



# Algeria's Hirak Movement: A Second National Liberation?

Linda El-Naggar





**Linda El-Naggar**

Analyst at the Middle East and North Africa Programme at The Swedish Institute of International Affairs, UI



## Contents

1. Introduction.....	4
2. Setting the Scene: Trajectories of Contentious Politics in Algeria.....	6
2.1 1807–1911: The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Making of French Algeria.....	7
2.2 1911–1962: Wars, Algerian Nationalism and National Liberation.....	9
2.3 1962–1989: “People Power”, Neoliberalism and the Rise of Islamism.....	11
2.4 1989 to date: The Black Decade and Continuous Collective Protest.....	12
3. The Current State of Affairs: A Stagnating System and Crippling State-Society Relations.....	13
3.1 The Postcolonial State: Le Pouvoir and the Rentier Economy.....	13
3.2 The Hirak Movement: A New Episode of Contention.....	15
4. Interpretative Framework: Understanding the Hirak.....	17
4.1 Social Movements in the Middle East and North Africa.....	17
4.2 Theoretical Concepts: Unravelling the Dynamics of the Hirak.....	19
4.2.1 Narrative Analysis.....	20
4.2.2 Attribution of Threat/Opportunity.....	21
4.2.3 Identity Shift.....	21
4.2.4 Brokerage.....	22
4.2.5 Innovative Collective Action.....	22
4.2.6 The Notion of Hogra.....	22
5. The Hirak: Mobilization, Actors and Trajectories.....	23
5.1 Narrative Analysis.....	24
5.2 Opportunities and Threats.....	27
5.3 Identity Shift.....	29
5.4 Brokerage.....	31
5.5 Innovative Collective Action.....	35
5.6 Hogra.....	36
5.7 Observing the Hirak through the Windows of History, Theory and Literature.....	39
6. Conclusions.....	41
7. Policy Recommendations.....	43
Bibliography.....	45





1962, independence of the soil, 2019, independence of the people.

- Slogan during the Hirak demonstrations in 2019

It is an unprecedented movement in the world. It is a movement that can liberate not only Algeria, but all of Africa and the whole region.

- Mohamed,\*<sup>1</sup> Hirak activist

It was a movement that could have been a real revolution, which could have changed Algeria, but which has failed for the moment.

- Ahmed,\* Journalist & Hirak activist

## 1. Introduction

A wave of mass protests erupted across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region in 2019. Deep-rooted frustration over a distant political elite, massive corruption and a conspicuous lack of democracy spurred people to take to the streets in Algeria, Sudan, Lebanon and Iraq, all of which are post-conflict countries. Some consider these large-scale contestations of the status quo to be the second wave of the Arab Spring.<sup>2</sup> In Algeria, which had been widely considered “immune” to mass mobilization following its brutal civil war in the 1990s, it was the announcement that the ailing President Abdelaziz Bouteflika would stand for a fifth

term that was the last straw. Millions of Algerians gathered in the streets on 22 February 2019, and the *Hirak* (movement in Arabic) was born. Initially, it pursued weekly demonstrations with a clear purpose – to oppose Bouteflika’s fifth mandate. What is less clear, however are: (a) the processes that brought people in and out of collective claim-making within the Hirak, (b) the roles, actions and identity formation of the various actors and individuals, and (c) the mechanisms governing the course and outcomes of contentious action in Algeria. Building on interviews with 12 individual experts, activists and journalists engaged with the Hirak, these are the aspects studied in this paper.<sup>3</sup>

In less than six weeks of protests, the crowds – with Algeria’s large youth population at the forefront – had managed to end Bouteflika’s 20-year rule. Bouteflika had been absent since suffering a stroke in 2013, and many Algerians viewed him as the personification of an opaque system that had drained the state’s ample coffers for the benefit of powerful oligarchs, generals, and party apparatchiks. All this was in stark contrast to the soaring levels of misery in Algerian society, symbolized by dilapidated hospitals, inadequate housing and shrinking salaries, as well as the increasing number of *harragas*,<sup>4</sup> or irregular migrants pushed by

<sup>1</sup> For security reasons, the names of all the activists and journalists interviewed for this study have been changed.

<sup>2</sup> Gilbert Achar. From One Arab Spring to Another. *Radical Philosophy*. 2020. <https://www.radicalphilosophy.com/> (retrieved 2021-01-06).

<sup>3</sup> The author extends her utmost gratitude to the 12 participants in this study who generously shared their

stories despite the sensitivity of the topic: saha! The author is also thankful to the internal reviewers at UI, whose insightful feedback has been greatly appreciated.

<sup>4</sup> Jessica Northey and Latefa Abid Guemar. The Algerian Hirak: Youth mobilization, elections and the prospects of reform. *ORIENT: Deutsche Zeitschrift für Politik, Wirtschaft und Kultur des Orients, German*



high youth unemployment (currently around 30%) to risk their lives by leaving for southern Europe in ramshackle boats in search of better opportunities.<sup>5</sup> People were well aware that Bouteflika was only at the tip of an iceberg of corruption, clientelism and clan politics, however, so protests continued with demonstrators calling for a civil, not a military, state (“*dawla madania, machi 'askariya*”).<sup>6</sup> Algerians from all walks of life united under the forceful slogan of “*ytnahaw ga!*”: “they must all go”.<sup>7</sup>

With a one-year hiatus due to the Covid-19 pandemic, weekly protests proceeded until May 2021, when they were heavily repressed prior to parliamentary elections. Repression has been a key ingredient of the state’s governance formula ever since. In October 2021, the youth association Youth Action Rally (Rassemblement Action Jeunesse, RAJ) was dissolved. The opposition parties Rally for Culture and Democracy (Rassemblement pour la Culture et la Démocratie, RCD) and the Union for Change and Progress (Union Pour le Changement et le Progrès, UCP) have all been threatened with the same. The number of political prisoners has also increased to at least 333 as of February 2022.<sup>8</sup> Added to this dark canvas is the mismanagement of state affairs. Unemployment is at 15% and inflation up to

10%,<sup>9</sup> which has led to soaring food prices and water rationing. Moreover, state action in a time of crisis has been a missing component of the administration of the new President, Abdelmadjid Tebboune. For instance, a shortage of oxygen paralysed the health system amid the ravages of the third wave of the pandemic in the summer of 2021. At around the same time, there were also huge forest fires, which led to the deaths of at least 90 people.<sup>10</sup> The latter were partly blamed on Morocco, contributing to a rupture in Algerian-Moroccan relations. In addition, there is a widening gulf between the aging generals in power and the youthful majority of the Algerian population, which hold strongly divergent visions for the future – leading to a persistently low turnout at the polls.

Increased repression, neglect and the distance between the rulers and the ruled have reinforced the Tebboune regime’s legitimacy deficit, fuelling the current crisis in state-society relations in Algeria. The Hirk may have disappeared from the public radar since May 2021, but it remains a project of political, economic, national, and cultural significance. Some see the movement as an effort to bring about a second national liberation, as the one achieved after the brutal War of Liberation

---

*Journal for Politics, Economics and Culture of the Middle East*. Vol 2, 2020: 16, 17.

<sup>5</sup> Trading Economics. Algeria Youth Unemployment Rate: Forecast. *Trading Economics*. 2022. <https://tradingeconomics.com> (retrieved 2022-01-12).

<sup>6</sup> Amin Allal, Youcef Chekkar, Lalia Chenoufi, Nacira Guénif-Souilamas, François Gèze and Farida Souiah. Hirk, Algérie en Révolution(s). *Mouvements*. Vol 2, no. 102, 2020.

<sup>7</sup> Ziad Bentahar. « Ytnahaw ga’ ! » : Algeria’s Cultural Revolution and the Early Stages of the Spring 2019 Hirk. *Journal of African Cultural Studies*. Vol 33, no. 4, 2021: 471-488.

<sup>8</sup> Benjamin Beraud. Algérie : une quarantaine de détenus politiques auraient entamé une grève de la faim. *TV5 Monde*. 2022. <https://information.tv5monde.com/> (retrieved 2022-02-04).

<sup>9</sup> M’hamed Abaci. Quels leviers pour l’économie de l’Algérie nouvelle? *Liberté*. 2022. <https://www.liberte-algerie.com> (retrieved 2022-01-12).

<sup>10</sup> Sarra Benali Cherif. En 2021, l’Algérie termine l’année en fanfare. *Arab News*. 2021-12-31. <https://www.arabnews.fr/> (retrieved 2022-01-05).



against the French in 1954–1962 is considered to have been usurped by *le pouvoir*, the secretive ruling class in the postcolonial Algerian state.<sup>11</sup> The movement's success in removing Bouteflika was historically significant: never before has an Algerian president resigned as a result of public protest. The Hirak has attracted academic attention, focused mainly on the movement's root causes,<sup>12</sup> the regime's authoritarian responses,<sup>13</sup> and the meaning of popular slogans.<sup>14</sup> However, despite covering relatively broad areas, these studies largely ignore what the Hirak's amorphous character means for the orientation and direction of the movement. Many studies also exclude the narratives of the protesters themselves. This paper seeks to fill that void by exploring the mobilization, actors and trajectories of the Hirak through people's stories.

Chapter 2 traces the histories of contentious action in Algeria. For those less interested in how the past plays into the present in the Hirak, chapter 3 describes the current state of affairs in the country. Chapter 4 lays out the theoretical framework and chapter 5 outlines the findings of the study, derived from online interviews with 12 people, most of whom are based in Algeria. Chapter 6

presents the conclusions and makes some policy recommendations.

## 2. Setting the Scene: Trajectories of Contentious Politics in Algeria

People draw on 'reservoirs of images and memories' when being politically active.<sup>15</sup> The emergence of the Hirak is well in line with popular notions of Algeria being "revolutionary", due to its persistent resistance to the French colonialism (1830–1962), the rise of the one-party state led by the National Liberation Front (*Front de Libération Nationale*, FLN), and the transformation of Algiers into an epicentre of anti-colonial movements in the 1970s.<sup>16</sup> The Hirak was also a direct response to a stagnant political system, which has continued to confine its rhetoric and policies within the frame of the War of Liberation.<sup>17</sup> One of the Hirak's main sources of support is the Kabylie region in north-eastern Algeria, which was historically labelled *Bled es Siba*, 'the lands of dissidence', by the Arabs, due to the highly independent character of Berber society.<sup>18</sup> Hence, tracing the trajectories of contentious politics in Algeria and the MENA region is essential to understanding the

<sup>11</sup> *Le pouvoir* refers to the opaque group of military, political and business leaders governing the Algerian state. See also Didier Le Saout. *Les Relations France-Algérie et le Soulèvement du Hirak. Pouvoirs*. Vol. 1, no. 176, 2021: 105–118.

<sup>12</sup> Omar Benderra, François Gèze, Rafik Lebjaoui and Salima Mellah, (eds.). *Hirak en Algérie. L'invention d'un soulèvement*. Paris: La Fabrique éditions, 2020.

<sup>13</sup> Frédéric Volpi. Algeria: When Elections Hurt Democracy. *Journal of Democracy*. Vol. 31, no. 2, 2020: 152–165.

<sup>14</sup> Bentahar. « Ytnahaw ga' ! » : Algeria's Cultural Revolution and the Early Stages of the Spring 2019 Hirak, pp. 471–488.

<sup>15</sup> Charles Tripp. *The Power and The People: Paths of Resistance in the Middle East*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013, pp. 6–7.

<sup>16</sup> See Martin Evans and John Phillips. *Algeria: Anger of the Dispossessed*. London: Yale University Press, 2008; and Henry F. Jackson. *The FLN in Algeria: party development in a revolutionary society*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1977.

<sup>17</sup> Evans et al. *Algeria: Anger of the Dispossessed*, p. 3.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, p. 13.



historical basis of the Hirak and of current state-society relations.

### 2.1 1807–1911: The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Making of French Algeria

Across the Middle East and North Africa, the period 1807–1911 was marked by state-building, state centralization and colonialism, all of which served as key drivers of protest.<sup>19</sup> Collective action later became one of the major motors of historical change in North Africa throughout the 20th century.<sup>20</sup> In Algeria, as in the rest of the Ottoman Empire, state-building was centred around tax collection. The *Dey* (national ruler) controlled Algiers, three *beys* (regional rulers) administered the regions, and *cadis* (judges) and *caïds* (tax collectors) kept the local tribal leaders in check, imposed taxes and resolved judicial disputes. The regime selected tribal leaders, known as *bachagas*, as administrators and suppliers of soldiers in areas beyond direct Ottoman control. The Ottoman regime also pursued a classic divide-and-rule policy, by playing off one tribe off against another.<sup>21</sup> However, efforts to increase the extraction of taxes provoked rebellions on a regular basis. Among these were substantial rural rebellions by Sufi orders, such as the *Tijaniyya*, which

contributed to the end of Ottoman rule in Algeria.<sup>22</sup>

The French invasion of Algeria in June 1830 was a watershed moment in the history of the MENA region, as Algeria became the first Arab country to be annexed by the West.<sup>23</sup> Algerian resistance mostly stemmed from the young *marabout* Abd el-Kader of the *Qadiriya* religious order, who proclaimed jihad against the unbelievers.<sup>24</sup> Despite his initial successes, however, el-Kader surrendered in 1847 and northern Algeria was split up into three French departments in 1848, constituting “French Algeria”. The Sahara and the southern areas remained under the control of the French Army. Thus, Algeria was made an integral part of France in a brutal process of assimilation that was unique in the MENA. French rule was to last for 132 years, as opposed to 75 years in Tunisia and 44 years in Morocco. A combination of the length and extent of the French colonization of Algeria, a sizeable Algerian diaspora in France, and lasting political, economic and not least cultural influence, means that France is still an “omnipresent feature” of the country.<sup>25</sup> This has paved the way for highly complex relations between France and Algeria – and, in the longer run, with the EU, as well as a French presence in the Hirak. Some of the

<sup>19</sup> John Chalcraft. Popular Movements in the Middle East and North Africa. In *The History of Social Movements in Global Perspective: A Survey*, Stefan Berger & Holger Nehring (eds), p. 260. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.

<sup>20</sup> Julia A. Clancy-Smith. *Rebel and Saint: Muslim Notables, Populist Protest, Colonial Encounters (Algeria and Tunisia, 1800-1904)*. Berkely: University of California Press, 1994, p. 4.

<sup>21</sup> Evans et al. *Algeria: Anger of the Dispossessed*, pp. 23-24.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, pp. 22-24. See also Clancy-Smith. *Rebel and Saint: Muslim Notables, Populist Protest, Colonial*

*Encounters (Algeria and Tunisia, 1800-1904)*; and Chalcraft. Popular Movements in the Middle East and North Africa.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, p. 2. See also Clancy-Smith. *Rebel and Saint: Muslim Notables, Populist Protest, Colonial Encounters (Algeria and Tunisia, 1800-1904)*, p. 71, and James L. Gelvin. *The Modern Middle East: A History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016, p. 95.

<sup>24</sup> A marabout is a holy man, historically a religious leader in the Maghreb.

<sup>25</sup> Evans et al. *Algeria: Anger of the Dispossessed*, pp. 3, 26-30. See also Gelvin. *The Modern Middle East: A History*, p. 93.



Hirak's demands relate to France and the War of Liberation, and demonstrations also take place in l'Hexagone (mainland France).

In the *sénatus-consulte* of 1865, Algerians were addressed as subjects rather than citizens, but Muslims came to be governed by Islamic law. This became an impediment to assimilation, as Muslims could only obtain French citizenship by abandoning the right to be governed by Islamic law, which was an act of apostasy. Although a deep divide arose between the rightless subjects and full citizens,<sup>26</sup> implicit pacts still arose between various religious notables and colonial officials in order to ensure cultural survival and ward off collective protest.<sup>27</sup> Nonetheless, Muslims began to lose their traditions amid hardship, including on the storage of food, and around 300,000 people died of starvation in 1867 and as a result.<sup>28</sup>

The French adopted the system of *cadis* and *caïds*, and the infamous divide-and-rule strategy from the Ottomans. The latter took the form of preferential treatment for Jews and Berbers (specifically Kabyles) over Arabs. The *Crémieux Decrees*, issued in 1870, awarded Jews citizenship. In response, the local leader, El-Mokhrani, declared jihad against French rule in 1871. Although 800,000 Muslims supported him, the rebellion waned relatively swiftly. The lands

of pro-rebellion tribes were confiscated, and their leaders deported. Arabic was classified as a foreign language, Quranic schools were supervised and pilgrimages to Mecca strictly controlled, leaving Algerians with a collective trauma.<sup>29</sup>

Settlers sought to keep the indigenous population in a permanent state of humiliation by spoiling all attempts at political reform. To make room for them, the *Warnier Law* of 1873 broke up communally owned land into individual lots to allow them to be sold off more easily. In the period 1871–1898, French settlers “purchased” 1 million hectares of land. By 1886, the number of southern European settlers had reached 430,000;<sup>30</sup> and by 1900 the ruthless process of confiscating land – which was a vital source of power and wealth – had fatally undermined traditional local leadership.<sup>31</sup> The marginalization of the pre-colonial elites reinforced a deeply embedded cultural egalitarianism, which later helped forge the populism of the FLN. The inferior status of Muslims was written into law as the *Code de l'Indigénat* in 1881, providing for a highly oppressive regulatory framework.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, pp. 30–31.

<sup>27</sup> Clancy-Smith. *Rebel and Saint: Muslim Notables, Populist Protest, Colonial Encounters (Algeria and Tunisia, 1800-1904)*, p. 83.

<sup>28</sup> Evans et al. *Algeria: Anger of the Dispossessed*, p. 31.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, pp. 31, 35–37, 41. See also Clancy-Smith. *Rebel and Saint: Muslim Notables, Populist Protest, Colonial Encounters (Algeria and Tunisia, 1800-1904)*, pp. 2, 24; and Tripp. *The Power and The People: Paths of Resistance in the Middle East*, p. 22.

<sup>30</sup> Over half of all settlers were from Spain, Italy, and Malta.

<sup>31</sup> Clancy-Smith. *Rebel and Saint: Muslim Notables, Populist Protest, Colonial Encounters (Algeria and Tunisia, 1800-1904)*, p. 24. See also Evans et al. *Algeria: Anger of the Dispossessed*, pp. 33–34; Gelvin. *The Modern Middle East: A History*, p. 94; and Tripp. *The Power and The People: Paths of Resistance in the Middle East*, p. 22.

<sup>32</sup> Evans et al. *Algeria: Anger of the Dispossessed*, pp. 33–35.





## 2.2 1911–1962: Wars, Algerian Nationalism and National Liberation

An unparalleled colonial assault coupled with competing ideologies attempting to seize state power drove protest in the MENA region in general, and Algeria in particular, in the period 1911–1962.<sup>33</sup> As Algeria suffered in the wake of the Great Depression of the 1930s, France exclusively looked after the settlers' interests, which provoked an enormous exodus of landless peasants from the interior to the main coastal cities and led to the 1937 famine.<sup>34</sup> By the mid-1930s, there were four active nationalist movements.

The first, the *Young Algerians* movement, took the *Young Turks* movement in the Ottoman empire as its guiding star and was quite assimilationist. Its adherents were younger, urban and from a middle-class background, and led by Emir Khaled – the grandson of Abd el-Kader. It argued that in return for conscription, Muslims should be entitled to citizenship rights, called for the abolition of l'Indigénat, equal taxation, expanded suffrage for Muslims and representation in the National Assembly. The movement formed the *Fédération des Elus Indigènes* in 1926, and its later leader, Ferhat Abbas, became one of the most influential figures in Algerian political life of the 20th century.<sup>35</sup>

The second strand of Algerian nationalist politics arose from a broader Islamic renaissance, which was an important unifying force for Muslims under French rule.<sup>36</sup> The movement was influenced by the ideas of Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838–97), Mohammed Abduh (1849–1905) and Rashid Rida (1865–1935), who believed that a reassertion of Islamic identity was essential if Muslim countries were ever to become completely independent of the West. The *Association of Algerian Ulema* was founded in 1931, directed by clerics from traditional middle-class backgrounds. The demands of the Association persistently revolved around the rediscovery of Islam, Arabic and Algerian history.<sup>37</sup>

The third variant of native resistance was political nationalism, led by Messali Hadj who became an extremely important figure in Algerian nation-building. A man of a modest background, he drew on lessons from his time in the French trade union movement and was significant in the creation of the *Etoile Nord-Africaine* (ENA). Initially associated with the French Communist Party, the ENA sought to mobilize the significant number of Algerians in the Paris region. It emphasized the importance of Islam and Arabic to Algerian national identity, while also demanding the repeal of l'Indigénat, press freedom, a National Assembly for Algeria, the withdrawal of all French troops, instant

<sup>33</sup> Chalcraft. *Popular Movements in the Middle East and North Africa*, pp. 242, 260.

<sup>34</sup> Evans et al. *Algeria: Anger of the Dispossessed*, pp. 37–38. See also Gelvin. *The Modern Middle East: A History*, p. 94.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, pp. 42–43. See also Benjamin Stora. *Retours d'histoire: L'Algérie après Bouteflika*. Montrouge: Bayard Éditions, 2020, p. 71.

<sup>36</sup> Chalcraft. *Popular Movements in the Middle East and North Africa*, p. 242.

<sup>37</sup> Evans et al. *Algeria: Anger of the Dispossessed*, pp. 43–45. See also Stora. *Retours d'histoire: L'Algérie après Bouteflika*, p. 71.



independence, and the nationalization of all industry.<sup>38</sup>

Finally, the fourth tendency of Algerian nationalism was the Algerian Communist Party. Founded from the Algerian section of the French Communist Party, the party stands as an example of the close and complex relations between Algeria and France, as it gained support from settlers as well as Muslims. While equal rights was a vital claim of the Algerian Communist Party, it hesitated over the question of independence. The French Communist Party had unequivocally supported independence in the 1920s, but in 1936 its attention was directed to the international fight against fascism, which made anti-colonialism less of a priority.<sup>39</sup>

Following a period of intensified repression amid the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 and the rise of the Vichy regime in France, the national movement was reignited when US forces landed in North Africa in 1942. Algerians were introduced to the new ideas of the Atlantic Charter, which declared the right of peoples to choose their own form of government. In late 1942, Abbas met with the US envoy in Algiers, who was sympathetic to his cause, and published the *Manifesto of the Algerian People*, which asserted Algeria's right to self-determination, in early 1943.<sup>40</sup>

A broad programme of reform was presented to the French authorities in June 1943, arguing that the participation of Algerian soldiers in the liberation of France should ultimately lead to the liberation of Algeria. These demands were largely ignored, however, leading to the creation of the *Association des Amis du Manifeste et de la Liberté* (AML) in Sétif in Constantine in March 1944. The AML rapidly developed into a genuine mass movement, but significant divisions quickly emerged between the leadership who wanted to stay within the letter of the law and the grassroots who were eager to fight against French rule.<sup>41</sup>

Amid a period of economic and social hardship, the AML sought to link the victory over fascism in Europe directly to the end of colonialism in Algeria. As a result, enormous demonstrations calling for independence took place across Algeria on 8 May 1945. In Sétif, the police intervened, triggering a violent insurrection across the region that led to the deaths of 103 settlers. In response, the French declared martial law, the AML was dissolved, and Muslims were killed indiscriminately. French statistics put the death toll at between 1020 and 1300, while Algerian nationalists estimated that 45,000 had died. This trauma became a major impetus for mobilization, and for the making of national heroes such as Abd el-Kader, as well as a continuous Algerian experience of dispossession, discrimination and violence.<sup>42</sup> Between 1.5 million and 5 million

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, pp. 45–46. See also Stora. *Retours d'histoire: L'Algérie après Bouteflika*, pp. 72–73.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, pp. 46–47. See also Stora. *Retours d'histoire: L'Algérie après Bouteflika*, pp. 71–73.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, pp. 49–50.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, pp. 50–51.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. See also Chalcraft. *Popular Movements in the Middle East and North Africa*, pp. 245–246; Tripp. *The*

*Power and The People: Paths of Resistance in the Middle East*, pp. 22–24; and Hassina Mechai. *La résurgence de la mémoire de la lutte contre le colonialisme française*. In *Hirak en Algérie. L'invention d'un soulèvement*, Omar Benderra, François Gèze, Rafik Lebджаoui and Salima Mellah, (eds.). Paris: La Fabrique éditions, 2020, p. 129.



Algerians died under French rule as a result of fighting, famine and repression.<sup>43</sup>

Messali later created the *Mouvement pour le Triomphe des Libertés Démocratiques* and the most militant Algerians joined the *Organisation Spéciale* (OS), its paramilitary wing. When the OS was dismantled in 1951, the remaining militants formed the *Comité Révolutionnaire pour l'Unité et l'Action* in March 1954. Among them were six historical leaders of the independence struggle: Rabah Bitat, Mostefa Ben Boulaïd, Mourad Didouche, Mohammed Boudiaf, Krim Belkacem and Larbi Ben M'Hidi. Their confidence was strengthened by the way decolonization was breaking down barriers in the post-1945 world.<sup>44</sup> In October 1954, the *Comité Révolutionnaire* was renamed the FLN, and on 1 November it carried out its first attacks. These sparked the Algerian War of Liberation, which lasted from 1954 to 1962 and became one of the most brutal and protracted wars of decolonization. Following this hard-fought struggle, in which women also played major roles, Algeria became the epitome of revolution in the Global South.

### 2.3 1962–1989: “People Power”, Neoliberalism and the Rise of Islamism

Under its first president, Ahmed Ben Bella (1962–1965), Algeria was marked by revolutionary, Third World-ist and nationalist ideals, along with the legacy of a civilian-military regime as a result of the War of Liberation. Yet independence was seen by

some as appropriated by the FLN and its military wing, the *Armée de Libération Nationale* (ALN). The second presidency, that of Houari Boumediene (1965–1978), which took power through a military coup, was a strong and authoritarian state with an economy based on the Soviet model. Algiers became the nucleus of anticolonial movements in the 1970s,<sup>45</sup> at a time when anti-imperialism served as a driver of significant political shifts in the MENA region.<sup>46</sup>

The degradation of the state coupled with neoliberalism and the return of imperialism formed the major drivers of protest in Algeria and the wider MENA region in the period 1962–1989. Such tendencies were identifiable during the time of Algeria's third president, Chadli Bendjedid (1979–1992).<sup>47</sup> An uprising known as the Berber Spring took place in Algiers and Kabylie in May 1980, in opposition to ‘Arabization’ campaigns and discrimination against Berbers and their languages, the Amazigh languages. The movement was the first challenge to the FLN, as it expressed an alternative version of Algerian identity. It is possible to relate the Hirak to the Berber Spring, as it also makes claims pertaining to minority rights. Perceived as a threat to a national narrative based on “Arabness” and Islam, and to internal stability, the regime fiercely repressed the uprising. Women also took

<sup>43</sup> TRT World. Millions of Dead Later, Algeria's War of Independence Never Ended. *TRT World*. 2020-07-05. <https://www.trtworld.com/> (retrieved 2021-12-20).

<sup>44</sup> Evans et al. *Algeria: Anger of the Dispossessed*, pp. 53-56, 58, 68.

<sup>45</sup> Stora. *Retours d'histoire: L'Algérie après Bouteflika*, pp. 25-27, 57, 151-152.

<sup>46</sup> Chalcraft. *Popular Movements in the Middle East and North Africa*, pp. 247-248.

<sup>47</sup> Stora. *Retours d'histoire: L'Algérie après Bouteflika*, pp. 152.



collective action in the 1980s, around the question of women's rights.<sup>48</sup>

The mobilization during the Berber Spring paved the way for 'Black October' in 1988, which was a watershed moment amid the global economic crisis of the 1980s that had affected Algeria particularly badly. In common with the rest of the MENA region, riots against *le pouvoir*, corruption and the cost of living broke out in several big cities. The upheaval was the culmination of a legitimacy problem that had swelled throughout the 1980s as a result of the economic and social breakdown in the country, as well as demands to be told the full story of the War of Liberation. Hence, there are also similarities between Black October and the Hirak, as the latter movement is also the result of a legitimacy deficit against the backdrop of an economic, social, and political crisis. Even though the riots were met with violent repression that led to at least 500 deaths, they increased the pressure for change that resulted in the introduction of increased pluralism, an independent press and economic liberalization in 1989.<sup>49</sup> Around the same time, Islamism was becoming increasingly popular following the turning point of the Iranian revolution in 1979 and frustration

over the failure of pan-Arabism to defeat Israel.<sup>50</sup>

#### 2.4 1989 to date: The Black Decade and Continuous Collective Protest

A nation in search of an identity, the increasing popularity of political Islam coupled with the return of the 'Arab Afghan' *Mujahidin*,<sup>51</sup> and an authoritarian regime unwilling to accept the fruits of its reforms created an explosive cocktail in the 1990s, trapping Algeria in a 'Black Decade'. The first round of the parliamentary elections of December 1991 brought about a victory for the Islamic Salvation Front (*Front islamique du salut*, FIS) so the second round was cancelled, sparking mass protests as hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets to call for a democratic state. The democratization process was abandoned, and a long and extremely violent civil war began between the state and various Islamist groups (1991–2002).<sup>52</sup>

The war was not just the result of the regime's refusal to transfer power to Islamists. There was also infighting following Bendejdid's reforms, as well as a desire among many to avenge the killings of Black October.<sup>53</sup> While the Algerian regime, and many others with it, have officially branded

<sup>48</sup> Evans et al. *Algeria: Anger of the Dispossessed*, pp. 122–124.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, pp. 102–142. See also Stora. *Retours d'histoire: L'Algérie après Bouteflika*, p. 66.

<sup>50</sup> Marina Ottaway. *Algeria: The Enduring Failure of Politics*. *The Wilson Center*. 2021.

<https://www.wilsoncenter.org/> (retrieved 2021-10-14).

See also Asef Bayat. *Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010, p. 9.

<sup>51</sup> Moudjahidin or mujahidin refers to Muslims who frame themselves as 'holy warriors', engaging in jihad.

<sup>52</sup> Stora. *Retours d'histoire: L'Algérie après Bouteflika*, p. 30. See also Salima Mellah. Le rôle majeur du traumatisme de la "sale guerre" des années 1990. In *Hirak en Algérie. L'invention d'un soulèvement*, Omar Benderra, François Gèze, Rafik Lebджаoui and Salima Mellah, (eds.), Paris: La Fabrique éditions, 2020, pp. 15–32.

<sup>53</sup> See Evans et al. *Algeria: Anger of the Dispossessed*, pp. 140–142. See also José Garçon. Un régime opaque et corrompu, habité d'un profond mépris du peuple. In *Hirak en Algérie. L'invention d'un soulèvement*, Omar Benderra, François Gèze, Rafik Lebджаoui and Salima Mellah, (eds.), Paris: La Fabrique éditions, 2020, p. 40.





the event a War on Terror,<sup>54</sup> others perceive it as a war against the Algerian people,<sup>55</sup> not least due to the security services' use of torture, extrajudicial killings and kidnapping. No investigations of the many massacres have ever been carried out, leaving Algerians with a lasting trauma and a feeling of being scorned by *le pouvoir*, which later played into the Hirak protests.<sup>56</sup> Consequently, under the fourth Algerian presidency, of Mohamed Boudiaf (1992–1992), and the fifth, that of Liamine Zéroual (1992–1999), Algeria was ripped apart by a war that caused the deaths of 150,000–200,000 civilians.<sup>57</sup>

As in the rest of the MENA region, the first decade of the 21st century in Algeria was characterized by unparalleled calls for change.<sup>58</sup> In May 2001, serious rioting against the “murder state” flared up in Kabylie, leading to 100 deaths. Between 2001 and 2005, numerous strikes and violent demonstrations took place in the region and the rest of the country, and the legislative elections were boycotted by the vast majority of the population. Meanwhile, determined to overcome the terrible memories of the civil war, Algeria's sixth president, Abdelaziz Bouteflika (1999–2019), launched a project of reconciliation. The *Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation*

was approved in a referendum in 2005. It offered an amnesty for almost all the crimes committed during the war. For many victims of the war, however, it became a source of anger as no one was held responsible for the violence. Widespread discontent and economic grievances fuelled a number of strikes and labour disputes in 2009–2011, preparing the ground for the Arab Spring of 2011.<sup>59</sup>

### 3. The Current State of Affairs: A Stagnating System and Crippling State-Society Relations

#### 3.1 The Postcolonial State: Le Pouvoir and the Rentier Economy

In a similar vein to Prussia in the 18th century, contemporary Algeria gives the impression of being an army with a state rather than a state with an army.<sup>60</sup> The military and the secret services, which form the cornerstone of an immense security apparatus, have come to represent the most important pillar of *le pouvoir* and are seen as the “real decision makers”.<sup>61</sup> The second pillar consists of the economic elites that emerged at the end of the civil war and amid

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, pp. 252–292.

<sup>55</sup> See Mellah. Le rôle majeur du traumatisme de la “sale guerre” des années 1990, pp. 15–32. See also Omar Benderra. La banqueroute au bout de la dictature. In *Hirak en Algérie. L'invention d'un soulèvement*, Omar Benderra, François Gèze, Rafik Lebджаoui and Salima Mellah, (eds.), Paris: La Fabrique éditions, 2020, pp. 73–74.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid. See also Stora. *Retours d'histoire: L'Algérie après Bouteflika*, pp. 34–35.

<sup>57</sup> Stora. *Retours d'histoire: L'Algérie après Bouteflika*, p. 152.

<sup>58</sup> Bayat. *Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East*, p. 1.

<sup>59</sup> Stora. *Retours d'histoire: L'Algérie après Bouteflika*, pp. 41, 45–49.

<sup>60</sup> Garçon. Un régime opaque et corrompu, habité d'un profond mépris du peuple, p. 41.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, pp. 38–42. See also François Gèze. Une démocratie de façade, une société verrouillée. In *Hirak en Algérie. L'invention d'un soulèvement*, Omar Benderra, François Gèze, Rafik Lebджаoui and Salima Mellah, (eds.), Paris: La Fabrique éditions, 2020, pp. 49–51 and Lahouari Addi. Algeria. In *The Middle East*, Ellen Lust (ed), 409–410. Thousand Oaks: CQ Press, 2017. 14<sup>th</sup> Edition.



a booming rentier economy.<sup>62</sup> The third pillar is constituted by leaders of the state parties: the FLN and, since the late 1990s, Democratic National Rally (*Rassemblement National Démocratique*, RND). The influential National Organization of Mujahideen (*Organisation nationale des moudjahidines*, ONM) also makes up part of the state structure,<sup>63</sup> clearly demonstrating the strong national legitimacy of the War of Liberation.

These structures created a centralized state. Inspired by Messali Hadj, its leaders had three top priorities in 1962. First, the declaration of an Arab-Islamic and socialist identity for Algeria, constructing an ideological foundation of populist Arab socialism. Second, to assert that this would be the key feature of Algerian unity. Third, the implementation of legislation to guarantee that this collective identity would be materialized through a single legal political party, the FLN.<sup>64</sup> The history of the War of Liberation was smothered and modified to justify the dominance of the FLN, and to exclude the roles of immigrants in shaping Algerian nationalism as well as the roles of Berbers, communists and women in the war.<sup>65</sup> This later shaped public displays of discontent, as seen in the Hirak

protests, during which placards with the names of forgotten personalities from the various Algerian nationalist movements were used.

Hydrocarbon revenues make up the backbone of the Algerian economy; these represent around one-third of Algeria's gross domestic product (GDP) and almost 95% of its export income.<sup>66</sup> Through the redistribution of rents, the state buys social peace and controls opposition. Indeed, subsidies to the population and rents to the security apparatus – which represses protesters as required – oil the wheels of resilient authoritarianism in Algeria.<sup>67</sup> As a result, the economic system is paralysed by corruption on a massive scale, as well as cronyism, overregulation and a lack of innovation.<sup>68</sup> Other forces are also at play: *pseudo-democratization* produces elections within a multiparty system that generates a democratic facade while co-opting and dividing the opposition.<sup>69</sup> *International support networks* secure the legitimacy of *le pouvoir* on the global stage. The US has become a close ally of Algeria due to its

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, p. 33. See also Project on Middle East Democracy. Q&A – “No to the Fifth Term”: Algeria’s New Protest Movement – A Conversation with Isabelle Werenfels. *Project on Middle East Democracy*. 2019. <https://pomed.org> (retrieved 2021-10-04).

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, pp. 33, 38–42. See also Stora. *Retours d’histoire: L’Algérie après Bouteflika*, p. 74.

<sup>64</sup> Tripp. *The Power and The People: Paths of Resistance in the Middle East*, pp. 238–239, 242–244.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, pp. 237–252. See also Stora. *Retours d’histoire: L’Algérie après Bouteflika*, pp. 64–65.

<sup>66</sup> Cecilia Camporeale, Roberto Del Ciello and Mario Jorizzo. Beyond the Hydrocarbon Economy: The Case of Algeria. In *Sustainable Energy Investment: Technical, Market and Policy Innovations to Address*

*Risk*, Joseph Nyangon & John Byrne (eds.), IntechOpen.

<sup>67</sup> Frédéric Volpi. Algeria Versus the Arab Spring. *Journal of Democracy*. Vol 24, no. 3, 2013: 104, 109–112. See also Eva Bellin. The Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Exceptionalism in Comparative. *Comparative Politics*. Vol. 36, no. 2, 2004: 144–151.

<sup>68</sup> Francesco Cavatorta and Belgacem Tahchi. Politique économique et résilience autoritaire en Algérie: Les difficultés de la diversification économique. *Études Internationales*. Vol. 50, no. 1, 2019, p. 15.

<sup>69</sup> Volpi. Algeria: When Elections Hurt Democracy, pp. 152–165.



experiences with terrorism in the 1990s,<sup>70</sup> whereas major European economies, such as Italy, France, Germany, Spain, and the UK, depend to a great extent on Algerian hydrocarbons.<sup>71</sup>

Clientelism is a remnant of the Ottoman system, which created a mercenary attitude to the state that was envisaged as a tool for acquiring personal wealth and prestige through tax collection.<sup>72</sup> Hence, it is not surprising that the FLN came to provide an umbrella for numerous clans and clientelist networks. Conflicts between these clans are emblematic of *le pouvoir*, as they constantly emerge around the accumulation of rent.<sup>73</sup>

### 3.2 The Hirak Movement: A New Episode of Contention

The Hirak movement draws on shared knowledge of previous processes of collective action from the early 2000s onwards, such as the riots in Kabylie in 2001, the nationwide strikes and demonstrations that followed in subsequent years and, not least, the Arab Spring of 2011. Algerians only mobilized in limited numbers during that transformative period, leading to quick and effective repression by the security apparatus.<sup>74</sup> One reason for the low level of

mobilization was that the population had been traumatized by the violence of the Black Decade of the 1990s, and feared that an upheaval would provoke a brutal crackdown by the security forces or trigger the mobilization of radical Islamists in the region.<sup>75</sup> Limited protests also occurred against Bouteflika's fourth mandate in 2014, under the banner of the *Barakat* movement, which means "enough" in Algerian dialect.<sup>76</sup>

In its first wave, the all-embracing Hirak mobilized millions for democracy on a weekly basis. Both women and youth, which together make up around 60% of the Algerian population, played major roles.<sup>77</sup> Students demonstrated on Tuesdays while the wider population, including older people, numerous trade associations and civil society, mobilized on Fridays. In addition to calls for a civil and democratic state, demands covered issues of social justice, the release of political prisoners, the governance of Algeria's abundant natural resources and the role of external powers in the region.<sup>78</sup> Learning from its own turbulent history, but also from failed revolutions elsewhere, *silmiya*, or peaceful protest, became a core strategy of the Hirak. A social media campaign was initiated calling for peaceful

<sup>70</sup> Bellin. *The Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Exceptionalism in Comparative*, pp. 144–151.

<sup>71</sup> Cavatorta and al. *Politique économique et résilience autoritaire en Algérie: Les difficultés de la diversification économique*, p. 13.

<sup>72</sup> Luis Martinez. *La Guerre Civile en Algérie, 1990–1998*. Paris: Editions Karthala, 1998.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ahmed Selmane. Une insurrection qui n'est pas tombée du ciel. In *Hirak en Algérie. L'invention d'un soulèvement*, Omar Benderra, François Gèze, Rafik Lebjaoui and Salima Mellah, (eds.), 79–91. Paris: La

Fabrique éditions, 2020. See also Volpi. *Algeria Versus the Arab Spring*, pp. 107–109.

<sup>75</sup> Mikael Eriksson. *Popular Uprisings that Never Came: Algeria and Morocco in the Light of the Arab Revolts*. Stockholm: FOI, 2014. [www.academia.edu](http://www.academia.edu) (retrieved 2021-05-10).

<sup>76</sup> Le Point. Algérie : Barakat, le mouvement anti-Bouteflika, durement réprimé. *Le Point*. 2014-03-07. <https://www.lepoint.fr/> (retrieved 2021-12-20)

<sup>77</sup> 60% of the Algerian population is under the age of 30.

<sup>78</sup> Northey and al. *The Algerian Hirak: Youth mobilization, elections and the prospects of reform*, p. 16.



protest, and protests were only organized in daytime.<sup>79</sup>

In contrast to the Arab Spring, activists with secular and Islamist inclinations joined the same protests in 2019. They created a cross-ideological coalition, which was enabled by the solid mobilization of the youth who had no memories of the civil war.<sup>80</sup> Moreover, following the departure of the powerful General “Toufik” in 2015, who was largely seen as the head of *le pouvoir*, the security services imploded.<sup>81</sup> The institutional crisis intensified further when conflicts flared up within the FLN and the RND in 2018.<sup>82</sup> Hence, the regime no longer had a grip on the widespread diffusion of grievances within Algerian society. Finally, mass mobilization in early 2019 was facilitated by the limited scope of the Hirak’s goals at the time. Claims pertaining to the rejection of Bouteflika, who was symbolic of *formal power* in Algeria, were perceived as acceptable by the military, holding Algeria’s *real power*.<sup>83</sup>

Following the removal of Bouteflika, the presidential election in December 2019 took place amid mass protests. The five candidates were all regime insiders, and Tebboune – a former prime minister and housing minister – won with the support of the military but began his term with a

legitimacy deficit. The turnout in the elections was just 40%, and just two weeks into Tebboune’s presidency, his principal backer, General Ahmed Gaïd Salah, died of a heart attack. The new president introduced a new constitution in an effort to obtain both internal and external legitimacy within the pseudo-democratic framework. The text ignored protesters’ demands, which included a reduction in presidential powers, an assurance of judicial independence and a reinforcement of the protection of freedom of expression and press freedom. The November 2020 referendum on the constitution was boycotted by the Hirak, leading to an embarrassingly low turnout of 23%.<sup>84</sup>

The Hirak was soon to be restricted by its lack of leadership. Leaderless movements in Algeria are the result of strong mistrust of opposition following the civil war. Protesters feared that control of the Hirak might be seized by self-appointed representatives who could be co-opted by the regime or lead the movement down a conflict-ridden path.<sup>85</sup> There were also deeper divisions between two groups assembled around small opposition parties and activists’ associations. *Pôle démocratique* (Democratic Pole) favoured negotiations with the regime and seeking consensus, while *Forces du pacte de l’alternative démocratique* (Forces of the

<sup>79</sup> Faouzia Zeraoulia. The Memory of the Civil War in Algeria: Lessons from the Past with Reference to the Algerian Hirak. *Contemporary Review of the Middle East*. Vol. 7, no. 1, 2020: 42–43.

<sup>80</sup> Volpi. Algeria: When Elections Hurt Democracy, pp. 154, 156–157, 160.

<sup>81</sup> “Toufik”, also known as general Mohamed Mediène, was the head of the Department of Intelligence and Security (Département du Renseignement et de la Sécurité, DRS) in 1990–2015. Together with the rest of the DRS, he made up the backbone of *le pouvoir*.

<sup>82</sup> Stora. *Retours d’histoire: L’Algérie après Bouteflika*, pp. 114–117.

<sup>83</sup> Dalia Ghanem. 2: Above the State: The General’s Republic in Algeria. *Texas National Security Review*. 2021. [www.tnsr.org](http://www.tnsr.org) (retrieved 2021-06-01).

<sup>84</sup> Andrew G. Farrand. Two years on, Algeria’s Hirak is poised for a rebirth. *Atlantic Council*. 2021. [www.atlanticcouncil.org](http://www.atlanticcouncil.org) (retrieved 2021-05-10).

<sup>85</sup> Zeraoulia. The Memory of the Civil War in Algeria: Lessons from the Past with Reference to the Algerian Hirak, pp. 32–33. See also Gèze. *Une démocratie de façade, une société verrouillée*, pp. 51–53, 57.





Democratic Alternative Pact, PAD) demanded a complete reconstruction of the system and a democratic transition, including the election of a Constituent Assembly.<sup>86</sup> These frictions made the Hirak an easy target for regime manoeuvres and infighting, and the lack of leadership left the movement unable to take strategic decisions, establish a distinct programme for political change or negotiate with the authorities.

#### 4. Interpretative Framework: Understanding the Hirak

The Hirak has much in common with other social movements in the MENA region, and also with other forms of political processes. To understand the details of mobilization, the actors, and the trajectories within the Hirak, it is necessary to place the movement within an interpretative framework. This chapter provides an account of social movements in the MENA region, in order to place the Hirak within the field of collective action in its neighbourhood. It then sets out a three-dimensional interpretative framework based on political, sociological and cultural concepts, with a focus on agency, structure and emotions.

##### 4.1 Social Movements in the Middle East and North Africa

When the uprisings known as the Arab Spring swept across the MENA region in

2010–2011, leading to the fall of four long-standing dictators and the introduction of reform (albeit limited) regionwide, the concept of ‘social movements’ was on everyone’s lips. While some countries in the region, such as the United Arab Emirates and Qatar, remained relatively unmarked by social movements, the history of others, such as Algeria, Morocco and Iran, is unthinkable without them.<sup>87</sup> Along with processes of revolution, nationalism and democratization, the term social movements falls into the category of *contentious politics*. It refers to “episodic, public, collective interaction among makers of claims and their objects when (a) at least one government is a claimant, an object of claims, or a party to the claims and (b) the claims would, if realized, affect the interests of at least one of the claimants”.<sup>88</sup>

Thus, social movements such as the Hirak can be understood as collective political struggles. People from the Middle East and North Africa have historically mobilized in the name of claims pertaining to social justice, Islamism, Arab socialism, Third World-ism, communism and feminism.<sup>89</sup> They have done so by using a combination of political actions, ranging from the establishment of special purpose associations and coalitions, public meetings and demonstrations, to rallies, petition drives and pamphleteering, all of which form a *social movement repertoire*.<sup>90</sup> New ways of expressing dissent include boycott

<sup>86</sup> International Crisis Group. *Algeria: Easing the Lockdown for the Hirak?* Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2020. [www.crisisgroup.org](http://www.crisisgroup.org) (retrieved 2021-05-09).

<sup>87</sup> Chalcraft. *Popular Movements in the Middle East and North Africa*, pp. 225-263.

<sup>88</sup> Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow and Charles Tilly. *Dynamics of Contention*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004: 5.

<sup>89</sup> Chalcraft. *Popular Movements in the Middle East and North Africa*, pp. 225-263.

<sup>90</sup> See Charles Tilly. *Social Movements, 1768–2004*. London: Routledge, 2004, p. 4.



campaigns and cyber-activism. Participants in social movements employ practices they have observed or exercised before, modifying them to current conditions.<sup>91</sup> A social movement dynamic occurs when single events of collective action are viewed as elements of a longer-lasting action, and when participants feel connected by ties of solidarity and fellowship with protagonists of similar movements.<sup>92</sup>

The emergence of a social movement depends on the spread of discontent, to which rigid institutions are unable to respond.<sup>93</sup> This does not mean, however, that *episodes of contention* often start and stop abruptly.<sup>94</sup> Rather, “mobilization of some actors, demobilization of others, and transformation of one form of action into another occurs frequently in most complex contention”.<sup>95</sup> *Contained contention* often proceeds over a long period of time, later shifting to *transgressive contention*,<sup>96</sup> as social movements are historically linked.<sup>97</sup> After such a shift, unprecedented forms of contention occur.<sup>98</sup> Thus, the eruption of the HIRAK in 2019 should not have come as a surprise, as it builds not only on mounting

anti-government sentiment, a deteriorating socio-economic situation and an increase in protests since the early 2000s, in Algeria and the wider MENA region, but also on the lessons from the Arab Spring, the Black Decade of the 1990s and the War of Liberation, 1954–1962.

Nonetheless, an increase in grievances is insufficient to explain social mobilization. Episodes of contention are often derived from considerable uncertainty from within the state, as well as non-state elites and contenders.<sup>99</sup> Challenges to the state, such as an economic crisis, international pressure or infighting, can create a breeding ground for a political opportunity, leading to contentious action.<sup>100</sup> Even more important to social mobilization, however, is the perception of a collective *threat*.<sup>101</sup> Nonetheless, these variables will not push contenders towards mobilization unless they are visible and perceived as threats and opportunities, which makes *social interaction* key to contentious politics.<sup>102</sup> Indeed, dense informal *networks* play a crucial role in movements in the MENA region, as they nurture mobilization through the

<sup>91</sup> McAdam and al. *Dynamics of Contention*, p. 138.

<sup>92</sup> Donatella della Porta and Mario Diani. *Social Movements: An Introduction*. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2006, p. 23.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid, pp. 16-18, 21.

<sup>94</sup> Episodes are “continuous streams of contention including collective claims making that bears on other parties’ interests”, also seen as a “unique sequence of alteration among connected elements”. McAdam and al. *Dynamics of Contention*, pp. 24, 85.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid, p. 72.

<sup>96</sup> Contained contention refers to “those cases of contention in which all parties are previously established actors employing well established means of claim making”. Transgressive contention refers to those cases of contention in which “at least some parties to the conflict are newly self-identified

political actors, and/or at least some parties employ innovative collective action”. Ibid, pp. 7-8.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid. See also Tilly. *Social Movements, 1768–2004*, p. 3; and Tripp. *The Power and The People: Paths of Resistance in the Middle East*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>98</sup> McAdam and al. *Dynamics of Contention*, p. 72.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid, p. 97.

<sup>100</sup> Bayat. *Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East*, p. 9. See also: McAdam and al. *Dynamics of Contention*; and della Porta and al. *Social Movements: An Introduction*, pp. 16-19.

<sup>101</sup> Joel Beinin and Frédéric Vairel. *Social Movements, Mobilization and Contestation in the Middle East and North Africa*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011, p. 9. See also McAdam and al. *Dynamics of Contention*, p. 43; Tilly. *Social Movements, 1768–2004*.

<sup>102</sup> See also McAdam and al. *Dynamics of Contention*, p. 43.



dissemination of information, ideas and strategies.<sup>103</sup> Broader *structural change processes*, such as secularization, economic modernization and urban migration, also affect the genesis of a social movement.<sup>104</sup>

Social movements consist of the constituent bodies of claim-making, such as groups, organizations and myriad relations and social sites, for instance workplaces and neighbourhoods. These networks form *actors* – socially embedded beings who constantly interact with other such beings, undergoing alterations of their boundaries and attributes in the course of these interactions. Actors use partially shared histories, cultures and collective links with other actors. Every actor that participates in claim-making involves at least one group of previously affiliated persons who have spread widely recognized ideas concerning their political position.<sup>105</sup> Participants are connected through feelings of community, fellowship and a shared commitment to a cause, which through conversation, cooperation and competition creates *collective identities*.<sup>106</sup> These identities are adopted through contentious action. As

movements develop new ideas and values, and as contention transforms relations within communities, associations and companies, they become 'agents of cultural change'.<sup>107</sup>

#### 4.2 Theoretical Concepts: Unravelling the Dynamics of the HIRAK

Compared with classical social movement theory, the rather rigid concepts of which have mostly been applied to examine collective action in the Global North, the ground-breaking book *Dynamics of Contention* by Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly approaches contentious politics through a significantly more interactive framework. By emphasizing the importance of *actors*, *networks* and *practices* for understanding contentious politics, it primarily analyses episodes of collective action in the Global South, and is seen as a useful tool for understanding social movements in the MENA region.<sup>108</sup> In contrast to the studies of Clark,<sup>109</sup> Wictorowicz,<sup>110</sup> and Hafez,<sup>111</sup> which are limited to demonstrating the applicability of social movement theory to

<sup>103</sup> Bayat. *Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East*, pp. 18-24. See also: McAdam and al. *Dynamics of Contention*; Beinin et al. *Social Movements, Mobilization and Contestation in the Middle East and North Africa*, pp. 8-14; and Frédéric Volpi and Janine A. Clark. Activism in the Middle East and North Africa in times of upheaval: social networks' actions and interactions. *Social Movement Studies*. Vol. 18, nr. 1, 2019: 1-16.

<sup>104</sup> McAdam and al. *Dynamics of Contention*, pp. 24, 27-28, 41, 43, 94-95.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid, pp. 56, 132.

<sup>106</sup> Collective identities comprise "social relations and their representation, as seen from the perspective from one actor or the other". They are political since they include relations to governments. McAdam and al. *Dynamics of Contention*, pp. 133-137. See also della Porta et al. *Social Movements: An Introduction*, pp. 21-22.

<sup>107</sup> Thomas R. Rochon. *Culture Moves: Ideas, Activism and Changing Values*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998. See also McAdam and al. *Dynamics of Contention*, pp. 135-137.

<sup>108</sup> Beinin and al. *Social Movements, Mobilization and Contestation in the Middle East and North Africa*, pp. 2-4, 6-7. See also McAdam and al. *Dynamics of Contention*.

<sup>109</sup> See Janine A. Clark. Women in Islamist Parties: The Case of Jordan's Islamic Action Front. *Arab Reform Bulletin*. Vol 2, no. 7: 2004.

<sup>110</sup> See Mohammed M. Hafez. 2003. *Why Muslims Rebel: Repression and Resistance in the Islamic World*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2003.

<sup>111</sup> See Quintan Wiktorowicz (ed). *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004.



the MENA region, the framework developed by McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly contributes to a reformulation of aspects of the theory, based on their empirical observations in the Global South.

Thus, concepts within this framework, such as *attribution of threat/opportunity*, *identity shift*, *brokerage* and *innovative collective action*, are used to unravel the dynamics of the Hirak movement below. These concepts are used to interpret the results of this study, which allows for an examination of the processes of mobilization and demobilization, participants' changes in identity and social interaction among previously unconnected sites, among other things. *Narrative analysis* is also used to examine the stories and claims that people use when they exert social action. Finally, with the aim of adapting this framework to the specific context, the Algerian notion of *hogra* is used to explore how the Hirak relates to deeply rooted feelings of humiliation and social injustice.

#### 4.2.1 Narrative Analysis

Stories and storytelling, which are key features of social movements, are explored using *narrative analysis*. The development of "events", both human actions and experiences, a plot structure and the centrality of time are all crucial components of a narrative. A narrative is formed when past events are chosen and structured into a plot, representing them as a meaningful sequence consisting of a beginning, a middle

and an end. A narrative can be understood as both an essential form of movement discourse and a critical analytical concept, focused on *agency*, context, and the embeddedness of the human experience.<sup>112</sup>

Agency is centred on the individual, his or her actions and self-consciousness. As knowledgeable and contemplative actors, individuals learn the universal principles of social life and integrate these into their conduct, later applying this knowledge to counter social principles. Therefore, agency is understood as "the capability to have done otherwise", such as performing an action opposing a certain *structure*. This makes power an inherent feature. Structure stresses social processes, such as repeated practices, that form institutions. It is conceptualized as *rules* and *resources* that represent "both the precondition and the unintended outcome of people's agency". A structure represents an understanding of the rules (expected processes or traditions) and resources (material and social tools used to exert action) that are appropriate for human behaviour in different contexts. According to Giddens, agency and structure are dynamic, conflicting facets of all social practices that both enable individuals to act and constrain them from acting.<sup>113</sup>

Below, a narrative analysis is used to capture discourses about the grievances that pushed people to exert agency within the Hirak. Like the concept of identity shift (see section 4.2.3), it elucidates key characteristics of identity formation and meaning in social

---

<sup>112</sup> Joseph E. Davis (ed.). *Stories of Change: Narratives and Social Movements*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002, pp. 3-4, 10-12.

<sup>113</sup> Anthony Giddens. *Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, Structure and Contradiction in Social Analysis*. London and Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press LTD, 1979, pp. 53, 55-56, 63-70, 81-85, 88, 91.





activism. The analysis also provides new perspectives on the appearance of movements, internal dynamics and structures, and public persuasion. As stories seek certain reactions from their audiences, they are essentially transactional, which, coupled with their organizing operations, explains their discursive power.<sup>114</sup>

#### 4.2.2 Attribution of Threat/Opportunity

*Threats* and *opportunities* often drive people to mobilize, given that they are visible and perceived as such by challengers. Consequently, threats and opportunities are not objective structural factors, but subject to attribution.<sup>115</sup> Although protesters – especially in the MENA region – generally lack resources and are excluded from standard decision making,<sup>116</sup> the political arena is not constant and opportunities for challengers to participate in collective action fluctuate over time. Threats of repression also vary over time and while they are stronger drivers to collective action than opportunities, many movements emerge due to participants' disregard of them as a danger.<sup>117</sup> The attribution of threat or opportunity is an activating *mechanism*,<sup>118</sup> which partly mobilizes previously inactive citizens. Whether the factors discussed in section 3.2, such as the cross-ideological coalition between the secularists and

Islamists, were perceived by protesters as opportunities for mobilization has not been explored.

#### 4.2.3 Identity Shift

*Identity shift* refers to changes in identity during contentious claim-making, and is a considerable part of mobilization. Participants in social movements continuously manipulate, strategize, adjust and reinterpret the identities of parties to their contention, including their own. Despite the emergence of new, fluid identities during contentious episodes, however, most people initially join a movement following appeals to, and the fruitful appropriation of, existing identities. Moreover, contention and its consequences are contingent on the shape, content, and efficiency of identity mobilization. The establishment, transformation and destruction of actors, identities, and forms of action during collective action alter the range of actors, identities and actions taking place in routine politics, boosting contention once a specific episode is over. As noted above, social interaction is crucial for mobilization, and an ongoing dynamic of actor formation and transformation interplays with the mobilization process, influencing its directions and consequences.<sup>119</sup> Hence, it is crucial to analyse the shift in the identities of participants within the Hirak in order to

<sup>114</sup> Davis (ed.). *Stories of Change: Narratives and Social Movements*, pp. 3-4, 10-12.

<sup>115</sup> McAdam and al. *Dynamics of Contention*, pp. 41, 43, 45.

<sup>116</sup> See also Beinin and al. *Social Movements, Mobilization and Contestation in the Middle East and North Africa*, p. 8.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid*, p. 41.

<sup>118</sup> Mechanisms are a delimited category of events that modify relations among given sets of elements in

identical or roughly similar ways in a vast array of situations. McAdam and al. *Dynamics of Contention*, pp. 24, 43.

<sup>119</sup> McAdam and al. *Dynamics of Contention*, pp. 27, 55-57. See also della Porta et al. *Social Movements: An Introduction*, pp. 21-22; and Francesca Polletta and James M. Jasper. Collective Identity and Social Movements. *Annual Review of Sociology*. Vol 27, 2001: 283-305.



understand its changing markers, ideological directions and boundaries, as well its potential alliances.

#### 4.2.4 Brokerage

*Brokerage* plays a major role in the production, aggregation and transformation of contentious actors. The concept refers to the connection of two or more previously unrelated social sites by a unit that mediates their relations with each other and additional sites. Consequently, brokerage links groups and individuals to one another in stable sites, but can also connect actors during contentious episodes as new actors end up crossing each other's paths following heightened interaction and uncertainty. In the case of the Hirak, a focus on brokerage would highlight the roles of individuals and groups acting as mediators between different segments of the movement and with the regime. Furthermore, brokerage contributes to the creation of mass movements, as the linking of sites serves to mobilize previously unorganized or apolitical elements of the population.<sup>120</sup>

#### 4.2.5 Innovative Collective Action

Changes in the locus, forms and meaning of contentious action form *innovative collective action*, which usually takes place at the beginning of an episode. This includes claims and selecting the objects of claims, encompasses collective self-representations, and/or employs methods that are either unparalleled or prohibited by the regime. Although these forms of action

are rarely completely new, they are original adaptations of common routines. As a result, innovative action attracts attention, presents new disturbances in an interactive scene, and usually leads to increased uncertainty among all parties to a nascent conflict. In general, shared prior knowledge, links between key individuals and onsite management direct the flow of contentious action. Protesters usually interact strategically with the objects of their claims, important audiences and representatives of public authorities, as well as with rivals or adversaries. These contacts build on prior interactions and cumulative experiences, as *performances* innovate around familial repertoires, often including ritual forms of collective action. However, polity members also engage in innovative action.<sup>121</sup> These forms of innovative action need to be explored in order to properly understand the *modus operandi* of the Hirak.

#### 4.2.6 The Notion of Hogra

Emotions also drive collective protest.<sup>122</sup> In the Algerian case, the notion of *hogra*, or feelings of humiliation owing to the contempt of *le pouvoir* towards the population, has been a red thread throughout society since the era of French colonization, but especially after the riots of Black October in 1988. Hogra involves humiliation through the opaque regime's abuse of power, widespread feelings of injustice amid extensive corruption and strong repression, and a quest for dignity.<sup>123</sup> It is a mix of denial of people's lived realities,

<sup>120</sup> Ibid, pp. 26, 102.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid, pp. 44-45, 48-50.

<sup>122</sup> James M. Jasper. *The Art of Moral Protest: Culture, Biography and Creativity in Social Movements*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1997.

<sup>123</sup> Garçon. Un régime opaque et corrompu, habité d'un profond mépris du peuple, pp. 35-36. See also Tripp. *The Power and The People: Paths of Resistance in the Middle East*, p. 248.



an impression of being belittled, and living in a constant state of being discriminated against.<sup>124</sup> These sentiments have swelled since the Arab Spring of 2011. Bouteflika was already absent from his own presidential campaign in 2014, after he suffered a stroke the previous year, and only made a few public appearances throughout his fourth mandate. A fifth mandate in 2019, with yet another presidential campaign consisting of photographs of Bouteflika to represent him, became too humiliating for the Algerian population.<sup>125</sup>

Thus, hogra represents disappointment and anger over the state's failure to keep its promises with regard to the social contract, as well as a feeling of having been cheated by history, resulting in a deep rupture in state-society relations. Widespread understandings of what decent state-society relations should look like are mainly defined by the past desire to surmount the humiliations of colonialism. For many, the aims of an independent state should be equality, redistribution of wealth, dignity and a sense of personal participation in the progress of the country.<sup>126</sup> The symbols and slogans of the Hirak show that Algerians still identify with the liberating ideals of postcolonial nationalism, but the extent to which feelings of hogra fuelled mobilization in the Hirak is unclear.

The concepts discussed above are used below to explore different aspects of the Hirak, such as the processes pertaining to mobilization and demobilization, the roles

and actions of various actors, and the factors governing the trajectories and outcomes of contentious action. They complete each other, as they include general social movement theory as well as a specifically Algerian concept. Moreover, they incorporate vital dimensions of social action, such as agency, structure and emotions. Section 5 applies these concepts to an examination of the findings derived from the interviews.

## 5. The Hirak: Mobilization, Actors and Trajectories

It was a dream. To speak, that was one of the good things, now in fact we must reclaim the public space. Maybe re-appropriate a few concepts in terms of citizenship, but we have to get out of this economic crisis and that is what we are doing in fact. But with a lot of resistance.

- Sarah, activist

This section discusses the empirical data derived from 12 online interviews with experts, activists, and journalists regarding the theoretical concepts introduced in chapter 4. In this way, the mobilization, actors and trajectories of the Hirak are explored through the lens of social movement theory and the notion of hogra, as well as Algerian history and the literature on the movement. Most of the participants are Algerians who either monitored or participated in the Hirak movement, and sometimes both. Almost all the participants

<sup>124</sup> Saïd Bouamama. Le sentiment de "hogra" : discrimination, négation du sujet et violences. *Hommes & Migrations*. No. 1227, 2000: 38–50.

<sup>125</sup> Stora. *Retours d'histoire: L'Algérie après Bouteflika*, pp. 103-104. See also Volpi. *Algeria Versus the Arab Spring*, pp. 154-155.

<sup>126</sup> Edward McAllister. The Past in the Present: Algeria at 50. *Mediterranean Politics*. Vol 17, no. 2, 2012: 450.



**Table 1. Participants**

Participant	Role in Relation to the Hirak	Geographical Position
Andrew G. Farrand	Expert	Germany
Nacer Djabi	Expert & activist	Algiers
Naïm*	Activist	Algiers
Sarah*	Activist	Algiers
Hamza*	Activist	Kabylie
Ibrahim*	Journalist	Algiers
Nour*	Activist	Kabylie
Ahmed*	Journalist & activist	North-eastern Algeria
Youcef*	Activist	France
Yasmine*	Journalist & activist	Algiers
Imene*	Opposition politician & activist	Algiers
Mohamed*	Activist	Kabylie, Algiers

live in northern Algeria, in Algiers, the Berber-dominated region of Kabylie or the north-eastern parts of the country. One participant lives in France and another lives in Germany. Consequently, there is a certain degree of geographical spread among them and their perspectives, which makes the data fairly representative of the Hirak movement as a whole. That said, there are no participants from southern Algeria, which means that views on specific local issues in the more deprived regions are excluded. None of the participants expressed any sympathies for Islamist ideologies, instead providing data on the more dominant secular orientations of the Hirak.

The results demonstrate that in addition to the major reasons for mobilization within the Hirak, such as a rejection of Bouteflika’s fifth term, and of the Algerian system of corruption and repression, there were calls for democracy, human rights, and economic opportunities, as well as more even development and cultural rights. Visions of new political systems and philosophical standpoints, such as federalism and secularism, also spurred people to join the

movement, as well as deeply rooted feelings of *hogra*. Second, the Hirak offered a reinterpretation and re-appropriation of the notion of citizenship, as more people reflected on the meaning of being an *active* citizen, not least through demonstrations, but also in debate groups. Third, several attempts were made at brokerage and coordination continued to take place within the Hirak with key actors including individuals and organizations in Algerian civil society, affecting the trajectory of the movement.

### 5.1 Narrative Analysis

Today, the system itself recognizes that, in fact, we had a bunch of...predators who squandered public money and ruined the country. So that's right, when you have a president who is all powerful, places all the power in his hands, so that it prevents the institutions from functioning normally, that they instrumentalize justice to settle accounts with their adversaries. Certainly, (it was) all of this that made people fed up on 22 February 2019. And people went out because it was the last straw, the fifth





term was the straw that broke the camel's back.

- Imene, opposition politician and activist

By linking the extensive corruption at the summit of the Algerian state to robust authoritarianism and clan-related conflicts, Imene's narrative about the onset of the Hirak demonstrates that it was the very *raison d'être* of the system, coupled with Bouteflika's fifth mandate, that led people to pour on to the streets. Indeed, a fifth term for a sick, silent, and publicly absent president became one grievance too many. Speaking of "a bunch of predators", Imene refers to a large-scale anti-corruption campaign that took place in 2019, leading to numerous high-level arrests. In fact, this campaign was a way to settle old scores among rivals, while at the same time cleaning the facade of *le pouvoir*.<sup>127</sup> Yet, even if the Hirak started as largely a political campaign, economic grievances also fuelled mobilization. Imene stated that: "the economic choices have not been for the benefit of the majority of the Algerian people in terms of education, health, justice, local development, regional planning or job creation". Indeed, the unprecedented wealth from hydrocarbons in the early 2000s did not translate into a richer society, but instead to a more inequitable one as Bouteflika not only allowed the oligarchs to enrich themselves, but used the wealth as a means to gain leverage over the generals in power.

<sup>127</sup> Andrew G. Farrand. *The Algerian Dream: Youth and the Quest for Dignity*. Potomac: New Degree Press, 2021, pp. 272-273. See also Volpi. *Algeria: When Elections Hurt Democracy*. 152-165.

For several participants, mobilization in the Hirak signified frustration over the lack of opportunities, mass unemployment and a rejection of rent dependency, which was seen as an out-of-date economic model that impeded sound economic initiatives. Sarah expressed frustration about the difficulty of establishing a company; and, to her, the lack of interest in innovation and entrepreneurship was the result of the rent-driven economic system. She undoubtedly has a point – the economic system is state-centred and overregulated. Owing to the immense corruption and cronyism, there are no incentives among officials to foster entrepreneurship. Sarah called for a political economy not based on hydrocarbons that is "social and inclusive" – notions that are increasingly popular following 132 years of colonial domination, but also after six decades of harsh authoritarian rule.<sup>128</sup> Like Imene, Sarah added: "so tonight, it is a country (that is) in fact so rich. And my grandma, she always said actually, like there's never been a country too rich to steal". The notion that the country has been "stolen" is something that is shared by many Algerians, in the knowledge that they could have been much better off due to the country's enormous natural resources. This plays into people's feelings of having had their dignity violated (see section 5.6. on hogra) and of being betrayed by your fellow countrymen.

Calls for democracy and human rights were major slogans from the very start of the Hirak. As Ahmed, a journalist and activist,

<sup>128</sup> See McAllister. *The Past in the Present: Algeria at 50. Mediterranean Politics*, p. 450.



put it: “everyone demanded democracy. No form of democracy could be born or emerge under the umbrella of the current power”. Nearly all the participants emphasized the importance of freedom of expression and an independent media for a functioning democracy. The Hirk’s opposition to the prevailing repression in Algeria, including the detention of political prisoners, was also stressed, as were minority rights. Naim, an activist, highlighted the right to carry the Berber flag and discussed the preservation of Algerian identity. He criticized the extensive use of French within the administration, arguing that it is not an official language in Algeria, but rather the “foreign language of the colonizer”. This sheds light on the perpetual significance of the past and of colonization in Algeria, as well as on the Hirk as an ongoing quest for a national identity. Indeed, the issue of what role the French language should have in Algeria has been a stumbling block ever since independence.

Uneven development, especially with regard to the marginalization of the south and of the highlands in Algeria, were also grievances that spurred the mobilization. In addition, some participants emphasized that Algeria was plural and diverse, and too big to be an “ultra-centralized” state. Federalism and decentralization were mentioned as demands by some, such as Naim:

There was the theme of the federal state. Kind of like (a) slogan [...] there was a big question about the internal regions or regions that are not really close to Algiers; [...] there was this question: How do people influence decision-making at the national level? And how can this person

participate? ...make things emerge without having to go through Algiers.

Issues pertaining to federalism are very interesting, since they have gone largely unmentioned in work on the Hirk. Moreover, this is a highly sensitive matter, since it relates to the very core of the Algerian state – centralization, under which *le pouvoir* is assigned all the power – and its Arab-Islamic identity. At the same time, *le pouvoir* is probably concerned that demands for decentralization would strengthen the position of organizations such as the small *Movement for the Self-determination of Kabylie* (Mouvement pour l’autodétermination de la Kabylie, MAK), which is seeking autonomy for Kabylie.

Political spaces related to feminist, Islamist and Berber claims emerged a few months into the movement. These spaces allowed demonstrators to formulate specific political demands beyond the broad outcry against Bouteflika’s fifth term. Among these were feminist demands, as the activist Nour called her main claims: “The family code: always around it”. The family code is inspired by Islamic law, and reduces the civil status of women. Another largely neglected claim of the Hirk, secularism, was mentioned by two participants. These claims show how some segments of the Hirk sought to alter the importance of certain foundation stones of Algerian state-building, such as Islam.

The above narratives put the broad base of the Hirk on vivid display, including claims against authoritarianism, corruption, and rent dependency, and in favour of democracy and human rights – such as minority rights and women’s rights – as well



as federalism and secularism. All these stories are related to agency, as the participants show that they know how *le pouvoir* works, and draw on these rules and resources as they try to alter core state structures: a centralized and opaque military state that justifies itself through the War of Liberation, an Arab-Islamic national identity and an economic system that is based on hydrocarbons. These structures have been enabled by repeated social practices, such as clan conflicts, and corruption and clientelism among generals, oligarchs and FLN officials, ever since Algerian independence in 1962.

## 5.2 Opportunities and Threats

I would say that it (the movement) has evolved a lot over time, so if we are looking at the early stages, I think that there is a degree of widened participation that is central to the essential characteristic of the movement. And that one of the reasons why it had some...very early successes was because it was so broad-based and...there was so much alignment in the objectives of the people who were protesting. I think there was a very clear goal of blocking the fifth mandate....and because of that clarity, they were able to stay focused on the goal, achieve the goal...and that is when things got complicated.

- Andrew G. Farrand, expert

Farrand sums up the *opportunities* that contributed to the continuous mobilization and early successes of the Hirak. First and foremost, it was broad-based and included secular as well as Islamist participants, which Volpi identifies as a distinct success factor for

the movement, making it cogent and clearly distinguishing it from the mobilization during the Arab Spring.<sup>129</sup> Many participants also emphasized the importance of women's participation in the demonstrations, mentioning International Women's Day on 8 March 2019 as a decisive moment. Algerian women flocked on to the streets on that day and since then have been a natural element of the Hirak, drawing on a tradition of female collective action since the War of Liberation. Second, it had a clear goal, due to the focus on blocking the fifth term. This was also recognized by Ghanem as an important explanation of the achievements of the Hirak.<sup>130</sup> Once that goal had been achieved, the Hirak lost much of its cohesiveness in terms of objectives and people started to drop out, leaving the movement with what Farrand described as a "more hardcore group of people", who generally tended to be more left-oriented, multilingual and urban. Clearly, this small and rather elite segment of the population did not represent wider Algerian society and failed to offer the opportunity for mobilization that the Hirak enjoyed in its early stages.

The regime also seized on opportunities to further its objectives. Ibrahim, a journalist, describes the Algerian system and its anti-corruption campaign in 2019 in the following way:

But the current regime under which we live (is) the perfect continuation of the old regime, we just changed president; and we put people in jail...businessmen; and the former...ministers and former prime ministers in prison to silence people and to

<sup>129</sup> See Volpi. Algeria: When Elections Hurt Democracy, pp. 154, 156–157, 160.

<sup>130</sup> See Ghanem. 2: Above the State: The General's Republic in Algeria. [www.tnsr.org](http://www.tnsr.org) (retrieved 2021-06-01).



make people believe in a truly independent justice...(It) is also the same justice that put demonstrators, politicians, and journalists in prison.

Some of regime's survival techniques as a resilient authoritarian state, such as co-option, appeasement, division, and confrontation, are highlighted here. By carrying out an anti-corruption campaign among elites within *le pouvoir*, the government sought to appease the Hirak by offering concessions, while at the same time seeking to regenerate. Co-option was used when the FLN and other state political parties participated in the demonstrations and Hirak's debates, while appeasement was applied amid the anti-corruption campaign, and division as well as confrontation were enforced amid the arrest of demonstrators – especially those holding Berber flags.

Several participants stressed that repression is increasing in Algeria as the regime tightens its grip in order to confront the Hirak. Ibrahim said that: "It is undoubtedly one of the worst periods (for) the press in Algeria", adding that "several journalists have been imprisoned; ...before the state (did) not imprison journalists, it was always a red line. Today, the government is not afraid to jail journalists". Some participants mentioned the regime's extensive use of legal tools, such as the law 87 bis,<sup>131</sup> which widens the definition of terrorism in order to criminalize activists and journalists for their social media statements by treating them as threats to national unity. In addition, Sarah

mentioned that a "mole" attended one of the Hirak meetings with civil society associations, and several activists were arrested following the event. Many of these strategies are identified in Farrand's book on Algerian youth and the Hirak, *and intimidation, confrontation, division, appeasement, co-option and negotiation* are all used by the regime to stay in power.<sup>132</sup> The increased level of repression is not surprising, as the more limited number of people on the demonstrations, coupled with containment measures against Covid-19, have made taking a strong grip on society less costly than before.

Threats were also important in the mobilization and demobilization of the Hirak. A fifth mandate for Bouteflika – who had been publicly absent since his stroke in 2013 – was seen as an impossible continuation of a longstanding socio-economic and political downward spiral, which threatened the dignity of the Algerian population. However, conditions in Algeria are still tough. Sara, for instance, told how she had "never observed so many drugs" in the public space as she did in the autumn of 2021. She considered a revival of the Hirak in the form of demonstrations unlikely, due to the regime's crackdown on the movement. As mentioned above, the threat of a potentially organized Hirak led the regime to use the instruments in its toolbox available to authoritarian systems, such as appeasement, co-option and sowing division.

<sup>131</sup> Law 87 bis stipulates that any action aiming at the security of the state, the national unity and the stability and the normal functioning of the institutions, having as object to gain power or to change the system of governance by non-

constitutional means, is considered a terrorist act or sabotage.

<sup>132</sup> Farrand. *The Algerian Dream: Youth and the Quest for Dignity*, pp. 268–279.



Perceived opportunities and threats spurred the mobilization of the Hirak. Opportunities included the broad base of the movement, its clear goals and the danger of a fifth mandate for Bouteflika. These factors served as activating mechanisms, which contributed to the mobilization of previously inactive citizens. They were much-needed ingredients for collective action in the Algerian environment, in which protesters generally lack resources. The widespread perception that a fifth mandate for Bouteflika was a threat signified a change in the political arena, in which the president had been seen as “untouchable” before 2019. The initial mass mobilization of the Hirak was perceived as a threat to the very existence of *le pouvoir*. Just like the Hirak, the regime seized its opportunities, including an array of repressive tactics from intimidation to confrontation, division, appeasement, and co-option. These were used throughout Hirak’s mobilization but stepped-up after its relative demobilization.

### 5.1 Identity Shift

I had a very strict upbringing; in fact, with respect to ...my university trajectory, I had no right...to be in clubs, music, and all...my time at university was very, very controlled because ...the fact is that there was a girl who had her throat cut...in the middle of the car park. In fact, it dissuaded us all from going out on the demonstrations for Palestine...every time there is a financial crisis. I resisted for a long time actually, out of fear, but then [...], as I saw that the second demonstration (of the Hirak) went very

well...the following week...well, I was there, we were there.

- Sarah

While most of the participants in this study had a personal history of collective action – a common ingredient in the nascence of social movements – Sarah had never participated in a demonstration before the Hirak, although she had taken part in sit-ins. Her quote illustrates the kind of terror many Algerians witnessed during or after the Black Decade, and how that trauma drove political inactivity. Referring to “us all” and “we”, Sarah also sheds light on the vital role of networks in the mobilization of people within the Hirak, as is the case in the rest of the MENA region.<sup>133</sup> She was referring to her fellow students at university, and her friends and colleagues in civil society. Most of the participants were part of embedded networks of activists.

Moreover, Sarah’s quote is an example of the conservative attitudes pertaining to the expected roles of women and girls in public spaces: she was not allowed to go to certain places. For Sarah, participation in the Hirak was a question of reclaiming her citizenship. This issue was raised in several interviews. Ahmed, a journalist and activist, emphasized that “before being a journalist, I am an Algerian citizen”. Youcef, who lives in France and demonstrated for the first time in relation to Algeria, told how: “it just made me happy to express myself as a citizen... [an] active citizen and not passive”. Clearly, involvement in the Hirak, itself a result of the participants’ agency, spurred reflections on definitions of citizenship. As they repeatedly

<sup>133</sup> Bayat. *Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East*, pp. 18–24.





expressed their demands in public spaces, these individuals became political actors and, as Youcef put it, *active* citizens. Frontiers shifted pertaining to what it is possible or not possible to do as an Algerian. Collective action in the Hirak signified an *identity shift* for the participants as they re-appropriated and reinterpreted their citizenship, as women, journalists or members of the Algerian diaspora. Finally, Sarah's story also relates to expert and activist Nacer Djabi's view of identities and youth who had not experienced the Black Decade:

People, young people, Algerians were no longer afraid to talk about politics, to talk about political strategy, to talk about...everything and nothing...so it's a new mentality, people are no longer afraid, were no longer afraid... so Algerians are no longer as before.

It appears that Algeria's massive youth population offered an opportunity for many in society as a whole to move on from the trauma and the fear of collective action caused by the brutal civil war of the 1990s. As children of the internet generation, Algerian youth have been exposed to a multitude of styles online, which has made them more individualistic than previous generations. They have been fed with stories and images from other societies and political systems, which have served as an inspiration for mobilizing on the streets.<sup>134</sup> As a result, many young people have been politicized, and developed visions about their future lives that are drastically different from anything the aging generals in power can

---

<sup>134</sup> See Stora. *Retours d'histoire: L'Algérie après Bouteflika*, pp. 144-150.

provide. Drawing on this, young activists manipulate, strategize, adapt and reinterpret their own identities and those pertaining to *le pouvoir*.

However, the Hirak was not groundbreaking for everyone. Hamza, an activist and resident of the dissident region of Kabylie, stressed that: "here in the region, we have not stopped fighting... so the change of system, was it really a thing? For us [...] it was not a discovery". He recalled how demonstrations had occurred every weekend in Béjaïa when he was a student there. Nour, another resident of Kabylie, also highlighted that the university she attended in Tizi Ouzou was "known for mobilization". Unsurprisingly, Hamza and Nour had been active in social movements and civil society since they were in their late teens. Their continuous engagement can partly be explained by local grievances, in the form of language rights, lack of recognition of the Amazigh identity and repression of Berbers, but mostly because their participation builds on action that they have practiced or observed growing up.<sup>135</sup> While the weekly marches of the Hirak came to be seen as a single social movement dynamic in the rest of Algeria, it appears that it was understood as part of a significantly longer struggle for democracy and human rights in Kabylie.

Some of the participants have had their lives significantly altered by the coverage of, or their participation in, the Hirak, as they have been harassed by the police, detained or jailed. For Yasmine, a journalist and activist, her four days in custody were "infernal" and she was shocked by the brutality of the

<sup>135</sup> See McAdam and al. *Dynamics of Contention*, p. 138.



police. She received bruises when she was arrested, fainted twice and lost her memory while in the cell, which is an indication of trauma.<sup>136</sup> Yasmine was so terrified that she resigned her job, but her colleagues convinced her to stay. She now views herself as even more “rebellious” than before. While repression led to an identity shift for her, motivating her to continue organizing, it has had the opposite effect on Ahmed. He sees himself as “blacklisted” as he was prosecuted on several occasions, and difficulties in obtaining information have obstructed his work as a journalist. Ahmed provided an example of the repression he suffers: “when you are having coffee with your girlfriend, for example, and some elements of the intelligence services come to photograph you, so that’s...scary, it’s stressful, it looks like paparazzi”. This is a clear example of how *le pouvoir* uses intimidation (see section 5.2) not only to disable the HIRAK, but also to prevent people from doing their jobs. This has affected Ahmed’s view of the political environment in which he works.

Thus, mobilization in the HIRAK generally signified an identity shift for the participants, involving a re-appropriation and reinterpretation of citizenship. While this applied to most of the participants, the residents of Kabylie tended to consider the HIRAK less transformative than the others, owing to their long histories of collective action. Indeed, previous experiences of activism were important for mobilization within the HIRAK overall, as most participants joined following appeals to, and useful appropriation of, existing identities as

activists. Nonetheless, being active within the movement affected all the participants in one way or another, as they manipulated, strategized, adapted and reinterpreted identities pertaining to *le pouvoir*, as well as their own.

## 5.4 Brokerage

There are a number of people who might have emerged as leaders of the HIRAK, but early on there was resistance to that...and any time somebody seemed to be trying to get into a leadership-like position, they would start to make speeches, saying, oh, the people want this, and the people want that...the people would say no, you shut up; you don't speak for us. So, they would sort of reach up and drag these people back down and it was this popular enforcement [...] it's a popular rejection of any kind of structure at all [...] like we don't want anything organized and I think that's in part because they know that anytime they or...guys, the government moves in, they jump on the head then start chopping up the body.

- Farrand

This quote sums up the situation pertaining to formal organization of the HIRAK very well. People rejected representation, as they wanted to retain the broad and popular characteristics of the movement without risking a leader steering it in an unwanted direction or failing to represent everyone in the movement. This is probably due to the lack of trust in Algeria, as the regime has been effective at dividing society – not least after the civil war – in combination with the absence of an open political space. Indeed, several participants argued that “Algerians

<sup>136</sup> Psychology Today. Dissociative Amnesia. *Psychology Today*. 2021.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com> (retrieved 2021-12-14).



did not know each other” and that the Hirk brought them together. In addition, there is a constant fear of co-option by the regime, as people have seen this on multiple occasions, among the opposition and civil society more broadly. Farrand mentioned one of Algeria’s principal human rights organizations as an example: “the Algerian Human Rights League, which exists in three or four different pieces now because it has been chopped up so many times and [...] it’s just what’s left over after divide and conquer”. Clearly, *le pouvoir* draws on tactics from the Ottoman Empire and French colonial rule. There are, however, other ways to understand the issue of leadership. Djabi asserts:

We have a political culture that refuses leadership. Algerians do not believe in leaders... even during the war of national liberation. The national liberation war never recognized a leader. A single leader, we were forced to form a coalition, a collegial direction...and we worked in a collegial manner until 1962. So, it is this story [...] it is...almost communitarianism.

There is definitely something to Djabi’s point: the main trademarks of *le pouvoir* are that it is made up of several actors, it is opaque, and no one knows exactly who is in charge. As Djabi also pointed out, Abane Ramdane, who tried to seize the leadership during the War of Liberation, was murdered by his peers.<sup>137</sup> This focus on the collective, which also explains the creation of a socialist state on independence, is probably a remnant from the period of French colonialism and its heavy repression.

<sup>137</sup> Garçon. Un régime opaque et corrompu, habité d’un profond mépris du peuple, p. 41. See also Evans et al. *Algeria: Anger of the Dispossessed*, pp. 64-65.

Although this argument collides with Stora’s view of Algerian youth as more individualized than previous generations,<sup>138</sup> it confirms the relational and dynamic aspects that McAdam, Tarrow & Tilly stress in their research – that a government and a social movement mimic, learn from and respond to one another. In that sense, it is maybe not surprising that the Hirk has taken on a collective character.

Nonetheless, the names of two individuals frequently cropped up in the conversations as potential leaders or brokers. Karim Tabbou, a former deputy of the socialist opposition party *Socialist Forces Front* (Front des Forces Sociales, FFS), a spokesperson for the opposition party *Democratic and Social Union* (Union Democratique et Sociale, UDS) and one of the most famous faces of the Hirk, was mentioned as a significant figure. He has been arrested repeatedly since the launch of the movement. The other important character was Mostefa Bouchachi, a lawyer, former president of the above-mentioned Algerian Human Rights League and a former deputy of the FFS. Certain other politicians and civil society leaders also adopted leading roles, although some were seen as opportunists and thus rejected. Djabi argued that: “there are people, people who are listened to that are...who unfortunately did not know how to hang on, did not know how to organize and did not know...did not have a political programme like ... Sudan.” Indeed, organization among the protesters was a key factor in the success of the Sudanese popular

<sup>138</sup> See Stora. *Retours d’histoire: L’Algérie après Bouteflika*, pp. 144-150.



movement, and the lack of it accounted for the failure in Algeria's.<sup>139</sup>

While certain participants, such as Naim, referring to Bouchachi and other civil society leaders, argued that “their visions and opinions had been very well-received by the people”, others were less positive. Both Ahmed and Hamza expressed frustration over the actions of Bouchachi and Tabbou. Ahmed expressed impatience about the fact that they rejected responsibility, arguing that they would do anything just to remain popular. Hamza considered the representation to be superficial: “because the goal was selfish, it was individual, it was populist”. He also voiced scepticism about attempts at brokerage, such as a human rights representative seeking to start a discussion with Islamists. There is indeed a paradox here. Hamza would have liked to see more organization and leadership, while at the same time he disapproved of talks between human rights organizations and religious parties. This reaction is probably linked to a lack of trust, an absence of fruitful dialogue in recent Algerian history and, judging from the statements Hamza made about the “contradictions” between religious parties and democracy, also a frustration over the roles of religious and conservative actors in Algeria.

Despite this, dialogue initiatives did occur within the Hirak. Some individuals and associations tried to convene civil society by positioning themselves as negotiators. Mohamed, who is very active in civil society, said:

We welcomed a nucleus of civil society activists on 8 March (2019)...we organized a national conference for civil society on 16 June (2019)...so we also came out with another roadmap...so, we started to work together [...] then, from late September (2019), the repression began.

From that point, they could not continue with their initiative, which aimed to “bring together practically all political parties, all unions and all national figures, to find a consensual path”. Mohamed stressed the importance of bringing everyone together, as there were many different proposals at the time that they wanted to capitalize on. Several initiatives still exist, such as *Nida 22*, a coordination platform for 22 civil society associations, and *Forces du pacte de l'alternative démocratique* (PAD), which gathers together political parties, civil society organizations, trade unions and individuals such as researchers, lawyers and writers. The youth organization RAJ, which was dissolved by the authorities in October 2021, was described as a leading actor by many of the participants. Nonetheless, despite mounting repression, Imene and Yasmine confirmed that attempts continue to hold meetings, dialogues and exchanges within the movement, albeit under difficult circumstances.

It is clear, however, that the regime is not interested in negotiating with civil society. As Farrand explained, “the government said we are not going to speak to a bunch of civil society leaders, because the government's view of civil society [organizations] is that

---

<sup>139</sup> Sharan Grewal. Why Sudan Succeeded Where Algeria Failed. *Journal of Democracy*. Vol 32, no 4, 2021: 102-114.



they are just total garbage". He also noted that Algerian civil society is weak, confirming much of the literature on the topic, which suggests a causal relationship between the existence of strong civil society and democratization in the MENA region. As mentioned above, civil society organizations in Algeria have been subjected to co-option as well as divide and rule strategies on numerous occasions, generally leading to a fragmentation of associational life punctured by patron-client networks.<sup>140</sup> According to Farrand, the actors in these initiatives did not connect well enough with the population to gain legitimacy and, as a result, were targeted by heavy criticism from the grassroots. Nonetheless, efforts continued, leading to a series of different mutations; but whenever they were close to announcing a platform, the government interfered in order to counter the threat that would arise from a well-organized civil society.

A certain degree of organization took place at several levels of Algerian civil society – for example, all the feminist organizations coordinated around a rotating secretariat – but divisions were palpable even in these more homogenous settings. As Sarah noted: I suffered threats myself. From feminists, feminists that I know say...that I actually put money from my...but everyone will turn their backs on some of us...have even been accused of having used the foreign hand [...] but I think it's a bit hard and I can understand why in fact, they kill each other the old

women, sorry to say the old women, why do they kill each other?

Sarah demonstrates the lack of trust on an intrapersonal level in Algerian society. Rumours about a "foreign hand" are common in the MENA region, as a way of demolishing someone's image and diverting attention elsewhere. Divisions were also prevalent between the secularists and the Islamists, and between feminists and conservatives/Islamists. Hamza did not see the point of waiting for the "faithful" to get out of the mosques on Fridays before starting its demonstrations, and Ahmed was sceptical of cross-ideological coalitions. However, some participants, such as the feminist activist Sarah, saw such coalitions as unremarkable: "we walked with bearded men, with veiled women, in total cohesion". Nonetheless, feminism remained a thorny issue. Youcef recalled: "there were feminists who were attacked...there are those who say: 'this is a movement, this is the cause of Algeria, not of women. Do not divide us'". Yasmine strongly disagreed with this idea, emphasizing the improbability of achieving change without advancing women's rights. These divisions were the result of the broad, all-encompassing character of the Hirak, which generated disagreements about the goals of the movement and over the future direction of Algeria. They also reflect the gulf between the conservative and traditional segments of society, and the younger and more secular.

<sup>140</sup> Andrea Liverani. *Civil Society in a Weak State: The Political Functionings of Associational Life in Algeria, 1987-2005*. PhD Diss., London School of Economics and Political Science, University of London, 2008. See also Clement M. Henry. *The Vanishing Intermediary*

*Bodies of "Authoritarian" Regimes: Legacies of Algerian Student Revolutionaries*. In *Modern Middle East Authoritarianism: Roots, Ramifications and Crisis*, Nouredine Jebnoun, Mehrdad Kia and Mimi Kirk (eds), 81-101. Abingdon: Routledge, 2014.





Political parties appear to have played a relatively peripheral role in the concerted efforts of the Hirak, such as the PAD. Opposition parties described by participants as “democratic”, such as the FFS, the RCD, the UCP, the Socialist Workers Party (*Parti Socialiste des Travailleurs*, PST) and the Workers Party (*Parti des Travailleurs*, PT), all participated in the PAD and took part in the boycotts led by the Hirak. Referring to their absence from the protests, Farrand emphasized, however, that: “I’d still feel pretty comfortable saying that that Algeria’s political parties played almost no role whatsoever in the Hirak”. Instead, the parties appear to have played the opportunist card by commenting on the demonstrations in the media and sharing their visions in debate groups. This is unsurprising, as opposition parties have been important actors in the creation of the Algerian pseudo-democracy that has spurred public mistrust of politicians.<sup>141</sup>

In sum, the Hirak was characterized by its rejection of leadership and organizational structure. This rejection was the outcome of a fear of co-option by the regime, as well as a political culture that favours the collective over individual leadership. Despite this, several attempts at brokerage occurred. The politician Tabbou and the civil society leader Bouchaci, along with the youth organization RAJ and the initiatives Nida 22 and PAD tried to convene Hirak and civil society, and to initiate dialogues with the regime. Thus far, these initiatives have failed, owing to the absence of a political programme, growing repression, the lack of official recognition of civil society leaders as brokers, insufficient legitimacy vis-à-vis the grassroots of the

Hirak, and mistrust between and within various segments of the movement.

## 5.5 Innovative Collective Action

Also, after each demonstration, we organized what we called debate groups...what is the alternative? Because the Arab world, especially...the MENA region, has created revolutions, but what has been missing is really a clear picture of the alternative that will replace...the system...once the system...has been cleared. Who will take over after what we have done? We decided to hold debates.

- Naim

Journalists and researchers have mostly written about Hirak’s main practice of organizing demonstrations. Their non-violent nature is indeed an example of how protesters learn from past experiences, such as the brutal episode of the civil war and the more limited demonstrations during the Arab Spring, and adapt their social movement repertoire accordingly. Peaceful protest forced the security forces to exercise restraint, at the same time as it also convinced others to join, making this form of *innovative collective action* a success for the Hirak. As Naim highlights, however, activists in the movement also organized other types of innovative collective action, such as debates. These took place in public spaces after the weekly demonstrations. Following the outbreak of the pandemic, they also occurred online, due to the extensive need among Algerians to discuss and express themselves politically. Just like Mohamed (see section 5.3), Naim emphasized the importance of inclusion:

<sup>141</sup> Volpi. *Algeria Versus the Arab Spring*, pp. 104-115.



This is really our goal [...] to be as inclusive as possible. As participatory, as concerted as possible... [we] did not want to extract whatever slices of Algeria; all categories, all orientations are welcome, because it is a social project.

Thus, Algerians were provided with an accessible platform for political exchange in the public space, which is unprecedented in the country. It gathered mostly young people, and a majority were men, but after 8 March women's participation emerged as well. Political parties and associations took part in the discussions on themes ranging from the roles of women and the place of religion in society to the status of language, Amazigh culture and the decentralization of Algeria. Hence, many young Algerians have now been part of a politicization process. Hamza attended debate groups on a few occasions. He said: "We tried to regain control in public spaces [...] we were up all night and women, girls, people, grandfathers, we discussed social, political and economic subjects...each at their own level". This sort of innovative collective action attracted the attention of the wider population and the regime, leading to uncertainty regarding the status quo among all parties. In this sense, it is no surprise that state officials tried to infiltrate themselves into the discussions.

The Hirak has also produced a large number of texts, in another form of innovative collective action. The aim of the texts was to clarify the movement's objectives, such as an opening up of mass media. Another objective was to devise a schedule for a transition period and organize a large-scale national debate. Other modes of collective action, in the form of social media

campaigns, petitions and independent media, also made up part of Hirak's social movement repertoire. Moreover, external partners provided opportunities for innovative collective action. Sarah described how her association undertook a tour of France, where they participated in a conference and addressed the ministry of foreign affairs. Both Sarah and Mohamed argued that to achieve the Hirak's objectives, it was important to think beyond the street. In addition, amid increasing repression at home, engaging with partners abroad appeared worthwhile. Consequently, peaceful protest, debates, texts, social media campaigns, and activities with external partners all formed the *modus operandi* of innovative collective action within the Hirak.

## 5.6 Hogra

On a personal level, I lost my father in 2015 due to cancer. And with healthcare...there is no choice. Nothing, there is no healthcare in Algeria. [...] The President was going back and forth abroad. [...] I didn't even have...(access to healthcare) And after? I sort of had...anger, anger against life, against the president, against the system in place. It pushed me. The reason that prompted me to go out.

- Yasmine

This quote relates to the very essence of *hogra*, as Yasmine describes the feelings of anger, humiliation and discrimination that she felt when her father was unable to obtain cancer treatment in Algeria, while President Bouteflika was flown abroad for his healthcare. Importantly, the feelings of deep injustice served as a key driver of Yasmine's



mobilization. Farrand's description of hogra reflects her story:

It is this building feeling that both I am not being treated as I should be as a human being and that...it's like somebody...you know, sticking the knife in you but then twisting it, or like they're putting salt in your wound or they're kicking you while you're already down on the ground, like the extra indignity on top...of the existing one. And that's what people feel and really react against.

Most participants agreed that the sentiments described above, of being in a constant state of deep discrimination, played a major role in the Hirak. While all the participants saw hogra as an issue pertaining to social injustice and humiliation, Imene gave the broadest definition of the idea. For her, hogra encompassed a wide array of political, economic and social discrimination. This included everything from an inequitable distribution of resources, a neglected school system, inadequate hospitals, arbitrary travel restrictions and a lack of public transport, to the absence of cultural and leisure activities for young people, mandatory authorization of civil society associations and unemployment among university graduates.

On top of all the socio-economic problems, the lack of leisure activities is palpable in Algeria, further feeding into feelings of hopelessness among the youth.<sup>142</sup> Imene also mentioned the grim prospects for finding an apartment or marriage, the complete lack of interest in innovative ideas among officials and investors, and the failure

to provide adequate infrastructure and competent teachers in the country's south. Naim mentioned a few other examples of hogra:

To be repressed because you are from a community...oh, to be repressed because you are Kabyle, that is injustice. And to be repressed because you are from the village, and you are not from the city. And also, being put down because...I don't have cousins...oh, my brother is not in the military, is not a soldier, that's right, injustice also because the behaviour of the administration towards the people still rests on...this relationship.

Here, Naim mentioned two common feelings of frustration and being discriminated against in Algeria: because you identify as Kabyle (or Berber), and thus do not fit into the national narrative built on the notion that "Algerians are Arabs"; and not having equal opportunities because to succeed you have to have close contacts with the state. He also highlighted the crisis in current state-society relations, arguing that *le pouvoir* views "youth as a problem and not as wealth". In addition, Naim stressed that hogra paved the way for *harragas*, young people leaving Algeria in boats because of the lack of opportunities. Indeed, that so many people risk their lives to leave the country provides an indication of the breadth and depth of socio-economic troubles or "indignities" in Algeria. For Hamza, hogra was a question of the exercise of power and relations between 'the dominators' and 'the dominated'. He explained:

---

<sup>142</sup> See Stora. *Retours d'histoire: L'Algérie après Bouteflika*, pp. 111-112.



Voilà, I'm really talking about all power from...God and the state, (they) are therefore the dominators. With that, social morality, because we translate the state, there is social morality, therefore the collective imagination. Traditions [...] on the other hand, the dominated are always the citizens, the ordinary citizen.

This is interesting as Hamza is expressing how the actors seen as *agents* in Algerian society are God and the state. The latter draws on resources, such as collective imagination in the form of social morality and traditions, including Islam, to form a *structure* to control its citizens. For Hamza, opposition to this structure is what brought Algerians out on to the street, giving them a feeling of domination themselves. Thus, participation in the Hirak can be understood as a process of overcoming a harmful structure, and by doing so acquiring agency. Moreover, hogra is understood as a long-term structure of Algerian suffering and humiliation. Farrand explains:

(They have) been told for their whole lives that their country is special and that the story is Algeria is special because Algerians suffered this incredible injustice for so many years. But we never stopped fighting it and what you learn as an Algerian is that there was not one war of liberation, it was a constant struggle of liberation for 132 years. There's that, there were struggles of liberation even before that, against the Ottomans and against the Romans...so there's been a trajectory of this forever, and it's who we are as people.

Farrand pinpoints several aspects that are crucial to understanding Algerian society and the Hirak movement in relation to social

movement theory. First, the past is a constant aspect of the present in the country, and the structure of injustice, domination and suffering is something that most Algerians can relate to. Second, the episodes of contention are linked, and the mobilization of some actors and the demobilization of others forms a complex process. This means that the struggle for national liberation is seen as longer and more fluid than the war that took place in 1954–1962, which in itself was related to previous struggles against other colonizers. Third, as a result, when people experience *le pouvoir* demonstrating a major display of contempt towards the population through its actions – or lack of actions – this is extra hurtful because the trajectory of suffering and domination has been so long, and yet Algerians are still not free. This is why some speak of the birth of the Hirak in terms of “1962, independence of the soil; 2019, independence of the people”.

As the power and wealth of the oligarchs swelled during Bouteflika's reign, the disparities in Algerian society became more visible, fuelling the sentiments of hogra for some. Nonetheless, not everyone was fully convinced of the use of applying hogra to explain mobilization in the Hirak. Hogra played a limited role in the movement, according to Ibrahim, who argued that the main demand was political: to block Bouteflika's fifth mandate. Even so, he acknowledged that among the masses in the street, some had mobilized for social reasons, especially following the increase in arrests.

Hogra was a major force in the mobilization of the Hirak, as Algerians took to the streets



in a quest for dignity. This notion involved sentiments of anger and humiliation towards the regime's expressions of contempt for its own population, which often boiled down to a lack of recognition of being an equal, human being. As noted above, *hogra* represented a relationship of power, with the state as dominator and the population as the dominated. As a new episode of contention was initiated by the Hirak, it offered an opportunity to overcome the disparity in this relationship – a process that is still ongoing, although *le pouvoir* clearly has the upper hand. Nonetheless, the contours and content of the social contract will continue to be a topic of contention in the coming years.

### 5.7 Observing the Hirak through the Windows of History, Theory and Literature

Numerous processes are behind the mobilization and demobilization of the Hirak. Just as in past episodes of contention, such as the mass demonstrations in May 1945, Black October in 1988 and the Arab Spring in 2011, *grievances* were an important driving force of mobilization. These deep-seated grievances included frustration over unemployment and the lack of economic opportunities, corruption, rentierism, authoritarianism and uneven development, as well as run-down hospitals, insufficient housing and repressed minorities, which culminated in feelings of humiliation, or *hogra*. These feelings are the result of long-standing periods of domination and suffering, which were intensified during the Bouteflika years.<sup>143</sup> *Hogra* played two roles

in the mobilization of the Hirak. First, boiling humiliation, disappointment and anger over the decision by *le pouvoir* to present Bouteflika for a fifth term enabled people to overcome the structure of repression to seek dignity as they mobilized, thereby exerting their agency. Second, a constant state of discrimination underpinned by the structure of repression, fuelled by fear and the current relative demobilization of the Hirak, pushed transgressive contention back into a mode of contained contention.<sup>144</sup> Thus, *hogra* is a dynamic emotional force that enables agency as well as structure, and mobilization along with demobilization. The presence of *hogra* within the Hirak shows that emotions do indeed play a vital role in the processes pertaining to mobilization and demobilization in the MENA region,<sup>145</sup> representing a clear breach in state-society relations.

Like many other movements, the Hirak is not only a reaction *against* something, but also a movement in *favour of* an alternative reality. Similar to the Berber Spring in 1980, a number of different visions of the orientation of a future Algeria mobilized people in the Hirak. These visions mainly involved demands for a civil state, democracy and human rights, but also more peripheral claims in favour of federalism and secularism. The latter represent broad *structural change processes*. Calls for federalism and secularism are probably the product of individualization coupled with digitalization, as Algerians on the web are more exposed to other political systems,

<sup>143</sup> Stora. *Retours d'histoire: L'Algérie après Bouteflika*, pp. 103-104.

<sup>144</sup> McAdam and al. *Dynamics of Contention*, pp. 7-8.

<sup>145</sup> See Jasper. *The Art of Moral Protest: Culture, Biography and Creativity in Social Movements*.





ideas and beliefs than ever before.<sup>146</sup> Calls for federalism are also a reflection of the fact that Algeria is a vast country in which certain regions, such as Kabylie, are marked by enduring grievances, a tradition of collective action and a distinct minority culture that is excluded from the national narrative. Moreover, those who favour secularism draw on accelerating processes of secularization in the Arab world – trust in Islamist parties and religious leaders is decreasing, along with attendance at mosques, at the same time as atheism is increasing.<sup>147</sup>

In the same sense as in the Barakat protests in 2014, the attribution of *threats* and *opportunities* also spurred the mobilization and demobilization of both the Hirak and the regime. The movement's initial mass mobilization was due to the perception of a single threat – a weak, absent and ailing president being given yet another term – and two opportunities, in the form of its broad base and a clear goal of blocking the fifth mandate.<sup>148</sup> In contrast, its demobilization was the result of obscure objectives and a small-scale mobilization dominated by left-leaning, urban elites. This resembled the demobilization during the Arab Spring, as one of the reasons for its failure was the lack of a broad, cross-ideological coalition.<sup>149</sup> The regime also seized on opportunities for mobilization, as it launched an anti-corruption campaign, arrested activists

carrying Berber flags, as well as journalists, and infiltrated Hirak events. In carrying out such actions, they adopted the array of repressive strategies identified by Farrand: *intimidation, confrontation, division, appeasement* and *co-option*, among others.<sup>150</sup> Similar strategies have been used during past periods of contentious politics in Algeria: appeasement was adopted when concessions in the form of pluralism and economic liberalism were introduced following Black October;<sup>151</sup> co-option of new opposition parties was implemented by Bouteflika's regime in the aftermath of the Arab Spring;<sup>152</sup> and intimidation and division were embraced by the state amid its harsh treatment of the population during and after the Black Decade,<sup>153</sup> as massacres were left uninvestigated and Algerians were split, marked by a significant mistrust towards each other.

With regard to roles, actions and identity formation, the Hirak signified an opening up of the civic space. Although most of the participants in this study had been politicized before the dawn of the movement, not all of those referred to as "activists" had participated in demonstrations before or expressed their political views in public. For them, as well as for the more experienced activists, the Hirak paved the way for a reinterpretation and re-appropriation of citizenship, through regular marches, debates and boycott campaigns,

<sup>146</sup> See McAdam and al. *Dynamics of Contention*, pp. 24, 27-28, 41, 43, 94-95.

<sup>147</sup> Arab Barometer. Arabs are losing faith in religious parties and leaders. *Arab Barometer*. 2019. <https://www.arabbarometer.org/> (retrieved 2022-01-10)

<sup>148</sup> See Ghanem. 2: Above the State: The General's Republic in Algeria. [www.tnsr.org](http://www.tnsr.org) (retrieved 2021-06-01).

<sup>149</sup> See Volpi. Algeria: When Elections Hurt Democracy, pp. 154, 156-157, 160.

<sup>150</sup> Farrand. *The Algerian Dream: Youth and the Quest for Dignity*, pp. 268-279.

<sup>151</sup> See Evans et al. *Algeria: Anger of the Dispossessed*, pp. 102-142.

<sup>152</sup> See Volpi. Algeria Versus the Arab Spring. 104-115.

<sup>153</sup> See Mellah. Le rôle majeur du traumatisme de la "sale guerre" des années 1990, pp. 15-32.



that led to an *identity shift*. This leads to two conclusions. First, that Djabi is indeed right when he says that there has been a change in mentalities among Algerian youth, as they did not experience the Black Decade and, as a consequence, fear collective action less than their parents and grandparents. Second, the ball of change is now rolling, and it will be difficult for *le pouvoir* to bring it to a halt. Although this does not signify regime change any time soon, it does mean that wide segments of an entire society – and especially the youth – have learned, shared and internalized modes of resistance in the form of *innovative collective action*, such as non-violence, and political ideas pertaining to a civil state, democracy and human rights. Having removed Bouteflika, Algerians know that change is possible. While the Hirak is not as organized as the four main nationalist groupings during the 1930s, both contentious episodes represent a momentous rejection of the status quo.

Civil society organizations, such as the youth association RAJ and umbrella groups the PAD and Nida 22, as well as individuals, such as the human rights lawyer Bouchachi and the politician Tabbou, played important roles in attempting to convene the Hirak and Algerian associational life. They tried to negotiate with the regime, attempting *brokerage*, but were utterly rejected both by *le pouvoir* and by the grassroots. As several of the participants pointed out, these individuals, as well as others, refused to take on leadership. For Djabi, this refusal was a result of the resistance to individual leadership in Algerian culture, and he referred to the communal leadership in the

War of Liberation. Governing factors of the course and outcome of the Hirak were its initial broad, cross-ideological base and clear goal, and later on the lack of these attributes, its absence of leadership, its failure to agree a clear programme, its internal divisions and its general unwillingness to negotiate with the regime, as well as the insistence of the regime on implementing a smorgasbord of repressive tactics. As Grewal points out, in states where the military represents a powerful political actor, pacts between it and the opposition might be pivotal to beginning a transition once an authoritarian leader has been ousted.<sup>154</sup>

## 6. Conclusions

The winds of change are blowing in Algeria – and yet there is also continuity. When Algerians mobilize within the Hirak, they draw on a long history of collective protest – whether during the era of the Ottoman Empire, French colonization or the modern-day *le pouvoir*, people have repeatedly shown that they will act when the social contract is endangered. Algerian protesters' perceptions of *threats and opportunities*, as well as their use of *innovative collective action*, govern mobilization and demobilization within the Hirak. Such instances have included the threat of a fifth mandate for Bouteflika, opportunities linked to the Hirak's broad, cross-ideological base and distinct goal, and innovation in the form of non-violence, debating groups and boycott campaigns. Mobilization was also spurred by *narratives*, consisting of popular claims pertaining to democracy and human

---

<sup>154</sup> Grewal. Why Sudan Succeeded Where Algeria Failed. *Journal of Democracy*, p. 102.



rights as well as less highlighted ones, such as federalism and secularism. In addition, *hogra* was important for mobilization, as people sought to liberate themselves – this time from their Algerian oppressors – and restore their dignity. During trajectories of collective protest, participants experienced an *identity shift* as they reinterpreted and re-appropriated their citizenship. These trajectories were also affected by *brokerage* as civil society associations and individuals attempted to act as negotiators between the Hirak and the regime without adopting leadership roles. As a result, the Hirak reached an impasse.

Although Algeria's entrenched authoritarian system is likely to remain for the foreseeable future, crisis after crisis will follow. The closed economic system will be unable to respond to the country's multiplying financial woes, which include rising inflation, food prices and unemployment, since the system is centred on hydrocarbons. Despite claims pertaining to diversification, the opaque political system will be unable to change, as its survival depends on the prevailing economic system. Meanwhile, the neglected health system will continue to crumble as new variants of Covid-19 wreak havoc across the country. A disillusioned society will proceed with its transformation in accordance with broad structural change processes, such as individualization, which will continue to deepen the gulf between the old generals in power and the young majority of the Algerian population, deepening the crisis in state-society relations. All this will fuel feelings of *hogra* and expose the regime's legitimacy deficit,

leading to heightened pressure on *le pouvoir*. The regime is likely to respond to this pressure in three ways: (a) business as usual, by initiating impetuous, last-minute solutions to problems that might exacerbate the problem; (b) minimize the threat, by increasing repression; and (c) divert attention elsewhere, by creating crises abroad, such as the current one with Morocco.

What does this mean for the Hirak and Algeria's second national liberation? While the popular movement has yet to liberate Algeria from its aging, authoritarian rulers, it has shifted the dynamics of power in society, despite the tenacious grip of *le pouvoir*. Broad segments of Algerian society – not least the youth – will not forget what the striking power of collective action can achieve, or what active citizenship means. As this study has shown, the current relative demobilization of the Hirak does not necessarily signify the end of the movement, but rather that it has been *contained*. For mobilization to become *transgressive* once again, the Hirak must alter its tactics. Change cannot come through marches alone. For instance, leaders will be needed to structure the movement and pressure the regime to initiate a transition, make use of the debating groups to decide on specific demands – or, as Farrand has suggested, organize general strikes.<sup>155</sup> *Le pouvoir* will not give up its power willingly, but it might be forced to do so if internal or external pressure is great enough. It should come as no surprise if there is a revival of protests on 22 February.

---

<sup>155</sup> Farrand. *The Algerian Dream: Youth and the Quest for Dignity*, p. 337.



## 7. Policy Recommendations

EU member states are advised to work together in their relations with Algeria, and to consider the following:

- a) **Prepare for the impossible to be possible: although the Algerian system is creaking amid its multiple crises, it has proved durable in the past.** After all, the state has 60 years of experience of stifling dissent. Factors such as rents to the military and security forces, subsidies to the population, pseudo-democratisation and international support networks have been critical components of the resilient authoritarian state. However, continuing resistance from the Hirak, either on or off the streets, should also be expected. Grievances in the form of tightened public spending, the removal of subsidies and mounting food prices could lead to future mobilizations. Protests or other forms of collective action could re-emerge on public holidays or anniversaries, such as the Anniversary of the Hirak (22 February), Independence Day (5 July) and the Anniversary of the Revolution (the War of Liberation, 1 November).
- b) **Pressure the Algerian government to release political prisoners and abolish law 87 bis, whose definition of terrorism is too vague.** The regime has used a wide array of legal tools to criminalize hundreds of activists, opposition politicians and journalists, often describing them as terrorists or a “threat to national unity”. This has been the regime’s way of choking all aspirations to leadership and organization within the Hirak. EU member states should communicate to the Algerian authorities that these arrests stand in opposition to human rights, such as freedom of expression and freedom of the press, and that it is in their own interests as a member of the international community to respect these rights.
- c) **Support the dissolved youth organization RAJ and the threatened political parties RCD and UCP.** The dissolution of a youth organization and the threats against opposition parties, which were all active in the Hirak, indicate that repression is reaching a new high in Algeria. Support these actors by calling in talks with the regime for their freedom to operate, fund them where possible, and invite them to present their agendas abroad. International partners form support networks for the Algerian regime, giving it legitimacy on the global stage. It is therefore extremely important that democracy and human rights are emphasized in relations with *le pouvoir*. While these issues are extremely sensitive in Algeria – and considered to exclusively fall within the frame of sovereignty – coordinated pressure from like-minded countries could increase the pressure for change.
- d) **Contribute to the improvement of schools and hospitals in Algeria.** As highlighted during the Hirak protests, education and health are becoming increasingly salient features of deprivation, social injustice and feelings of hogra. Both sectors have been increasingly neglected and have been especially pressured since the onset of the



pandemic. Schools, especially those in the south, lack competent teachers, while hospitals are short of essential resources such as oxygen. It is therefore vital to strengthen schools and hospitals through funding and other material resources.





## Bibliography

Aachar, Gilbert. From One Arab Spring to Another. *Radical Philosophy*. 2020. <https://www.radicalphilosophy.com/> (retrieved 2021-01-06).

Abaci, M'hamed. Quels leviers pour l'économie de l'Algérie nouvelle? *Liberté*. 2022. <https://www.liberte-algerie.com> (retrieved 2022-01-12).

Addi, Lahouari. Algeria. In *The Middle East*, Ellen Lust (ed.), 403-423. Thousand Oaks: CQ Press, 2017. 14<sup>th</sup> Edition.

Arab Barometer. Arabs are losing faith in religious parties and leaders. *Arab Barometer*. 2019. <https://www.arabbarometer.org/> (retrieved 2022-01-10).

Bayat, Asef. *Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010.

Beinin, Joel, and Vairel, Frédéric. *Social Movements, Mobilization and Contestation in the Middle East and North Africa*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011.

Bellin, Eva. The Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Exceptionalism in Comparative. *Comparative Politics*. Vol. 36, no. 2, 2004: 139-157.

Benali Cherif, Sarra. En 2021, l'Algérie termine l'année en fanfare. *Arab News*. 2021-12-31. <https://www.arabnews.fr/> (retrieved 2022-01-05).

Benderra, Omar. La banqueroute au bout de la dictature. In *Hirak en Algérie. L'invention d'un soulèvement*, Omar Benderra, François Gèze, Rafik Lebджаoui and Salima Mellah, (eds.), 63-78. Paris: La Fabrique éditions, 2020.

Bentahar, Ziad. « Ytnahaw ga' ! » : Algeria's Cultural Revolution and the Early Stages of the Spring 2019 Hirak. *Journal of African Cultural Studies*. Vol 33, no. 4, 2021: 471-488.

Beraud, Benjamin. Algérie : une quarantaine de détenus politiques auraient entamé une grève de la faim. *TV5 Monde*. 2022. <https://information.tv5monde.com/> (retrieved 2022-02-04).

Bouamama, Saïd. Le sentiment de "hogra" : discrimination, négation du sujet et violences. *Hommes & Migrations*. No. 1227, 2000: 38-50.

Camporeale, Cecilia, Del Ciello, Roberto and Jorizzo, Mario. Beyond the Hydrocarbon Economy: The Case of Algeria. In *Sustainable Energy Investment – Technical, Market and Policy Innovations to Address Risk*, Joseph Nyangon & John Byrne (ed.), IntechOpen.

Cavatorta, Francesco and Tahchi, Belgacem. Politique économique et résilience autoritaire en Algérie: Les difficultés de la diversification économique. *Études Internationales*. Vol. 50, no. 1, 2019: 7-38.



Chalcraft, John. Popular Movements in the Middle East and North Africa. In *The History of Social Movements in Global Perspective: A Survey*, Stefan Berger & Holger Nehring (eds.), p. 225-263. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.

Clancy-Smith, Julia A. *Rebel and Saint: Muslim Notables, Populist Protest, Colonial Encounters (Algeria and Tunisia, 1800-1904)*. Berkely: University of California Press, 1994.

Clark, Janine A. Women in Islamist Parties: The Case of Jordan's Islamic Action Front. *Arab Reform Bulletin*. Vol 2, no. 7: 2004.

Davis, Joseph E. (ed.). *Stories of Change: Narratives and Social Movements*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002.

della Porta, Donatella, and Diani, Mario. *Social Movements: An Introduction*. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2006.

Eriksson, Mikael. *Popular Uprisings that Never Came: Algeria and Morocco in the Light of the Arab Revolts*. Stockholm: FOI, 2014. [www.academia.edu](http://www.academia.edu) (retrieved 2021-05-10).

Evans, Martin and Phillips, John. *Algeria: Anger of the Dispossessed*. London: Yale University Press, 2008.

Farrand, Andrew G. Two years on, Algeria's Hirak is poised for a rebirth. *Atlantic Council*. 2021. [www.atlanticcouncil.org](http://www.atlanticcouncil.org) (retrieved 2021-05-10).

Farrand, Andrew G. *The Algerian Dream: Youth and the Quest for Dignity*. Potomac: New Degree Press, 2021.

Gamson, William A. *The Strategy of Social Protest*. Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1990.

Garçon, José. Un régime opaque et corrompu, habité d'un profond mépris du peuple. In *Hirak en Algérie. L'invention d'un soulèvement*, Omar Benderra, François Gèze, Rafik Lebdjaoui and Salima Mellah, (eds.), 33-48. Paris: La Fabrique éditions, 2020.

Gelvin, James L. *The Modern Middle East: A History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Gèze, François. Une démocratie de façade, une société verrouillée. In *Hirak en Algérie. L'invention d'un soulèvement*, Omar Benderra, François Gèze, Rafik Lebdjaoui and Salima Mellah, (eds.), 49-62. Paris: La Fabrique éditions, 2020.

Ghanem, Dalia. 2: Above the State: The General's Republic in Algeria. *Texas National Security Review*. 2021. [www.tnsr.org](http://www.tnsr.org) (retrieved 2021-06-01).

Giddens, Anthony. *Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, Structure and Contradiction in Social Analysis*. London and Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press LTD, 1979.



Grewal, Sharan. Why Sudan Succeeded Where Algeria Failed. *Journal of Democracy*. Vol 32, no 4, 2021: 102-114.

Hafez, Mohammed M. 2003. *Why Muslims Rebel: Repression and Resistance in the Islamic World*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2003.

Henry, Clement M. The Vanishing Intermediary Bodies of "Authoritarian" Regimes: Legacies of Algerian Student Revolutionaries. In *Modern Middle East Authoritarianism: Roots, Ramifications and Crisis*, Noureddine Jebnoun, Mehrdad Kia and Mimi Kirk (eds), 81-101. Abingdon: Routledge, 2014.

International Crisis Group. *Algeria: Easing the Lockdown for the Hirak?* Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2020. [www.crisisgroup.org](http://www.crisisgroup.org) (retrieved 2021-05-09).

Jackson, Henry F. *The FLN in Algeria: party development in a revolutionary society*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1977.

Jasper, James M. *The Art of Moral Protest: Culture, Biography and Creativity in Social Movements*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1997.

Le Point. Algérie : Barakat, le mouvement anti-Bouteflika, durement réprimé. *Le Point*. 2021-12-20. <https://www.lepoint.fr/> (retrieved 2021-12-20)

Le Saout, Didier. Les Relations France-Algérie et le Soulèvement du Hirak. *Pouvoirs*. Vol. 1, no. 176, 2021: 105–118.

Liverani, Andrea. *Civil Society in a Weak State: The Political Functionings of Associational Life in Algeria, 1987-2005*. PhD Diss., London School of Economics and Political Science, University of London, 2008.

Martinez, Luis. *La Guerre Civile en Algérie, 1990–1998*. Paris: Editions Karthala, 1998.

McAdam, Doug, Tarrow, Sidney and Tilly, Charles. *Dynamics of Contention*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

McAllister, Edward. The Past in the Present: Algeria at 50. *Mediterranean Politics*. Vol 17, no. 2, 2012: 446-451.

McCarthy, John D., and Zald, Mayer N. Resource Mobilization and Social Movements. A Partial Theory. *American Journal of Sociology*. Vol 82, no. 6, 1977: 1212-1241.

Mechai, Hassina. La résurgence de la mémoire de la lutte contre le colonialisme française. In *Hirak en Algérie. L'invention d'un soulèvement*, Omar Benderra, François Gèze, Rafik Lebджаoui and Salima Mellah, (eds.), 124-144. Paris: La Fabrique éditions, 2020.

Mellah, Salima. Le rôle majeur du traumatisme de la "sale guerre" des années 1990. In *Hirak en Algérie. L'invention d'un soulèvement*, Omar Benderra, François Gèze, Rafik Lebджаoui and Salima Mellah, (eds.), Paris: La Fabrique éditions, 2020.



Northey, Jessica and Guemar, Latefa Abid. The Algerian Hirak: Youth mobilization, elections and the prospects of reform. *ORIENT: Deutsche Zeitschrift für Politik, Wirtschaft und Kultur des Orients, German Journal for Politics, Economics and Culture of the Middle East*. Vol 2, 2020: 14-21.

Ottaway, Marina. Algeria: The Enduring Failure of Politics. *The Wilson Center*. 2021. <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/> (retrieved 2021-10-14).

Polletta, Francesca and Jasper, James M. Collective Identity and Social Movements. *Annual Review of Sociology*. Vol 27, 2001: 283-305.

Project on Middle East Democracy. Q&A – “No to the Fifth Term”: Algeria’s New Protest Movement – A Conversation with Isabelle Werenfels. *Project on Middle East Democracy*. 2019. <https://pomed.org> (retrieved 2021-10-04).

Psychology Today. Dissociative Amnesia. *Psychology Today*. 2021. <https://www.psychologytoday.com> (retrieved 2021-12-14).

Rochon, Thomas R. *Culture Moves: Ideas, Activism and Changing Values*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998.

Safir, Nadji. Algeria during the *Hirak*: The crumbling of rentier power. *Confluences Méditerranées*. Vol 114, no. 3, 2020: 97-108.

Selmane. Ahmed. Une insurrection qui n’est pas tombée du ciel. In *Hirak en Algérie. L’invention d’un soulèvement*, Omar Benderra, François Gèze, Rafik Lebджаoui and Salima Mellah, (eds.), 79-91. Paris: La Fabrique éditions, 2020.

Stora, Benjamin. *Retours d’histoire: L’Algérie après Bouteflika*. Montrouge: Bayard Éditions, 2020.

Tilly, Charles. *Social Movements, 1768–2004*. London: Routledge, 2004.

Trading Economics. Algeria Youth Unemployment Rate: Forecast. Trading Economics. 2022. <https://tradingeconomics.com> (retrieved 2022-01-12).

Tripp, Charles. *The Power and The People: Paths of Resistance in the Middle East*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

TRT World. Millions of Dead Later, Algeria’s War of Independence Never Ended. *TRT World*. 2020-07-05. <https://www.trtworld.com/> (retrieved 2021-12-20).

Volpi, Frédéric. Algeria Versus the Arab Spring. *Journal of Democracy*. Vol 24, no. 3, 2013: 104–115.

Volpi, Frédéric, and Clark, Janine A. Activism in the Middle East and North Africa in times of upheaval: social networks’ actions and interactions. *Social Movement Studies*. Vol. 18, nr. 1, 2019: 1-16.

Volpi, Frédéric. Algeria: When Elections Hurt Democracy. *Journal of Democracy*. Vol. 31, no. 2, 2020: 152-165.



Wiktorowicz, Quintan (ed). *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004.

Zeraoulia, Faouzia. The Memory of the Civil War in Algeria: Lessons from the Past with Reference to the Algerian Hirak. *Contemporary Review of the Middle East*. Vol. 7, no.1, 2020: 25-53.





## About UI

Established in 1938, the Swedish Institute of International Affairs (UI) is an independent research institute on foreign affairs and international relations. Any views expressed in this publication are those of the author. They should not be interpreted as reflecting the views of the Swedish Institute of International Affairs. All manuscripts are reviewed by at least two other experts in the field. Copyright of this publication is held by UI. You may not copy, reproduce, republish or circulate in any way the content of this publication except for your own personal and non-commercial use. Any other use requires the prior written consent of UI.