

Political and Media Fields in Algeria

Bensalah Djaafar

doctoral student, Algeria

Pr. Bergane Mohamed

Supervisor, Algeria

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Abstract

This study examines the evolution of the written press in Algeria from 1962 to the present, focusing on the transformations it has undergone in the political landscape. The media's journey is divided into two distinct phases: the period of unilateral political control from 1962--1989 and the era of political pluralism from 1989--present. This paper investigates the role of censorship, political interference, and legal frameworks that shaped the media environment during these phases. While the state monopolised audiovisual media, the written press witnessed varying degrees of freedom, especially after 1989, with the introduction of pluralism. The challenges faced by the Algerian media, including financial struggles, political pressures, and fluctuating laws, are critically analysed, with the conclusion highlighting the impact of these forces on the media's credibility and its role in political socialisation.

Keywords: Censorship; Media law; Media transformation; Political control; Political pluralism; Press evolution, Press freedom, Written press.

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Introduction

The changes witnessed in the media landscape in Algeria since independence have significantly affected the written press, both in terms of legal frameworks, material and technical resources, and organisational structures. However, this transformation did not extend to the audiovisual sector, which has remained under the authorities' control, with public ownership from 1962 to the present. In contrast, the written press enjoyed a certain degree of freedom of expression. This study focuses on the written press and the transformations it has undergone since Algeria's independence, dividing it into two distinct phases. The first phase, from independence in 1962--1989, marked the period of a one-party system, whereas the second phase, from 1989--present, was characterised by political and media pluralism.

1. The Period of Unilateral Orientation from 1962--1989

The unique political reality in Algeria led to consequences that extended to the media field, where media activities became shaped by the same characteristics and features that defined the political situation, with the most prominent of these being the absence of democracy. The lack of democracy in the media can, in part, be attributed to the phenomenon of censorship and dependence on the ruling authority. Censorship was exercised through the issuance of laws and regulations that hindered media activities, and various government bodies exercised oversight over the content that was published or broadcast. This censorship process often extends to confiscating media materials, suspending certain media outlets, and restricting journalists while performing their duties. In many cases, this prevented journalists from accessing reliable news sources. This period can be divided into three distinct phases:

1.1 First Period: The Exceptional Period of the Press from 1962--1965

After independence, the legal situation regarding the media did not change, as the Algerian government did not issue a new legislative law specifically for the media.

The first sovereign decision made by the independent Algerian government was to prohibit the publication of colonial newspapers as of July 1962, immediately following the official declaration of independence on July 5. This ban included nine colonist-owned newspapers, based on the first legal text in the history of independent Algeria, dated July 10, 1962, issued by the head of the temporary executive body. This law prohibited the printing, sale, and distribution of specific titles.

This period was marked by the November 1962 banning of the Algerian Communist Party's organ, the weekly *"Al-Hurriya."* A year later, in 1963, the ban also extended to colonial newspapers (*La Dépêche d'Alger, La Dépêche de Constantine, and La Dépêche d'Oran*).

On December 31, 1962, a law stipulated that "the continues according to French legislation in all areas that do not contradict national sovereignty."² This French law emphasised absolute freedom in journalistic activity and private ownership of newspapers, which allowed several Algerians to take the initiative to publish their newspapers.

Algeria, from the early years of its independence until 1966, experienced a period of freedom of expression and press during which several private and independent newspapers emerged. Some were owned by Algerians, while others were owned by colonists, and each was managed according to its respective political and ideological orientation.

An example is the newspaper *Alger Républicain*, which resumed its media activities on the first day of independence as a private newspaper with a leftist Marxist orientation and was managed by Algerians.

This period (1962--1965) was also characterised by the dominance of a single party and the government over radio and television. The government sought ways to assert its control over the written press, which was still relatively inexperienced and not well established among readers. As a result, dangerous competition began to emerge against the national daily newspapers.

On September 17, 1963, the political bureau of the party and the government decided to nationalise these newspapers. This aimed to eliminate private ownership of the written press and impose government control over all types of Algerian media. After the National Liberation Front (FLN) succeeded in ending the free practice of colonial journalism and nationalising and confiscating its properties, it began publishing Algerian newspapers such as *Le Peuple* in both languages. The government also dismantled independent Algerian newspapers, including *Alger Républicain*.

By 1965, the government had transformed into a system that fully controlled the press, eliminating private ownership in the media sector. This marked the beginning of a new era in which a socialist media system was established in Algeria.

1.2 Second Period: The Socialist Media System from 1965--1979

This phase begins with a significant transformation in the political and media landscape. The events of June 19, 1965, led to the disappearance of the last private newspaper and the cessation of *El-Chaab* (the French-language daily), which was replaced by *El-Moudjahid* (the French-language daily). *El-Moudjahid* then began to play an increasingly prominent role in the media field, eventually

² Zahir Ihaddaden, *La presse algérienne après l'indépendance*, Communication Science, Azzi Abdelrahman et al., Algiers: Office of University Publications, 1992, pp. 121–151.

becoming the sole representative of the written press in Algeria, with a circulation of 100,900 copies daily by 1970, compared with only 68,000 copies.³ For other daily newspapers.

No significant advancements were made in media resources or technology during this period. The media continued its activities using offices and printing presses nationalised from colonial newspapers, and no new titles were launched.

The efforts of political authorities to eliminate media freedom continued, aiming to establish a socialist media system on the basis of two main foundations:

The abolition of private ownership in the media sector was achieved by monopolising the distribution field, as there was no public law to prevent private ownership of media outlets. Moreover, the written press was directed to become a tool used by the authorities to promote their policies. On November 16, 1967, laws were passed that transformed daily newspapers into institutions with commercial and industrial characteristics, making their directors the sole authorities with absolute administrative and financial management rights. However, these directors were placed under the supervision of the Ministry of Information for media and political guidance.

Owing to the widespread illiteracy during this period, which affected more than 70% of the Algerian population, the government neglected the written press and opted to freeze its development regarding the number of newspapers and the quality of media messages. Instead, it intensified efforts to strengthen radio and television, considering them mass media through which messages could be understood without the necessity of literacy. In 1978, 89.90% of financial aid was allocated to audiovisual media, whereas the percentage of aid for the written press did not exceed 4% or 16%⁴. This resulted in the written press not experiencing significant growth during this period, as it was frozen in favour of radio and television, weakening its media message and decreasing its credibility. Furthermore, the government focused on Arabising some of the newspapers published in French, leaving only one daily publication in French, *El-Moudjahid*, while the number of daily newspapers published in Arabic increased to three.

The media policy followed during this period was characterised by significant ambiguity, both theoretical and practical. Until 1976, there was no media law regulating the practice of media activities or defining the general framework for journalism. This legal vacuum negatively affected the media sector, leading to a situation where the media environment was more inclined towards stagnation.

³ Zahir Ihaddaden, *Ibid.*, p. 132.

⁴ Zahir Ihaddaden, *Ibid.*, p. 135.

1.3 Third Period: The Legal Status of Media from 1979--1988

This period was characterised by a clear legal framework for media activities and the emergence of new titles in the written press. During this time, the political authorities issued three key legal texts that served as the basis for media activity in Algeria.

In January 1979, for the first time, the Fourth Congress of the National Liberation Front (FLN) approved a special resolution on media. This signified that the media had become the country's political leadership priority. The rise in the cultural level of society, the increasing number of educated individuals, and improvements in living standards led to an increase in public demands, which necessitated a reassessment of the concept and role of media and media outlets.

Thus, in the early 1980s, Algeria's media concept was defined within the context of a socialist country. This concept was based on the collective ownership of media outlets, considering them an integral part of the political authority represented by the FLN and a tool for its tasks of direction and mobilisation.⁵ The party held all the powers to manage media institutions, either directly or indirectly or through the Ministry of Information, which appointed officials for media institutions according to the party's directives. The ruling political authorities preferred to choose loyal individuals over competent individuals, even if they were far removed from the profession of journalism. Moreover, they relied on individuals who were firmly committed to the party's ideology and had the necessary revolutionary credentials.

This was explicitly stated in the media policy resolution of the Seventh Ordinary Session of the Central Committee of the National Liberation Front (FLN), held in 1982, where it was stated:

"National media policy primarily relies on the commitment of the militants of the National Liberation Front towards the revolution... The application of the principle of unity of direction in the media sector presents two highly important issues. The first concerns finding a formula for work that ensures a balance between the unity of direction and what the nature of media production requires in terms of encouraging creative initiatives. The second is related to determining how to implement the principle of socialist management in a manner that aligns with a political sector tied to the concept of sovereignty."

As a fundamental requirement, these two issues necessitated the assignment of key responsibilities and positions within the media sector to trustworthy militants who possessed integrity, competence, and commitment. Media outlets suffer greatly from the absence of democracy in terms of the content of the messages presented by journalists and the space allocated to the public

⁵ National Liberation Front (FLN), Preliminary Draft of the Media Policy File, Party Publications, Media and Culture Committee, 1982, p. 34.

to express their interests and opinions on the topics and messages they receive. The national press lost its role in raising public awareness, informing citizens, and expressing their concerns, limiting its function to merely transmitting the top-level discourse to the grassroots.

The government outlined its media policy in accordance with the party's official texts and charters. However, it had not formulated a clear vision for media policy before 1982, which caused the press to endure various forms of pressure and suppression in the face of the legal vacuum.

On February 6, 1982, media law was introduced, but it did not bring the expected change and failed to provide real momentum for media movement. It continued to be dominated by the political party, which retained control. The law stipulated that direction would come from the Minister of Information, the media officer in the party, the directors of media institutions, and all party members. The Ministry of Information was responsible for publication and censorship, whereas the authority over media institutions' management was the responsibility of the director. The ruling authority resorted to curbing journalistic freedom through media institution directors under various pretexts, such as unity of direction, unity of thought, and cohesion at work.⁶

This legal situation emphasised the need to diversify the written press by launching regional newspapers and specialising in publications to create movement within the media landscape. In 1985, two evening dailies were launched—*Al-Massa* in Arabic and *Horizons* in French—along with some specialised newspapers, which brought a certain level of vitality after the previous period of stagnation. From this, it can be concluded that there was a lack of a clear and comprehensive media policy, with the media often subject to multiple forms of oversight by the government, the party, and the censorship imposed on media outlets. Given that the media was considered a socialist sector and an area of national sovereignty, it became oriented from top to bottom, serving merely as a tool to propagate the ruling authority's socialist ideology.

Journalists were marginalised, becoming mere employees who, in most cases, were subjected to the authority that governed them. As a result, citizens' right to objective journalism, which is tied to a coherent political culture, was lost. In contrast, opinions are shaped by fragmented and distinct cultural perspectives, as *Al-Mond* suggested⁷. Since the media content was far removed from the concerns of the citizens, society rose against this situation, demanding participation in political life and democracy, culminating in the events of October 1988. Journalists played a crucial role during

⁶ Salah Bouza, "The Algerian Media Policy: Theoretical Foundations and Practice (1979-1990)," *Algerian Journal of Communication*, no. 13 (1996): 12.

⁷ Ismail Merazka, *Political Communication in Algeria under Political and Media Pluralism: Analysing the Factors Influencing the Role of Independent Daily Newspapers from 1990 to 1994*, Master's thesis, Institute of Media and Communication Sciences, 1997, p. 122.

these events by issuing a statement on October 10 to denounce the excessive use of force against demonstrators and call for political reforms.

2.1.1 Political Opposition Press in Algeria

Political parties in Algeria, regardless of their ideological affiliations, have engaged in journalistic activities since the 1930s. This is evidenced by their ownership of newspapers and periodicals that carried their ideas and visions to educate their supporters. This practice became a solid tradition for these parties despite the colonial administration's efforts to confiscate and ban their publications. These parties joined the ranks of the National Liberation Front (FLN) during the War of Independence, setting aside their party ideologies until national independence was regained.

After independence, they quickly returned to political activism and began re-establishing newspapers, recognising the importance of these media outlets.

Three months after Algeria's independence, in addition to continuing to publish titles that criticised the ruling authority, several new publications emerged, representing political factions that opposed the existing regime.⁸ Among these were *Le Révolutionnaire*, the organ of the Socialist Revolution Party, which was founded by the late Mohamed Boudiaf. The Front of Socialist Forces (FFS) later launched *La Voix de la Révolution* and *Libre Algérie*. Following this, Boudiaf's party initiated *La Gazette*, and the Movement for Democracy in Algeria, led by Ahmed Ben Bella, created *Le Remplaçant*.

The Socialist Vanguard Party made "*Sout El Chaâb*" its official mouthpiece. In addition, there was *Alger Républicain*, a newspaper operated by a communist editorial team headed by the nationalist movement activist Abdelhamid Ben Zine and his French-born colleague Henri Alaq, who also fought for Algeria's independence and endured imprisonment and torture by the colonial army.

This pressure remained under the control of the one-party system until 1988 and was distributed "under the cloak" in secrecy after being secretly printed in Algeria or France. It is challenging to address all the underground newspapers published by opposition parties during the one-party rule because of the absence of specific archives or detailed information about this period and the types of publications produced. The available accounts mostly come from testimonies by activists within opposition parties.⁹

These publications played a crucial role as a link between the leadership of these political parties and their grassroots supporters. They were published regularly, and among them were:

⁸ Ahmed Hanifi, *La presse écrite algérienne en Île-de-France: Lecture et identité*, Master's thesis, October 1995.

⁹ 8- اسماعيل مرازقة، الاتصال السياسي في الجزائر في ظل التعددية السياسية و الاعلامية (ترتيب العوامل المؤثرة في دور الجرائد اليومية المستقلة من 1990-1994)، رسالة ماجستير بمعهد علوم الاعلام و الاتصال، 1997، ص 122.

- *La Gazette*: It replaced *Le Révolutionnaire*, which ceased publication after a few issues, with the decision of the Socialist Revolution Party. The party produced approximately 20 issues of *La Gazette* over ten years, starting with the first issue in May 1968. All publications of the Socialist Revolution Party ceased publication during the early 1980s. During this period, newspapers from other political organisations also emerged.

- *El Badil*: The Movement for Democracy in Algeria, led by former President Ahmed Ben Bella, published approximately thirty issues of *El Badil* before launching another publication, *Le Changement*, in July 1987. In April 1988, *La Fronde* was released, and after the October 1988 events, *La Tribune d'Octobre* was published.

- *Libre Algérie* initially planned to release its first issue in June 1986, but its publication was delayed until August. This newspaper resulted from a collaboration between the two main opposition factions: the Front of Social Forces (FFS), led by Hocine Ait Ahmed, and the Movement for Democracy in Algeria, led by former President Ahmed Ben Bella. The late opposition activist Ali Mesli, who was assassinated in France, played a significant role in fostering this rapprochement between these two historical leaders.

The choice of the newspaper's title was a nod to *Algérie-libre*, the organ of the movement for the Victory of Democratic Liberties in Algeria, which operated from 1946--1954. The original suggestion for the title was the *La Tribune*. The editorial team was able to publish 21 issues between August 1986 and December 1988, when it ceased publication. It reappeared in March 1990 in Algeria following the opening of the political space and the establishment of multipartyism.

A team of militants and sympathisers from both parties managed the newspaper's editorial work from the special issue to the fourth issue in the summer of 1987. However, months after the assassination of the publishing director Ali Mesli, the editorial team split due to serious political disagreements. The militants from the Movement for Democracy in Algeria withdrew, and the remaining members received support from militants and sympathisers of the Front of Socialist Forces. Despite this division, both movements continued to publish other periodicals for their internal party purposes.

- *La Tribune Algérienne*: This was the mouthpiece of the Algerian Trotskyist contact committee. It published 24 issues over two years before being replaced by the *La Tribune Ouvrière*. The same movement published another theoretical periodical, *L'Étincelle* (five issues), along with internal pamphlets and publications.

- *Sout El Chaâb*: This was a monthly newspaper affiliated with the Socialist Vanguard Party, published in Arabic and French in Algeria and distributed in both Algeria and France. The party published the first issue of this newspaper on a single page in the Kasbah district of Algiers in 1966. The newspaper published twenty issues until the Socialist Vanguard Party's conference in December 1990, after which a new movement emerged in January 1993, *Le Défi-Thafath*. The task of producing the newspaper was assigned to a central committee and then to an editorial committee.

In addition, the party published several other periodicals, such as *La Révolution Triomphera en Algérie*, which was launched following the military coup in 1965, and *Révolution Socialiste*, the party's mouthpiece, which was published quarterly. The party also published a newsletter titled *Contact des Travailleurs*.

2. The period of political pluralism from 1989 to the present

After the October 1988 events, Algeria experienced significant changes in cultural, economic, and political fields following the adoption of a new constitution in 1989 that allowed for political and media pluralism. This profoundly impacted the media system, revealing that the media had been disconnected from the concerns and problems of the citizens. This period can be divided into four stages, each linked to political events in Algeria, as many researchers believe that political factors played a fundamental role in the creation and development of the Algerian written press, especially in shaping its editorial direction¹⁰.

The first phase lasted from 1988 until April 3, 1990, when a new media law was enacted. For the first time, this law granted media freedom and allowed for the establishment of independent press institutions in the form of joint-stock companies.

The second phase began on this date and lasted until January 11, 1992, when President Chadli Bendjedid resigned.

The third phase began after this and ended on June 7, 1994, with the issuance of the ministerial decree, which became one of the most significant measures affecting the future of many newspapers.

The fourth and final phase started on this date and concluded in January 2001, when the government issued a new decision regarding the modification of the penal code under the pretext of protecting institutions and official bodies from media defamation and slander.

2.1 First phase: Preluding pluralism from 1988--1990

This phase can be considered a preparatory stage for political pluralism. It marked a new reality reflected in the emergence of a legislative and constitutional framework with the 23 February 1989

¹⁰ Ismail Merazka, Op. cit., p. 110.

Constitution, which was distinct from the previous constitutions that Algeria had known since independence. The 1989 Constitution opened the door to democratic freedoms such as freedom of opinion, the right to form political parties, and the establishment of various associations.

Article 35 of the 1989 Constitution specifically addressed the inviolability of freedom of opinion and belief: "There shall be no violation of the inviolability of freedom of belief and freedom of opinion"¹¹. Following this, Article 36 prohibited any institution from confiscating any publication or media outlet, stating, "Freedom of intellectual, artistic, and scientific creativity is guaranteed to the citizen. The rights of the authors are protected by law. No publication or recording or any other means of communication and media shall be confiscated except by judicial order".¹²

This article ended any potential abuse by the administration, providing a strong guarantee for media freedom and the practice of journalism in Algeria since independence.¹³ This political shift was reflected in the announcement of numerous political figures of the establishment of political parties, followed by the creation of private newspapers.

Party newspapers were the first nongovernmental press to emerge. The first party newspaper, *Al-Munqidh*, the mouthpiece of the Islamic Salvation Front, was launched on October 5, 1989. This newspaper gained significant popularity among readers.¹⁴ Several other party newspapers followed, becoming platforms for various political discourses, and were published in multiple languages, including French, Arabic, and Berber, to convey the parties' messages to the public.

The delayed emergence of the independent press benefited the state-owned media sector, which began to improve by covering the media gap. Noticeable changes in content and presentation were observed. Compared with a party or independent press, what strengthened it further was its vast experience, which helped maintain some stability, as well as its guaranteed state funding, unlike independent or party-affiliated newspapers. Despite the 1989 Constitution guaranteeing the freedom to take initiative, the beginning of a new era of pluralism and press independence was not fully realised during this period.

The practice of media pluralism did not improve until 1990, as the constitution required laws and provisions to clarify its general principles and establish general guidelines for media operations. The first and most significant regulatory measure was the issuance of the March 19, 1990 decree, which allowed for the creation of collective capital and its investment in the media sector. This measure gave journalists working in public institutions the freedom to choose: either remain in the

¹¹ William A. Rouh, *Arab Journalism: News Media and the Politics Wheel in the Arab World*, translated by Mousa Al-Kilani, Jordan: Jordanian Book Center, 1989, p. 87.

¹² People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, *Constitution of 1989*, Algiers: Dar al-Maghribia, p. 13.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

¹⁴ Zahir Ihaddaden, *Op. cit.*, p. 149.

public sector, establish independent media institutions as joint-stock companies or join politically oriented party newspapers (political parties).

A new media law followed this law on April 3, 1990. This law resulted from two projects: the first, which involved journalists in its preparation, and the second, which was overseen by the presidency. This indicates that drafting this law was undemocratic, much like the practices of the one-party system. However, for the first time since independence, it marked recognition of media freedom and pluralism by allowing the private sector to participate in the media field. As a result, it became possible to distinguish between public media, party-owned media, and independent media regarding ownership.

The flaws and drawbacks of this law became evident with the establishment of the High Council for Media, which was revived after being nonexistent, despite its existence since 1984. Under this law, it became a substitute for the Ministry of Information. It was granted the authority to ensure the implementation of the law's provisions and the freedom to practice the profession within the framework of pluralism. However, its members were appointed by the government, the presidency, and the National People's Assembly without the involvement of journalists, who should have been the ones to elect their representatives. Moreover, the law contained provisions that limited press freedom and presented difficulties in understanding due to its vague and ambiguous wording.

2.2 The Period of Extended Power from April 1990--January 1992

The previously mentioned measures led to profound changes in the national media landscape, marking a qualitative leap in quantity and quality. This massive development in the media and communication sector since 1990 ended the state's monopoly on media, particularly the written press. The first independent newspaper emerged on September 3, 1990, *Le Soir d'Algérie*.

With respect to public sector newspapers, following 1990 media law, they began to face problems that made them vulnerable to the risk of bankruptcy at any moment. These issues included failure to provide suitable conditions for functioning in a highly competitive market. Moreover, intense competition by the independent press, bolstered by prominent journalists who had left the public sector, further exacerbated the situation. The public pressure struggled to adapt to the new pluralistic political environment and market economy mechanisms. As a result, it became fragile, suffering from high returns and declining sales. Many newspapers were subjected to harsh measures enforced by public printing pressures under the guise of "market law," which caused public sector pressure to lag on various structural and financial levels.

However, the independent written press experienced significant growth at the beginning of this period, with dozens of new titles emerging and engaging in qualitative development. There was no

direct clash between the political authorities and the press. By December 1991, the number of newspapers had reached 103, including 16 dailies, whereas only 12 newspapers previously existed, 6 of which were dailies¹⁵.

However, towards the end of this period, following the appointment of Sid Ahmed Ghazali as Prime Minister, several newspapers began to suspend their publication. This marked the emergence of a conflict between the political authorities and the private press, which took on a judicial dimension, with many independent and partisan newspapers facing legal challenges. Even though the 1989 Constitution guaranteed the freedom to take initiative, the starting point for pluralism and press independence was not fully realised, and the practice of media pluralism did not improve until 1990. The constitution required additional laws, and journalists found themselves facing courts and judicial councils¹⁶. This indirect conflict resulted from attempts by the authorities to exert pressure on the press to serve specific political goals and interests.

Since there were no regulations or restrictions governing the process of issuing many newspapers, nor were there clear standards and conditions for professional practice within them, a significant number of these newspapers disappeared at the beginning of this period of pluralism at the same speed as they were launched. This was due to their inability to compete or the rising costs of production factors.

2.3 The Tumultuous Period from January 1992--June 1994

This period was politically marked by the resignation of President Chadli Bendjedid on January 11, 1992, and the subsequent replacement of his position by the High Council of State on January 14 of the same year. The results of the legislative elections held on December 26, 1991, were annulled, and a state of emergency was declared on February 9, 1992. The period culminated with the assassination of Mohamed Boudiaf, President of the High Council of State, on June 29, 1994, which was followed by a decision by the authorities to monopolise security-related news.

This period is considered a time of instability, violence, and difficulty in contemporary Algerian history. After the annulment of the results of the first round of the first multiparty legislative elections and the declaration of a state of emergency on February 9, 1992¹⁷, the 1989 Constitution and the 1990 media law, which enshrined press freedom, were effectively suspended. The media sector was negatively affected by the state of emergency. In the same year, the prime minister dissolved the High Council of Media, opening the door to widespread harassment of media practices.

¹⁵ People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, Official Gazette: Issue 10, February 1989, Decree 92-44 on the Declaration of a State of Emergency.

¹⁶ Ismail Merazka, Op. cit., p. 256.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 230.

However, the council, in reality, had failed to perform its intended role, as attested by many journalists¹⁸.

The political authorities dominated the private press under the pretext of restoring the state's authority. This was done by security forces raiding newspaper offices, arresting journalists, and suspending newspapers by decision of the Ministry of the Interior, thereby disregarding the 1989 Constitution, which stipulates that no publication or printing may be confiscated except by judicial order.

The party press also suffered greatly after declaring an emergency on February 9, 1992. Many newspapers disappeared due to the suspension of activities of most political parties until more favourable conditions became available. In addition, some newspapers were subjected to confiscation and suspension, disappearing from the media landscape by the decision of the political authorities. Some attribute the disappearance of party press to economic, political, or media-related reasons.

The political reasons behind the disappearance of the party press are related to the positions of certain political parties on various national and regional issues and their degree of influence on the national stage. It was observed that parties whose statements and actions contradicted Algerian society's core values and opposed its political inclinations struggled to gain credibility and failed to convince different social groups.

The media-related reasons stemmed from these newspapers' weaknesses in terms of both form and content and the competition they faced from independent newspapers, which began publishing on September 3, 1990. The independent press clearly had a more credible news-oriented approach than did party newspapers in an opinion-based style.

After the assassination of President Mohamed Boudiaf, President of the High Council of State, on June 29, 1992, and the appointment of Reda Malek as Prime Minister in July 1993, the majority of newspapers aligned with the government's discourse. This was due to Reda Malek's national relationship with journalists and their perception of him as a veteran journalistic figure.¹⁹

Some newspapers, such as *Liberté*, began to serve as platforms for certain political parties, even without an official organisational link, defending against the issues raised by the Rally for Culture and Democracy Party. The political authorities also attempted to pressure the press through advertising, which became a tool for the government to control, particularly the private press. There was a significant disparity between newspapers regarding the space allocated for advertising, with the

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 258.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 260.

press becoming hostage to printing companies and distribution institutions. Advertising was also used to gain endorsement from newspapers for the political authority's programs.

One key measure that had a lasting impact on the future of many newspapers was June 7, 1994, a ministerial decree issued by the Ministries of Culture, Communication, Interior, and Local Communities.²⁰

Under this decree, the authorities decided to monopolise security-related news and prevent the publication of any news that did not come from official channels. This decision was followed by a campaign of recommendations regarding how the media should handle security news, as well as techniques for shaping public opinion. This justified the official retreat from freedom of opinion and professional media performance. Ibrahim Ibrahim expressed this shift in his reflections on the practice of journalism between 1992 and 1995, stating the following:

"We noticed a return of journalists who had held positions of responsibility before 1988. These employees in the cultural sector regained control over the only television channel, the advertising agency, and government newspapers... The return of self-censorship in public media institutions, coupled with financial pressures, led to more severe action against journalists: arbitrary arrests, judicial harassment, newspaper confiscations, and preventive monitoring of security news, which were introduced in January 1994 during the Ministry of the Interior visit and the formation of reading committees in late 1994 at printing institutions".²¹

The political influence on the private press affected its material capabilities and economic and technical independence. The authorities continued to exert control over paper, printing presses, and advertising, which constituted indirect censorship and hindered the regular publication of newspapers.

2.4 Period of restricted pluralism from June 1994 to the present

The defining feature of this period was the deterioration of the relationship between the authorities and the press due to the censorship imposed by the political powers on the publication and distribution of news. This was accompanied by a decline in public freedom and freedom of expression and a sharp rise in self-censorship. The complete stagnation of political party activities also affected newspaper media activity. 1997, the near-total disappearance of party-affiliated press from the media landscape was recorded.²²

²⁰ Redouan Boujemaa, "The Identity of the Algerian Journalist through Discourses and Official Charters from 1962 to 1998," *Algerian Journal of Communication*, January–June 1998, no. 17, p. 145.

²¹ Brahim Brahimi, *Le pouvoir, la presse et les droits de l'homme*, Algiers: Marinoor, 1998, pp. 108–109.

²² Rachid Youb, *Le guide politique de l'Algérie*, Algiers: National Institution for Lithographic Arts, January 1992, p. 37.

This period was also marked by pressure from printing presses on the press industry, such as reducing the number of pages, decreasing print runs, halting publication, or increasing the cost of printing newspapers and other related services, all without consulting publishers or considering the cultural role of the media sector. Additionally, distributors delayed settling their debts to private newspapers, especially, and advertising distribution became monopolised by the public authorities through a government decree. There was also a lack of financial support from the authorities for the press.

The official retreat from the laws that previously established press freedom was justified by the difficulties of the period and the security situation at the time. Between 1993 and 1997, dozens of journalists and media workers were assassinated.

A draft for a new media law was prepared and presented to the National People's Assembly in 1998, with plans to discuss it during the spring session of 1999. However, the April 1999 presidential elections altered the schedule, and the draft law, which proposed ending the state's monopoly on the audiovisual sector, was left unaddressed. As a result, the 1990 law has remained in effect despite not being suitable for the current situation.

The political changes that occurred during this period, particularly the election of Abdelaziz Bouteflika as president of the Republic, did not positively impact media practices in Algeria. Recently, the authorities issued a new decision regarding the amendment of the penal code under the pretext of "protecting institutions and regulatory bodies from insults, slander, and defamation," aiming to muzzle the democratic press and deprive the public of its most fundamental right—the right to information. This led journalists to issue a statement.²³ These measures, which the authorities used to impose new forms of self-censorship and control, especially concerning financially weak publications, are denounced.

From all of the above, we can conclude that the political system's instability has led to instability in the media system, making it vulnerable to fluctuations. This, in turn, has resulted in its weakness and lack of credibility owing to the absence of clear mechanisms governing the management of media work.

The relatively democratic opening that Algerian society has experienced since 1989, which manifested in political pluralism and encouragement of political participation, led to the political authority's concession of its monopoly over specific sectors. However, it succeeded in maintaining its influence and dominance over the media sector by controlling vital economic sectors essential to media activity, which remain under its oversight.

²³ El Khabar Newspaper, no. 3074, Monday, January 22, 2001, p. 03.

Since political culture is one of the most important trends and values that media should instill in the public, considering that these media institutions are responsible for political socialisation, this process involves instilling a political culture in individuals, encompassing values, beliefs, and attitudes toward the political system and their role in political life.

In the following section, the foundations of political culture in Algeria are examined during the country's first phase of history, from 1962--1988. This period was marked by a tendency toward a one-party system of government, where the state held control and monopolised the media sector.

Conclusion:

Political developments have profoundly influenced the media landscape in Algeria since independence. While the initial period was marked by stringent control and censorship, the introduction of pluralism in 1989 allowed the media to diversify. However, political and economic factors, including state dominance over vital resources, continue to limit the full potential of media independence. The media's role in political socialisation and its capacity to foster public political engagement have been hindered by recurrent legal ambiguities and the persistence of state interference. Despite these challenges, the Algerian press has remained a crucial platform for political discourse, although the broader political environment has continuously shaped its credibility and influence. The ongoing struggle for media independence underscores the need for a clear and effective media policy that safeguards press freedom and fosters a democratic media culture.