Title of research article

Political Parties in Algeria: Historical Emergence, Evolutionary Trajectories, Political Influence, and Social Impact

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Abstract

This research paper investigates the historical emergence, developmental trajectories, and political influence of political parties in Algeria, contextualized within the broader political and social transformations of the country. It traces the origins of Algerian political organizations to the colonial era, where parties arose as a natural response to repression, identity erasure, and the struggle for independence. Following independence, the adoption of a single-party system sought to consolidate state authority but simultaneously limited political diversity. Later, under the influence of internal demands and global political transformations, Algeria transitioned to a multi-party system in the late 20th century.

The study highlights how political parties have shaped Algerian political awareness, influenced state-society relations, and contributed—positively and negatively—to the democratization process. On the one hand, parties have enhanced popular participation, channeled social demands, and contributed to nation-building. On the other, their fragmentation, internal crises, and weak institutionalization have constrained their effectiveness. The paper argues that Algerian political parties represent both instruments of democratic expression and arenas of contestation, reflecting the complexity of Algeria's political and social evolution.

Introduction

The emergence of political parties is attributed to various factors that led to their appearance. Although their origins differ from one region to another, there are several common factors that formed the basis of their creation. In this sense, addressing political parties in Algeria is closely linked to the political history of Algerian society and the stages it went through, particularly given that it was subjected to extermination and the erasure of its identity and components by long-standing colonial powers. The emergence, trajectory, and activities of political parties in Algeria mark the political awareness and maturity of Algerian society, which endured under a colonial force

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seeking to obliterate Algerian identity, existence, and ultimately the Algerian entity itself. Political parties, as representatives of political forces, expressed the political consciousness of Algerian society. Their entire course was one of struggle and resistance against colonialism.

1) The Emergence and Historical Roots of Political Parties in Algeria
Several currents emerged to shape the political field, even though, in their early stages, they operated under different political leaderships and differed in their circumstances of emergence, methods of struggle, and political programs. Nonetheless, they were united in their ultimate objective: liberation from the yoke of colonialism and the attainment of independence.

To achieve this goal, all political currents united under one political front, which succeeded in achieving independence despite the differences among its constituent movements. After independence, during the stage of building the national state, the choice was made to adopt a one-party system as the cornerstone of the political system of the newly independent national state (Independent Algeria). Algeria thus experienced a single-party system for a long period, until multiple factors—akin to a political earthquake—struck the political system, leading Algeria into a stage of political pluralism, adopting the multiparty option after having rejected it for a long time.

Formation of Political Awareness and the Emergence of Political Parties
The appearance and formation of political parties in Algeria were closely linked to the general historical circumstances the country experienced. While some link the emergence of political parties to the national movement, historian Dr. Abu al-Qasim Saadallah identifies the first appearance of an Algerian political party as dating back to 1830. This was when the Algerian Dey government signed the July 1830 agreement with the French commander, and the Algerian resistance began. Under the leadership of Hamdan Khodja, Algerians organized the first national political party known as the *Maghreb Committee*, which Abu al-Qasim Saadallah called the *Resistance Party*.

This party was essentially composed of notable figures and bourgeois elites who, through their awareness, firmly recognized their political and national role. The party gained popular support, with the masses spontaneously expressing their backing for its anti-colonial resistance. It was regarded as "the first movement against France." Some Algerians, who were informed about the French Revolution and the rise of nationalism in Europe, played a role in the creation of this *Resistance Party*, which opposed the French occupation. Among the pioneers of the Algerian nationalist movement was Hamdan Khodja.[1] His scientific education, supportive family background, travels to Turkey, the Balkan states, and Europe—particularly France—and his awareness of the events taking place there enabled him to become a pioneer of this movement.

The Rise of Political Parties Some scholars date the emergence and formation of political parties in Algeria to the year 1912, viewing them as expressions of the demands of the elite.[2]

However, Saadallah emphasizes and specifies that "all the political and social currents that dominated Algerian life until the War of Independence, which broke out on November 1, 1954, were already active and interacting during the 1920s." These included all the following currents:

- **The first current:** the conservative current, dominated by the feudal class and the bourgeoisie.

- **The second current:** the moderate current, led by a segment of the elite after their split in 1919.

- **The third current:** comprising the remaining segment of the elite or elite groups.

- **The fourth current:** the revolutionary current, which experienced greater development.

- **The fifth current:** the Arab-Islamic current, under the leadership or influence of the *ulama*.

- **The sixth and final current:** representing the socialist and communist current.

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[1] Abu al-Qasim Saadallah, *The Algerian National Movement 1830–1900*, Vol. 2, 3rd ed., National Publishing and Distribution Company, Algiers, 1983, p. 28.
[2] *Ibid., p. 29.*

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The Period of the Emergence of Political Parties Many scholars date the historical emergence of Algerian political parties to the *national movement*. This movement refers to the political expression of patriotism and love of the homeland as practiced by the political elite and the intellectual class, taking shape in the form of associations, political parties, cultural clubs, and other entities.[3]

However, contemporary Europeans point to the existence of political parties as early as 1919, when these Europeans spoke about political parties in Algeria. Augustin Bernard classified them as follows:

- **The Conservative Party:** composed of old feudal families.

- **The Liberal Party:** led by the assimilationist elite.

- **The National Party:** dominated by members of the elite advocating equality with France.

Some others also referred to the existence of additional parties, such as the *Jeunes Algériens* (Young Algerians) Party, the Islamic National Party, and the English writer Wortham, who, in 1922, spoke of two Algerian political parties: the *Moderate Young Algerians Party* and the *New Party*, which drew its program primarily from the Qur'an.

This national movement played a fundamental role in the emergence of Algerian political parties with their different orientations. Several factors contributed to their appearance, including the following:

Factors Behind the Emergence of Algerian Political Parties During the Colonial Period

The national movement played a key role in shaping the political awareness of Algerians. But what is meant by the *national movement*?

In almost every country, the term *national movement* refers to "that political movement or political struggle carried out by the citizens of a colony or protectorate in order to improve their conditions and restore their civil rights, which have been taken from them or are enjoyed exclusively by the other side—the colonizer." However, the most important and fundamental aspect is that the organizational framework of this movement—the driving and motivating force that enables, organizes, and channels political struggle—consists of political parties.

Although political parties generally differ in their methods, approaches, and programs for achieving their objectives, these differences are aligned with each party's or movement's specific goals.[4]

World War I had a clear impact and served as a starting point for the Algerian national movement, as the war brought peoples closer together, facilitated contact among them, and contributed to the spread of ideas—especially those related to concepts such as independence, freedom, and the rights of colonized peoples in general. Algerian participation in World War I was compulsory, enforced without their consent, and deeply resented, as they were under colonial rule and subject to the compulsory conscription law. France used various means to recruit Algerians into the war effort, including propaganda, different incentives, and a range of pressures, despite Algerians' refusal to participate. This refusal was expressed in various ways, including fleeing to the mountains and remote areas, migrating to the Near East, escaping to the German front, and engaging in acts against French interests. France responded with repression, intensifying conscription measures in 1916. During this period, two uprisings broke out—one in the Hoggar and the other in the Aurès—but French military superiority prevailed.

France continued its forced recruitment of Algerians for the war, exceeding even the requirements stipulated by the conscription law. The war's consequences for Algerians were disastrous on the social front: thousands were killed or wounded, Algerians were forced into labor in French war industries, and living conditions deteriorated due to France's plundering of Algeria's economic resources, increased taxation, looting of raw materials, and their exploitation for French interests. This treatment persisted even after the war. Despite these grave social, economic, and other consequences, Algerian participation in the war had a positive side: it contributed to raising political awareness regarding the issues of liberation and independence.

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[3] *Abu al-Qasim Saadallah, previously cited reference, pp. 29–30.*
[4] *Bekkâr al-ʿIyāshī,* **The Algerian People's Party and Its Role in the National Movement (1937–1939)***, Sayatin Publishing, Printing and Distribution House, Algiers, 2013, p. 24.*

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The Emergence of Political Awareness and the Formation of Various Currents

Algerian participation in the war enabled them to gain political awareness through interaction with fellow soldiers and other societies, and by learning about global events such as the Bolshevik Revolution, developments in the Near East, the triumph of nationalities in Central Europe, and Wilson's Fourteen Points. These factors further matured political consciousness, benefiting Algerians upon their return from abroad and during their work in the diaspora, where they contributed to the formation of national movement organizations.

Currents of the National Movement The early 20th century saw the beginning of a cultural and religious renaissance, reflecting Algerians' rejection of colonialism and shaped in part by the impact of World War I, which provided them with awareness and experience, creating new conditions that led to the emergence of the national movement in the form of various currents:

- **The Equality Advocates:** Represented by the reformist elite faction that split from the modernist elite, this current was embodied in a conservative wing of the modernist elite rallying around Emir Khalid, who was elected by majority vote in the municipal elections of Algiers. They called for equality, submitting a petition to U.S. President Wilson in 1919 demanding Algerians' right to self-determination and participation in governing their country. They founded a newspaper published in both French and Arabic and called for equality between Algerians and French citizens.

- **The Independence Current:** Mainly represented by workers and soldiers living in France, this current was influenced by events such as the Bolshevik Revolution, the Egyptian National Party's struggle, the Rif War led by Abd el-Krim al-Khattabi, and Mustafa Kemal's movement in Turkey. These events inspired the formation of the *North African Star Association*, which initially included Algerians, Moroccans, and Tunisians. The association's main objectives were:

1. A long-term goal: independence for the Maghreb countries (Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia).

2. A short-term goal: defending the interests of North Africans in France.
   Over time, the association became exclusively Algerian, presenting its program and objectives to the anti-colonial Brussels Congress held from 10 to 15 February 1927, which included a 15-point agenda.

- **The Reformist Current:** Considered an extension of the ideas of Emir Khalid, Hamdan Khodja, and others, this current was adopted by Algerian students influenced by the *Islamic University* movement and Islamic reform trends. Figures such as Abdelhamid Ben Badis, Mohamed Bachir El Ibrahimi, and Tayeb El Okbi sought to implement these ideas through educational, religious, social, and media means. This current was embodied in the *Association of Algerian Muslim Ulama*, founded on 5 May 1931, less than a year after France's centennial celebration of Algeria's occupation. Abdelhamid Ben Badis served as president, with Mohamed Bachir El Ibrahimi as his deputy. The association's program covered religious, cultural, social, and political aspects—defending religious values, preserving Algerian identity (particularly language and culture), and demanding Algerians' rights while opposing naturalization policies.

- **The Assimilationist Current:** Represented by the liberal elite and the Deputies' Association, this current took shape particularly after the 1919 elections, showing greater alignment with French nationalism. It later split and declined in the face of the equality current. After the split, some members demanded various reforms such as equal pay with Europeans, equal representation in parliament, and equal treatment in military service. This current remained isolated from the people because it did not reflect Algerian cultural and national identity and wavered between Algeria and its religion on one side, and France and its civilization on the other.[5]

The Political Landscape Through the National Movement and the Emergence of Political Parties

All political currents emerged and took shape through the national movement, influenced by numerous factors that led to their development. These currents gradually crystallized into distinct political trends, represented by parties with specific programs and orientations. Among the earliest and most prominent of these political parties was:

1. **The North African Star (Étoile Nord-Africaine):** Algerian historian Professor Dr. Abu al-Qasim Saadallah states that the birth of the North African Star was one of the great events in Algeria's political history. Through its broad

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[5]Bachir Bellah Al-Arabi, Menouar Lamine Daoud, Contemporary History of Algeria, Vol. 2, Dar Al-Ma'rifa, Algiers, 2010, pp. 59–60.

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scope, revolutionary orientation, and lasting impact, it played an active role in strengthening and guiding the Algerian national movement. While there is variation, disagreement, and even contradiction regarding the exact date of its emergence or founding, most sources agree that the party was founded in 1926, which is considered the actual year of its establishment.[6]This party later played a prominent role—under different names—in determining the future of the country, or more specifically, the future of Algeria. Its creation was shaped by three main factors:

- **The climate of freedom** that prevailed in France after World War I.

- **The independence ideas of Emir Khalid**, expressed through his activities in France after being exiled there in 1923, and who was elected president of the party after its formation.

- **The desire that existed in France at the time** to establish a movement that would defend the material and moral interests of North African Muslims.

The party presented political programs in the name of the Algerian people, with its defining feature being that—for the first time—it explicitly and publicly included the independence of Algeria in its platform. Although it was founded and operated in France, it called for France's withdrawal and Algeria's independence openly at the Brussels Congress in 1927.

The Algerian People's Party (PPA): This party emerged after the dissolution of the North African Star in 1937. Its foundation took place under difficult circumstances, prompting it to modify its tone and rhetoric compared to that of the North African Star, which had been bold and direct. The harsher political climate in Algeria—marked by repression and surveillance—pushed many of its members to work clandestinely. Nevertheless, the party maintained the same political line and demands as the North African Star. Its slogan was *"No separation, no assimilation—only liberation"*, with complete liberation as its ultimate goal.

The Communist Party: The October Revolution in Russia, the Second Communist International in 1920, the founding of the French Communist Party in December 1920, and the presence of a small leftist minority in Algeria were direct factors behind the rise of communist tendencies in the national movement. Some educated Algerians, part of the intellectual elite, embraced communist ideas. Initially, they operated within the French Communist Party before the Algerian Communist Party was established in 1936, inheriting the structures of the French party. This party, composed of both Algerians and Europeans, faced several difficulties, including a superficial understanding of Algeria's socio-political and socio-cultural realities, and organizational weaknesses that prevented it from managing the ethnic contradictions among its supporters. From 1936 onward, it sought closer ties with nationalist parties and worked in coordination with the French Communist Party. However, its leadership clashed with the Algerian People's Party and later the Movement for the Triumph of Democratic Liberties, considering Messali Hadj and his party to be "a separatist movement fighting against France."

The Democratic Union of the Algerian Manifesto (UDMA): Founded in 1946 by Ferhat Abbas, this movement was initially open to both Algerians and French citizens. It aimed to establish a state linked to France. One of its distinguishing features was the dominance of *notables*, who occupied the leading positions. Many of these notables had previously been part of the "assimilationist movement." Historian Mohamed Harbi notes that "they had been under the banner of the assimilationist movement." Despite the intentions of its leadership and its goals, the movement failed to rally wide popular support, attracting more interest from the educated elite than from the masses. This was largely due to its elitist leadership and its inability to connect with or appeal to the broader population through its discourse.

The Union also took part in the June 1946 parliamentary elections to choose members of the French National Assembly, winning 11 seats. It presented a reform proposal for Algeria that called for the creation of an independent republic associated with the French Union, possessing its own parliament, government, and sovereignty, under joint control with France. Citizenship would be shared, or dual—French and Algerian. However, this proposal was rejected by the French National Assembly.[7]

[6]*Bekkâr al-ʿIyāshī, previously cited reference, p. 121.*

[7]*Mohamed Harbi,* **The Algerian Revolution: The Years of Labor***, trans. Najib ʿUbāda Ṣāliḥ al-Mathlūth, Al-Araqam Publishing and Distribution, Algiers, 2004, pp. 13–14.*

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Movement for the Triumph of Democratic Liberties (MTLD): This movement played a distinctive role among political organizations in mobilizing Algerians. It was founded by *Messali Hadj* and is considered the continuation of the Algerian People's Party (PPA) and the North African Star (ENA), both of which had been dissolved by the French authorities. One notable feature of this movement was its ability to consolidate the strong and urgent desire for independence. Alongside Messali Hadj, Ahmed Ben Bella's associate *Lamine Debaghine* also contributed to its founding, though the French authorities required a change of name since it was essentially the successor to the PPA. The movement had significant influence within the migrant community in France, the petty bourgeoisie in Algerian cities, the proletariat in urban areas, and the general population in rural regions.

Its core demands were:

- The abolition of the colonial system

- The establishment of Algerian sovereignty

- The holding of general elections on the basis of universal suffrage

National Liberation Front (FLN): The FLN became the unifying political party that brought together diverse ideological currents and led the Algerian War of Independence. Its founding was the result of both internal and external factors:

- **Internal factors:** divisions within the leadership of the PPA, which by then had been renamed the MTLD. In 1953, the party experienced a major internal crisis, splitting into two camps:

1. **Messalists –** led by Messali Hadj, rejecting armed struggle at that stage on the grounds that the time was not yet ripe, while still adhering to the goal of full independence through legal political work.

2. **Centralists (*les centralistes*) –** a group of nationalist leaders who would later play key roles in the revolution, including *Mustapha Ben Boulaïd*, *Mohamed Boudiaf*, and *Larbi Ben M'hidi*. They rejected the Messalist approach and founded the **Revolutionary Committee for Unity and Action** (*CRUA*).

Although the CRUA leadership initially claimed neutrality to mediate between the two opposing factions, the escalating conflict—marked by mutual accusations of treason and contradictory decisions—led the CRUA members to break away from both camps.

On **24 October 1954**, during a meeting in Algiers, the CRUA decided to rename itself the **National Liberation Front (FLN)**.

The Liberation War Phase and Political Currents: During the War of Independence, the FLN acted as an umbrella organization for all political and ideological currents that had emerged since the early nationalist movement. It managed to unite diverse factions under a single party framework. The spread of the revolution throughout Algeria reinforced the FLN's authority, enabling it to attract mass support and incorporate leaders from various political backgrounds.

These leaders brought with them significant organizational and activist experience, which helped the FLN publicize the revolution internationally and gain recognition as the *sole representative* of the Algerian Revolution and the Algerian people.

Although differences within its leadership persisted—rooted in political formation, ideological contradictions, and varied activist backgrounds—these disputes were largely postponed until after independence, as the overriding goal remained the liberation of Algeria. During the war, the FLN stood as the **only political party**, despite internal diversity, and this unity was key to the success of the independence struggle.

Post-Independence Phase and the Establishment of the One-Party System:
After independence, the revolutionary leaders did not have a clear and unified vision regarding the nature of the political system Algeria would adopt. The *1 November Declaration* had only stated the aim of "establishing a democratic and social Algerian state within the framework of Islamic principles, and respecting fundamental

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freedoms." The *Soummam Conference* did not address the issue, and the *National Council of the Revolution* (CNRA) likewise avoided discussing it in any of its sessions.

However, the first signs of establishing a single-party system emerged in the laws and statutes regulating the National Liberation Front (FLN), ratified in **December 1959** and **January 1960** by the CNRA. These developments reflected a tendency toward institutionalizing the one-party principle, which later became a constitutional norm. The formal adoption of the single-party system dates back to the *Tripoli Charter*, and it was reinforced by the **Presidential Decree of 14 August 1963**, which prohibited the existence of associations of a political nature in Algeria.

Under this approach, the principle was clear: the FLN—having been the sole political organization that united all nationalist currents during the revolution—would naturally assume political leadership and govern the country after regaining national sovereignty and achieving independence.

This principle was enshrined in the Algerian Constitution, with **Article 23** stipulating that *"The National Liberation Front is the sole vanguard party in Algeria."*[8]

The Political System after Independence: Although post-independence Algeria adopted the principle of the single-party system and rejected or opposed political pluralism, this reality did not reflect the diversity of political currents and ideological orientations that had existed before and even during the revolution. The principle of one-party rule was far from enjoying a national consensus. The Algerian Revolution was a collective struggle in which all political currents—despite their ideological differences—participated.

During the liberation struggle, unity under the FLN was based on the shared goal of expelling colonialism and achieving independence. The FLN encompassed divergent and even contradictory currents, as well as widely different generations, whose alliance was built solely on the objective of ending colonial rule. Once independence was achieved, the FLN, as the organization that had led the revolution to victory, naturally evolved into the sole ruling party.

In this post-independence context, political pluralism was neither proposed nor considered viable—indeed, it was effectively *unacceptable*—despite the internal differences in orientation, background, and ideological composition among FLN leaders.

Several factors influenced Algeria's adoption of the single-party system, including:

- **The Nasserist Arab nationalist wave**, which promoted the belief that single-party rule was the only path to development and a bulwark against imperialism.

- **The dominance of leftist ideology**, which, though differing in its starting point from Arab nationalism, converged with it in advocating the one-party principle, aligning with anti-imperialist and anti-opposition elements.

- **Religious influence**, as the general orientation of the Islamic current emphasized unity as a source of strength, with Islam seen as a unifying force for the Ummah in a broad sociopolitical sense.

These combined influences contributed to the FLN becoming the sole political party, despite its internal diversity of currents and tendencies. The party adopted the principle of one-party rule and institutionalized itself as the exclusive framework of political life in Algeria.[9]

The Leadership of the National Liberation Front (FLN) in Algeria after Independence

The leadership of the FLN in independent Algeria embodied the post-independence political system, with its various currents aiming to build the new Algeria. However, despite the transition to a new stage distinct from the

[8]Ibrahim Lounis, Al-Sira' al-Siyasi fi al-Jaza'ir khilal 'Ahd al-Ra'is Ahmad Ben Bella [Political Conflict in Algeria during the Presidency of Ahmed Ben Bella], Houma Publishing House, Algiers, 2007, pp. 71–72.

[9]Naji 'Abd al-Nur, Al-Nizam al-Siyasi al-Jaza'iri min al-Wahadiyya ila al-Ta'addudiyya [The Algerian Political System: From One-Party Rule to Pluralism], Directorate of Publishing and Distribution, University of Guelma, 2006, pp. 86–87.

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revolutionary struggle, the ideological differences among these currents continued to influence the party and the political system at every stage, up to the eventual shift toward political pluralism. The leadership of the FLN before Algeria entered the multiparty era can be divided into stages as follows:

First Stage – The FLN under President Ahmed Ben Bella

The political practice of the FLN during this period—spanning roughly from 1962 to 1965—was essentially a continuation of the revolutionary approach. This was evident in the role assigned to the party: it was responsible for establishing the state, supervising it, and monitoring it, as outlined in the texts of the Algerian Revolution and later reaffirmed by the first Constitution of 1963 and the 1964 Algiers Charter.

While official and constitutional discourse emphasized the FLN's leadership of the people and the subordination of the state to it, Algeria still experienced political tensions in its early years of independence. According to some observers, the process of drafting the 1963 Constitution exposed the shortcomings of the political system: it was not debated in the Constituent Assembly (the parliament of the time) but within the party itself, after which deputies were asked to approve it—primarily to avoid dissent.

This reveals that, despite the powers granted to the Constituent Assembly, it lacked real and practical authority, as the influence of President Ben Bella exceeded its powers. Ben Bella was able to pass the constitutional project, secure a dominant position within the Assembly, and consolidate support both in the Assembly and in the government. His backing from the army's leadership and the seats held by his allies in the Assembly further strengthened his position, enabling him to be nominated for the presidency by the FLN.

This political advantage allowed Ben Bella to consolidate his power, sideline opponents, and implement his political program. The constitution vested broad executive powers in the President, who also shared legislative authority with the National Assembly, thereby centralizing power in the presidency. Over time, this authority became increasingly personalized, as Ben Bella held both the revolutionary legitimacy of FLN leadership and the popular legitimacy of the presidency.

This dual legitimacy granted him the highest authority in the state and made governance highly personal. Ben Bella exercised executive power and legislative influence, effectively becoming the sole holder of authority in both the party and the state. However, his reliance on the party's grassroots rather than on institutional elements of the political system weakened his ability to manage established state apparatuses. This approach led to constitutional and organizational breaches, overlapping jurisdictions, intensified political rivalries, and the transformation of the party into a tool for consolidating power, containing social groups, and curbing the army's growing role in political life.[10]

capable of serving as the cornerstone of the political system in terms of the party's essential functions, such as political socialization, structuring, political training, and ideological dissemination. Instead, it was used as a tool to embody leadership and mobilization, serving as an instrument for employment rather than genuine participation in power. Consequently, the party's functional role was structurally flawed.

Second Phase – The FLN under President Houari Boumediene (1965–1979):

The coup carried out by President Houari Boumediene was intended to restore legitimacy—rooted in popular sovereignty—back to the system. Boumediene introduced a new concept of the state, placing it at the core of the nation's revival in all spheres of political life. He viewed the state as the unity of the people, the system, and the authority, and he declared his intention to build an efficient state apparatus characterized by rational institutions capable of responding to the demands of the people.

Boumediene proposed a new source of legitimacy—constitutional legitimacy—effectively ending the historical and revolutionary legitimacy that had been the foundation of the political system in its first stage. His objective was to create a political system with new constitutional institutions capable of fostering political participation and restoring the FLN's authentic and effective role in political life. However, the opposite occurred: the political system maintained dominance over the party, ensuring that state authority took precedence over party authority.

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[10] Naji 'Abd al-Nur, *Al-Nizam al-Siyasi al-Jaza'iri min al-Wahadiyya ila al-Ta'addudiyya* [The Algerian Political System: From One-Party Rule to Pluralism], Directorate of Publishing and Distribution, University of Guelma, 2006, pp. 88–89

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Even though Boumediene declared on Independence Day that "the goal of the process is to put an end to personal power, and the Revolutionary Council came to restore legitimacy and continuity to the Algerian revolution," the political system under Boumediene ensured that the FLN would remain merely a source of legitimacy for the regime, without any real political authority. The party's function was confined to political and social mobilization in support of the existing system, with no room for opposition—whether formal or informal—to debate or hold the system accountable.

Boumediene's presidency was characterized by a concentration of all powers in his hands: he was Chairman of the Revolutionary Council, Head of the Executive Authority, Secretary-General of the party, Minister of Defense, and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces. This concentration of powers, enshrined in the 1976 Constitution, meant that Boumediene's authority exceeded even that of Ben Bella. His dual leadership of both the state and the political system allowed him to take decisions without consulting institutions, including the council. He centralized all the functions of both party and state in his own hands, as reflected in the party charter, the constitution, and the party's basic statutes.

Thus, during this period, the FLN functioned primarily as an instrument of the political system, rather than a genuine leader of the country. Despite Boumediene's popularity at the time, the FLN lacked effectiveness in governance and was relegated to the role of mass mobilization.

Third Phase – Chadli Bendjedid's Presidency: In this phase, the question of power succession re-emerged in the Algerian political system. Although Article 117 of the 1976 Constitution defined procedures in the event of a presidential vacancy, no succession issues arose prior to the presidential elections. Constitutionally, the period between a president's death and the presidential election was to be overseen by the Speaker of the National People's Assembly. However, by 1978, Algeria had not yet completed the institutional framework it had initiated, and lacked political and institutional mechanisms to ensure a peaceful transfer of power—despite having a constitution, a national charter, a president, parliamentary representation, mass organizations, and local institutions.

Internally, the post-Boumediene period saw two opposing tendencies: one advocating economic reform, including the liberalization of the market and the private sector without restrictions; the other calling for strengthening the party, consolidating socialism, and protecting the revolution's achievements. Ultimately, a compromise was reached with the selection of a military figure who had not been considered previously—Chadli Bendjedid, a member of the FLN.

Once in power, Bendjedid sought to rebalance the political and military wings of the system, strengthening the party as a means of exercising influence both within its structures and over the state, while avoiding direct army dominance. He reinforced the party's general secretariat, formed the Political Bureau and the Central Committee, and required all elected association members and cadres of mass organizations to join the FLN. This move aimed to restore political primacy and create a balance with the military, thereby strengthening the civilian side.

Bendjedid's approach differed markedly from Boumediene's, aiming to consolidate his popular legitimacy through measures such as releasing some political prisoners, allowing exiles to return, addressing corruption, and amending the 1976 Constitution. These amendments reduced the presidential term from six to five years and made the appointment of a prime minister mandatory. However, these changes did not diminish presidential authority.

The 1986 National Charter reaffirmed the principle of the one-party system, positioning the FLN as the primary instrument in governing the country and maintaining its influence over mass organizations, whose leaders were predominantly party members. Political participation—whether by peasants, workers, youth, and others—was organized through elected councils, while dissenting elements were excluded.

Centralization of decision-making remained a hallmark of Bendjedid's rule, with the presidency holding significant influence over legislative matters. The revitalization of the party apparatus was evident, particularly through Article 120, which stipulated that state administrators must be members of the party's central administration. The Central Committee became the body for appointing parliamentary and governmental positions, enabling the party to control segments of the state and facilitating access to leadership positions for many.

Bendjedid's tenure was characterized by the gradual dismantling of certain foundations established under Boumediene—especially the "three revolutions" (industrial, agricultural, and cultural)—but in a slow and selective

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manner. His decentralization policy aimed to bring administration closer to citizens, but in practice, it often degenerated into inconsistent local decision-making.

Despite these political adjustments, the FLN failed to assert its organizational strength in the nation-building process, struggling with internal factionalism and repeated crises. Economically, Algeria faced mounting financial imbalances, high unemployment, currency depreciation, and rising foreign debt. The state proved unable to meet citizens' daily needs, creating pressure on the political system.

By the mid-1980s, the system's inability to manage socio-economic demands or to handle internal contradictions within a democratic framework widened the gap between state and society, eroding political legitimacy. This culminated in the October 5, 1988 events—costly but historically significant—as they marked the end of the one-party system and the birth of political pluralism with the adoption of the February 23, 1989 Constitution.

The Multiparty Phase or Democratic Opening

The multiparty phase was the result of various and numerous factors, the most prominent of which was the economic factor experienced by Algeria, particularly the noticeable decline in the state's foreign currency revenues due to the drop in oil prices. This was among the main factors. We can summarize the factors that led to political openness and pluralism as follows:

There were both internal and external factors that served as influences pushing the Algerian regime toward the choice of pluralism. These factors were multiple—political, social, cultural, and economic—and formed an interactive system among themselves. In addition, there were external influences, both regional and international, which also played a role in approving pluralism or this transformation. These factors can be summarized as follows:

- **Political factor:** The political system in any society is considered the foundation for the movement of social, economic, and intellectual interactions among the members and groups of society. The continuity of any political system depends on the movement of these interactions within society, which express the conflicting interests of its different groups, the predominance of certain interests over others, and the ability to face external challenges confronting society as a whole. If any political system fails to perform these functions, as previously mentioned, it begins to collapse and deteriorate.

  The Algerian political system experienced shortcomings in carrying out these functions. The one-party system, dominated by a specific political elite and characterized by the absence of political participation, led to the emergence of contradictions that the institutions of the political system could not contain, control, or address.

  This resulted in a widening gap between the state and its political system—its components and structure—on one side, and society with its political and social forces on the other. Consequently, the state lost its credibility among large sectors and classes of society. This loss of credibility was one of the main drivers of the October 1988 uprising.

  The political aspect can be summarized as follows:

  o **One-party crisis:** The National Liberation Front (FLN), which led the revolution and enjoyed historical legitimacy as the party that achieved independence, had united various ideological currents during the liberation struggle. It held a unique historical legitimacy unmatched by any other political force after independence and remained the only major political actor. All laws and charters affirmed the primacy of the party and prohibited the emergence of other political forces. It monopolized political representation and controlled all organizations, unions, and elected institutions as the sole political force.

  Within the FLN, there was internal competition among militants for high positions and control over party institutions, as these were the only gateway to senior state positions. The party had become merely an executive apparatus tasked with implementing the recommendations of the Central Committee and its Political Bureau. Reaching these bodies was a major goal for party members, as they served as a stepping stone to positions of authority in the state.

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In these circumstances, society increasingly aspired to change, leading to widespread rejection and discontent among many social groups. This deepened the gap between society and the state's official structures, and trust in the FLN eroded. This resulted in:

▪ Weakening the party's credibility in upholding the charters of the revolution.

▪ The emergence of internal conflicts and contradictions within the FLN.

▪ The party's failure to restructure itself and its cadres.

▪ The spread of corruption and bureaucracy within the party and loss of trust in its political project.

The FLN also failed to balance the various political forces, especially since the process of transition toward political pluralism was seen by the authorities as a potential source of class conflicts and divisions, something to be resisted and opposed. Furthermore, the party was unable to restructure its institutions and cadres within its own orientations.

o **Inability of the Algerian political system:** Algeria suffered from a series of political, economic, social, and cultural crises. The political system was unable to find solutions or confront these crises. Combined, these factors drove the restructuring of the Algerian political system and its institutions, representing instability and prompting the move toward multiparty politics.

o **Legitimacy:** The cornerstone of the Algerian political system was the historical legitimacy embodied in the FLN, which led the liberation revolution. After the June 19, 1965 coup, President Houari Boumediene sought to find another source of legitimacy in addition to historical legitimacy. He redefined the concept of the state, ending personal rule and emphasizing the continuity of the Algerian revolution. For him, the state meant authority, order, and national unity. He worked on building institutions responsive to the people's demands and creating an effective state apparatus. This introduced a new source of legitimacy, aiming to establish a new political system and constitutional institutions that would promote political participation and restore the FLN's effective role in political life.

After Boumediene's death, President Chadli Bendjedid worked to strengthen the party, relying on its political wing and reorganizing it. His presidency witnessed early signs of ideological, political, and economic changes. Meanwhile, the FLN's legitimacy deteriorated due to internal conflicts among its leadership and cadres, competition for positions of power, and the decline of its ideological and mobilizing role. Combined with internal and external developments—regional and international—this led to the loss of legitimacy and highlighted the crisis within the FLN and the political system as a whole, pushing toward pluralism.[11]

The Party Phenomenon or Political Pluralism after the 1989 Constitution

The 1989 Constitution did not simply declare the end of the monolithic phase or the revolutionary legitimacy that had long underpinned the Algerian political system. Rather, it transformed the entire structure and foundation of the system.

The 1989 Constitution, which enshrined political pluralism, was the product of exceptional circumstances experienced by Algeria—by both Algerian society and the political system as a whole. Some of these factors were mentioned earlier, and they were embodied in the demands and events of October 1988. The aim was to lay the foundations of a new phase in which governance would be based on the sovereignty of the people, a democratic system rooted in multiparty politics, and a civil society actively participating in political decision-making.

This transformation, starting with the multiparty Constitution of 1989, by adopting political pluralism and separating party from state, allowed the formation of a new political landscape in Algeria. Numerous political parties with diverse orientations emerged, some of which had historical roots before pluralism—where some leaders or members had previously operated clandestinely or abroad.

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[11] Naji Abdelnour, The Algerian Political System from Monolithism to Pluralism, op. cit., pp. 117–118.

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The new political scene comprised multiple parties with varying backgrounds and orientations. The political parties in Algeria after pluralism can be classified as follows:

Classification and Trends of Political Parties after Pluralism

From a historical perspective, we can distinguish between political parties that existed before pluralism—such as the FLN—which was constitutionally exempt from the requirement to obtain official recognition under Article 41 of the law on political associations, as it already legally and constitutionally existed. The FLN's legitimacy stemmed from its emergence on 1 November 1954 as the sole revolutionary party, replacing all other pre-existing parties as the mass organization leading the armed revolution against French colonialism.

Other parties were banned before pluralism, such as the Communist Party, which dissolved itself in 1964 and reconstituted under a new name—the Socialist Vanguard Party—in 1966, and the Socialist Forces Front (FFS), founded in September 1963, as well as the Movement for Democracy in Algeria founded by Ahmed Ben Bella.

The "democratic spring" of 1989–1991 witnessed the emergence of numerous new political parties that played a prominent role in political life and represented different currents—Islamist, nationalist, and democratic. Some of these parties, particularly the Islamist ones, had existed before pluralism in the form of religious associations before revealing themselves and adopting political activism. Secular and democratic movements, which had operated clandestinely in organizations and movements, also came into the open as political parties after pluralism.

Regarding their ideological foundations, these parties can be divided into **personalist parties** and **ideological parties**.

a) Personalist Parties: This type of political party is founded on leaders and individuals with a revolutionary history who enjoy considerable influence and who previously held positions of responsibility in the state before being dismissed or retiring and becoming opposition figures. Many political parties in Algeria were founded by such historical figures or centered around them.

Examples include:

- The Socialist Forces Front (FFS), founded by Hocine Aït Ahmed, a historical figure.

- The Movement for Democracy in Algeria, founded by Ahmed Ben Bella, a historical figure, revolutionary leader, and the first president of independent Algeria.

- The Party of the Nation, founded by Youcef Benkhedda, the last president of the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic.

- The Union of Democratic Forces, founded by Ahmed Mahsas, a historical figure and former minister who later became an opposition figure.

- The Justice and Development Party, founded by former Prime Minister Kasdi Merbah.

Other parties were also founded on prominent revolutionary leaders who had held responsibilities during the revolution and after independence, enjoying influence and followers in society. The main feature of these parties is that their founding and emergence revolve around the leader or founder, whose position in the party, influence, direction, and choices significantly shape the party's course. Loyalty often tends to be directed toward the leader rather than the party itself.

Party Families or Political Trends in Algeria after Pluralism

The classification of political currents or party families in Algeria, as in all countries or societies, is generally based on the common denominator they share with other parties in terms of intellectual values, general principles, and shared objectives. However, in Algeria, at the beginning of pluralism—and given that this pluralism was young and its experience short-lived—it is difficult to draw precise boundaries between the intellectual currents shaping political parties.

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Another factor is the closeness between these parties or currents, particularly those referred to as the nationalist and Islamist currents. From this perspective, we can classify party families according to their principles, intellectual reference points, and even their political stances. On this basis, three party families emerged in Algeria after the advent of pluralism, namely:

1. **The Nationalist Current:** This current includes all parties that view themselves as heirs to the national movement and the values of the November Revolution. A notable feature of these parties is that they do not oppose rapprochement with the Islamist current and show a clear willingness to reinforce Islamic values, which they consider to be an integral part of the national movement's values. At the forefront of this current is the National Liberation Front (FLN).[12]

denying the nationalism of other parties; rather, these parties are grouped here because they defend national constants and the values of November 1st, and their positions are often close to, and even aligned with, those of the Islamist current.

3. **The Laicist (Secular) Current:** In Algeria, this current does not draw on any civilizational background or societal heritage and is considered to represent values external to the diverse heritage of Algerian society. Several parties adopt this laicist orientation, such as the Rally for Culture and Democracy (RCD) and the Socialist Forces Front (FFS). A key principle of these parties is the adoption of the separation between religion and state.

4. **The Islamist Current:** This includes parties with a distinctly Islamic orientation, characterized by explicitly Islamic identities and the aim of building a state on Islamic foundations. It is represented by the Ennahda Movement and the Movement of Society for Peace (MSP). Its main demands center on a return to the principles of Islam as a comprehensive way of life, along with the defense of the enduring constants and authentic values of Algerian society. This current also adopts a stance opposed to laicism and Westernization. It holds that the principles of November 1st are fundamentally Islamic in nature, but have been subjected to distortion and appropriation.[13]

Party Alliances and Joint Action among Political Parties after the Advent of Political Pluralism

Alliances and coordination among political parties become necessary when individual parties are unable to achieve their objectives alone. When there is a shared interest between two or more parties—whether in the context of elections or during a governance crisis—it becomes essential to form alliances, coordinate, and engage in joint action. However, in Algeria, the option of alliances and coalitions was hindered by the short lifespan of its democratic or pluralistic experience, in addition to other repercussions stemming from the crisis that emerged at the onset of political pluralism. Within this context, four party groupings emerged, each presenting its own vision for resolving the crisis. These groupings or coalitions were as follows:

- **The Group of Six Parties:** Formed in August 1990, this group included the Socialist Forces Front (FFS), the Democratic Movement for Algerian Renewal, the Socialist Party for Labour, the Workers' Party, and the Union of Progressive Forces. Through a joint petition, these parties presented a set of demands, the most important of which were:

o A referendum guaranteeing the representation of these parties.

o Equal access for all political parties to the use of mass media, as well as the provision of material resources to political parties.

- **The Group of Seven Parties:** Formed in May 1992, this group comprised the Islamic Society Movement, the Movement for Justice and Development, the Movement for Algerian Renewal, the Islamic Renaissance Movement (Ennahda), and the Social Democratic Party. They signed a joint declaration containing several demands, the most significant being:

o Respect for individual and collective freedoms and human rights in order to restore calm and reassurance.

o Opening a national dialogue without exclusion on constitutional, political, economic, and other issues.

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[12] Issa Jeradi, *Political Parties in Algeria*, Qurtuba Publishing and Distribution, 1st ed., 2002, p. 46.
[13] Ibid., pp. 48-49.

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o Establishing an electoral timetable at all levels and opening public media to dialogue and opinion-sharing.

o Ending the unlawful use of state resources to create political associations that contravene existing laws, and working toward forming a government capable of achieving national reconciliation.

- **The Group of Four Parties:** This grouping included the National Liberation Front (FLN), the Movement for Democracy in Algeria, the Islamic Society Movement, and the Islamic Renaissance Movement. Their joint statement emphasized that in order to make the national dialogue a success, certain measures were necessary, the most important being:

o Taking steps in favor of the leading members of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) to enable their participation in the success of the national dialogue, closing security centers, and halting the work of special courts as a prelude to abolishing exceptional justice and special laws.

o Respecting rights and freedoms, and opening public media institutions to political parties.

- **The National Contract Group:** Comprising seven political parties along with the National League for the Defense of Human Rights, this group met in Rome on 13 January 1995 to reach an agreement among themselves. Their aim was to establish a national contract between the authorities and the opposition to find a comprehensive and legitimate political solution to the crisis. The group signed a platform later known as the *National Contract Document*, which included the following key points:

o The re-establishment of a sovereign, democratic, and social Algerian state within the framework of Islamic principles, based on the Declaration of 1 November 1954.

o The rejection of violence as a means to gain power, the people's right to defend their elected institutions, respect for and promotion of human rights, and the peaceful transfer of political power through elections.

o Emphasis on the constituent elements of the Algerian identity and the separation of powers.[14]

Inferences from Party Coalitions and Joint Political Action

Party coalitions and joint political action in Algeria were essentially based on two main variables or fundamental factors:

- **First Factor:** The novelty of the democratic experience and political pluralism, which drove a number of parties to form coalitions and work jointly in order to gain material benefits such as access to headquarters and the use of media outlets—especially since they perceived that such resources were made available exclusively to the National Liberation Front (FLN), as it was the only party with deep influence and control over the state apparatus.

- **Second Factor:** A critical one, represented by the severe political and security crisis that Algeria experienced starting in early 1992—a crisis that nearly plunged the country into chaos. This factor was decisive because there can be no genuine political activity or democratic process capable of building legitimate elected institutions in the absence of security. This crisis was a primary driver for party coalitions and joint political action, aiming to find a solution to the turmoil, particularly amid escalating violence and the absence of elected institutions.

Party Coalition after Overcoming the Period of Violence and Electing Legitimate Institutions

In the phase that followed the difficult period of violence and the election of legitimate institutions, the most prominent coalition and form of joint political action was the **Presidential Alliance** (*Alliance Présidentielle*). This alliance consisted of three main parties that formed the parliamentary majority and participated in government: the National Liberation Front (FLN), the National Rally for Democracy (RND), and the Movement of Society for Peace (MSP).

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[14] Issa Jeradi, *Political Parties in Algeria*, Dar Qurtuba Publishing and Distribution, 1st ed., 2002, p. 58.

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The alliance was established after President Abdelaziz Bouteflika's first term in 2004 and essentially adopted and supported his program, as it had achieved several key objectives, notably:

- **Rescuing the country and leading it out of the crisis through the policy of Civil Concord**, a cornerstone since security stability is fundamental to any democratic process or economic recovery.

- **Economic recovery**, which was a central pillar of President Bouteflika's program, alongside his commitment to restore Algeria's international standing and prestige.

The Presidential Alliance outlined several core principles, the most important of which were:

- Respect for the Constitution and the components of national identity—Islam, Arabism, and Amazighité—as well as the national constants drawn from the Declaration of 1 November 1954.

- Adherence to the democratic and republican system, respect for the rule of law, combating terrorism, addressing the phenomenon of violence, respect for political pluralism and democratic principles, safeguarding freedom of expression, protecting and strengthening national unity and sovereignty, and ensuring the peaceful transfer of power.

According to its principles, the alliance aimed to safeguard democratic practice and political competition within the framework of the Constitution and the laws of the Republic, defend national unity and identity in its three constitutionally defined dimensions, enhance Algeria's international standing, deepen political and economic reforms, promote social development, and create employment opportunities.

To implement and achieve its objectives, the three parties established a **Joint National Committee** composed of their leaderships, tasked with developing mechanisms to follow up on the execution of the alliance's goals. Initially, the objectives centered on implementing the president's program, but over time, other coherent and complementary objectives were incorporated.

This stage thus represents one of the most significant periods in the evolution of political parties in Algeria, reflecting the conditions of their emergence, the objectives and programs they pursued, and the nature of joint action and alliances—spanning from the colonial period to political pluralism and the post-one-party era.

Party Influence and Penetration in Algeria

While political parties in various political systems and societies have multiple roles and functions—whose emergence and development depend on factors that vary from one society to another—there are also common or similar factors across countries that shape their existence. Among the most important shared functions of political parties is the articulation of demands and concerns to the authorities, exerting pressure to meet these demands, presenting programs and solutions, and adopting stances on various issues—whether local, regional, or international.

However, the true extent of a party's influence and penetration in society can only be revealed through its capacity to guide public opinion, gain citizens' acceptance of its positions, and mobilize them behind it as a force they believe represents them and defends their interests. This dynamic generates a reciprocal influence, often described as a *clientelist relationship*, whereby the party gains strength from defending the interests and demands of individuals and groups, while individuals and groups grant the party the legitimacy and support it needs to influence the decisions of the ruling authority. In return, the party seeks solutions to the citizens' demands and advocates on their behalf.

Therefore, the presence of political parties in any society entails roles and functions—multiple in nature—that enable them to penetrate and influence society.

In Algeria, given its relatively short democratic experience, the question arises: how can we assess the influence and penetration of political parties within the specific context of their emergence, trajectory, and the factors that shaped them—especially in the post-one-party era? Political pluralism allowed different ideological currents to operate and express their visions and demands within constitutionally recognized political frameworks, namely, political parties.

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The specificity of Algeria's political experience, or its experiment with pluralism, lies in the opening of the political arena—driven by multiple factors—that was soon confronted by numerous obstacles threatening to undermine it in its infancy. The early stages of political pluralism were shaped by several factors that influenced the functions of political forces, as these functions determined the extent of their penetration and influence in society.

At the outset of pluralism and democracy, Algeria experienced events—some with a direct and lasting impact on political life from social, economic, and political dimensions. Chief among these was the **security dimension**, marked by the wave of violence that began in the early 1990s. This was the greatest obstacle to the democratic experiment and to all aspects of national life. The country faced a prolonged period of severe instability, lacking an environment conducive to political activity. As a result, political forces shifted from engaging in electoral competition and program-building to focusing primarily on finding ways to end the violence.

This shift fundamentally altered the function of political parties and their influence in society, as the conditions for normal political activity were absent. It also cemented a **negative public perception** of political parties: Algerian society, which had initially looked positively upon pluralism, came to associate it with a new and dangerous era of violence. Citizens—having never before experienced such widespread violence in the history of independent Algeria—came to view political pluralism as a tragedy for the country, with some even perceiving the former one-party system as preferable to the pluralist system they had once hoped for.

This period was also marked by the **state of emergency**, restrictions on political activities, closure of the media sphere, bans on demonstrations and public gatherings, and other measures that had a direct and significant impact on party performance. Political forces were thus transformed from entities offering solutions and alternatives to end the crisis, into actors merely seeking mechanisms that would allow them to operate—searching for the political space and enabling environment necessary to function at all.

The Influence and Penetration of Political Parties in Algeria

Although political parties generally have multiple roles and functions within political systems and societies, and while their emergence is tied to various factors that differ from one society to another—often with certain commonalities across different states—their core functions typically include conveying demands and concerns to the authorities, exerting pressure to have these demands met, proposing programs and solutions, and taking positions on various issues, whether local, regional, or international.

The true measure of a party's influence and penetration in society manifests in its ability to shape public opinion and secure citizens' acceptance of its representation of their concerns, thereby building mutual trust. This mutual relationship, often clientelistic in nature, enables parties to defend the interests of individuals and groups, influence the decisions of governing authorities, and gain the necessary support to negotiate on behalf of the public. Thus, party presence within any society plays an important role through its intrinsic functions, which allow it to exercise social penetration and influence—without enumerating all possible roles, as these are numerous.

In Algeria, given the relatively short democratic experience, it is important to assess the extent of political parties' influence and penetration in light of the specificities of their emergence, trajectory, and formative factors—especially in the post-single-party era. The introduction of political pluralism allowed all ideological currents to operate and express their visions and demands through constitutionally recognized political frameworks.

However, the Algerian experience of political pluralism, shaped by the opening of the political arena through multiple factors, soon faced numerous obstacles that nearly halted its development in its early stages. The emergence of these political forces was influenced by several determinants that affected their functioning and capacity to exert influence. Notably, Algeria's nascent democratic experiment was quickly confronted by a severe security crisis in the early 1990s, marked by violence and instability.

This environment was not conducive to political activity. Parties shifted their focus from competing in elections and developing policy platforms to prioritizing a single goal: finding solutions to end the violence. This crisis fundamentally reshaped their role, limiting their ability to operate politically and influencing public perceptions. For many Algerians, who had initially viewed pluralism positively, the experience became associated with instability and tragedy. Having never before witnessed violence of such magnitude in the post-independence period, the public began to see the single-party era as more stable and secure than the multiparty system, which they had once hoped would bring political renewal.

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The situation was further aggravated by a state of emergency, restrictions on political activities, closure of the media space, and bans on demonstrations and public gatherings. These factors forced parties to focus not on their main political functions, but on simply securing minimal conditions to remain active.

The short lifespan of pluralism, combined with the dangerous conditions of this period, prevented parties from developing effective social penetration strategies or sustained communication with various social groups. The political arena remained restricted, media access was blocked, and parties lacked mechanisms for outreach and grassroots engagement. Consequently, the gap between parties and society widened, and they failed to carry out essential political education and organizational activities, even within their own ranks. This loss of grassroots bases, caused by adverse circumstances, deprived them of the social foundation necessary for influence.

These constraints shaped both the parties' performance and the public's perception of them. For much of the 1990s, Algerians saw only one priority—ending violence and restoring civil peace—while partisan politics was regarded as secondary. This created a social mindset in which political pluralism was viewed as a destabilizing force.

Even after the violence subsided and stability began to return, numerous factors continued to limit party performance and influence:

1. The period remained associated, even if only partially, with the violence of the 1990s, sustaining the perception that pluralism threatened stability.

2. The political environment remained inhospitable to competitive party activity.

3. Parties failed to build broad social bases and struggled to provide viable solutions to Algeria's crises, a shortcoming linked to the brief democratic experience and limited opportunities to propose alternatives.

4. Several parties experienced internal fragmentation and splits, with cadres leaving to form new organizations.

5. These splits reinforced public perceptions of political opportunism, with parties seen as seeking personal or factional gain rather than serving the public.

6. Public media space remained largely closed to opposition parties.

7. Many parties lacked socially influential elites, including symbolic or intellectual figures, that could enhance their legitimacy.

8. Leadership monopolization by certain cadres stifled internal democracy, discouraged grassroots activism, and reduced membership engagement.

9. The historical trajectories of some parties—being founded by cadres who had split from others—further complicated their legitimacy.

10. A widespread public belief developed that parties were irrelevant and self-serving, failing to address citizens' concerns. This perception was reinforced by parties' tendency to appear only during electoral periods, with limited engagement in grassroots mobilization or early intervention in social issues.

11. The internal conflicts within political parties, particularly between cadres and activists during electoral periods over candidacies, projected an image of these parties as composed of opportunistic individuals seeking only personal gain.

12. The absence of sustained political mobilization and socialization within the parties.

13. The emergence of a significant gap between political parties and individuals, resulting from the lack of continuous political training and socialization.

14. The failure of these parties to function as mechanisms for social organization and influence, capable of bringing about meaningful change in various aspects of individual and societal life.

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15. The rejection by individuals of political activity or engagement in party work, driven by the negative image formed around partisan and political activity.

16. The daily preoccupations of individuals—particularly economic concerns and the need to meet basic needs—have kept them distant from political engagement and party involvement.

17. The relationship between party cadres and elites and the wider social groups is essentially seasonal, revolving mainly around electoral events.

All of these factors—though not the only ones—have significantly influenced the ability of political parties to achieve social penetration and exert influence within Algerian society. Other factors, closely tied to the historical trajectory of Algerian society, from the pre-independence period through the post-single-party era of pluralism, have also shaped the emergence, performance, and functions of these parties. While the roles and functions of political parties may be similar, in part or in whole, across societies and are considered pillars of democracy, they remain intrinsically linked to the specific socio-historical contexts of each society. This reality applies directly to the Algerian case, where the functions, performance, penetration, and influence of political parties are deeply shaped by the country's particular historical experience.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, it becomes clear that political parties in Algeria are historically linked to the country's historical circumstances, social conditions, and the level of political practice it has experienced over time. From the birth of these parties after independence to the establishment of political pluralism and openness, they have served as an important means of political mobilization and organization, seeking to play their role in political participation as well as in political and social development

Method and Methodology

The research adopts a historical-analytical approach combined with qualitative political analysis:

1. Historical Inquiry: Examining the emergence of political parties during colonial rule, the national liberation struggle, and the post-independence single-party era.
2. Documentary Analysis: Reviewing Algerian constitutions, party charters, legal frameworks, and electoral laws that structured party activities across different political stages.
3. Comparative Contextualization: Situating Algeria's experience within broader global and regional trends of democratization and party politics.
4. Analytical Evaluation: Assessing the roles, achievements, and limitations of Algerian parties in relation to governance, political participation, and societal transformation.

This methodology ensures a balanced understanding of both the historical depth and contemporary relevance of Algerian political parties.

Findings

The study produced several key findings:

1. Colonial Genesis: Algerian political parties emerged as vehicles of resistance against colonial domination, rooted in nationalist aspirations and identity preservation. The Maghreb Committee and subsequent nationalist organizations embodied early political mobilization.

2. Liberation Front and Independence: The unification of political currents under the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN) enabled the achievement of independence in 1962, but also institutionalized a single-party system that defined political life for decades.

3. Single-Party Era: Post-independence Algeria was dominated by the FLN, which became both a symbol of national unity and an obstacle to political pluralism. This period reinforced state authority but stifled democratic competition.

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4. Transition to Pluralism: The socio-political crisis of the late 1980s, marked by economic difficulties and popular unrest, forced Algeria into adopting a multi-party system (1989 Constitution), marking a turning point in its political history.

5. Contemporary Challenges: Despite legal recognition of multiple parties, Algerian political life suffers from party fragmentation, weak organizational structures, and declining trust among citizens. Many parties remain elite-driven rather than grassroots-based.

6. Social Impact: Political parties remain crucial in shaping political culture, mobilizing citizens, and articulating demands, but their influence is weakened by public disillusionment, resulting in limited voter turnout and declining party legitimacy.

Ethical Considerations

This research is based on historical documents, academic studies, and official legal sources. No human participants or sensitive personal data were involved. The study adheres to principles of academic integrity, accurate citation, and respect for intellectual contributions.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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