

## Political Reforms For Regime Survival: Algeria From 1988 To Post-Covid-19 Era

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### ABSTRACT

This study examines how the regime in Algeria could survive the different popular uprisings throughout history, unlike the rest of regimes that experienced the Arab Spring. The study argues that since the foundation of the republic, the Algerian regime has always supported quick political reforms as a survival tactic. Contrary to other Arab dictatorships, the FLN has always been in power, but, as a survival tactic, it has always been willing to make concessions. The Algerian government used immediate political reforms to dictate the populace's behavior during uprisings, which over time created a kind of negative reinforcement. The study will employ an extensive literature review and archival records to support this argument. Relying on a fusion of classical conditioning, power-maximization theory and inherent factors approach, this study will prove that political reforms are used mostly as a tool of regime survival and power maximization.

### INTRODUCTION

Following the year 2011, a series of uprisings against Arab dictatorships swept the Middle East and North Africa, in what is known as the Arab Spring. The beginning of the uprisings has shown optimism for the popular demands of peaceful reforms or democratic transition of power. However, the next few years would bring about a series of tragic events, including the failure of the Arab nation states and the rise of civil wars, especially after the intervention of different foreign powers in these involved countries. Nonetheless, many Arab states in the MENA region, with similar backgrounds of Egypt, Syria, Libya, Yemen and others, have not been influenced by this series of civil wars. Among these special cases is Algeria, which was not influenced significantly by the Arab Spring, until 2019, and even then, the regime could manage to maintain the pacific nature of the uprisings or what is known as *Algeria's Hirak*, which means Algerian popular movement as a reaction to President Abdelaziz Bouteflika's candidacy for the fifth presidential, after a twenty-year of presidency. The regime also managed to sabotage the Hirak of 2019 peacefully, without military intervention. Indeed, it is fair to ask, how did the regime in Algeria survive the different popular uprisings throughout history, unlike the rest of regimes that experienced the Arab Spring?



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The wave of uprisings that swept the Middle East and North Africa, toppling a number of tyrants supported by the West, seemed to trigger a chain reaction across the region (a domino effect) Following the overthrow of Mubarak in Egypt and Ben Ali in Tunisia (Hamouchene & Rouabah, 2016). However, not all MENA region faced the same destiny, including the very special case of Algeria. Algeria is different from the states that have witnessed the Arab Spring because it did not have one in 2011, and it is different from the those states that were concerned with the domino effect of 2011. On one hand, Algeria did not experience any uprising in 2011 that qualifies as Arab Spring. On the other hand, it already experienced an early and late Arab Spring, in 1988 and 2019, which makes it a special case that is worth studying. What makes this case even more distinctive is the ability of The National Liberation Front (FLN), the ruling party since independence, to survive the two crises of 1988 and 2019.

There are different possible answers to this question mark. There is the argument of the Algerian dictatorship's political economy. Accordingly, oil and gas profits were used to pay for domestic social peace as well as to win approval from other countries. The hydrocarbon bonanza was utilized domestically to calm the populace and prevent any radicalization of popular rage. This was accomplished through the provision of loans to small and medium-sized businesses (through ANSEJ, the Agence nationale de soutien à l'emploi des jeunes) and salary increases in a variety of sectors, particularly the pervasive security apparatuses guaranteeing the swift containment of any uprising (Hamouchene & Rouabah, 2016). However, this claim can be questioned when we recall the case of Libya. The Gaddafi regime employs a similar method, and even in its most extreme forms. For instance, Prior to Colonel Gaddafi, King Idris essentially let Standard Oil write the laws governing petroleum in Libya. All of that was put to an end by Mr. Gaddafi. Every Libyan citizen's bank account received a direct deposit of oil revenue (Yahaya 2019, p.580). Yet, Gaddafi's regime was not able to survive with the outburst of the Arab Spring.

Another available argument suggests that the reason behind the failure of Arab dictatorships against popular uprisings is the imperial plans to redraw a "greater Middle East" as part of a regional strategy to weaken nation-states are well underway. The governments that intervened in the Arab uprisings in an effort to sway them in their favor still meddle in the political affairs of the numerous states left damaged by that experience(Christopher, 2021). Yet, this claim can be also questioned if we examine the case of Tunisia and Egypt. For instance, Ben Ali was ousted from power because of the decision of the armed forces and key legislators ("Flight of the Dictator: The Pilot Who Flew Tunisia's Ben Ali into Exile | Middle East Eye," 2017).

According to Frédéric Volpi, the pseudo-democratic multiparty system that divides and suppresses the opposition while producing a semblance of international recognition aids authoritarian leaders in keeping control of their regimes. Additionally, they establish a patronage-based rentier economy, which essentially uses money to buy social harmony. The well-equipped repressive apparatus is additionally prepared and equipped to quell armed uprisings and social unrest. (Volpi, 2013). However, these strategies are not specific attributes of Algeria; many other states employ the same techniques. As explained above, Libya under Colonel Gaddafi employed patronage rentier economy, and many other regimes that were tragically affected by the regime used the pseudo-democratic multiparty system such as Egypt and Tunisia, and to a lesser extent, Syria.



Although the FLN in Algeria faced many survival crises since 1988 with the October Riots outbreak, until 2019 Hirak, the party continued to rule, and to maintain national security and stability until today. Compared to the remaining Arab regimes that failed to survive the popular uprisings of 2011. In this study, we argue that the FLN succeeded to survive in the past and the present for its “quick” embracement of political reforms after each uprising, which is not the case in the rest of Arab cases.

## METHOD

The answer to our research question lies in the historical analysis of the behavior of the Algerian regime since Independence in 1962. In other words, a close analysis of the way the regime behaves in times of instability and popular uprisings will answer the question. In this study, we expect that the regime in Algeria has always embraced immediate political reforms as a strategy of survival since the foundation of the republic. Although the FLN has always been in power, it has always been flexible with concessions, unlike other Arab dictatorships, as a strategy of survival. The regime in Algeria developed over time a kind of negative reinforcement strategy, through the use of immediate political reforms to control the behavior of the populace in times of uprisings.

In this study we adopt three theories of analysis: the power-maximization perspective and the inherent factors approach. First, the power-maximization theory stipulates that political reforms occur for regime survival or for maximizing power: politicians decide on the electoral system to increase the number of seats they receive (Renwick, 2010). Second, the inherent factors approach contends that reforms happen when there is a specific systemic failure, which places an emphasis on the role of additive actors and the dual influence of politicians and citizens (Renwick, 2010). A bridge can be made between these two theories: The reform process is distinguished by a complex engagement between politicians and citizens in the case of elite-mass contact. When there is a specific systemic failure occurs, citizens react in different way, including uprisings similar to the Arab Spring. Some politicians adopt political reforms to stop these popular uprisings, as a strategy of maximizing power for regime survival. In this study, we will show how the regime in Algeria follows this strategy, which helped the FLN survive until now, yet other states which witnessed the rise of the Arab Spring and civil wars did not follow this example; they instead rejected demands for reforms, and used violent reactions against citizens.

Further, we will borrow stimulus-response theory of classical conditioning from psychology to explain the previous “negative reinforcement” through immediate political reforms. The transfer of reactions between stimuli is the central theme of the conditioning paradigm. According to the conventional theory of classical conditioning, a Conditioned Stimulus (CS) will automatically and unconsciously elicit a Conditioned Response (CR) when it is repeatedly paired with an Unconditioned Stimulus (US) (Allen and Madden 1985, p. ). We suggest that the Algerian regime could use “immediate political reforms” as a stimulus in a process of negative reinforcement to calm down the population in times of uprisings., and this strategy became more effective through time.

In this study, we will employ a comparative genealogical methodology to compare the Algerian regime’s behavior in times of crisis, namely: October Riots of 1988, the Algerian Civil War, 2011 Arab Spring, and the 2019 Hirak. We expect that the regime adopted the same method, which is immediate political reforms to maintain power, with different levels of competency. We will also compare, secondarily, the way some Arab



regimes reacted to the Arab Spring: Syria, Egypt, and Libya, with the Algerian case. We expect that these regimes failed to maintain power, with different degrees of failure because they chose a suppressive reaction rather than political reforms. To achieve this methodology, we will use a critical literature review for data collection tools, with a number of archives such as newspapers and reports.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Failed Arab Regimes' Response to the Arab Spring

The countries that were swept by the Arab Spring have witnessed either regime change like in Libya, Egypt and Tunisia, or power fragmentation like in Syria. In both cases, the regime failed to survive. In this section, we will discuss the different responses of different regimes to the Arab Spring, particularly, the Assad regime in Syria, Gaddafi's regime in Libya, Mubarak's regime in Egypt, and Ben Ali in Tunisia. We aim to prove that these regimes either refused to embrace political reforms or delayed them, which made it difficult to respond effectively to the escalating conflict. Extreme responses by Assad regime and Gaddafi led to enduring civil wars, while less extreme responses in Tunisia and Egypt saved them from going through a similar tragedy.

The 2011 uprisings were peaceful popular demands for universal values such as freedom and dignity, and political reforms. Asef Baya explains that The MENA region needs to develop a "scholarship of silence," or a study of the voiceless, of people who operate outside of formal institutions and, despite lacking institutional capacity to exert pressure, pose a significant threat to those in positions of power (Brownlee, 2015). The initial demands were calls for reforms, not radical change nor the fall of the regime. Gerges explains that Syria's popular uprising was neither violent nor motivated by sect. In Syria, protesters risked their lives to challenge the government and dared to demand just political and social reforms—not even regime change. The uprising did not militarize and assume a sectarian guise until six months later (Gerges, 2021). In fact, it is the suppressive response of the Arab regimes that caused a metamorphosis of demands from reforms to regime change.

### 2. The Baath Regime

Assad's brutal repression, followed by the country's descent into a bloody, increasingly sectarian civil war. More than 100,000 people have been killed, millions have been forced to flee, and eight million require humanitarian assistance. Syria, according to the UN, is the worst humanitarian disaster since Rwanda in 1994, and Syria's Arab neighbors are becoming more unstable (Slackman, 2011).

After Friday prayers, on March 25, large-scale demonstrations broke out all over the country. Security personnel killed at least 20 protesters. Later, demonstrations also occurred in Homs, Hama, Baniyas, Jasim, Aleppo, Damascus, and Latakia in Syria. There were reportedly over 70 protesters killed in total (Slackman, 2011).

Further, in his public speech on March 30, Assad called the demonstrations a "foreign plot" and referred to the people who were killed in the gunfire as a "sacrifice for national stability," prompting a huge uproar (Macleod, 2011). Therefore, Assad didn't only show a very repressive method against the protestors since the first day, he also did not show any signs of willingness to dialogue or compromise. Assad would continue repressing the rebels in the most barbaric ways.



The end result is not the complete fall of the regime, but the division of power among different parties, including foreign participants. The Assad regime, with his foreign allies, controls Syria's major cities and coast; the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria, which is dominated by the Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD); and northwest Syria, including the governate of Idlib, which is held by Turkish-backed militias and a rebel government backed by the Islamist Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham, which was lashed out Syria's major cities and coast are under the control of the Assad regime and his foreign allies. Northwest Syria, including the governate of Idlib, is held by militias backed by Turkey and a rebel government backed by the Islamist Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham, which has been critical of the Assad regime (Neep, 2021).

### 3. Gaddafi Regime

In Libya, Colonel Gaddafi responded to the uprisings in a similar way of Assad's response, yet with less extremity. After three days, however, Gaddafi's security forces sabotaged the protests. After 14 civilians died, the protesters began throwing rocks at the regime's live ammunition ("Protesters Take Control of Several Libyan Cities," 2011). As Gaddafi's offensives intensified, the protesters began to use more rudimentary weapons to fight back, including bulldozers, stones, and crude bombs ("Libya," 2011). Only with such limited resources and the assistance of security personnel who refrained from attacking civilians were anti-Gaddafi protestors able to grow. Late in February, Gaddafi had lost control of most of Libya ("Gaddafi Defiant as State Teeters - Africa - Al Jazeera English," 2011). Despite the regime's constant counteroffensives, rebels were only able to take control of a substantial portion of Libya with limited resources.

### 4. Mubarak's Regime

Dina Bishara has summarized Mubarak's response to protestors in the concept of "the politics of ignoring". The idea encompasses both protestors' perceptions of the actions of regime officials as well as those actions themselves. Ignoring protestors includes things like refusing to communicate with them, making rude statements, dodging protestors physically, and acting disrespectfully toward popular mobilization (Bishara, 2015). Mubarak, later, started a sequence of political reforms. Omar Suleiman, a former head of Egypt's intelligence service and a military figure, was appointed vice president as part of Mubarak's initial efforts to quell dissent. Ahmed Shafiq, the former commander of Egypt's air force and minister of aviation, was tasked by Mubarak with forming a new government. The Muslim Brotherhood is just one of the major opposition organizations that support Mohamed ElBaradei in his role as a negotiator for some sort of transitional unity government. The opposition to the Mubarak regime has come together around him (Shadid & Kirpatrick, 2011). Therefore, Mubarak took so long to resort to reforms, which put him at a disadvantageous position.

### 5. Ben Ali's Response

On December 28, President Ben Ali referred to protestors as "extremist mercenaries" and threatened them with "firm" punishment during a national television broadcast. He also referred to "certain foreign television channels" as "hostile to Tunisia," accusing them of spreading untruths and distorting the truth ("Tunisia President Warns Protesters," 2010). This declaration was accompanied with police repression. Only later that Ben Ali declared his willingness to embrace reforms. For instance, on December 29, Ben Ali announced changes to the trade and handicrafts, religious affairs, communication, and youth portfolios in addition to the removal of Oussama Romdhani as minister of communications ("Tunisian President Removes Ministers after Protests," 2010).



However, it was late because the armed forces and legislators had already turned against him.

## 6. The Case of Algeria

The previous section has revealed that all the Arab regimes responded in repressive ways against the protestors. Some of the regimes did not embrace reforms at all, some others did not resort to reforms until at very late stage of the crisis, when most of the involved parties turned against them. In this section, we will discuss the way FLN responded to popular uprisings in different occasions throughout history since 1988 to 2022.

## 7. The 1988 Reforms

Algeria is not a democracy because it was designated as "Non-Free" by Freedom House for the duration of the study. "Reporters Without Borders" ranked Algeria 125th out of 179 nations in their 2013 Press Freedom Index (DU PEUPLE, n.d.). Although it has a multiparty system and is officially a democratic republic, List Proportional Representation voting was instituted in 1997. The 407 members of the Assemblée Populaire Nationale are chosen in multi-seat proportional elections for terms of five years. For Algerians who live abroad, eight seats in the national assembly are set aside. 48 of the 144 members of Conseil de la Nation are appointed by the president, and 96 are chosen by local councils (DU PEUPLE, n.d.). In fact, since independence in 1962, Algeria witnessed two major electoral reforms to end up with this current system.

Shortly after gaining its independence from France, Algeria adopted single-party system, following Soviet pole model. The ruling party (FLN) restored democracy and adopted a majoritarian multi-party system in the late 1980s after twenty years of authoritarian rule to survive the economic crisis that led to popular unrest and immense manifestations against the failure of the system in what is known as the 1988 October Riots. Actually, the new reform cooled down uprisings, and people were busy with the first election in the history of the country.

## 8. The Civil War

But it soon became evident that even if they did not control the majority of the populace, the Islamists were a political power. *Le Front Islamique du Salut* (FIS) won 188 of the 231 seats in the first round of the 1991 election (which was conducted using a majoritarian system) with 47% of the vote. Les Decieurs, or the army, pressured President Chadli Benjedid to call off the second round in response to the impending defeat.

Shortly after, in 1992, General Khaled Nezzar and a group of other generals who desired stronger links with France overthrew Benjedid in a coup d'état. This group is referred to as *hizb França*, which is Arabic for "the party of France." Nezzar's actions weren't completely undemocratic. Nezzar noted that the FIS lacked a majority and that it would be unthinkable if men gaining control through democracy brought about a dictatorship (Qvortrup, 2015).

Following the military coup, The Groupe Islamique Armé (GIA), now composed of terrorists retaliated in kind. Abdelkader Hattab, the head of the GIA, published a flyer with the slogan "Throat-slitting and murder until the Power is God's", inaugurating the Algerian Civil War and the bloody war between secular generals and the terrorists. 30,000 people had died in the fighting by the year's end in 1994. Liamine Zeroul, new appointed



president, began speaking with the FIS's leaders Abassi Madani and Ali Belhadj in this atmosphere of unrestrained violence (Qvortrup, 2015).

The conversations led to hard-line GIA elements attacking what they saw as conciliation-seeking FIS parties. Representatives of the FLN and the FIS met in Rome in an effort to break the deadlock, where they agreed on the "Rome Platform," which called for political pluralism, the acknowledgement of Berber rights, multi-party democracy, and a proportional representation voting system to replace the previous majoritarian system (DU PEUPLE, n.d.).

A number of constitutional changes were pushed through by Zeroual, including a proportional representation system that insured no party would hold an absolute majority and required future governments to reach an understanding with political groups of various ideologies or colors. Voters approved the platform and the constitutional revisions it contained in a referendum in 1996, which was fairly balanced considering the circumstances (DU PEUPLE, n.d.).

Although the first transition from one-party system to multi-party system with a majoritarian rule led to catastrophic results, it achieved its objective which is maintaining the regime in power. This transition confirms *inherent factors approach* that emphasizes the role of additive actors; binary influence of both politicians and citizens; reform occurs when there is a particular systemic failure. Indeed, single-party system with its reliance on oil-based economy and Soviet-like heavy industry produced a crippled economic system that led people to ask for reforms. Regime survival at the time pushed the ruling party to submit to the people's will, confirming power-maximization perspective. According to this theory, politicians control the choice of electoral system to cement their power, expecting that after adopting democratic reforms, people will vote for them. Youcef Bouandel also explains that Algeria started its transition away from dictatorship in October 1988. Political changes were made, ostensibly to speed up the transition process but really to ensure the survival of the current system. The electoral system's overhaul was a key component of the survival plan (Bouandel, 2005).

However, two mistakes were committed. First, the President did not respect the new constitution that stipulated that religion-based and ethnic parties were illegal, and he legalized the activity of the Islamists. Second, the adoption of a majoritarian system in a highly fragmented society between Arabs and Berbers, les laïques and the Islamists was also a major mistake, which confirms Lijphart's hypothesis that a majoritarian system would eventually exclude minorities. For this reason, Lijphart argues that PR is the best electoral system for its management of ethnic conflict in deeply divided societies.

In fact, the decision of *Rome Platform* to proportional representation confirms the previous claim. Matt Qvortrup has used pair sampled T-Test to prove that proportional representation actually helps diminish extremism and particularly terrorism, comparing the cases of Algeria and Northern Ireland (Qvortrup, 2015). The PR system also enhanced Berber ethnic crisis (despite being majority in number, they are politically a minority). After many bloody incidents to revive their identity that was shadowed after the 1963 coup and the rise of FLN and the arabization process of the country, today Berbers have their own representation in parliament and their language is constitutionally an official language along with Arabic. William Quandt explains briefly that Algerians have shown a number of enduring traits after ten years of elections with varying degrees of probity. First, it appears that the society is split into at least four sizable political blocs, each of which has a distinct philosophy and agenda. There is a nationalist group that consistently



backs the FLN or other government-endorsed parties, consisting of public servants, state employees, and rural voters; There is an Islamist current that commands the loyalty of about 15-20% of the population, a Berber-dominated bloc of about 10-15% that frequently abstains from voting but still has political clout due to its organizational strength, and a smattering of democratic, regionalist, and independent parties that likely make up the majority of the remaining members of society (Quandt, 2004). No group can readily rule without the assistance of one or more of the other groups, nor does any one group have a majority.

Despite the two major reforms that transformed the country from an authoritarian single party system to a proportional representation. The FLN is possessing power for its rooted linkage with the military. In fact, the reforms were kind of advantageous to people, but mostly used as a weapon to maintain the power of the generals and to face any possible system failure. They were also used by the regime to create the illusion of democratic transition to calm down popular uprisings. William Quandt explains that when oil prices fall, as they did in the middle of the 1980s, the regime can feel pressured to make at least a nominal political opening in order to shoulder some of the blame for the ensuing benefit reductions (Quandt, 2004).

### **9. FLN's Response to the 2011 Arab Spring**

Following the 2011 uprisings in different Arab countries, President Bouteflika immediately announced a number of political reforms to avoid the domino effect, especially that the neighboring Tunisia could end over a twenty-year rule of Ben Ali.

Bouteflika announced political changes to strengthen the democratic system and give citizens more influence over the decisions that will determine their future. Although the announced reforms were deceptive in nature, the fact that they were declared at a very early stage of the upheaval made them successful. RFI has reported that the political reforms announced by Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika on April 15, 2011 have disappointed the media and civil society who judge them to be below the demands of changing the system. The opposition parties want to go further than these reforms. The student unions, which had managed to organize a big march on Algiers on Tuesday, are not convinced (Boudina, 2011). However, soon after, in an effort to make up for the concessions given to various striking sectors, the Algerian government unveiled a revised budget in May 2011 that drastically increased public sector spending by 25%. In the manner of the Gulf monarchy, a regime trying to buy its way out of trouble used this spending spree as an affordable short-term fix. But the Algerian state has a huge wage bill that can only be paid as long as the price of oil and natural gas rises due to a constantly expanding public sector and a population that is larger than in the Gulf ("IMF Survey", 2011). It is outstanding how the regime could immediately respond to uprisings in a way that does not force it to lose the negotiations, yet it cements an illusion that the solution always is in the FLN's hands. This illusion became gradually throughout history a kind of a collective memory that enables the FLN to exercise a kind of negative reinforcement, if we may use behaviorist lexicon, through "immediate political reforms" to cripple any possible popular uprisings.

It is also outstanding how the military and the police force is used to achieve this negative reinforcement mentioned-above. In other words, during the 1990s civil war, the police and gendarmerie were strengthened, and by the end of the 2000s, they collectively





numbered more than 200,000. What gives the security forces their greatest strength is how well they handled the unrest. Compared to the repressive system in place in October 1988, when the army killed more than 500 protesters in a little more than ten days, the one in place in January 2011 was significantly superior in that regard. Only three protesters lost their lives during the seven days of rioting in January 2011. At the end of February 2011, the government also revoked the state of emergency that had been in place ever since the military coup in 1992. However, the implementation of new "antiterrorism" policies giving the security forces broad discretion to deal with anything they deemed "a threat to the nation"—including capital demonstrations—balanced this (Volpi 2013, p. 111). This symbolic concession can be understood in the form of reforms; the regime is willing always to change itself to meet the demands of the populace, even if the concession is minor, but the way the people are already conditioned makes it feel major.

### 10. 2019 Hirak

After the ailing president Bouteflika decided to run for a fifth term in violation of the constitution, millions of mainly young Algerians peacefully mobilized throughout 2019. The Hirak movement is a significant development that has gone largely unreported. Algerians went to the polls in December 2019 to elect Abdelmadjid Tebboune as president after two elections were canceled (Northey & Guemar, 2020). FLN, immediately, responded with reforms.

The planned presidential elections were postponed as a result of the protests. The initial cause of the protests was the declaration that the ailing Bouteflika, who has hardly been able to move or speak since suffering a stroke in 2013, would run for a fifth term in office in April 2019. Midway through March, the April elections were called off due to public pressure, and Bouteflika resigned two weeks later. Plans for a July election without Bouteflika as a candidate were initially put forth by the interim administration that was installed after the longtime leader resigned, but they also failed (Volpi, 2020). In fact, Election-based authoritarian regimes are successful because they create a political environment where voters and opposition figures believe there is at least a chance of change (Schedler, 2013). The regime in Algeria could cement this illusion throughout history through its strategy of immediate reforms. The populace is conditioned to have an immediate response to their demands, yet this response is illusionary. The regime adopts symbolic change, which is possible, because of the election-based authoritarian system.

The resignation of Bouteflika did not end the protests, yet it limited them somehow. Now, the protesters demanded the resignation of the interim administration as well as new regulations that would stop the government from meddling in elections. The "3 Bs"—Abdelkader Bensalah, the interim president who was formerly the head of the upper house, Nouredine Bedoui, and Tayeb Belaiz, the president of the Constitutional Council—became the protesters' primary targets (Volpi, 2020). Immediately, the regime responded by political reforms. The three Bs were removed from office, and many of the "old regime" symbols, including Bouteflika family were arrested for corruption allegations.

Moreover, the regime adopted different constitutional reforms. The preliminary version of the constitutional amendment was released on May 7, 2020. It stipulates that the position of First Minister will be replaced by that of Head of Government, who will report to the Assembly and be subject to censure, as well as the possibility for the President of the Republic to appoint a vice president, the replacement of the



Constitutional Council by a Constitutional Court, the retention of the two-term limit for presidents, whether consecutive or not, and the one-term limit for deputies (Hamadi, 2020).

In addition, the Constitution's preamble mentions the Hirak, and the army is permitted to take part in operations in foreign theaters. The presidential third of the Council of Nation is eliminated, the National Independent Election Authority (ANIE) is constitutionalized, and the ability to pass laws by ordinance while the legislature is in session is abolished ("Révision de la Constitution," 2020). Most importantly, the final version of the constitutional amendment was released on September 8, 2020. It abolishes the presidential third of the Council of Nations as well as the vice-president position (AE, 2020). We can notice from the kind of reforms implemented that the regime in Algeria does not depend on specific symbols, which made its capacity to create illusionary reforms outstanding.

### **11. Covid-19 Measures: A Kind of Reforms**

During this crisis of legitimacy, the widespread of Covid- 19 in Algeria put the government's weak health public institution under the microscope (Fakir & Werenfels, 2021). However, the regime exploited the pandemic to put a root end to the Algerian Hirak. The regime's measures were limited to the main forms of controlling movement, including isolation from others, restriction of movement, quarantine, and lockdown (Hamidouche, 2020). In fact, these measures succeeded to limit the widespread of the pandemic, and to shadow the deficient of the health care sector. Most importantly, these measures restricted the weekly manifestations of the Hirak for over a year, leading to the end of the uprisings, even after the lift of restrictions. A study revealed that The projections we discovered indicate that thousands of COVID-19 cases have been prevented by the application of the previously mentioned preventive strategy, though these numbers may be disputed by the underestimation of the actual cases numbers caused by the low screening rate of COVID-19 in Algeria (6500 tests) (154 test/M population) until April 13, 2020 (Hamidouche, 2020).

Recent research on the COVID-19 crisis' political ramifications suggests that the pandemic has provided governments with a "window of opportunity" to more effectively suppress activist movements without drawing unwelcome attention from citizens and the international community (Barceló, Kubinec, Cheng, Rahn, & Messerschmidt, 2022) . In general, Political leaders may use global crises like the COVID pandemic to generate a "rally around the flag effect," which can temporarily increase government legitimacy (Kritzing et al., 2021). The regime also adopted a number of economic reforms to avoid the resurgence of uprisings after the pandemic. It turned to what is known as "unconventional" financing, or printing money. Additionally, it made an effort to absorb the estimated 40% of GDP in investments made in the unorganized sector, yet this measure did not produce the expected results (Dris, 2021), economically. The regime also announced plans to drastically reduce spending (i.e., cutting the country's energy import bill by \$10 billion, halving Sonatrach's budget, freezing state-funded projects, and reducing the state's operating budget by 30%) (Abouzzohour, 2020). Despite this plan, President Tebboune also promised not reduce wages of the education and health sectors, which he fulfilled.



More importantly, President Abdelmadjid Tebboune announced a new unemployment benefit in February 2022 for first-time job seekers between the ages of 19 and 40. 580,000 young Algerians received their first payment of \$90 per month on March 28 (Boubekeur, 2022). This new reform would have great impact on popular manipulation.

The regime responded to the 2019 Hirak with immediate reforms and different types of concessions that created an illusion of cooperation with the popular demands. Soon after, the uprisings started to die out gradually to reach a root end during the Covid-19 pandemic and the post-Pandemic eras, following a series of economic reforms that empowered the already existing health restrictions on gathering, travel and moment.

## CONCLUSION

Collapsed Arab regimes after the Arab Spring, like Syria, Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya responded to the 2011 uprisings in similar way: immediate rejection of the popular demands of reforms. In the most extreme cases, the regimes responded with extreme violence and police repression, such as the cases of Assad and Gaddafi regimes, with consistent refusal of reforms. In these cases, the uprisings transformed into civil wars, and the fall of the regime. Although the Assad regime has not completely collapsed, but its governance has become limited to certain geographies. In other cases, like Mubarak and Ben Ali regimes, there was a late embracement of reforms, but the army and the legislators were already dissatisfied with them, which led to their collapse. Both these regimes also used police repression, following the uprisings; however, it was not as extreme as the previous two cases.

The National Liberation Front in Algeria survived many popular uprisings throughout history, and a tragic civil war. The analysis of the behavior of the regime in times of crises, namely 1988 October Riots, the Civil War, the year 2011 unrest, and the 2019 Hirak has proven that the party developed and enhanced throughout time a strategy of survival of negative reinforcement through immediate reforms to inhibit popular movements.

In 1989, following the riots of 1988, the regime made a radical change that involved the termination of the one-party system, and the birth of the majoritarian multi-party system. The country witnessed the first, and last real democratic experience. The riots immediately stopped, believing that the country would surpass the many years of one-party dictatorship. At this stage, the regime lacked experience to deal with such kind of uprisings. It was actually the first lived popular movement. Thus, there were a number of miscalculations that led to a short-lived victory of the Islamic Salvation Front. The military intervened to annul the elections, orchestrating the second coup d'état after independent. The country plunged into a civil war, which would become more of a war of counterterrorism. Yet, the ten-year war did not lead to the collapse of the regime, unlike the civil wars in Libya and Syria because the regime adopted another electoral reform that transformed the majoritarian system into a PR system, for the purpose of power maximization, through increasing parliamentary seats of the FLN, marking the end of the civil war.

In 2011, the Arab Spring in the Arab world influenced the population in Algeria, who organized marches and labor strikes, asking for reforms. However, these popular did not develop into an "Algerian" Arab Spring because the regime immediately embraced political reforms. However, in 2019, another popular movement, known as the Hirak, outburst as a reaction of president Bouteflika running for the fifth term. The regime again



embraced immediate constitutional reforms, and the resignation of the president, with the FLN still in power. Later, Covid-19 widespread would be a golden opportunity to enforce restrictions on gatherings, which stopped the manifestations temporarily. Yet, the FLN implemented different economic reforms to ensure that the manifestations would not outbreak again after the end of the pandemic, a strategy that succeeded.

Despite the different critical uprisings that the FLN faced throughout history, the party still rules the country with absolute power. We should conclude that the FLN, in different times, could survive because of its strategy of immediate reforms. Whereas, other Arab regimes failed to survive similar threats because they did not embrace reforms, immediately.

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