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THE ELLIOTT SCHOOL
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ENOUGH IS NOT ENOUGH: SOCIAL
MOVEMENTS IN CONTEMPORARY ALGERIA

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Introduction

President Abdulaziz Bouteflika's February 2014 announcement of his candidacy for a fourth term in office prompted criticism, conspiracy theories and calls to boycott the April 2014 elections. However, social movements that arose in response to the announcement were lackluster at best. Barakat, a self-described, peaceful, democratic organization against a fourth term of Bouteflika has over 28,000 likes on its Facebook page¹, but most demonstrations organized by this group in Algeria have only garnered tens of participants, with the largest demonstration getting anywhere between 100 to 200 participants.² Indeed, many self-described socio-political movements that have arisen within the past twenty years have failed to gain widespread support.

The existing literature on social movements during and after what is remembered today as the Black Decade—the period of armed conflict between the Algerian government and various Islamist groups which followed a brief political opening in 1988-92, derailed by the regime's response to the *Front Islamique du Salut's* (FIS) victory in the first round of 1991 parliamentary elections—is quite limited in scale and scope due to effects of that conflict on social scientific research. However, the consensus viewpoint of the existing literature, produced by pundits and political analysts like Narrimane Benakcha,³ claims that there is an obvious connection between the memory of the black decade and the reluctance of Algerians to protest en masse or take action that may threaten stability. However, social protest and movements for change have persevered.

¹ “Mouvement ‘barakat.’” Facebook. Web. 21 March 2014.

² Meziani , Allaoua. “حركة 'بركات' تتظاهر في الجزائر احتجاجا على ترشح بوتفليقة دون تدخل الشرطة.” *France 24*. 15 March 2014. Web. 15 March 2014.

³ Benakcha, Narrimane. “The Algerian Regime: An Arab Spring Survivor.” *Journal of International Affairs*, (2011). Web. 9 April 2014.

This paper examines why these social movements in contemporary Algeria often fail to bring about change. Here, change is defined as any substantial alteration to political or economic policies (see Table 3 for examples), and failure is measured both by the movement's own defined parameters of success (i.e., objectives reached) and by the popular reception of the movements. Movements here are defined as groups which self-identify as a movement. Local protests, associations or other organizations, which may illicit direct responses from the government, do not necessarily fit in to this category.

The influence of the black decade is still fresh in the minds of the Algerian people and the Algerian state, both of which have modified their approach in dealing with each other. This modified system pushes the state to be more liberalized and open and the people as more subtle and wary. This paper argues that Algeria is a liberalized oligarchy with controlled freedom of the press, expression and association. These freedoms allow for the population to form social movements and air grievances but with knowledge that the state may respond only with superficial changes or may deter these groups in other ways. This, along with the black decade, creates an environment in which the state, the media and the movements themselves remain in a delicate balance with one another.

Three major actors contribute to the general ineffectiveness of social movements. The first, the state, follows Daniel Brumberg's model of a liberalized autocracy⁴ – used in this case to analyze a liberalized oligarchy – in that it supports a civil sphere which debates and opposes the government as well as a press which can mostly, though not fully, candidly print ongoing criticisms and controversies. This openness insulates the autocratic state from direct challenges and allows it to coopt and control groups at a safe

⁴ Brumberg, Daniel. "The Trap of Liberalized Autocracy." *Journal of Democracy*. 13.4 (2002): pp. 56-68. Web. 28 Feb. 2014.

distance. The second major actor is the media, which can both sully the name of social movements by alleging links they have with corrupt parties or advocating for the social movements, with the effect of exaggerating their influence and thereby losing the trust of the reader for both the social movement and the media outlet. The third actors are the movements themselves which are unable to connect with Algerian citizens and their priorities for the reasons outlined above and in the shadow of the black decade and chaotic reflections of it in the post-Arab Spring turbulence. Social movements also stall themselves simply from disorganization, incompetence, or inability to innovate and capture people's imagination and garner their support. This paper will analyze the role of these three actors.

Social Movements in Algeria

There is a somewhat limited literature on established social movements in Algeria notably Islamist, feminist, radical socialist and Amazigh varieties. The power these movements garner stems from their ability to rally people around common grievances which are often cast in identity terms.⁵ The Islamists' rallying message is the belief that Algeria has moved away from the religion which characterized the essence of Algerian state and society prior to the revolution and which unified revolutionary fighters against the French. Following Algeria's democratic opening sparked by the 1988 riots, the FIS touted slogans dating from the national liberation struggle attempting to establish their movement as the rightful heir of the FLN,⁶⁷ "by the people and for the people."⁸ This was

⁵ Interview, William Lawrence. Washington, D.C.

⁶ "Le FIS est le fils du FLN". Slogan of FIS. Quandt, William B. *Between Ballots and Bullets: Algeria's Transition from Authoritarianism*. Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2001.

why their movement was able to form a political party with enough support to threaten the state.

This rallying point of identity is also present in the feminist movement, which found its platform in opposition to both the state and Islamist groups especially in reference to the Family Code of 1982.⁹ The Berber Spring of 1980 stemmed from the identity created from increased immigration to France and a growing class of Amazigh intellectual elites which mobilized people of all classes around a joint Kabyle identity.¹⁰ Other notable social movements of Algeria's past came from student groups or unions or banned political parties, all of which had unifying and organizing ideologies and identities.

Older-generation social movements which have survived to the present are all represented either by their own political party or maintain a strong alliance to or manifestation in an existing political party. This connection is a double edged sword in that, on the one hand, the agenda of these groups is discussed and promoted by the parties in the political sphere, but, on the other hand, the role these politicians play in their positions as ministers or parliamentarians in a much maligned political system sullies

⁷ Interview, William Lawrence. Washington, D.C.

⁸ Evans, Martin and John Phillips. *Algeria: Anger of the Dispossessed*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007. Print.

⁹ Lawrence, William A. III. "Representing Algerian Youth: the Discourses of Cultural Confrontation and Experimentation with Democracy and Islamic Revival since the Riots of 1988." Diss. Tufts University, 2004. p. 110.

¹⁰ Djabi, Abdel Nasser. "Algeria: From social regimentation to new popular movements." *The State of Resistance*. Ed. Francois Polet. London: Zed Books, 2007. Print.

their actions in the view of some citizens, who consider these representatives to be coopted allies of an autocratic state.

Because of this, established social movements do not inspire the same interest they once did. The social movements of contemporary Algeria, like Barakat, do not necessarily have a common social identity and are sometimes quite heterogeneous. Newer groups which tend to be dominated by young people—or people of a certain economic class, or people of a specific region—often do not rally support around ideologies and identities as much as in established social movements. Also, unlike the established movements, movements of today recognize that allying with a political party or entity is a proven way to damage the reputation and perceived independence and purity of message of the group. This attribute is shared with youth movements across North Africa pre- and post-Arab Spring.¹¹

Liberalized Autocracies of the Middle East

This paper specifically analyzes social movements within the context of the liberalized autocracy. Daniel Brumberg coined the term to describe states which selectively liberalize and repress for a calculated survival of state. The purpose of this is that the state can use dissonance for its own good, only to crack down on it when the state is threatened. Andrea Liverani identifies three methods the Algerian state—which Hugh Roberts and William Lawrence identify as an oligarchy rather than an autocracy, but with autocratic elements under Bouteflika—uses to control and monitor non-state entities in her book *Civil Society in Algeria: political functions of associational life*. First, the state is able to categorize, divide, and rule competing groups, using some as scapegoats for

¹¹ Interview, William Lawrence. Washington, D.C.

others. Second, associations and movements must comply with the legal and bureaucratic framework maintained by the state, which allows their activities to be closely monitored. Third, associations and opposition groups are a safety valve that allows opposition groups to let off steam while presenting the state as democratic to international actors. This paper asserts that these methods of control affect all social movements, both formally and informally, and beyond those methods the state will even use infiltration and cooptation of movements.

Thus, liberalized autocracies may boast a superficially impressive associational sector, a relatively free press and multiparty elections, but social movements are still coopted, controlled or undermined by the state. Liberalized autocracies in the Middle East include pre-revolution Egypt, which shares a striking similarity with the Algerian case. Trust of both the state and opposition groups was low in Egypt, as in Algeria. Voter turnout was low and opposition parties often boycotted elections in protest of alleged voter fraud. Social movements existed, but faced problems enacting change. Conversely, an example of a less-liberalized autocracy is pre-revolution Tunisia in which civil society was highly restricted to those allied with the government, and those that were not operated in a climate of fear and intimidation. However, both Egypt's and Tunisia's social movements expanded and ultimately overthrew their governments in the Arab Spring. An obvious difference between social movements in Algeria and these countries is Algeria's history of the black decade, which creates a context for both the state and movements to concede to each other. Another notable factor is the state's reach of power, which, although comparable to the autocracies of Tunisia and Egypt, is bolstered by

hydrocarbon wealth allowing for rentier-style control over the population.¹² The black decade has heavily impacted the failure of social movements to enact change, and the state indeed exercises control over movements, limiting their success, but neither explanation fully accounts for the track record of socio-political movements. Rather, the three actors referenced above, the state, the media and the movements are all distinguished by their relationship to each other and to the black decade and create an environment prone to failure.

Therefore, the degree of liberality of the state cannot fully explain the ability of social movements to succeed. The Algerian state does not take full blame for social movements' unsuccessful track record. Among other factors, the media and the activists themselves play a role in the context of a liberalized oligarchy and contribute to the stalling of social movements.

Methodology

We conducted qualitative field research in the form of semistandardized and unstandardized interviews in Algiers, Algeria. Semistandardized interviews can be optimal when the researcher does not know how the interviewees will react to certain themes.¹³ Therefore, we assessed that this type of interview was necessary when asking politically sensitive questions to different individuals who understand Algerian politics in varying ways. In an unstandardized interview, the interviewers must develop, adapt, and

¹² Henry, Clement M. "Algeria's Agonies: Oil Rent Effects in a Bunker State," *Journal of North African Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (2004). pp. 68-81.

¹³ Berg, Bruce L. and Howard Lune. *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*. Upper Saddle River: Pearson Education, Inc., 2012. Print.

generate questions appropriate to the given circumstances and interview subject.¹⁴ These interviews are best conducted when researchers start with the assumption that they do not know in advance what all the necessary questions are. Because some of our perspectives of Algerian media and political events were evolving on the ground, unstandardized interviews shed light onto how Algerian citizens interpreted these same observations and thus introduced new possibilities to our analysis. We also conducted unstandardized interviews through two focus groups of Algerian students and young professionals. These focus groups allowed us to observe free-form discussions on social movements in Algeria, and learn common terms of expression for political events and varying opinions toward media sources, specific groups and political actors.

Our sample of interviewees is diverse in terms of age, occupation and hometown, but all of the interviewees are from similar education levels and are residents of the capital Algiers. Travel, time and research authorization constraints prohibited us from making connections with those of other social strata and cities.¹⁵ However, within the scope of our project our sample of interviews is analytically valuable because they fell into one (or more) of three categories: 1) academics who have professionally studied Algerian politics, 2) activists, former activists and potential activists involved in social movements in some capacity, and 3) professionals and students uninterested or disengaged with social movements. It is worth noting, therefore, that our sample included Algiers-based university educated citizens who were the “likely” participants in social and political movements and had completely opted out.

¹⁴ Ibid. 110.

¹⁵ Standardized, large-scale surveys with a broader sample of interviewees would have provided a valuable level of analysis to this research, but it was outside the practical limitations of this project.

Although the majority of our literature review focuses on Algeria, we compared the current Algerian context to the legal, structural and cultural framework of pre-revolution Egypt and Tunisia. Egypt is similar to Algeria in that both countries are military-backed authoritarian regimes with struggling and diverse opposing social movements. Tunisia differs from Algeria in that it was a much stricter autocracy and social movements were given considerably less freedom. These comparisons help identify in what ways Algeria's social movements are unique or not entirely unique.

The State

Algeria has an autocratic state that has undergone several evolutions. Jean Leca attributes the resilience of the Algerian state to its mutation from populist authoritarianism, one based on the legitimacy of the revolutionary fighters, to pluralist authoritarianism, one which employs the diversity of social movements and political divisions for the benefit of the state.¹⁶ Remarkably, the same camp of individuals who took power via the revolution and immediately after it has continued to hold on to power throughout the course of the last sixty years. As described above, Algeria is an example of a liberalized oligarchy. Yahia Zoubir suggests that the state began to liberalize in the late-1980s because the regime was threatened by violent upheavals fueled by socio-economic grievances, wanted the approval of international institutions and, most

¹⁶ Leca, Jean. Foreword. *Civil Society in Algeria: the Political Functions of Associational Life*. By Andrea Liverani. 2008. London: Taylor and Francis (2008). Print.

importantly, had lost a significant degree of its legitimacy dating from the independence era.¹⁷

Throughout the black decade beginning with the 1992 coup, Algeria lurched back towards the authoritarianism of the 1970's, galvanizing a subset of Algerians around the need for heavy-handed security against terrorism. As the war drew on for years, the state lost credibility both with international and domestic constituencies and stakeholders. However, the state attempted again to open up the political system with the 1997 parliamentary elections by selectively approving political parties to represent various social movements. Since the black decade, the Algerian government returned to a slow-paced liberalizing track by passing – what have been criticized by international organizations and opposition movements as nominal – changes to laws like the Family Code or Law of Associations. These changes are gradual in relation to the rapid opening in the late 1980's that preceded the black decade, thus indicating that the state has not forgotten the regime-threatening fallout from that rapid change.

Algeria's neighbor, Tunisia, was less keen to liberalize during the 1990's, in part based directly on their reading of events next door. President Zine Ben Ali's policies preferred total autocracy to political opening. Jack Brown has observed that it was strange that Algeria, which had a much freer and more active civil society than Tunisia, did not pull together in mass protest in 2011.¹⁸ Protests in Algeria occurred in 2011, but much of this period's activities were marked up to reactions to commodity price increases,

¹⁷ Zoubir, Yahia H. "The painful transition from authoritarianism in Algeria." *Arab Studies Quarterly*. 15:3 (1993). Web. 1 March 2014.

¹⁸ Brown, Jack. "Algeria's Mid-Winter Uproar." *Middle East Report Online*, 20 January 2011. Web. 28 March 2014.

not larger political issues.¹⁹ Still, Tunisia’s revolution began with similarly mundane issues but quickly focused on larger reactions against the tyranny of the state. When comparing the two states, Brown concludes that: “In Algeria, the regime headed by President Abdelaziz Bouteflika practices a subtler form of authoritarianism, which pulls its more robust opponents into a gentle embrace before smothering them politically.”²⁰

More similarly to Algeria, Egypt under President Mubarak allowed opposition and a somewhat robust but highly controlled civil society sector. Most associations, for example, were in the economic, social or cultural spheres, and were under direct supervision of the Ministry of Social Affairs which held the right to refuse or dissolve any association at will.²¹ Egypt differed from Algeria in that rather than “smothering” the opposition, as Brumberg phrases it, the state put formal distance between itself and society so as to let society create its own competitive and dissonant politics, all the while keeping a tight lid on certain actions it deemed outside of regime interests.²²

This paper explores three broad mechanisms used for control by autocratic states in general: bureaucratic obstacles, divide and rule and cooptation. Table 1 breaks down how the Algerian state uses these mechanisms and compares it to how the Egyptian and Tunisian states have used them as well – both formally through the law and informally.

¹⁹ The framing of these protests as apolitical is controversial. Mustafa Benfodil claims that: “[The government] labelled these events ‘riots of sugar and oil’ as if Algerians were not capable of claiming their dignity. They are digestive tracts only.” Befodil, Mustafa, and Karima Bennoune, “Algerian elections and the Barakat Movement: We are saying no to submission.” *Open Democracy*. 2 April 2014. Web. 2 April 2014.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Hassan, Hamdy, “Civil Society in Egypt under the Mubarak Regime.” *Al-Arabiya*. 13 May 2013. Web. 5 May 2014.

²² Brumberg, “The Trap,” p. 61.

The table draws on existing literature on liberalized autocracies and provides examples of how they interfere and control social movements.

Table 1. State Mechanisms for Control of Social Movements

State Mechanism for Control	Example
<i>Algeria</i>	
Bureaucratic Obstacles	Associations must have licenses, public protests must have permits, law grants bureaucrats right to interpret which associations and manifestations are legal, ban few political parties and affiliations
Divide and Rule	Scapegoating local associations for government failure, creating or exploiting divisions within movements (eg. Islamist, Amazighist)
Cooptation	Socialist, Feminist, Islamist movements represented in ruling party coalition
<i>Egypt (under Mubarak)</i>	
Bureaucratic Obstacles	Registration for associations was mandatory, meetings were allowed without registration, but both associations and meetings were subject to vague and unpredictable restrictions against activities
Divide and Rule	Scapegoated Islamist organizations for violence, played on class divides
Cooptation	Coopted opposition's agenda to gain supporters from said groups
<i>Tunisia (under Ben Ali)</i>	
Bureaucratic Obstacles	Associations and public meetings had to have licenses, very few were granted.
Divide and Rule	Played on differences between classes and regions; scapegoated Islamists
Cooptation	Coopted secular movements by catering to secular opposition's agenda

Sources: The International Center for Not for Profit Law, Human Rights Watch

Bureaucratic Obstacles

Algeria's overtures toward political opening are apparent through its liberal policies of multipartyism, free speech and freedom to associate. However, true to the model of a liberalized oligarchy, these freedoms are limited and serve to help the state control these movements. Although movements may have legal rights to operate, they face bureaucratic obstacles, and the law is vague enough to give security officials the right to arrest activists for most activities.

Algeria formally became a multi-party system in 1989 after a constitutional reform. More than sixty parties were able to register and participate in the municipal elections of 1990. After constitutional reform in 1996 designed to concretize the strategic underpinnings of the anti-FIS coup of 1992, parties could no longer be founded on religious, linguistic, racial, gender-based, corporatist or regional bases nor could parties “resort to partisan propaganda.”²³ The FIS continues to be banned under this and other provisions of the constitution.

Although during the black decade, speaking freely publically on certain issues was a daring feat, Algerians have felt empowered to talk about a wide range of issues since 1988, even criticisms against the regime and the president. Facebook groups like *Mouvement ‘barakat’* are active with critical comments against the government. However, Algerians, including Algerian student participation in our focus groups, expressed their concern that it is easy to talk but that talking will not change anything in the government.²⁴

Opposition parties and groups commonly boycott elections as a form of protest, but only sometimes are people arrested for this. In 2012, young cyber activist Tarek Maameri was arrested and brought to trial over his very public boycott of the legislative elections. He was quietly arrested in May 2012, leading many of his Internet followers to

²³ “Constitution of the People’s Democratic Republic of Algeria, 1989 (amended by the Constitutional Revision of 1996),” University of Richmond, Online, accessed April 2, 2014.

²⁴ Interview, Students. Algiers, Algeria. March 10, 2014.

claim kidnapping.²⁵ He later turned up in police custody and went to trial in which the prosecutor charged him with public disturbance with a sentence of three years in prison.²⁶

Some international bodies, following de Tocqueville's praise of associations as “armies against the enemy”, view a high number of associations as a healthy indicator of democracy. The highly restrictive Law of Associations was written in 1990 before the black decade. It mandates that associations must register with the government, and the government may exercise discretion in dissolving associations. The law also states that associations cannot have any structural or institutional relationships with political parties.²⁷ The Law of Associations was updated in 2012, but did not make it easier to register or appeal rejection of an association. Significantly, the law made it much more difficult for associations to receive foreign funds, putting a chill on international cooperative efforts with Algerian NGOs in every domain.²⁸ Public numbers of associations are inflated, and include total registrations, not the much smaller number of active groups. A series of articles in El Watan from 1997 to 1998 noted that beyond the discrepancy between registered and active associations, some associations appeared to be completely fictitious.²⁹

Public gathering and protests must also seek the permission of the government. The 1990 Law on Public Meetings and Gatherings allows the government to deny

²⁵ Ainmakandz. “كلنا المختطف طارق معمرى” Youtube. 2 May 2012. Web. 30 March 2014.

²⁶ النيابة تطالب بسجن المدون طارق معمرى ثلاث سنوات لدعوته الي مقاطعة الانتخابات *France 24*. 14 June 14. Web. 30 March 2014.

²⁷ “NGO Law Monitor: Algeria,” The International Center for Not For Profit Law, online, accessed April 2, 2014.

²⁸ Interview, William Lawrence. Washington DC.

²⁹ Liverani, Andrea. *Civil Society in Algeria: the Political Functions of Associational Life*. London: Taylor and Francis (2008). Print. p. 52

permits to a gathering which “opposes national values,” thus giving bureaucrats the right to interpret the legality of given meetings or demonstrations. Protests concerning President Bouteflika’s bid for a fourth term were often dispersed and participants arrested on the grounds that the protest was not registered. Some demonstrations went unchallenged, however, as a March 15 protest by Barakat faced no opposition by police, underscoring the arbitrariness of the law and its application.

Divide and Rule

Liverani writes that the Algerian government outsources failure to non-governmental or local entities.³⁰ Scapegoatism allows the government to insulate itself from popular dissatisfaction. Scapegoatism is also a piece of a larger strategy to divide and rule. This tactic is used against opposition parties, associations and social movements which, in Algeria, fail to keep alliances with each other.

In 2001, flooding in Bab El Oued, a popular suburb of Algiers, created a mudslide and widespread destruction. Although poor city planning contributed to the destruction -- drains had been blocked by the military as they were a threatening place for terrorists to rig with explosives -- neighborhood committees and local associations took blame for the destruction. SOS Culture Bab El Oued (SOSBEO) opened the doors of what was normally a space for musicians to practice to distribute food to the victims. More than once, due to scapegoating, SOSBEO staff reportedly got in physical fights with inhabitants over their distribution efforts. Likewise, associations, like RAJ and the Red Crescent, squabbled with each other over the effectiveness of food distribution and who

³⁰ Ibid. p. 23.

was responsible for reporting accurate numbers to the government for the ensuing housing replacement program.³¹ Rather than stepping in as a mediator, the government contributed to the finger pointing. Colonel El-Habri, Director General of the Civil Protection accused local associations of “being conspicuously absent at the time of tragedy.”³²

The flooding of Bab El Oued is an example of political scapegoatism and highlights the resulting rifts which exist—and are aggravated—between groups. Associations and social movements fail to make alliances with one another because they are fragmented and seek different things. Political science professor Abdehamid Bessaa stated that social movements’ rivalries with each other today divide the support, authority and money, rendering them weaker. With weak organizations to represent their interests, the only way for people to express themselves is in the street, but this is not a good solution because the movements come across as disjointed and violent.³³

Although movements may be disjointed and violent, as Bessaa describes, the state uses these weaknesses to further divide and rule. A clear example of this is the Islamist movement which was in fact developed as several independent movements during the 1970’s and 1980’s. Some of these groups were more extreme than others. After the 1992 cancellation of democratic elections, FIS members debated among themselves whether to form an armed wing – which they eventually did in 1994. More extreme factions, some of them government infiltrated and manipulated, formed shadowy armed entities known generically as Groupes Islamiques Armes (GIA)—Armed Islamic Groups—which

³¹ Ibid. pp. 36-39.

³² Ibid.

³³ Interview, Abdehamed Bessaa. Algiers, Algeria. 10 March 2014.

targeted intellectuals, women, foreigners and was even prone to acts of violence against seemingly random individuals. By 1994, these nebulous “armed Islamic Groups” had coalesced into *the* GIA, or “Armed Islamic Group.” The terror that this group reined on the population, including false flag attacks staged by the Algerian government, caused public relation problems for all Islamist groups, including FIS, and for the government. While there is significant evidence – from contradictory GIA documents and testimonies of defectors – that these factions were infiltrated and used to some extent by Algeria’s security forces to discredit FIS, a full accounting of the government role in Algeria’s atrocities is still a work in progress.³⁴³⁵ Suffice to say that widespread public skepticism of both Islamist and governmental narratives stems from this period.

Cooptation

A third way the state exerts control over social movements is through cooptation. Cooptation occurs when a group subsumes and assimilates weaker groups even if the weaker groups do not consent or agree to the larger group’s ideals. There has been a significant amount of literature on the cooptation of the feminist movement in the American War on Terror in Afghanistan, by the Soviets in Central Asia, and by French colonial officials in North Africa.³⁶

³⁴ Algeria-Watch, “GIA: Armed Islamist Groups Serving the Algerian Sécurité militaire?” Mar. 2003. Web. 4 May 2014.

³⁵ Willis, Michael. “Islamism in Algeria: The Politics of Inclusion and Exclusion.” *The Arab-African and Islamic Worlds: Interdisciplinary Studies*. eds., R. Kevin Lacey and Ralph M. Coury, New York: Lang Publishers, 2000.

³⁶ Delaney, Paul. “In North Africa, Feminists on Diverging Paths,” *New York Times*, 6 Jan. 1988.

Similarly, the Algerian government coopted and manipulated feminist movements. In what would become known as the Hassi Messaoud atrocities, a mob of local men attacked an apartment complex full of mostly single women employed by the oil companies in the town. The women were raped, beaten and some died later from their injuries. The affair shocked the country and became interpreted as a return to the media spectacle of violent Islamist-led “femicides” which occurred throughout the 1990’s, despite the fact that violence against women in Algeria was perpetrated with greater frequency by the security forces than by Islamists. Not only was this discourse reinforced by the government and the sensationalist press, but women who questioned these narratives were often subject to considerable ostracization by the polarized regard of their feminist peers. The government’s response to the atrocity was to send a delegation of sympathetic feminist activists to administer support to the victims. The delegation included Fettouma Ouzegane, a fighter during the Independence War who later recalled that they were being used by the state.³⁷ The victims were transported by the military to a hostel where they apparently were left without sufficient access to food or medicine. The result is that the crime, which was a complex indication of grievances and social malaise, was simplified to an issue of Islamists versus women with the state portrayed as the latter’s protector.

Indeed, established social movements have been represented, at least in name, in alliances with the ruling party. Louisa Hanoune, president of Algeria’s Workers Party (PT) and presidential candidate in 2014, is both a feminist and socialist activist who was arrested several times before the legalization of multiple parties in 1988 and remained

³⁷ Liverani, Andrea. *Civil Society in Algeria: the Political Functions of Associational Life*. London: Taylor and Francis (2008). Print. p. 41.

vocal against both the state and Islamists throughout the 1990's. Since then, however, her party has succeeded to secure a growing number of parliamentary seats, in part due to other parties boycotting elections. Although she continues to publicly criticize the government, accusing Bouteflika and several key ministers of electoral fraud in the 2012 elections,³⁸ she made an alliance with the Rassemblement National Démocratique (RND), one of two parties of the ruling coalition of electoral politics.³⁹ Hanoune is criticized by the press and other groups for her connections to the government and alleged support of and cooptation by Bouteflika. Abderrezak Mokri, president of the Movement of Society for Peace (MSP), an Islamist party, accused Hanoune's party of winning seats in the legislature illegally and purposefully defaming opposition parties by claiming they work for foreign governments.⁴⁰ Hanoune characterizes her involvement in politics as designed to advance a progressive, militant political agenda and to carve out a space for political plurality.

However, Islamist groups, including MSP, have also been accused of being coopted and corrupted. The groups supported Bouteflika when he was first nominated for president in 1999 on a reconciliationist platform, subsequently won 7 percent of seats in the parliamentary races of 2002, and formally joined an alliance with FLN and RND in

³⁸ Sleiman, H., Atef Kedadra et. al. "Algerian Workers' Party chief Claims Election Fraud." *Al-Monitor*, 24 May 2012. Web. 30 March 2014.

³⁹ "Le PT est prêt à une alliance avec le RND." *Le Matin*. 18 April 2009. Web. 2 April 2014.

⁴⁰ Ottmani, Abdelhamid. "Mokri: Louisa Hanoune is a horrible woman," Echoroukonline, Web. 26 March 2014.

2004. In 2012, Bouteflika reappointed Mostafa Ben Bada of MSP to Minister of Commerce even after the party's decision to leave the government alliance.⁴¹

Cooptation is a way for the government to both somewhat appease movements by getting these movements some sort of cosmetic reform and power, and a way for the government to hold the movement in close watch. If activists step out of the regime's approved and coopted social movement structure, these activists can quickly be labeled as fringe or extremist.

The Media

Since the black decade, the many entities in the press, like *El Watan*, have fought against being used by the state. *El Watan Weekend* editor Adlene Meddi explained that the media was caught between the state and the Islamists during the black decade, with both censorship and assassination of journalists used with frightening regularity.⁴² Today, the press continues to struggle to be an independent and trustworthy voice. Because the media is directly involved in both publicizing and defaming social movements, it is a key actor in Algerian politics.

In Algeria today, there are over 150 newspapers (65 of which are classified as "primary" by pressreference.com), only two of which are fully independent, government-controlled television stations, and a handful of independent, albeit foreign, television stations. The only sector which remains fully under government control is radio.

Algeria's constitution guarantees freedom of expression, although it does not explicitly

⁴¹ Kedara, Atef Kedara. "Overdue New Government Takes Shape in Algeria." *Al-Monitor*. 26 May 2012. Web. 31 March 2014.

⁴² Interview, Adlene Meddi. Algiers, Algeria. 13 March 2014.

mention the press.⁴³ Freedom House, in its 2013 report, ranked Algeria's press as "not free," although it is on the edge of "partly free" with a score of 61 where Freedom House's cut off on a scale from 0 to 100 of "partly free" is 60.⁴⁴ As a result of this control over the press, the government can use the press as a weapon against social movements in the country.

For context, independently compiled indicators on Algeria's freedom and effectiveness of press compared to that of Egypt and Tunisia are shown below (Table 2). For simple comparison, the chart uses the indicators for all three countries as of 2009. Algeria's indicators have only marginally changed since this year. The Freedom of Press score, as referenced above, puts Algeria in the "not free" category, although it is only two points away from "partly free" – the category in which its counterpart Egypt (circa 2009) is classified. Both the Plurality of News and Professional Journalism are sub-indices designed by the organization IREX as a part of their composite Media Sustainability Index.⁴⁵ Plurality of News measures the number of news sources available to citizens, these sources' independence and the transparency of ownership. Professional Journalism measures news sources' objectivity, accessibility and ethical standards. Algeria scores between Egypt and Tunisia on each of these indices. This alone implies that neither the state's control of the press nor the quality of the press are significant factors for stalled social movements. However, the relationships between the press and the state and the press and society reveal compelling reasons why the press is an important, although declining, player in the realm of social movements.

⁴³ *Algerian Constitution 1996, amended 2008*. Chap. 4, art. 41.

⁴⁴ Freedom House. *Algeria*. Freedom of the Press 2013. Accessed: 23 March 2014.

⁴⁵ IREX, Middle East and North Africa, Media Sustainability Index, Accessed April 1, 2014.

Table 2. Indicators of Press Freedom and Effectiveness

	Algeria (2009)	Egypt (2009)	Tunisia (2009)
Freedom of the Press Score (0 = best, 100 = worst)	62 (Not Free)*	60 (Partly Free)	82 (Not Free)
Number of primary daily newspapers	65	18	22
Number of television stations	46	98	3
Number of radio stations	34	59	4
Plurality of News (0 = worst, 4 = best)**	1.33 (Unsustainable, Mixed System)	2.25 (Near Sustainability)	0.43 (Unsustainable Anti-free Press)
Professional Journalism (0 = worst, 4 = best)**	1.62 (Unsustainable, Mixed System)	2.08 (Near Sustainability)	0.75 (Unsustainable Anti-free Press)

Sources: Freedom House, IREX, pressreference.com

*2013 Score is 61 (Not Free)

**2009 is latest year of data available

The Press and the State

The Algerian government first created an independent press in the late 1980s, when then president Chadli Benjedid opened the political system. Since then, many newspapers have been created, but only two, El Watan, and its sister publication, El Khabar are considered fully independent and privately owned. This means that they have their own printing presses, do not buy state-subsidized paper, and have their own advertisers, outside of the state controlled *Entreprise Nationale de Communication, d'Édition, et de Publicité* (ANEP). There are also only five state-run newspapers, including Horizon, El- Masa, and Moujahid. The other publications fall in-between these two extremes and can be called semi-independent. Generally, they are privately owned but rely on the government printing presses and ANEP for advertising. As a result, even independently owned newspapers do not have the freedom to publish whatever they want.

According to Mounir Boudjema, an editor of the semi-independent newspaper *Liberté*, the press practices self-censorship.⁴⁶ The press, even the semi-independent press, is often critical of the government, but to a point. However, in the interest of self-preservation, the press will often not criticize the president, for example, or will not cover topics considered taboo, such as religion. The penalties for crossing these lines can be harsh, but somewhat unpredictably. The punishments laid out in the Information Code, published in 1990 and amended in 2001, include monetary fines and imprisonment for journalists whose writings can be considered insulting to the president.

The state has many other mechanisms for controlling the press, both newspapers and television stations. For starters, ANEP, which provides advertising to the majority of Algerian newspapers, can pull ads from newspapers deemed too critical or publishing articles the government does not want published. As advertising is a major source of revenue for many Algerian newspapers⁴⁷, the threat of having ads pulled is an effective way for the state to maintain control. In practice, this means that, while media can still cover events held by social organizations, they must stick to the government's line about what occurs at these events and how many have attended. Only those papers which do not fear having their advertising pulled, such as *El Watan* or *El Khabar*, are able to go beyond this.

Additionally, the government, through either the police or the gendarmerie, has been known to prevent journalist access to the sites of sit-ins and protests. On March 12, 2014, *El Watan* reported that journalists were prevented from accessing a protest taking

⁴⁶ Interview, Boudjema, Mounir. Algiers, Algeria. 12 March 2014.

⁴⁷ Kalli, Zena. "What Lies Beneath: The Stifling of Regime Resistance in Algeria and its Consequences." *OpenDemocracy* Feb 02 2013. *ProQuest*. Web. 23 Mar. 2014.

place at the Maqam Echahid, or Martyrs' Monument.⁴⁸ This impeded the news media from sharing with their readers information about the sit-in. Social media still provided some of that information, but journalists were unable to take pictures or interview protesters to gain a better understanding of the situation. Photographs published online by *El Watan* show police forming a chain which blocks any view of the protesters.⁴⁹ If the media is unable to access protests and other gatherings organized by social movements, they cannot accurately inform their readers of the circumstances surrounding the events. This may prevent the movements from connecting with people and growing.

The government restricts information given to journalists in other ways, as well. BBC reported that just after the new media law was announced in 2011, former Communications Minister Abdelaziz Rehabi stated that the law did not respond to the problems journalists in Algeria faced, which was information gathering.⁵⁰ He stated that the communication cells at various government ministries and state-owned corporations do not supply journalists with the information journalists need to report on the news.⁵¹ This limits journalists' ability to do their job and to report events. Additionally, if the press only has the information supplied by the government, the reporting is unlikely to tell the whole story. Instead, only one side of the story, the government's official line, is told. Indeed, during the attacks on the Amenas gas plant in January 2013, the government

⁴⁸ El Watan 2014. "La police intervient contre le Front du boycott au Monument des Martyrs." *El Watan* 12 March 2014. Web.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ "Algeria: Former minister criticizes new media law." *BBC Monitoring Middle East* 05 December 2011. Web.

⁵¹ Ibid.

maintained a strict media blackout on the issue.⁵² Reporters were not able to provide their readers with information on current events in their own countries, and to this day the government has not even provided an accurate total death toll, only releasing official numbers of foreigners killed.

In extreme cases, the government will shut down newspapers or television stations. This happened most recently on March 12, 2014, when police officers arrived at the studios of Al-Atlas TV and shut down the station, which is a private station broadcast over a Jordanian satellite.⁵³ The authorities did not immediately give a reason for the station being shut down but several members of the Algerian public informed the authors of this paper that the reason was well-known, that the station had permitted an outspoken government critic to appear on the station and to say what he wanted about the government and the upcoming elections. As a result of exercising freedom of expression and espousing critical views of the government, an opposition news station is no longer able to broadcast, a month before the presidential election.

The Press and Society

The press's reporting of social movements is not only limited by state control, as mentioned above but also relies on the public's trust. Ties with the government or other entities decry bias, while keenness to report social movements can lead to accusations of exaggeration. This leads to differences among Algerians in the amount of trust towards media outlets. Interviewees expressed favor towards one, several, or no media outlets.

⁵² U.S. Department of State. *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2013*. Washington, 2013. Web.

⁵³ Semmar, Abdou. "Les autorités algériennes forcent le provider jordanien Noorsat Satellite à ne plus émettre le signal Al Atlas TV." *AlgérieFocus* 12 March 2014. Web.

Because most news sources in Algeria are somewhat dependent on the state for production, they also have alliances with the state or other entities. Most students in our focus groups indicated lack of trust with news outlets – either specific outlets or news in general. Table 2 (particularly Algeria’s ratings for Plurality of News and Professional Journalism) and the relationship with the state as explained above give credence to this perception of lack of trust.

Newspapers in Algeria and the European continental tradition from which they emerged test boundaries between journalism and activism (what is sometimes framed as “ethical boundaries,” especially in the Anglo-Saxon journalistic tradition). Many journalists see their job as pushing society forward through movements. They may choose to misrepresent social movements in order to fulfill this goal, or more likely they will emphasize or de-emphasize aspects that do not fit with their political perspectives. Also, when the media wants to encourage a social movement, they may be more likely to report on their activities or report on them in a favorable light. This can make the movements seem more active than they truly are, creating a distorted view of the reality on the ground. Hada Hazem, an editor for the newspaper El Fajr, was arrested in March of this year for participating in a protest with Barakat, a movement which she supports both with her writing and with her appearances in public.⁵⁴ However, her involvement with this group can be considered a conflict of interest – and would definitely be so within anglo-saxon contexts – as she is blurring the line between activism and objective journalism.

⁵⁴ Al-Atlas TV. “Atlas TV accompanied Editor of El Fajer Hadda Hazem and Activist Amina Bourari.” Youtube. 4 March 2014. Web. 31 March 2014.

Algerian press is limited in how and when it can report on events in the country, including, but not limited to, social movements. Many movements rely on publicity to gather supporters from around the country, and therefore, if the media is unable to accurately report on social movements, this can hurt their chances of bringing change to the government. The state actively participates in this by penalizing news organizations which are too critical of the government, either by shutting them down, as in the case of Al-Atlas TV, or pulling advertising. However, the media also has its own biases, as it sees itself as pushing civil society forward to create change in the country.

The Movements

The Beginnings of Social Movements in Algeria

The political process model of social movement theory states that social movements are a political manifestation and play an important role in engendering political change. Social movements in contemporary Algeria have a tendency to reject the tactics and strategies used by movements in the past. Historically, Algerian social movements have brought about major changes to the country, having done so at least twice in the past 70 years. The most important time was in the fight to gain independence from France, and the second most important was in bringing about the political opening of 1988-1992. The nationalist movement brought about the revolution against the French, most prominently the FLN, which remains in power today, along with its armed wing, the Armée de Libération Nationale (ALN). The black decade pitted the state against the Islamist movement and left many other movements between those polarized extremes struggling for survival.

From 1830 until 1962, Algeria was occupied by the French, who colonized it, turning it into three French *départements* in 1848. However, despite being nominally equal to *départements* in mainland France, gross inequalities remained in Algeria, particularly due to the *Code de l'Indigénat*, which gave all Muslims in Algeria inferior status.⁵⁵ While there was almost constant resistance to French rule in one part of Algeria or another throughout its colonial history, it was the nationalist movement, reorganized in the late 1930s and early 1940s, which ultimately organized the Algerian resistance against the French and won the country its independence.

In the war for independence, the Algerian nationalist movements included many different ideologies, including, but not limited to, Islamist, secularist, Amazigh, and Communist.⁵⁶ However, the more dominant groups were able to marginalize the weaker groups through a combination of discrediting based on conspiracy theories and coercion⁵⁷—a pattern which continues in Algeria today. (These other ideological tendencies are represented today in established social movements and political parties.) When Algeria gained independence from France in 1962, the country became an authoritarian state ruled by the military and its civilian allies who represented a revolutionary Arab socialist nationalism, to some degree at the expense of other ideologies.

Social movements played their second major role in Algerian history in the late 1980s and 1990s. In the late 1980's many of the same ideologies that existed in the 1950s

⁵⁵ Lowi, Miriam R. *Oil Wealth and the Poverty of Politics: Algeria Compared*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

and 1960s were represented in the political debate, along with reinvigorated challenges from feminists, Islamists, Amazigh activists and radical socialists. After the *Front Islamique du Salut* (FIS) won the first round of parliamentary elections, the military cancelled the second round due to the electoral and perceived societal threat that the FIS posed to the regime. This resulted in a decade long, bloody conflict which pushed many Algerians away from the Islamists, who were blamed by the government for much of the violence—and terrorism—which occurred. Social movements were again transformed by these events. The movements which survived and opposed the FIS, including other Islamist groups, remain established movements today. Louisa Hanoune, who allied with the FIS in 1991 in their general strike against regime gerrymandering, has remained outspoken against the regime but a willing ally with the state in order to gain the political room to maneuver taken away from the FIS.

A reason for the unsuccessfulness of these groups is their tendency to fragment and thus their inability to work together, a centrifugal tendency encouraged by the state. Previously, Algerian social movements had been built around a single identity. The ALN was built around a single Algerian identity, for example, while the FIS was built around a religious identity and the *Front des Forces Socialistes* (FFS) around a Amazighist-socialist identity, both “hegemonic” identities. Feminist movements were built around women’s identity and student and workers movements were made up mainly by students or workers. This was the same in pre-revolutionary Tunisia and Egypt. The Muslim Brotherhood, which worked with other groups to overthrow President Hosni Mubarak, used religion as its rallying point and a link between various members of the organization. Like the FIS after 1992, the Muslim Brotherhood was technically illegal.

However, members of the Muslim Brotherhood ran for parliament as independents. The organization was, therefore, able to gain more followers by participating in the government, even if they were not participating under the name of their group. Similarly, in Tunisia, the *Union Générale Tunisienne du Travail* (UGTT) brought together workers from all over the country under one umbrella and, when it decided to join the protests against Ben Ali, was able to draw its militants to these demonstrations.

What the Egyptian, Tunisian, and pre-black-decade Algerian movements all had in common was their ability to draw together a single demographic into an organized, identity-based group. In Algeria today, fewer social movements are built around a singular identity. Rather, the groups are built around a cause, which can make creating a unified organization more difficult and also presents opportunities for exploitation by the organization's opponents.

If social movements played an important role in forging Algeria's past, they have been relatively stunted since the black decade. The movements described in Table 3 represent a range of examples from small movements with specific, targeted objectives to large movements calling for a variety of deeper, systemic changes. The table is divided between older and recent movements. The older movements have only gained nominal reforms, if any, and falter with lukewarm popular response or internal divisions. Some of the recent movements, namely Barakat and CNDDC, have received a great deal of press coverage and popular support. They have not, however, succeeded in bringing about change. This is to some degree justifiable because these movements are new and political promises have been made by the regime to each of these groups, which may or may not be enacted. The aftermath of the elections may determine if these the regime makes good

on its concessions. Past practice, however, indicates that political concessions usually remain few and far between, whereas economic and social concessions are more likely to be honored. This paper has examined the difficulty movements have under the state apparatus and general public relations problems they face with the media, and it will now examine how other faults lie within these organizations and the potential they have to overcome them.

Table 3. Cross-Sections of Movements and their Success with the State and the Population

Movement	Objectives	Popular Response	State's Response
<i>Older (1990-2010)</i>			
National Coordination of Families of the Disappeared	Release information on those who disappeared during the black decade to the family members	Supported by families of disappeared, not really diffused to other demographics, UN has taken note of their plight	Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation (Law 06-01) gives security officials impunity and criminalizes criticism, demonstrations were dispersed under these grounds ⁵⁸
<i>Collectif 20 ans barakat</i>	Repeal Family Code of 1984	Gained support of women's groups, many with elite connections	Established a board to amend Family Code in 2004, changes did not put women legally on equal footing as men (in terms of custody and divorce, for example). Bouteflika promised to repeal law completely in 2011, law remains today
Amazigh Movements	Recognition of Tamazight as official language, autonomy of Kabylie	Amazighism is promoted by two mainstream parties: RCD and FFS, but clashed with Movement for the Autonomy of Kabylie and Arouch, two newer Amazigh movements	Tamazight became national language (not official language), Kabylie is not autonomous, Algerian gendarmerie withdrew from Kabylie
<i>Recent (2011-now)</i>			
La Coordination nationale pour le changement et la démocratie (CNCD)	Pro-democratic reforms	Violent counter protests, group fractured between CNCD-Barakat and CNDC-Partis Politiques	Demonstrations violently broken up.
Barakat!	Pro-democratic reforms: increase rule of law, fix term limits for president	Very active on social media, public demonstrations gain attendance mostly in urban centers, significant media coverage – positive and negative	Some demonstrations broken up by police, activists arrested. Other demonstrations left alone. FLN promises greater freedom of expression in Bouteflika's fourth term.
Coordination nationale de défense des droits des chômeurs (CNDDC)	Rights for the unemployed,	Present in half the wilayas in the country	Activists have been arrested and demonstrations dispersed, Prime Minister met with movement and promised changes to be implemented next presidential term.
National Youth Council	Establish a unified, national forum for youth and students to build job skills and become politically engaged	Some interest by student groups, e.g., local AIESEC chapters	No response to date

⁵⁸ Amnesty International, "Annual Report: Algeria," 2012.

Case Study: Barakat, Common Pitfalls of Contemporary Movements

Barakat!, meaning “Enough!” is a pro-democracy movement comparable to the Kifaya Movement of pre-revolution Egypt (including the name) and holds objectives reminiscent of Arab Spring demands. Since its inception on March 1, 2014, the movement has been active on Facebook and has organized an impressive number of demonstrations abroad and within Algeria. As a new group with many young members, it may be less tethered to the memory of the black decade than the established movements associated with opposition parties. Tactically, its members have avoided violence, lest the state use the movement as a scapegoat, and allying with the government or any opposition party, lest they become coopted.

Barakat is a good example of a new group with new tactics but old weaknesses. The main weakness with this group, and similar groups, is its inability to connect with the Algerian population on two accounts 1) the objectives of this group are arguably not the priorities of the population, and therefore the group may resound only with urban elites, and 2) the movement’s call for swift democratic changes summon memories of instability and chaos. Another, somewhat converse weakness is that the group does not have a rallying point of identity like most established movements. This is intentional so the group can diffuse to demographics other than urban elites, but it may cause rifts between group members from varying backgrounds. Finally, a third weakness is the movement’s late arrival to the political arena.

Many of the interviewees in our sample noted the perceived disconnect between the objectives of the movements and the objectives of the populace. As Yahia H. Zoubir and Ahmed Aghrout point out, Algeria has experienced thousands of strikes and protests

for a number of years, mostly due to, “deteriorating purchasing power, low wages, unemployment and poor housing.”⁵⁹ These are the issues commonly cited in popular protests including the Arab Spring-era protests of 2011. However, many of Algeria’s social movements, such as Barakat and small teacher and student groups are not calling for improvements to these issues.

Instead, these new organizations are protesting the President’s choice to run for a fourth term in office, crossing the rubicon from socioeconomic to political protest. For example, on March 13, about 30 professors from the University of Algiers protested in front of their university. Rather than protest for food, housing, or better economic conditions, the professors used slogans such as, “Y’en a marre de ce système,”⁶⁰ i.e., “we are fed up with the system.” These protests voice different concerns than the protests of 2011 and highlight differences in elite movements versus mass movements. Eric McRae argued that the pro-democracy movements of the mid-2000’s in Egypt did not succeed because they did not have enough support from non-elite classes.⁶¹ It is possible that Barakat is facing the same problems.

As an example of Barakat’s failure to engage non-elites, the city of Ghardaïa in the South has undergone severe riots and clashes continually since December 2013. As of March 28, Algerian riot police had taken up position in the town to prevent further

⁵⁹ Zoubir, Yahia H. and Ahmed Aghrout. “Algeria’s Path to Reform: Authentic Change?” *Middle East Policy* 19.2 (2012): 66-83.

⁶⁰ Chellali, Salsabil and Neila Latrous, “Les universitaires de Bouzareah manifestent contre le 4e mandat.” *El Watan* 2014 [Algiers, Algeria] 13 March 2014.

⁶¹ McRae, Eric, “Social Movement Success in Authoritarian Settings: Kifaya and the Arab Spring in Egypt,” American University, 2012.

violence.⁶² This is not an area which is interested in seeing political change. Instead, as the Algerian Red Crescent chief said, it is more important for schools and shops to re-open and for families affected by the conflict to be helped.⁶³ As a result, Barakat's platform is low priority for this region.

A possible reason for low numbers of engagement in Barakat protests may be, as Narrimane Benakcha argued,⁶⁴ that Algerians prefer stability to change given their history with the black decade. One interviewee, Mounir Boudjema expressed that Algerians currently have more to lose than to gain⁶⁵ and until the Algerian people are convinced otherwise, they are unlikely to support the kinds of changes for which movements like Barakat agitate. The high activity of Barakat on social media reinforces this because online speech is perceived as safer than speech in the street, and many of Barakat's followers on Facebook are Algerians living abroad.

Barakat's Facebook page contains disagreements between Algerians abroad and in Algeria and between other various groups. On March 29, a comment thread was started on the page with users spiritedly arguing whether the page should use French or Arabic. Some users referenced the use of language to the groups identity: "[in Arabic] Write in Arabic! Write in the language of Islam! And do not speak in French." This is followed by the retort: "[in French] Who says Algerian necessarily means Muslim? Respect languages and ethnicities, these are the bases of liberty and democracy."⁶⁶

⁶² Fethi, Nazim, "Ghardaia on Knife's Edge". *Magharebia* 28 March 2014.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Benakcha, Narrimane. "The Algerian Regime: An Arab Spring Survivor." *Journal of International Affairs*, (2011). Web. 9 April 2014.

⁶⁵ Boudjema, Mounir. Personal interview. March 13, 2014.

⁶⁶ Mouvement Barakat, Facebook, accessed March 31, 2014.

It is impossible to draw anything conclusive from these Facebook disagreements as participants cannot be confirmed as either true participants of the movement nor representative of the group as a whole. It would seem, however, that Barakat, as a new social movement with no imposed or official source of identity, may either be vulnerable to divide and rule by the government or may be becoming a more universal movement and therefore has greater change of engendering true change.

While the movement has not garnered much turnout at its rallies, prior to the election there were signs the movement was gaining steam. On March 30, 2014, Barakat announced it was creating a National Coordination Board.⁶⁷ However, this came less than a month before the presidential elections were scheduled to occur. Coordination is key to a movement's gaining supporters and Barakat has taken a very piecemeal approach to scheduling protests both in Algeria and in France. This led, along with the other factors discussed in this paper, to Barakat not achieving its stated goal of preventing Bouteflika from being re-elected for a fourth term.

Other Movements and Slow Potential for Success

Although recent movements and their new strategies may have several perceived pitfalls, there is potential that some movements will succeed in enacting change. These movements, like Barakat, are new and behave similarly in that they reject both violence and cooptation, including any alliance with officials. One such movement is the *Comité National pour la Défense des Droits des Chômeurs* (CNDDC), which is now present in

⁶⁷ Baroudi, Fatma, "Des « actions » prévues à Annaba, Bejaia et El Bayadh: « Barakat » installe une coordination nationale." *Liberté* [Algiers, Algeria] March 31, 2014.

almost half the wilayas in the country.⁶⁸ This movement's main demand is socio-economic advancement and open dialogue with the government on behalf of youth and the unemployed. While the movement has not brought about much change, it has succeeded in bringing the Prime Minister to meet with the group and to promise to bring about economic change, including lowering unemployment in the south.⁶⁹ To date, however, the Prime Minister has not made good on these promises. However, the group did see the government cave into its immediate demands of meeting with the national leadership instead of the local governing officials. This is a major step towards the group gaining a voice on a national level. Indeed, the speed at which the movement is growing is remarkable. It remains to be seen whether or not the Prime Minister will reduce unemployment in the wilayas on which the CNDDC is focused. However, it has made more progress than perhaps any of the other new social movements to date.

Mouvement Pour la Jeunesse et le Changement en Algérie (MJC), is headed by Rachid Nekkaz, a former candidate for president in Algeria. Nekkaz made himself something of a laughing stock in the country when the car carrying the signatures required for him to be listed as a candidate in the elections disappeared on its way to the Constitutional Council's building. On March 27, 2014, Nekkaz announced that he would turn his movement into an official political party.⁷⁰ His rallies, even though he is no longer a presidential candidate, can attract anywhere from a dozen⁷¹ to several thousand

⁶⁸ Tlemceni, Rashid. "Algérie: jeunes sans jeunesse." *Alterantives Internationales* 14 (2014).

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Khettab, Djamila Ould. "Rachid Nekkaz annonce la création de son parti politique "Mouvement pour la jeunesse et le changement." *Algérie Focus* [Algiers, Algeria] March 27, 2014.

⁷¹ Koudil, Salim. "Rachid Nekkaz, ange ou demon?" *Liberté* [Algiers, Algeria] March 28, 2014.

participants (depending on the source).⁷² Nekkaz has called for the Algerian population to “voter blanche,” or vote with a blank ballot during the election. As it stands, Nekkaz’s movement has so far been unsuccessful, as he was not certified as a candidate in the elections.

Most recently, on March 21, 2014, both Islamist and secularist opposition parties held a rally in Algiers which attracted over 5,000 participants.⁷³ Given that demonstrations by individual opposition groups rarely number even in the hundreds, it is a good sign for the Algerian opposition that it is able to work together and attract thousands of participants. However, at the same rally, various organizations heckled each other, particularly over the appearance of Ali Belhadj, the former vice-president of banned FIS.⁷⁴ Until movements are able to put aside their differences and work together, the opposition will be fighting an uphill battle against a well-entrenched FLN.

In both Egypt and Tunisia before their revolutions, the social movements in these countries were successful at bringing about change, and ultimately overthrowing the regime, in part because they worked together effectively. In Egypt, for example, members of the Muslim Brotherhood protested alongside other groups. The opposition had a single goal of overthrowing Mubarak. It was only later, after Mubarak had been deposed, that the opposition fractured into disagreements over how to rebuild the state and society. The same happened in Tunisia with Ennahda, the UGTT, and other opposition groups. Until

⁷² Khettab, Djamila Ould. “Rachid Nekkaz annonce la création de son parti politique “Mouvement pour la jeunesse et le changement.” *Algérie Focus* [Algiers, Algeria] March 27, 2014.

⁷³ Markey, Patrick and Lamine Chikhi. “Algerian opposition rallies against Bouteflika re-run in April election.” *Reuters Africa* March 21, 2014.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

President Ben Ali stepped down, the various factions within Tunisia worked to depose him and avoided much of the intra-opposition bickering seen in Algeria today.

Algerian social movements do not always help themselves. By not demonstrating how their goals match those of the population, the movements are unable to garner much support for their agendas of political change. Many people in the country are afraid to lose what they have and are especially afraid of losing it in another war. Until either the Algerian people are ready to give up their preference for stability or the social movements are able to demonstrate how lives will be better if they garner power, these movements are unlikely to gain much traction. With the result of the presidential elections perceived as a foregone conclusion, neither Barakat nor any other political movement was able to attract more than tens or a couple hundred people to their rallies. The lack of popular support means the movements will not be able to bring about much change.

Perspective

The future of Algeria is difficult to predict. Will the state and movements remain in the status quo, making small concessions and advances on the other? Or will movements erupt leaving either the state or the movements as victor? What role will the media continue to play? Our interviewees responded with varying degrees of pessimism or optimism regarding the potential for success of social movements, but more than one summarized their prediction with the statement: “Algerians are not clairvoyant.” This sentiment aptly conveys the feeling of uncertainty regarding the future of movements and

the lack of full transparency of the state, the media, the social movements and other actors.

The increase in popularity of public demonstrations against Bouteflika's fourth term during the campaign did indicate that social movements were gaining confidence and may be growing. There was also some indication of limited traction with non-elites. The actions of Algerian social movements and other actors, however, indicate an apparent homeostasis based on balances struck between political actors, with only gradual shifts in concessions made by the state to society and between groups. This homeostasis may change once a new generation of elites rises to positions of power, and this is something for which activists and non-activists say they are waiting. Alternatively, this homeostasis could be threatened in the cases of an economic downturn or increased repression by the state. Since both the new social movements and the established ones have been actively speaking out against the state, a crackdown by state agents against activists could cause a backlash.

In fact, instead of a crackdown, the FLN is promising greater liberalization. Bouteflika's campaign manager and former Prime Minister, Abdelmalek Sellal, stated on the campaign trail that the president "pledged to enhance freedom of expression and democracy after strengthening macroeconomic indicators and achieving stability and security."⁷⁵ This hefty promise indicates that the ruling party knows the priorities claimed by the people: first stability and security, then economic development and finally greater democratic freedoms. If the pressures for greater democratization are strong enough, the state may readjust itself and liberalize more.

⁷⁵ Zerfaoui, Abdallah. "بوتفليقة سيعزز حرية التعبير في العهدة الرابعة" Elkhbar. 1 April 2014. Web. 2 April 2014.

Our research highlights the need for further research concerning social movements' role in democratization theory. As opposed to the revolutions that renewed discussions of democracy in Egypt and Tunisia, Algeria is making slow overtures towards liberalization. If the state continues to liberalize, Algeria may be ripe for gradual democratization, a process and pace claimed by developing countries such as China, Myanmar and Azerbaijan. Democratization, in this case, is controlled by the state, and social movements play complementary, not adversarial roles. If social movements in Algeria continue to fail to bring about social change but continue to grab the attention of the press, the state may feel more pressure to democratize albeit slowly.

A similar research question is to examine what social movements need to do in Algeria to succeed. This type of research would be the inverse of the research in this paper, which focuses on the roadblocks to social movements' success. Finally, further research on the relationship between media and social movements is warranted.

Conclusion

Since 2002, the Algerian state has played no role either significantly stricter or significantly more liberal than other Arab autocracies. For example, indices relating to Algeria's freedom of press place it between pre-revolution Tunisia and Egypt. Qualitative analyses of other factors, such as freedoms to associate, show that the Egypt and Algeria were similarly strict and that Tunisia was the strictest of the group. From this, we can rule out the state as the only impediment to the success of social movements. Furthermore, our approach also challenges the hypothesis that Algeria's social movements failed to mobilize as they did in Tunisia and Egypt during the Arab Spring primarily because of

the black decade. This paper argues that more than the population's memory of the black decade is at play. Rather, the state, the media and social movements are all altered from this period and all collaboratively cause social movements to stall.

First, the state, as a liberalized oligarchy operating on the model of Brumberg's liberalized autocracy, maintains mechanisms of control over social movements and their activities. The most obvious mechanism is the creation of bureaucratic obstacles which require associations to hold approved registrations and for permits for demonstrations. This allows the state to categorize entire groups and any actions without preapproval as illegal and prosecute the activists. More covertly, the state also applies cooptation and divide and rule tactics to discredit groups or attach them as extensions of the state. These tactics were employed well through the black decade, and it is the memory of this which contributes to the public criticism of established movements.

Second, the media, although marginally free, frustrates the efforts of social movements through real or perceived misrepresentation. The media, particularly the printed press, weathered the black decade and independent papers like *El Watan* and *El Khabar* survived. However, these media sources now must contend with conflicts of interest and social activism which may lead to the overstating the goals of social movements or mixing journalism with activism as these are ways to lose credibility for both the paper and the movement. Papers and media outlets, besides those that are completely independent, are reliant on the state to some degree for revenue. Therefore, they are at risk of editing along the lines the state or a given entity within the state wants.

Third, social movements themselves are trying to gain popularity with the people while steering clear of the state-laid traps which befell prior movements. During the black

decade, many movements were caught between the state and the Islamist militants. Though they fought to remain a third voice, many were later attached to the state, with their leaders forming coalitions or accepting ministerial portfolios with the FLN. As a result, Algerian citizens often perceive movements as corrupt. Other criticisms involve movements being violent or movements being too marginal or elitist to interest most Algerians. Newer movements are wary to work with the government and also concern themselves with remaining peaceful. CNDDC and Barakat both emphasize that they are peaceful, citizen movements. However, CNDDC activists have been accused of resorting to violence, and Barakat is accused of being disconnected with the demands of the people.

Social movements in contemporary Algeria operate in a unique balance, trying to shake the past holding them back and trying also to discover new tractics and strategies that will engender change with different pace and context than before. In the future, it is likely that this balance will change, particularly as the Algerian government changes and a new generation comes to power. The FLN is promising to provide more freedoms after the April 17 election. If this happens, it is likely to embolden the social movements currently agitating against the government and current political structure. Alternately, it may be that the government will crack down even harder on dissidence and social movements as a transition is made from President Bouteflika to a successor, which is likely before the end of a fourth mandate. Algerian social movements are currently unable to achieve their stated objectives. However, in the future, this is likely to change.

Appendix 1. List of Interviewees

Dr. John Entellis- Professor at Fordham University

Dr. Azzedine Layachi- Professor at St. Johns University

Dr. Mahfoud Amara- Professor at Loughborough University

Dr. William Lawrence – Lecturer at George Washington University

Algerian English class (10 students)

Abdullah- English teacher in Algiers

Dr. Abdehamid Bessaa- Professor at the Université Algiers III

Dr. Mohamed Mokhtar Dridi- Professor at the Université Algiers III

Dr. Benzennache- Professor at the Université Algiers III

Arif- Algerian student

Dr. Rashid Tlemcani- Professor at the Université Algiers III

Hichem Melaksou- Employee at U.S. Embassy in Algiers

Mounir Boudjomaa- Editor at Liberté

Adlène Meddi- Editor at El Watan Weekend

Abderrahmane Hadjnacer- Former governor of Algerian Central Bank

Fatma Oussedik- Professor at the Université Algiers II

Appendix 2. List of Algerian Periodicals Consulted

Echrouk

El Fajr

El Khabar

El Watan

Ennahar

Le Matin

Liberté

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