge.

### **The Independence Generation and Nation-building**

According to this classification of political generations in Algeria, the independence generation would be the second. It is the generation that was born in the late years of the liberation revolution and the early beginnings of independence. This generation has benefitted from the plentiful educational opportunities that were provided by the national state after independence;<sup>24</sup> the people in this generation entered the city at a young age, or may have even been born in it, which made it more adaptable and accepting of the city than the first generation, which maintained a hostility toward the

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<sup>22</sup> For instance, the current President Abdelaziz Bouteflika became Minister of Youth in 1962 immediately following independence when he was no older than 25 years of age (born in 1937). Similarly, President Boumediene occupied the head of the government, the Ministry of Defense, and, before that, the Command of the General Chief of Staff, before exceeding thirty years of age.

<sup>23</sup> Including, for instance, that the Algerian constitution states in its 73<sup>rd</sup> article that any candidate for the presidency born before July 1942 must prove his participation in the revolution of November 1, 1954, and, if he was born after July 1942, that his parents were not involved in anti-revolutionary action. These conditions of eligibility show the extent of the importance devoted to participation in the liberation revolution as a standard for determining the positions of political generations.

<sup>24</sup> The spread of education was relatively improving even during the late stages of the colonial period, specifically in the large cities, which allowed most of this generation to benefit from it.

city, its values, and its behavior.<sup>25</sup> However, the city will remain the main arena for the shortcomings of the generation that controlled the wheels of power, as well as the main arena of confrontation with the third generation and the protest movements that it organized against the establishment of the ruling generation beginning with the second half of the 1980s. This protest dynamic began when signs of weakness began to appear on the national state's economic and social project, which was under the domination of the generation that held tightly to its revolutionary legitimacy and rentier privileges.

As for the second generation, it was the one tasked with economic and social management, under the oversight of the first generation that turned it into a "generation of bureaucrats" who were to follow instructions, even if the second generation did partially benefit from the management of economic affairs. The educational achievements of the second generation have allowed it to manage economic and social institutions without reaching the center of political decision-making. From this perspective, the second generation occupies an important juncture between the first and third generations. They experience an everyday institutional relationship with the first generation by whom they are "employed" to enact economic and social policies. At the same time, they have a daily and direct relationship with the third generation, who they "command" in the economic, social, and service institutions it heads, such as the universities, the factories, and the employment sector in general. As a result, it is the only generation with direct relations with the other two generations. From this perspective, this generation bridges the different generations in Algerian society.

The second generation knew political and party activism in various ways, but to a limited extent; some of the representatives of this generation risked joining underground party activism during the one-party phase within various political organizations: leftist, Amazigh, and, later, religious. The political party experience of this generation, however, was ineffective, especially among the educated elements that were present in the world of business and management, and who continued with the daily use of the French language inside and outside the workplace. These categories

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<sup>25</sup> Studies conducted by the author on political elections in Algeria, especially during the era of multi-partism, clearly show that the average Algerian politician from the first ruling generation refuses to run for elections in the city, even if he had been living in it since his early youth, and prefers his village or small town that he had left a long time ago, making him a political creature without an effective popular base. This situation explains the disastrous results of this type of elite in elections where they ventured to run. See for more detail: Abdel Nasser Jabi, *Elections, State, and Society* (Algiers: Al-Qasba, 1999).

were known for having no interest in official political activism due to the dominant division of labor between “the political” and “the managerial” in the Algerian political experience. This division has distanced broad sections of this generation – those belonging to the middle class and its educated sections – from official political activism, which was handed to other social groups that framed the political experience of the ruling party during the one-party era. This was the case of teachers and civil servants in general who performed the role of mediators between the popular classes and the ruling generation and its institutions, though this was partly due to their knowledge of the Arabic language, which was given clear political and ideological roles unlike the French language, used as a language of business and management.<sup>26</sup>

The differences in the roles and positions of this generation can only be understood by examining the linguistic division that distinguished these middle classes, which are considered the main social ingredient of the following generation. This separation led to what the author has previously termed “sectoralism,” which characterizes the management of the state in Algeria with various outcomes, such as the undermining of state legitimacy in the eyes of the battling elites and citizens, and the conflict which takes place between the elites that are entrenched in their various sectors, which are in turn divided among elites along linguistic and cultural bases.<sup>27</sup>

Despite the diversity that characterized the political experience of the second generation on organizational levels, it has remained close to the extremely politicized national idea, even if it took at times a leftist, religious, or even an Amazigh cultural appearance. Nationalism, which was linked for this generation to the building and running of economic and social institutions within the framework of the specifically-Algerian generational division of labor, was a multifaceted professional and political experience that could not take the second generation away from the first on the

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<sup>26</sup> The settler colonialist situation in Algeria, and the deformities that it caused, have led to the Arabic language occupying the position of the “sacred language” that is the domain of the religious and the ideological, while the French language was granted the position of the language of business and modernity. The different roles of the two languages were reflected in the groups using them; during the one-party era the Arabized educated Algerian became specialized in everything relating to religion, ideology and politics while the French-educated Algerian was responsible for management and administration. This division also had institutional repercussions, leading teachers and civil servants to exert control over the Liberation Front Party, which remained separate from the technocratic and managerial domains.

<sup>27</sup> For further detail on the fragmentation of the elite and the sectoralism of the state in Algeria, see: Abdel Nasser Jabi, *Algeria: the State, the Elites, and Social Movements* (Algeria: Al-Shahab, 2008).



intellectual front; in fact, a rupture with the first generation was never considered. The independence generation could criticize the political management of the first generation, but without rebelling against it or contemplating a confrontation. This generation was not familiar with independent political initiative, having been trained to accept the roles delegated to it by the ruling generation. The second generation has accepted this role for a long period within the institutions of socialization that it experienced, beginning with the school, the factory, and the service establishment.

The political and economic choices adopted by the ruling generation, which followed the announcement of the shift toward pluralism and the market economy in the early 1990s, had a paramount effect on the positions of this second generation in the middle class, linked to the national state and its institutions for a long period. Many of the technocratic sections that were professionally tied to the public sector lost the economic and social positions that they occupied. The same took place with the groups that were linked to the state bureaucracy and its service apparatus, whose economic, social, and symbolic stature quickly deteriorated. This nascent situation did not push this generation toward rupture with the political logic of the first generation; at most, the reaction consisted of engagement with demands-based unionist action within the independent unions that appeared after the declaration of union pluralism,<sup>28</sup> or through the formation of political parties that did not transgress the limits drawn within the official pluralist political game with all its known flaws, such as falsifying elections, closing the media arena, and limiting party and associational activism.<sup>29</sup>

This was the situation of the middle classes of the second generation, whose economic and social position deteriorated due to the political choices made by the first. Other sections of this generation moved to adopt liberal choices, including many veteran leftists, after having benefitted from the economic opening, and having improved their social position based on their experience in the public sector and the social capital that it provided, inside and outside of Algeria. These groups conducted the transfer of

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<sup>28</sup> Most of the effective independent unions that appeared after the enactment of union pluralism in 1990 were formed in the public sector (health, education, and administration). These unions resorted to waging protracted strikes, usually for financial demands, primarily focused on the issue of salaries.

<sup>29</sup> This has led many political actors (parties and figures) to focus, during the phase of political dialogue launched by the regime in June 2011, on the importance of improving the daily performance of institutions and the daily application of the constitutional and legal framework, which was described by many politicians as not being realistic, regardless of its flaws and advantages.

monetary and social capital from the public sector to the private sector, which, by then, they controlled and managed, based on a clear familial strategy.<sup>30</sup>

The multiplicity of positions and paths for the members of the second generation may have had a role in their abstention from revising the legitimacy and the institutions of the first generation and from confronting it politically. However, the process of political socialization that this generation was subjected to, as well as by its perception of itself and of the first generation can also explain this stance. This second generation exists in a state of dissatisfaction and individual and collective suffering, psychologically and socially, which does not allow it to revolt against the fathers' generation in any case.<sup>31</sup> This study will discuss many potential reasons for the political impasse in Algeria, but it must be noted that one of the reasons for the crisis of political transition in Algeria lies in the inability of the second generation to confront the ruling generation of the fathers, in addition to their acceptance of the Algerian version of sectoralism, having been a generation that was raised in the shadow of the fragmentation that characterized the formation of Algerian elites.

### **The Third Generation: The generation of direct action and protest movements**

The birth of the sons of this second generation coincided with the first signs of weakness in the projects of the national state, which escalated later, and which began to be observed in the 1980s. The third generation came of age and learned about the national state while it was battling many economic, social, and political problems, due to the obvious degradation that was taking hold of the central institutions adopted by the regime and relied upon as institutions of social change, such as schools and industrial establishments.

As a result of the institutional atrophy that emerged during that period, the unemployment rate rose, including that of educated people and the youth in general.

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<sup>30</sup> Direct daily observation shows that many of the private industrial and service establishments that appeared following the economic opening in the early 1990s were fronts for cadres and managers who headed the economic and commercial institutions of the public sector.

<sup>31</sup> Many of the members of this generation resorted to quasi-collective emigration, especially when security conditions deteriorated in the 1990s. Many of the members of this generation emigrated at an advanced age and in difficult psychological conditions, which adversely affected the psychological and family balance of many of the sons of this generation, some of whom chose new emigration destinations for Algerians, including Canada, Great Britain, the Gulf countries, and Australia.

School dropout rates increased, and reliance on the school as an institution for social ascension declined among the popular classes, who had benefited from the educational system not long before. To compare the generations, it could be said that the "moment" of the second generation was one of ascension in its early beginnings, before entering the phase of malaise, which it experienced along with the third generation from different positions. On the other hand, from its beginning the political moment of the third generation was linked to the degradation of the national project, making the young generation the main victim of the failure of this project.<sup>32</sup>

This generation was born in the city, which witnessed an intense migration by Algerians beginning in the early years of independence for various reasons led by economic and social needs.<sup>33</sup> The main socialization of this generation took place in the neighborhoods and alleys of the city which was undergoing a multifaceted crisis in lodging, transportation, water quality, unemployment, and violence. The ensemble of these crises pushed this generation toward protest as a tool to express itself and its demands, choosing not to enroll in the existing official institutions, and even those formed by the opposition (parties, associations, and unions), constantly casting doubt on the official political and media discourse.<sup>34</sup> The only exception was radical political Islam, represented by the Islamic Salvation Front, which rose on the shoulders of these protest movements led by the urban youth of the third generation, who made use of the Islamist organization to advance their social and economic demands. The Islamic front rode that wave without enacting any reformist or intellectual initiatives, benefitting from the momentum of these movements in their early beginnings without being able to control or direct them during the phase of crisis and instability.

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<sup>32</sup> For more details, see the author's study: "Generations and Political Myths, or the 'Failed' Father and the 'Insubordinate' Son". The study was first published in Abdel Nasser Jabi, *Algeria From the Labor Movement to Social Movements* (Algeria: National Institute for Labor, 2002).

<sup>33</sup> In the city, the Algerian family could find a school in close proximity for its children and employment for its men and women, as well as better living conditions than in the countryside, especially during the first years of independence due to the destruction wrought upon the countryside during the liberation revolution and the delay of rural development projects after independence in comparison to the city.

<sup>34</sup> Among the signs indicating the young generation's disappointment in the ruling generation's official political discourse is youth abstention from reading political newspapers and political themes, preferring sports publications and sports pages, compared to the second generation, which remains the first consumer, and the main producer, of these media outlets in Algeria.

It could be said, then, that the Islamic Salvation Front was closer to the logic of protest movements than to that of party organization, which could be a major key to understanding the intensity with which the youth joined its ranks – unlike other political parties, including religious ones, such as the Nahda movement or the movement of the Society of Peace (Muslim Brotherhood),<sup>35</sup> which were incapable of riding the wave of these protests, like the leftist parties that suffered their deepest crises during that period.

These protests started in popular neighborhoods; protestors also used public spaces such as stadiums and mosques in order to work for a number of causes in strong expressive ways. These protests appeared to take the shape of “raw” movements without any effective framing, which made them often repeat themselves in their demands and expressions, without ever reaching their goals.

The first political participation of the youth in the post-independence period failed to achieve satisfactory results, having been brought to a real impasse by the radical religious currents, due to the armed violence that was exerted against the national state and the generation that controlled it. Following the end of large terrorist operations that characterized the 1990s, new expressive forms have emerged since the beginning of the new millennium that have been dominated by the individual character among the children of this young generation, especially given the reigning sentiment of the difficulty of collective change in Algeria. Rates of suicide among the youth have increased, as have the rates of drug use; the wave of illegal immigration to Europe has exploded, and new waves of Salafist religiosity have surfaced, focusing on a form of individual salvation, in contrast with the collective solution that was promoted by radical political Islam in the early 1990s and the late 1980s.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> The Brotherhood currently in Algeria, just like the left, was controlled by the middle class of the second generation that benefited from public education. Its political action was based on a participatory and reformist strategy that could not bring it closer to the radical protest movements.

<sup>36</sup> Starting in the second half of the 1980s, President Chadli Bendjedid adopted a return to a new, diverse, religious policy. He used some of the sheikhs of the Muslim Brotherhood, such as Mohammad al-Ghazali and Yusuf al-Qaradawi who had taught in Algeria’s universities and resided for long periods in the country. At the same time, he developed new relations with the traditional religious *Zawaya* that had remained secluded since independence. President Abdelaziz Bouteflika has adopted this policy of supporting the *Zawaya* in a notable way since arriving to power in 1999.

What is especially significant for this analysis is the fact that this third generation has been able to experience protest movements, and their accompanying individual and collective violence, against the revolution generation that controls the centers of political decision-making. This represents clear proof of the youth generation's dissatisfaction with the dominant generation that monopolizes political affairs in Algeria. This discontent is associated with a negative perception that is further deepening due to the confrontation that Algeria has witnessed over an entire decade when social inequality and corruption has increased, in all forms and at a shocking rate in a society that long believed in equality among its members.<sup>37</sup>

After entering the world of employment, this generation began to express itself directly in the workplace and in the factory, through labor strikes the likes of which Algeria had never known, in a clear rupture with the limited forms of protest of older workers, who were filled with the national idea and the experience of the liberation revolution.<sup>38</sup> These youth also expressed themselves through the rejection of official union structures, resorting to organizing protests and strikes outside of their framework, even before the legal acknowledgment of union pluralism. To that could be added the artistic expressions of that generation, such as Rai music and Amazigh songs, and all the other forms of artistic expressions that have been attempted in order to confront the official choices and tastes of the first generation and even the second generation, which was more open-minded, as a consumer of culture at least.<sup>39</sup>

## Relations Between Generations: The perception of the other

The above discussion shows that the relationship between the three generations, and the perception of each generation by the other, are not simple and homogeneous. This

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<sup>37</sup> A widespread Algerian generational joke says: he who did not study in the era of Boumediene will never study for the rest of his life; he who did not become wealthy in the age of Benjedid will never become wealthy in his life; and he who did not die in the era of Zirwal shall never die! Had this joke extended to the Bouteflika era, what would it have said about him?

<sup>38</sup> See the analysis by Algerian sociologist Dr. Djamel Guerid regarding the socialization and practices of what he terms the older classic laborer, and those of the third generation young worker: Djamel Guerid, *L'Exception Algérienne: La modernisation à l'épreuve de la société* (Algiers: Casbah, 2007), 188-242.

<sup>39</sup> The artistic choices of the third generation went in different ways, ranging between the erotic Rai songs and the activist Amazigh songs, as well as religious singing, all the way to a position completely rejecting all artistic forms following the Salafist interpretation of religion.

perception is not only built on personal factors, but also on the extent of the knowledge and contact between generations. It could be said that direct contact and work within the same institutions helps to establish a suitable ground for a healthy perception of the other. The second generation, which worked as an enforcer for the first generation in managing economic and social institutions, still holds reasonable respect toward the first generation and perceives it with respect and acknowledgment due to the roles that it played in the liberation revolution and the regaining of national sovereignty. In contrast, the third generation has refused to enlist in the institutions of the first – the official political and union establishment – which has not allowed it to enter into contact with the first generation.<sup>40</sup> The absence of contact between these two generations has deepened the negative image of the revolutionary generation (the first) in the minds of the youth generation (the third), a perception that neglects the critical historical roles achieved by this generation in the liberation of Algeria.

The issue does not stop at the absence of direct contact between the two generations inside institutions, but extends to other matters, including the political experience of the first generation that has monopolized the management of political affairs since the pre-independence era, which has made it responsible for the outcomes of this protracted management of the national state – along with the ensuing flaws, corruption, corrosion of legitimacy, inequitable distribution of national wealth, and confusion in the social and economic spheres, which have kept Algeria from advancing despite its natural and human resources.

The relationship of the second generation with the third remains more objective since it is a relationship that is closer to the one we find between employer and employee; it is a tense and antagonistic relationship, though not one of rejection and psychological distance. The daily relationship between the youth and the older second generation, which runs economic and social institutions, has been negatively affected by the environment of economic and social crisis, leading to the first fissures appearing in the

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<sup>40</sup> In recent years, authorities began to organize intellectual and political conferences where fighters from the revolutionary generation speak to the youth, in colleges and high schools, about their memories and experiences. Due to youth abstention from attending these lectures, the authorities resorted to bringing the students of police and civil defense colleges to fill the empty seats.

institutions managed by the second generation, but without reaching the level of rupture and enmity, as is the case in their relationship with the first generation.<sup>41</sup>

Points of conflict between the second and third generations increased due to the political and economic choices of the early 1990s, such as the shrinking role of the state, privatization and the ensuing firing of workers and dissolution of public institutions, as well as the accompanying financial crisis. However, these remained conflicts of interests and economic policies, without extending to the political and intellectual levels as with the young generation's perspective toward the revolutionary generation. The second generation does not want to emulate the same type of relationship it has with its fathers, nor does it want to occupy the father's position; it is also a generation that does not claim a revolutionary legitimacy that it lacks. This "revolutionary legitimacy" became a complex for younger generations in Algeria, making them perceive themselves as if lacking a "historical mission," and pushing them to yearn for victories, even small and ephemeral ones, as with numerous examples from the matches of the national soccer team.<sup>42</sup>

On the other hand, the new generation often accuses the second generation of being a "selfish" generation that, during that heated process of transformation, only cared for its class interests, which it knew how to preserve. In that sense, it is a generation with sociological features resembling those of a middle class whose upper echelons benefited from the centralized economic management to transit from the position of the employee to that of the proprietor, linked in many instances to foreign capital. That took place while the positions of many other groups in the lower middle class and the popular classes steadily deteriorated. The second generation could also be criticized for

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<sup>41</sup> Relations within the Algerian family witnessed many forms of conflict between the brothers representing the second generation, who succeeded through education and gained a measure of social promotion, and the younger siblings of the third generation, who generally have not continued their education. These dynamics should not distract from the many instances of cooperation between the two generations in the family environment, which became a major field for social, economic, and psychological investment by family members, following a strong feeling of the failure of collective social projects of change on the broad national level.

<sup>42</sup> The moment of the qualification of the national football team to the 2010 World Cup in South Africa was, despite its short length, one of the few moments after independence when the youth generation reconciled with the symbols of the national movement. The spread of the national flag was notable to the point where the ruling generation and its official media had to reassess their perspective on the extent of the "patriotism" of the young generation. Unlike the claims of the official discourse of the ruling generation and its institutions, the youth generation turned out to be "patriotic," and it never ceased to love Algeria. Officials attempted to exploit and extend that moment, even after the conclusion of the World Cup.

its failures in the field of administration, which led to preventing the formation of potential social alliances to defend the public sector and form a historical social coalition rooted in this important sector, as opposed to the dismantling that the public sector was subjected to. This scenario did not materialize because of the political socialization of the second generation, who lacked independent, political initiative that was not under the control of the first generation and its official political institutions, whose instructions it had become accustomed to obeying.

Inasmuch as the young generation casts a negative view on the first generation, there is, in return, an equally negative perception among the revolutionary generation toward the youth. It is viewed, in short, as an "ungrateful generation" and "confused," one that has revolted in the face of the "fathers" through daily protest; it is a generation that is not sufficiently endowed with national values, which it despises along with national symbols, to the point where it doubts the struggle and sacrifices of the independence generation. During this time, the 1990s,<sup>43</sup> many of the aging revolutionary fighters returned to carrying weapons against this "ungrateful generation" who rode the violent radical Islamist current and its protest movements, in order to direct them against the national state and its symbols. It was during this same time that a wave of assassinations that targeted many of the revolutionary strugglers and the sons of martyrs at the hands of religious terrorist groups, most of whom belonged to the youth category, occurred.

## Scenarios of Transition

Having discussed, in detail, the three generations that frame political life in Algeria, their institutions of socialization, and their perception of the other, this study shall move to its second part, which is related to the potential scenarios for transition in Algeria. As previously stated, this transition will not only be a political one, but also a generational, intellectual, and institutional transition as well, enacting change in the mechanisms of the management of the central political institutions and their relationship with each other, as well as in the relationship linking the civilian and military sectors. It is a transition that requires a departure from the traditional national idea, by renewing it

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<sup>43</sup> Before the assassinations, the youth's rhetoric (under the influence of extremist religious currents) escalated against the *Mujahideen* (those who participated in the liberation revolution), on the basis that they have received an exchange from the state for their struggle, which made them forfeit the virtue of *Jihad*, which can only be, according to religion, in the path of God, and not for ephemeral worldly benefits.



and reconnecting it to the modern age and to the active social groups that have moved away from it, such as the youth, women and the educated classes. This transition also requires that the revolutionary generation, who are now elderly, hand over the reins of political power to the younger generations. This transition confronts us with two possible scenarios. The first can be termed the "positive scenario" or the "reformist/non-revolutionary scenario," and it consists in the transition of political authority from the generation of revolution to the second generation, which is better educated and has more managerial experience. This would represent a transition of power to a generation that remains close to the national idea, even as it critiques it and calls for its development; also, this generation still holds great respect for the generation of the revolution, which may help achieve a smooth power transition between the two generations.

However, there will be many hurdles, the most important of which may be the characteristics of cultural and political socialization of the second generation, who grew accustomed to performing its tasks under superior political supervision, and did not learn political initiative outside of the framework presented to it by the revolutionary generation. Furthermore, broad sections of this enlightened second generation suffer from fragmentation, especially among the elite, who suffer from the inability to communicate in the Arabic language with the popular classes surrounding them, weakening the possibility of dialogue with them. This problem is widespread among the managers and the technocrats who were tasked with running the industrial and administrative sectors in Algeria. However, despite these difficulties, the advantage of the second generation lies in its middle position between the two other generations, which qualifies it to perform the role of the mediator. Moreover, its positive perception of the two other generations, and of itself, could help achieve the smooth transition of power. Additionally, the intellectual closeness represented in nationalism, which the second generation shares with the first, can help accomplish a smooth transition on the intellectual and political levels. This scenario, despite its relative calm and ease, would require deep reforms of the state institutions and their relations to society, including the parties, associations, and unions that are led by the second generation.

A second scenario, in which we would have a power transition from the first generation to the younger third generation, might become an alternative for the first in the event of its failure, or if the first generation refuses to "hand over the torch," a likelihood which can be sensed from the official political-media discourse. Such an eventuality would transform the second generation into a "sandwich generation" that is devoid of

effective political roles; it ages while it awaits a political role that will never come. However, this political role is the only element that is capable of peacefully deciding matters between the oldest and youngest generations in Algeria. Here, the element of time remains crucial to predicting the probability of the second scenario: the longer the effectuation of political transition in Algeria lasts, the longer we have an objective preparation for the realization of the second scenario. That would mean that the third generation, the generation of youth and social movements, would take the initiative and usurp authority from the first generation, which it views, along with its institutions and discourse, in a clearly negative manner, causing a rupture on several intellectual, political, generational, and institutional levels.

Thus, the question fully hinges on the generation of revolution and power, which controls political decision-making and its institutions. The second scenario, which could potentially be violent, is not necessarily fated if the generation that controls the centers of political decision-making organizes its retreat in a calm and amicable manner in favor of the second generation, its spiritual child.<sup>44</sup>

This situation explains why the political scene in Algeria is witnessing an internal struggle ranging between the demands of the second generation to radically reform the regime (as such, not demanding complete rupture with the existing situation, despite its criticisms and complaints), and the demands to overthrow the regime and radically transform it – a path that was taken by the third generation in a number of the protest movements. This duality could last for a relatively long period, but it will definitely reach a critical phase that will decide the shape of the historical solution to the crisis of political transition in Algeria.

### **The Conditions of Transition: Between objective and subjective factors**

At the end of the first part of the study, a reminder is in order that the process of political transition in Algeria is not occurring in a vacuum, as it is taking place within specific political and historical conditions, and not all of these may be helpful for a successful transition. These conditions will be divided into objective and subjective. The hypothesis of this study is that the former tend to be helpful conditions that advance

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<sup>44</sup> The question of political transition and the generational issue are present in the details of French-Algerian relations. Statements by former French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner made in 2010 caused a broad wave of Algerian protestation and led to his cancelling an official visit. He said that French-Algerian relations will not witness improvement as long as the generation of the revolution is the one ruling Algeria.

the positive direction of change, while the subjective conditions tend to hamper the transition process, representing serious hurdles to the achievement of the requisite reforms in Algeria. Mapping these factors and their influence would better explain the debacle that is currently happening in the reform process in Algeria.

At any rate, the objective conditions can be condensed into three major ones, which would aid in hastening and achieving successful political transition in adequate and acceptable circumstances. Some of these conditions relate to the financial situation of the country, while others are the product of the recent political experience of Algerians and the lessons learned from it. Lastly, there are conditions relating to the Arab and international dimension that are weighing heavily these days unlike what is sometimes claimed in the official political/media discourse, which reiterates the notion that the events taking place in the Arab world have no bearing on Algeria, in a manner similar to the slogan repeated in other Arab cases before protests struck.<sup>45</sup>

At a first glance, the financial situation of Algeria (not the economic situation)<sup>46</sup> seems to be a helpful factor for achieving transition because financial resources permit the decision makers to formulate economic and social decisions which accompany the complex transition process, without submitting to foreign pressures or fearing the financial impact of the choices made. The irony in this case is that the monetary situation, which is objectively advantageous, could become a hurdle for the transition

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<sup>45</sup> The official political/media discourse suffers from great confusion; sometimes it claims that Algeria achieved its political transition in 1988 and has paid a dear price for it, and that it is, therefore, not in need of new reforms, which it already enacted before everybody else more than two decades ago. However, the official narrative of the October 1988 events at the time was not similar to the one presented by the official discourse nowadays. The same incoherence can be observed regarding the January 2011 events, which were narrated by the official discourse in several ways and with varying depictions; sometimes, these events are presented as acts of rioting committed by lawless teenagers, while at other times the protests are described as a legitimate movement demanding the lowering of the prices of some staple goods. Eventually, the state began dealing with this protest movement that visited most Algerian cities as a political movement in the full sense of the term; immediately following the protests, the president of the Republic declared his intention to conduct deep political reforms, including the lifting of the state of emergency that had been enacted since 1992, the announcement of a substantial amendment of the constitution, the creation of new laws for elections and parties and associations, and the launching of political dialogue and consultations with the official political class.

<sup>46</sup> Algerian media sources (El Watan, July 28, 2011) reported that Algerian foreign reserves have reached \$160 billion. It should be noted that Algeria has already paid off all of its foreign debt. Nevertheless, the economic situation has not witnessed a noticeable qualitative improvement; reliance on oil and gas remains dominant (97 percent) at a time when the industrial base has already been dismantled and other alternative sectors, such as agriculture and tourism, are yet to emerge.

process, similar to the situation at hand since January 2011. During this recent period, the public authorities resorted to social policies that are closer to the logic of “social bribery”<sup>47</sup> than to social or economic reform. The objective was to purchase a fragile social peace that helps maintain the political status quo rather than change it, or to introduce cosmetic improvements that are, in the best of cases, limited to the legal framework without treating the heart of the problems. This had led the protest movement to continue and to diversify its demands, appearing not to have an upper limit, even with the persistence of economic and social demands, which often have a sectoral character.<sup>48</sup>

Among the other objective factors that facilitate the transition process is the notion that could be described as “the rationality of the Algerians,” who have suffered the horrors of a decade-long civil war, where the lives of more than 200,000 citizens were lost.<sup>49</sup> This rationality can be observed through the tone and content of the social and political discourse in Algeria in recent years, compared to the language of the 1990s, which was dominated by cultural and ideological battles, as opposed to socio-economic ones that have a wider margin of negotiation, unlike the former situation where the possibility of compromise is extremely low due to what Emmanuel Todd terms “the provocation of

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<sup>47</sup> Increases in salaries for many employees reached 100 percent, with a retroactive effect from 2008. At the same time, many loans were extended to young Algerians to establish small enterprises, while tens of thousands of social housing units (provided by the state at a normal rent) were distributed. Any serious dialogue with the independent unions, who had been demanding the improvement of purchasing power for their constituents for years, did not accompany the pay increases. These measures have not had a positive impact on the performance of institutions, since the public authorities did not consider casting the salary increases within a new social contract that determines rights and obligations. The task at hand was limited to securing a temporary social peace through the available financial liquidity, while a social contract requires dialogue between several parties whose existence and right to disagreement are acknowledged, which is not tolerated by the dominant official political logic.

<sup>48</sup> In addition to specific institutional and labor demands, the youth lead many of the protest movements with a social and economic character, often in their popular neighborhoods and the cities and towns that were reached by these protest movements, calling for demands such as the distribution of social housing, water, and the creation of jobs.

<sup>49</sup> This figure has become quasi-official, especially after President Bouteflika mentioned it in one of his speeches. The economic losses were estimated at \$20 billion, in addition to the psychological and social effects that often go unmentioned, such as the forced displacement of thousands of families and the sexual assaults and rape to which many children and women were subjected.

the anthropological depth of society,"<sup>50</sup> which is often linked to quick demographic shifts experienced by societies, as is the case in Algeria.

The protest movements witnessed in Algeria since January 2011 represent a more objective approach to social problems, which distances itself from ideological/cultural controversies that take long periods to resolve.<sup>51</sup> Another indicator is the weakness that has afflicted the political parties and movements that adopted these culturalist approaches which focused on the questions of language, identity, and religion. The same phenomenon can be observed in the media scene; the debates regarding identity, women, and other cultural issues that were strongly present in the 1990s and the late 1980s have waned today, especially after the popular shift toward social demands.<sup>52</sup>

Lastly, as part of the chain of objective conditions that facilitate the achievement and acceleration of the transition process, a mention should be made of the Arab and international dimension since the beginning of 2011. Algeria cannot, objectively, remain outside the Maghreb and Arab peoples, with conditions remaining in stasis in Algeria while the ceiling of reforms rises constantly in the region.<sup>53</sup> The Arab and international situation represent an element of pressure on the Algerian political regime to enact political reforms that would prevent it from turning into an "abnormality" in the region that would be internationally besieged and isolated from its immediate surroundings.

As previously stated, objective factors that facilitate transition and reform could also turn, in some cases, into hurdles to reform and transition. Such is the case of the advantageous financial situation of Algeria, when these resources have been used in a

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<sup>50</sup> Emmanuel Todd, *Après l'empire : Essai sur la décomposition du système américain* (Paris: Gallimard, 2004), p.79.

<sup>51</sup> The *El Watan* French-language daily estimated that an intervention by the riot police has taken place every two hours in Algeria during the period since January 2011, at an average of 555 protests a month and 18 protests every day. All of these protests have social and economic causes related to the distribution of national wealth, such as housing, water, and unemployment (See <http://www.elwatan.com>, June 9, 2011).

<sup>52</sup> The fragmentation of the educated middle class is clearly manifested in this instance; the Arabic-language press remains insistent on these subjects unlike the French-language publications.

<sup>53</sup> The modest ceiling of constitutional reforms in Morocco had a negative influence on constitutional and legal reforms in Algeria, which began to appear in the law drafts that were approved by the Algerian Parliament at the end of 2011. The two regimes have grown accustomed to competition, under pressure from the public in each country, each following the details of events in the other country.

process of broad social bribery in order to maintain the political status quo for the time being.

Similarly, the effect of the Arab and international dimension could be a negative one; for instance, the victory of the Islamists in post-revolutionary elections in Tunisia and Egypt provides the Algerian regime with arguments in favor of keeping things as they are, unchanged, under the pretext of the fear from repeating the previous experience that Algeria went through in the early 1990s, and which led to the collapse of electoral politics in January 1992 and the country's entry into a cycle of violence.

There is no doubt that the Libyan case will cast its shadow over Algeria, with its numerous negative outcomes, far more so than the influence of the positive aspects of the Tunisian and Egyptian experience because of the foreign military and political intervention, which has turned this neighboring country into a veritable monster that is used to blackmail the Algerian citizens. It is understandable, then, why the factor of time and sequencing is important to the launching of reforms in Algeria.

Among the non-helpful subjective factors is the matter of the specificities of the Algerian political regime and its management methods. The Algerian political system is not a presidential one, as was the case in Tunisia and Egypt – despite the powers that Bouteflika has regained in the position of the president, as a center of civic decision-making, since his second mandate in 2004. As such, the Algerian regime is not one that is amenable to change merely through the removal of its main pillar, as was the case following the escape of Ben Ali and the resignation of Mubarak.

Furthermore, the relationship linking the civilian and military sectors in Algeria will not be helpful to change and reform. For instance, the civilian manager could be replaced without any change to the effective decision-makers in the military. Even the military could witness a change on the level of personalities, as has taken place more than once, without it necessarily signifying a shift in the institutional relations between the military and the civilian domains.<sup>54</sup> This process is liable to extend the age of the regime and its current management methods, making the prospect of change difficult, as well as the ability to make institutions and individuals accountable, which weakens

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<sup>54</sup> For further details on the specificities of the Algerian political regime, see the author's study on the decision-making process in the Algerian political system, published as part of an edited book by Niveen Masad, *How Are Decisions Made in Arab Regimes*, (Beirut: Center for Arab Unity Studies, 2010).

transparency and the leaders' sense of responsibility.<sup>55</sup> The scenario of political transition in Algeria is further complicated by the weakness of parties and the existence of a popular political culture that is radical and demand-based, as well as one that believes in direct action, as is the case with the young generation hailing from the popular classes.

The second of the problematic subjective factors is related to the characteristics and roles of the middle classes in Algeria, with all the fragmentation that they suffer, which was partially discussed in the first section of this study. Despite the popular origins of most of the middle class, it remains isolated and divided culturally and linguistically. These elements will not be very effective in initiating reform, as mentioned above in the discussion on the second political generation, which was subjected to a process of socialization and a professional experience that led it to an impasse after the political and economic choices adopted by the state.

The damages suffered by these groups due to the state's choices made them resort to individual solutions,<sup>56</sup> which was clearly manifested in the spread of emigration from Algeria when times toughened, which was what a large section of the intellectuals and the educated middle classes did during the 1990s. This attitude was coupled with a trend toward individual isolationism and the abstention to participate in public affairs. Furthermore, a wave of fear took hold of many people, leading some to ask the army for protection from their social and political environment, which they no longer understood and whose political and cultural choices they did not approve of.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Many civilian officials, at the highest levels, including ministers and prime ministers, believe that they are not responsible for the flaws of the regime since they did not participate in the making of decisions. This was the argument of former Prime Minister Sid Ahmed Ghazali during an interview with Chafik Mesbah. Ghazali went as far as describing the technocrats and cadres, such as himself, as *Harakists* working for the regime (the *Harakists* are the Algerians who collaborated with the French army during colonialism) in interviews with Algerian newspapers.

Sid Ahmed Ghazali, *Questions d'état: Entretien avec Mohamed Chafik Mesbah* (Algiers: Casbah, 2009).

<sup>56</sup> Individual solutions became a dominant direction among many social groups, including the youth from the third generation, which is manifested in the emergence of Salafist currents, and the spread of drugs, suicide, and clandestine emigration. Similarly, the middle classes also witnessed a type of individual solution that went along with their resources and living conditions, such as immigration to Western countries and the Gulf. This situation reflects the difficulties of building a collective project for change in Algeria.

<sup>57</sup> These educated urban middle classes are relying on private schools to reproduce their social positions, as opposed to public schools whose standards are no longer trusted after their Arabization, to the point where they have been accused of graduating terrorists. This explains an aspect of the great struggle over the Algerian educational system,

Conversely, the logic of reform and change requires these middle classes, who are a main component of the second generation, to better connect with the offspring of the third generation in order to surpass subjective hurdles and create an opportunity for rapprochement with this young generation inside the institutions that are controlled by the middle classes, such as parties, unions, and associations.

In a similar vein, the impotence of these social groups was noteworthy during the first months of 2011, which witnessed a broad social movement that remains ongoing.<sup>58</sup> These middle classes did not attempt to frame the movement, or to work to endow it with political symbols and meaning. This inability was expressed by the political party that is controlled by the middle groups, as well as the independent unions<sup>59</sup> that remained limited to the logic of corporatist unionist demands, facilitating their being “bribed” by the public authorities and their financial resources. This situation has brought Algeria closer to the dominant model in the rentier Arab Gulf states: the middle classes and their political and unionist institutions have refused to undertake any attempt to “unify” these movements of demands and to give them a political dimension in favor of change and of reforming the political regime, which appears to draw the ire of these middle classes in more than one field, but they have practically abstained from changing it.<sup>60</sup>

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as an institution that no longer provides the secure reproduction of the middle classes in the public school, leading these groups to resort to private schools in Algeria and, specifically, to the Western and French university systems.

<sup>58</sup> This does not mean that Algeria was lacking in social dynamics before that date; the post-January 2011 phase was chosen merely as an example because it was distinguished by the density of demands and protests.

<sup>59</sup> As an example, the health sector hosts over ten independent unions, in addition to the structures of the central union (the General Union for Algerian Workers in its branches serving doctors, medical teachers, nurses, and state-employed doctors). Despite the fact that these groups have conducted long strikes that have lasted for over two months and have included the organization of demonstrations in the street, this dynamic has not led to coordination between unions or to a comprehensive approach toward the problems of the health sector, nor has it led to an approach relating to the political issues posed on the national level and their relation to what is taking place in the health sector, which would be preferable.

<sup>60</sup> The stance of these educated middle classes, their self-perception, and their relationship to the political regime can be observed by surveying some of the writings that have received widespread success in Algeria in recent years. These publications often range between autobiographies and testimonials, written by some of the representatives of this technocratic elite, such as Abderrahmane Hadj-Nacer, the former head of the Central Bank (1989-1992), who wrote the following phrase in the foreword to his book: “I write as I approach sixty years of age. In reality, I feel self-contempt every day. It is a feeling of contempt that I have as an Algerian citizen, but above all, as a person who was in charge of shaping the elite in Algeria. Someone my age should be in the phase where he reaps what he sowed



In this regard, the special position occupied by the second generation in the military establishment must be noted. In practice this generation currently controls the management of the military establishment on the daily technical and administrative levels, but it does not control the political decision-making inside this centralized institution. The political decision-making in the military remains generally in the grip of the first generation. This situation is especially important since it relates to the army, which is a major factor in the process of political transition, because of the role that the army, as an institution, is capable of fulfilling within this dynamic. It suffices to note here that the presence of the third generation (with all the characteristics discussed above, such as education, conditions of socialization, the nature of the relationship and perception toward the ruling first generation, and toward themselves and the younger generation) is a factor that objectively encourages the direction of the professionalization of the army and its non-intervention in political matters.

It goes without saying that the non-realization of the first scenario, which was described as “smooth” between the first and second generations, practically prepares for the occurrence of the second scenario, which would imply a different role for the army. Conflict could take place between the popular classes, as took place during the nineties, when the army was thrown into a confrontation with the popular social movements. This situation could also signify the army’s persistence in playing political roles, which may not be the desire of the military commanders belonging to the second generation since they, simply, did not “learn” to undertake such roles. This would mean a continual monopolization of political decision-making by small cliques of aging army

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his entire life, with full satisfaction with the work that he achieved, living comfortably in his home, feeling secure about the future of his children. However, a great feeling of frustration constantly accompanies me, and I am not the only person in this situation, which is shared by the majority – or even the totality – of my people. Herein lies one of the ironies of Algeria: such a feeling may be common among the deprived classes, or even among those who think that they are being excluded by the regime; however, we find this sentiment to be widespread among those that we term ‘decision makers,’ and even among those who benefited from the (petroleum) rent. This is a bizarre situation, which is specific to Algeria. The people who control the power of decision making, at least formally, and who benefit from managing the system, are among the first critics of this regime. A truly ridiculous situation...”

For more detail on this book-autobiography, whose author chose not to write in the field of his specialty, economics, despite his long national and international experience in this domain, preferring his first book to be a testimonial on the Algerian crisis, see: Abderrahmane Hadj-Nacer, *La Martingale Algérienne: Réflexion sur une crise* (Algiers: Barzakh, 2011).

commanders from the first generation, at the expense of the better-educated cadres of the second generation who practically manage the military institution.

The third subjective factor, which is not likely to facilitate change, relates to what was termed "the characteristics of popular political culture," which was described above as demand-based, radical, and egalitarian. It is a culture that prefers to express itself through direct action. This situation places us, these days, in front of another historical juncture where Algerian society repeats its own experience, which is shaped by Algerian political specificities, its cultural and social makeup: radical popular classes making initiatives and demands, in contrast with middle classes and elites that are completely devoid of initiative and action. This was exactly the situation during the liberation revolution, when the middle classes and the parties that spoke on their behalf failed to find a resolution to the national question, opening the way for popular forces to intervene and decide the matter. This explains the popular character of the liberation revolution in Algeria and its radicalism, compared to what took place in Morocco and Tunisia, for instance, which did not experience the long period of colonialism of Algeria, where the local bourgeoisie was capable of dominating the national movement and directing it in a manner that serves its interests.

The characteristics of this popular political culture, combined with the fragmentation of the Algerian middle class and its lack of political initiative, make the possibility of a meeting between the popular social movements and the institutions of the middle class unlikely and difficult. This will cause grave repercussions to the fate of these movements and their ability to achieve their goals. This inability to form a social convention will strongly affect the projects of change and reform in Algeria, which appear to be in crisis, especially if that was linked to the refusal of the ruling classes to depart the positions of political power, despite the failure of the adopted policies, which has reached the level of a veritable crisis in recent years.

Lastly, the crisis of the possibility of change in Algeria is manifested, again, in the preference toward individual solutions and the lack of faith in collective action. This is a phenomenon that can be observed among more than one generation of Algerians, as expressed through the lyrics of a song by the popular singer Baaziz: "Today, *je m'en fous* (I don't care)," which discusses a nonchalant Algerian man who only cares for himself and his personal issues; he does not join parties, which he had abandoned a long time ago; he prefers to pray at home rather than the mosque; he does not read newspapers nor does he trust any discourse because all of these are, to him, mere lies and *fisti* ("nonsense," in the Algerian dialect).