



ALGERIA

A COUNTRY REPORT BASED ON DATA
1962-2012

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Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) is a new approach to conceptualization and measurement of democracy. It is co-hosted by the University of Gothenburg and University of Notre Dame. With a V-Dem Institute at University of Gothenburg with almost ten staff, and a project team across the world with four Principal Investigators, fifteen Project Managers (PMs), 30+ Regional Managers, 170 Country Coordinators, Research Assistants, and 2,500 Country Experts, the V-Dem project is one of the largest ever social science research-oriented data collection programs.

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About V-Dem

Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) is a new approach to conceptualizing and measuring democracy. V-Dem's multidimensional and disaggregated approach acknowledges the complexity of the concept of democracy. The V-Dem project distinguishes among five high-level principles of democracy: *electoral*, *liberal*, *participatory*, *deliberative*, and *egalitarian*, which are disaggregated into lower-level components and specific indicators.

Key features of V-Dem:

- Provides reliable data on five high-level principles and 22 lower-level components of democracy such as regular elections, judicial independence, direct democracy, and gender equality, consisting of more than 400 distinct and precise indicators;
- Covers all countries and dependent territories from 1900 to the present and provides an estimate of measurement reliability for each rating;
- Makes all ratings public, free of charge, through a user-friendly interface.

With four Principal Investigators, two Project Coordinators, fifteen Project Managers, more than thirty Regional Managers, almost 200 Country Coordinators, several Assistant Researchers, and approximately 2,600 Country Experts, the V-Dem project is one of the largest-ever social science data collection projects with a database of over 15 million data points. The database makes highly detailed analysis of virtually all aspects of democracy in a country, while also allowing for summary comparisons between countries based on aggregated indices for different dimensions of democracy. Users from anywhere are able to use the V-Dem online analysis tools which can be found at the project's website. Governments, development agencies, and NGOs can benefit from the nuanced comparative and historical data when informing critical decisions such as selecting country program priorities, informing program designs and monitoring impact of their programs.

Methodology:

Unlike extant data collection projects, which typically use a small group of experts who rate all countries or ask a single expert to code one country, the V-Dem project has recruited over 2,600 local and cross-national experts to provide judgments on various indicators about democracy. The V-Dem dataset is created by combining factual information from existing data sources about constitutional regulations and de jure situation with expert coding for questions that require evaluation. Experts' ratings are aggregated through an advanced statistical model that takes into account the possibilities that experts may make mistakes and have different scales in mind when coding. In addition, bridge-coders - experts who code multiple countries - are recruited to calibrate the scales of estimates cross-nationally¹.

¹ For further details and information about the V-Dem methodology, see <http://v-dem.net>.

Overview: Algeria after Independence

Since its independence from French colonial rule in 1962, Algeria, the most prominent power of North Africa, has experienced ups and downs in its political regime, presenting an interesting case study for democratization and political development. Following the invasion in 1830, Algeria became one of the central places of French colonization and, in fact, it was an integral part of France as a province after 1848. French colonization in Algeria has transformed the country in socioeconomic, intellectual and administrative areas.

French control in Algeria ended in 1962 following an 8-year independence war that claimed the lives of at least one million people. As a result, Algeria became independent in 1962 following a referendum on self-determination. The *Front de Libération Nationale* (FLN) emerged as the force that liberated Algeria from French rule. This party, which was established in 1954, led the independence war and obtained independence for Algeria. In its original version, the FLN was the combination of different factions in Algerian society through which seculars, socialists, Islamists and nationalists came together against the French rule. When Algeria became independent, the new republic was founded under FLN rule, starting the almost thirty-year long single-party regime under the influence of the army as the guardian of the Republic. Especially under Colonel Houari Boumédiène's rule between 1965 and 1978, the party developed its identity around Arab nationalism and socialism.

Leadership of Algeria and the FLN passed to another colonel, Chadli Bendjedid in 1979 upon Boumédiène's death. Not as charismatic and influential as his predecessor, Bendjedid tried to continue his rule based on party authority and the backing of the army. While Algerian society benefited from socialist economic policies in the early years of independence, the political incapacity of the regime along with a stagnating economy in the 1980s led to a growing discontent with the Bendjedid regime. Following widespread riots in 1988, Bendjedid decided to make constitutional amendments as a survival strategy. By the Constitutional Referendum in 1989, Algeria entered to a tumultuous era that still marks the Algerian political scene today.

The most important outcome of the new constitution was to introduce a multiparty system removing the FLN from its official state party role. The same year, more than 20 parties were licensed, the most prominent being the Islamist *Front Islamique du Salut* (FIS). Being a combination of both hardliner and softliner Islamist factions, the FIS became very influential

among the mostly dispossessed youth along with lower and middle class urban population who were weary of the FLN regime. Yet, while becoming such a major power in the party system, some major factions in the FIS were championing a sharia-based regime, defaming democracy as a Western invention, and promising a transformation of the Algerian political system. Therefore, some FIS members were non-democrats playing the game of democracy.

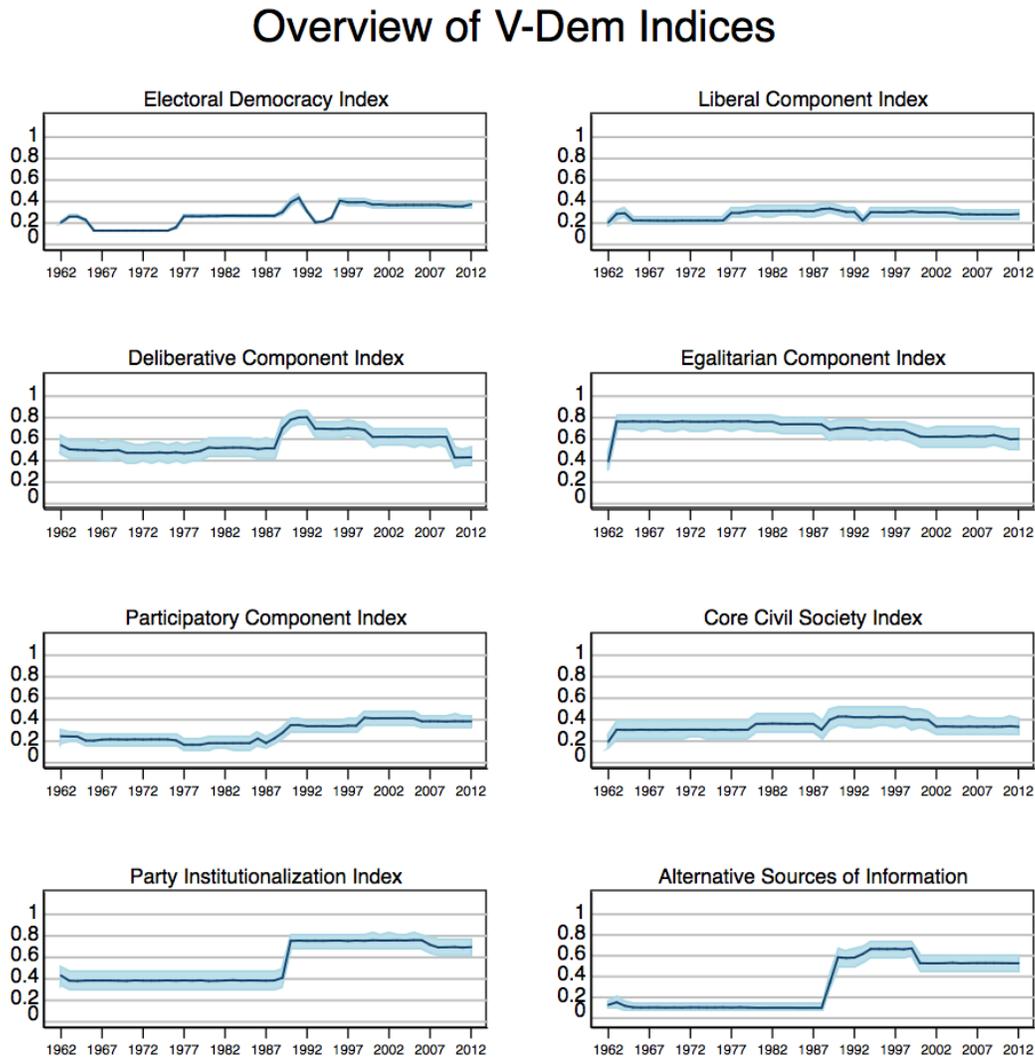
In 1990, Algeria had its first ever multiparty local elections, taking its first step toward a democratic transition. In these local elections, to the surprise of the ruling FLN, Bendjedid, and the army, the FIS won almost 55% of the votes, doubling the vote share of the FLN. Victory in the local elections of 1990 was only the beginning of the FIS. The next year, Algeria had its first-ever free legislative elections. In the first round of the elections in the last days of 1991, the FIS received 47% of all votes, which earned it 81% of the seats (188 seats) elected in that phase. The FIS's landslide victory and the fact that the FLN won less than one-tenth as many seats as the FIS did, alarmed the army, the guardian of Algerian Republic. On January 11, 1992 the army executed a coup d'état in which it cancelled elections, banned the FIS and forced Bendjedid to resign. This coup d'état put an end to the unfinished democratization of Algeria, started an authoritarian reversion, and led to an 8-year-long civil war between the army and various Islamic forces.

The Algerian Civil War claimed around 100,000 lives and left the country in turmoil. Although the army returned the presidency to civilian rule and allowed multiparty elections, the authoritarian regime continued while the military still dominated politics. In 1999, Abdelaziz Bouteflika ran for presidency with the backing of the military and won the elections after all other candidates withdrew due to allegations of systematic vote rigging. After becoming president, Bouteflika started a reconciliation process with the warring parties, pardoned some Islamist insurgents, and put an end to civil war. Restoring order and unity along with military support in war-fatigued Algeria, Bouteflika won four consecutive presidential elections, the last being 2014. Today, Algeria has a multiparty electoral system in which elections have serious limitations in freeness and fairness, the military is still the backbone of the political system, and opposition forces have no real hope of attaining significant power in government.

Figure 1 illustrates an overview of Algerian political regime since the independence. In areas of electoral democracy, civil society, participation, deliberation, political parties and media, there is a strengthening in the direction of democratization. While some aspects such as electoral democracy, civil liberties and deliberation deteriorated following the coup d'état of 1992, some

important gains of the 1989 constitutional reform remain intact. Today, while the country is deficient with respect to electoral democracy, civil liberties, media, and civil society, some aspects of the political regime such as the party system, egalitarianism, and participation are doing relatively well.

Figure 1. Overview of V-Dem Indices



The Algerian struggle for democracy was important not only for the country itself but also for the whole region of the Arab Middle East and North Africa. In the region, only Lebanon had a multiparty electoral system, albeit one complicated by the concessional system and the long civil war. With the attempted democratization in Algeria, the region that had been

doomed to monarchy and dictatorship witnessed its first-ever competitive elections. For many, the constitutional reform of 1989 and the subsequent elections were seen as a hope for a serious political transformation in the Middle East and North Africa.

Alas, the failure of democratization process was equally influential on the political dynamics of the region. First, the victory of the FIS showed that fears of regional authoritarian regimes of Islamist victory in case of democratic transition were not groundless. Therefore, the dictators remained more dedicated to their regimes' survival and some secular factions became more reluctant to work with Islamists. Second, the coup d'état in 1992 and authoritarian backsliding showed many how difficult democratic transition is. The striking example of the failed transition in Algeria spread a fear among opposition movements throughout the region regarding their struggle for democratic transition. In a way, this failed attempt postponed the democratization struggles in the region for at least two decades until the Arab uprisings in 2011.

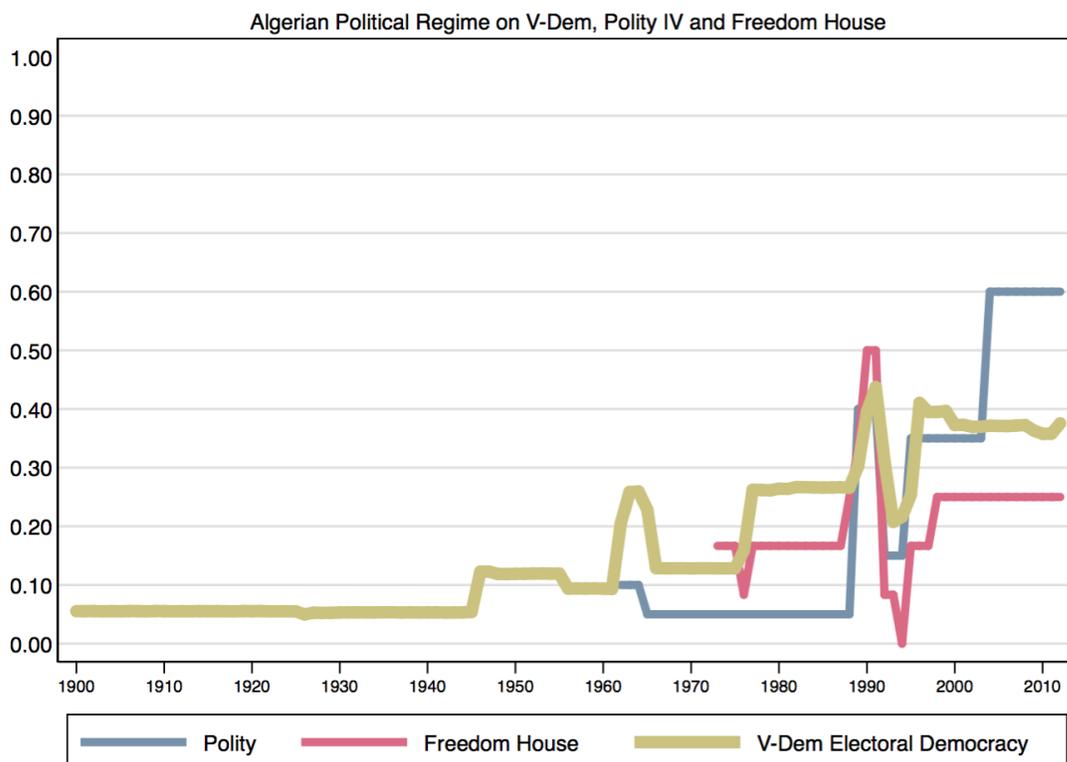
Finally, this failed attempt at democratization and the subsequent civil war was one of the reasons why the Arab uprisings did not later reach Algeria. Although there were occasional protests, Algeria did not have widespread protests like those in Tunisia, Egypt or Libya. According to experts (Volpi 2013), the memory of civil war is still vibrant and people are afraid of falling into the same turmoil again in an attempt at democratization. Also, since some of the political gains of the constitutional reform were preserved, the regime could alleviate the protests by making some minor concessions to people.

In sum, the Algerian political system since independence represents a very interesting case study of ups and downs along the road toward democracy. In order to obtain a clearer and more complete understanding of the evolution of political system in Algeria, it is better to understand how different aspects of democracy evolved during these decades. An in-depth look at V-Dem indicators between 1962 and 2012 can present a general picture of an evolving Algerian political system.

Democracy Indices Compared on Algeria

Figure 2 illustrates the electoral democracy score of Algeria on V-Dem in comparison with two major democracy indices, Polity IV and Freedom House.² These three indices capture the general trends in Algeria similarly, yet there are differences among them. Since Freedom House starts from 1972, its scores for the colonial period and first ten years after the Algerian independence are not displayed. Also, Polity IV does not score colonies; hence there is no polity score available for Algeria before 1962. On the other hand, V-Dem covers regime trends of Algeria even under French colonial rule and this graph shows the Algerian regime score going back to 1900. For this time period, the correlation of V-Dem electoral democracy index with Polity IV is 0.75 and with Freedom House is 0.62, while the correlation between Polity IV and Freedom House is only 0.54.

Figure 2. Algerian Political Regime on V-Dem, Polity IV and Freedom House



² The Freedom House and Polity indices have been rescaled for comparison. However, such comparisons should be interpreted with caution, as the indices are not actually measured on the same scale. The best practice is to compare the timing of major changes and the overall trends.

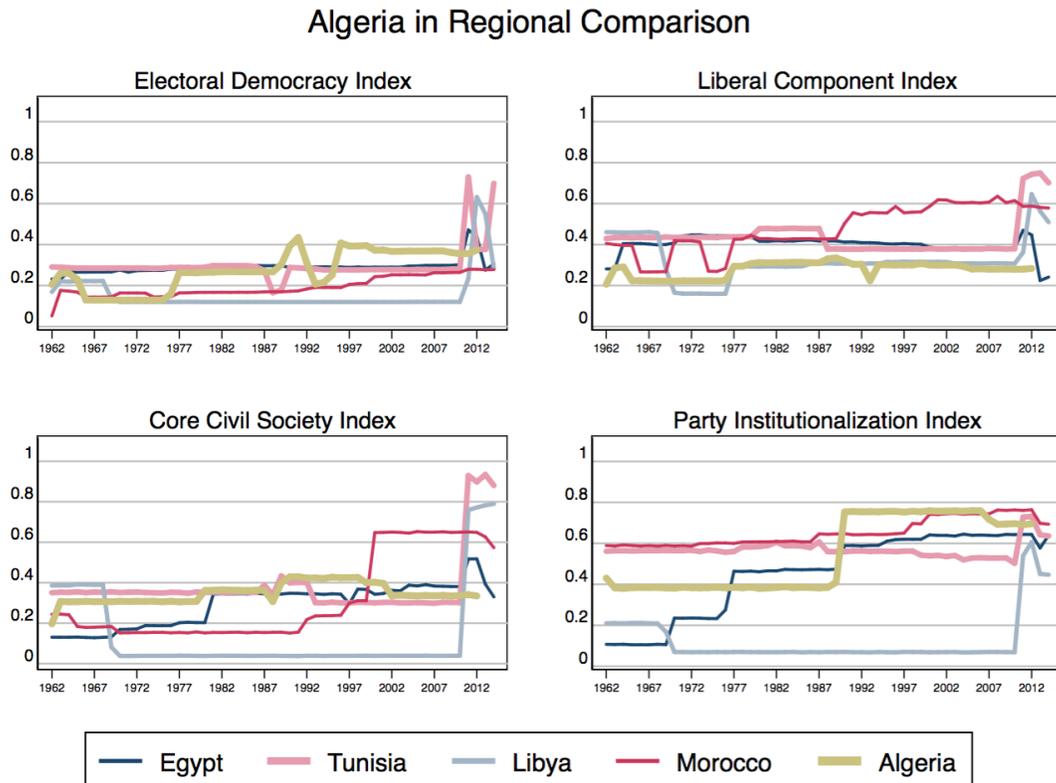
In each of three indices, there is a peak in 1988-1992 that corresponds with the constitutional reform and elections in Algeria. Later, in all indices, there is decline in democracy score by the 1992 coup d'état. While Freedom House defines this decline as a radical one, for the other two indices it was a more modest decline. All of three indices indicate a restoration in democracy scores of Algeria in the mid-1990s, when the army allowed regular civilian politics. Unlike V-Dem and Freedom House, Polity IV records a significant progress in Algerian political regime in 2004 that corresponds to the presidential elections of that year. As a result, Polity IV describes Algerian political system much closer to democracy today in comparison to V-Dem and Freedom House.

Algeria in Regional Perspective

Before moving into disaggregated analysis of the Algerian political regime, a comparative look at the region can provide a better understanding of where Algeria stands in terms of democracy. In Figure 3, Algeria's scores in several democracy indices are compared with those of the broader North African countries of Tunisia, Morocco, Libya and Egypt. The peak in the electoral democracy score of Algeria in the early 1990s supports the claim that the country was the forerunner in the region in terms of democratization. Although it declines to the level of other cases in 1992, it reaches a level relatively higher than that of other cases in the 2000s. One of the most striking points in this graph is the stark development of electoral democracy in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya after the Arab uprisings. Unlike other cases, Morocco records a slow but constant progress that indicates the gradual liberalization in the country in last two decades despite the lack of democratic transition.

In the liberal component of democracy, Algeria records one of the lowest scores in the region even during the short-lived attempt of democratization. In fact, since the constitutional referendum and this attempt concerned more electoral aspects of democracy, this low level in the liberal component is justified. Tunisia, which had ups and downs under different rulers, reaches relatively high scores after the Arab uprisings. Likewise, Libya, which recorded very low scores under Qaddafi's rule after 1970, shows progress in liberal features. Morocco's high score describes the nature of reforms in the last decades, in which the country recorded progress in civil liberties while lacking in electoral democratic reforms that would make it a democracy.

Figure 3. Algeria in Regional Comparison

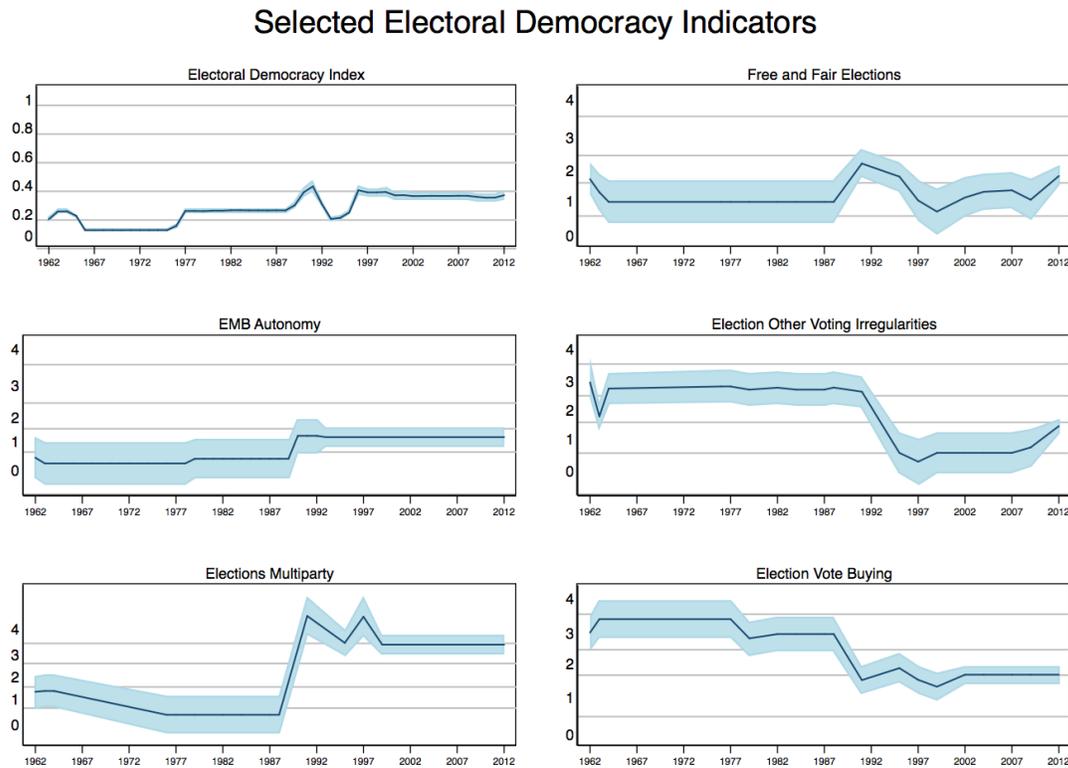


Electoral Democracy: An Arduous Road

Electoral democracy index of V-Dem, shown in Figure 4, is an aggregated index that measures the degree in which elections are free and fair and political parties are able to compete in elections. As discussed in previous graphs, electoral democracy index successfully captures the major developments in post-colonial Algerian political history. First, a decline in electoral democracy is recorded in the mid-1960s which coincides with the consolidation of the FLN rule under President Boumédiène. In 1965, previous President Ahmed Ben Bella was ousted by a coup within the regime and Boumédiène replaced him developing more nationalist and socialist aspects of the FLN and the Algerian regime. Boumédiène ruled the country under the title of “Chairman of the Revolutionary Council” after this replacement and V-Dem index indicates very low scores under this ruling body. Yet, there is a progress in electoral democracy when this Council was replaced. The second significant change in electoral democracy score is seen during the tumultuous period started with the 1989 constitutional reform. Although the path toward

democratic transition started at that period, the 1992 coup d'état brings a significant decline. Even though there is a restoration in the Algerian electoral democracy score by the mid-1990s and stability since then, the current Algerian political regime does not offer free and fair elections and a genuine competition among parties.

Figure 4. Selected Electoral Democracy Indicators.



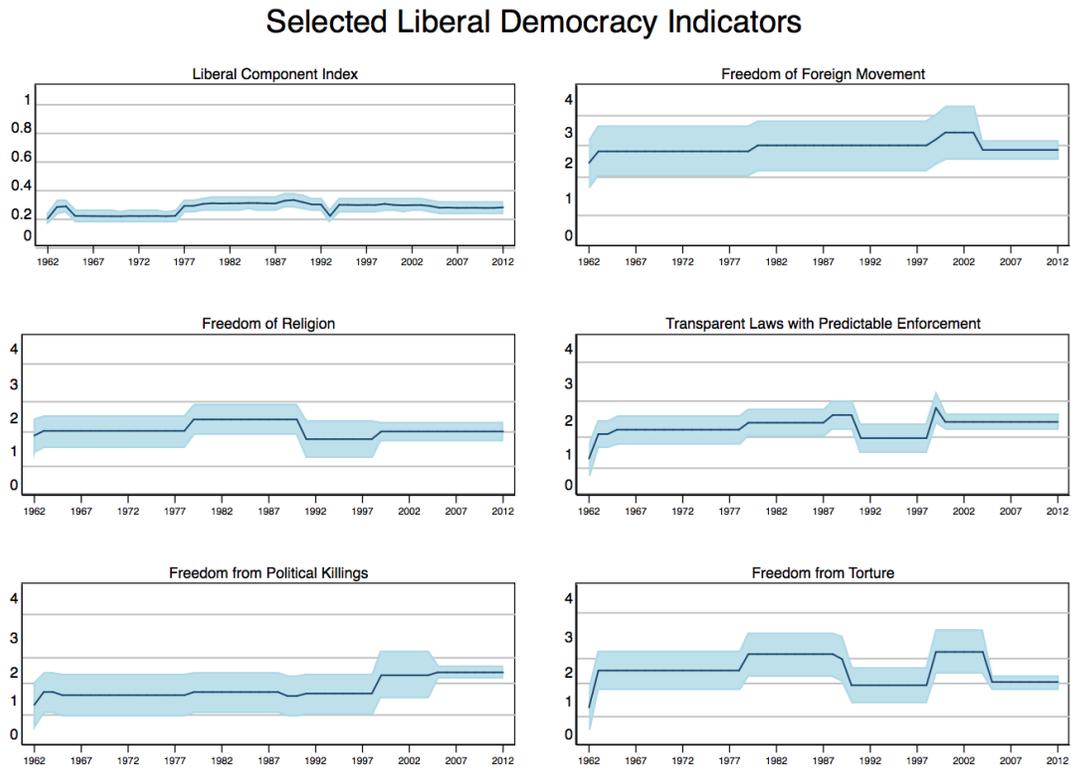
Since electoral democracy index is an aggregate measure of several different components, it is better to look at different factors that build this score in order to understand the Algerian regime. Some electoral measures capture the changes in Algerian political system very well. One of the most crucial components of electoral democracy, free and fair elections, is displayed on top right corner of Figure 4. There were elections even under the one-party rule of the FLN. Yet especially when the parliamentary elections took place in 1991, score of free and fair elections increases significantly. However, it plummets after the coup d'état and reaches the lowest score in 1999, in which all the opposition candidates withdrew from the presidential elections with the allegations of fraud. On the other hand, EMB Autonomy indicator suggests that Algerian Election Management Body has never been really autonomous from the regime, even during the short attempt of democratization.

Other electoral indicators show some interesting features of Algeria's electoral system over the course of time. By the constitutional reforms in 1989 when the regime allowed the opposition parties, multiparty elections score (bottom left) recorded a significant increase indicating that elections were open to the participation of multiple parties. Despite the authoritarian reversion, this score is still very high since parties are allowed to run in elections despite the lack of fair competition. On the other hand, high scores in election irregularities and vote buying components indicate the absence of dire irregularities and extensive vote buying. The fact that these scores were high during the one-party rule and low in multiparty period proves that authoritarian regimes use different strategies to stay in power depending on the structural and institutional conditions. Since there was only the FLN and no competition until 1988, Algeria did not have any problem of voting irregularities or vote buying. In the early decades after independence, the FLN did not need these tactics to stay in power. However, once the regime allowed opposition parties, these strategies became some of regime's main strategies to continue its rule. For that reason, V-Dem indicates systematic and nationwide irregularities along with non-systematic yet common vote buying in the post-coup d'état Algeria.

Civil Liberties: The Long Forgotten Aspect

While electoral democracy index shows variation during times of change in Algeria, liberal component index, which reflects Algeria's main characteristics in terms of civil liberties, has a relatively constant score. Liberal component index (top left in Figure 5) indicates that Algeria has had very low performance on civil liberties. This means that the regime lacked in liberal principle of democracy which emphasizes the importance of individual and minority rights, rule of law and effective checks and balances. Although there is a minor development in the mid-1970s, at the end of Boumédiène rule, the constitutional reform in 1989 did not provide any significant development in civil liberties. Coup period and unlawful acts of the army during that time caused a decline in liberal democracy score and the score remained constantly low in the post-coup era.

Figure 5. Selected Liberal Democracy Indicators.



An in-depth look to some of the variables composing liberal democracy component shows a relatively more variation in the process. Traditionally, freedom of foreign movement has been relatively high in Algeria. The main reason behind this was the colonial experience and the ties with France. Since many Algerian citizens moved to France during and after the colonial era, the regime imposed relatively less restrictions on foreign movement. Rule of law and transparency of laws, illustrated in center right of Figure 5, show some variation. While transparency and predictability of laws were somewhat limited during the one-party era, the coup brought even more severe limitations. During the one-party rule, public authorities somewhat respected the freedom of religion. Since the regime was an anti-colonial regime which emphasized its origins, Islam played a role in nation building. However, the FLN as a nationalist and socialist party did not allow religious groups and movements to act entirely free. The coup d'état of 1992 brought a backlash on religious freedoms since the target of the coup was a religiously oriented party, the FIS. During this time, the bans on religious activities and persecution of people due to religious ties led to a decline in the freedom of religion score.

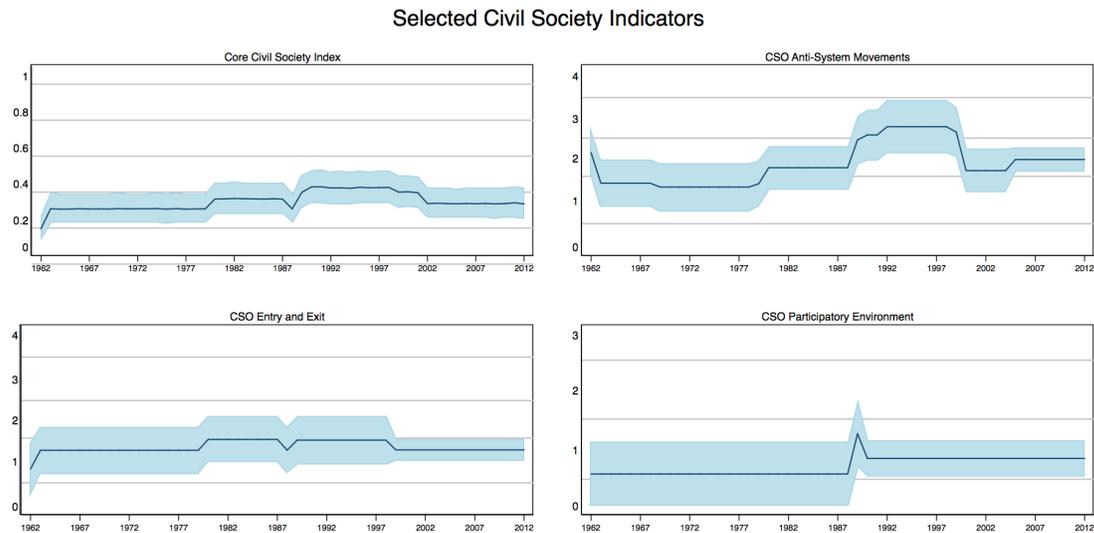
The coup era has also made some negative impact on the protection of lives and personal integrity. As indicated in freedom from torture scale of V-Dem (bottom right), the coup era, subsequent civil war and the persecution of the FIS activists and militants led to an increase of torture in Algeria. The same period records a very low score in freedom from political killings indicating that there were frequent killings. Especially the civil war era was a time in which politicians became a target to assassinations. The restoration of order after 1999 under Bouteflika provides an improvement in freedom from political killings score.

Civil Society: Absent Component of Democratizing Forces

During the fifty years after independence, Algeria could never have a vibrant and effective civil society. Especially because of the all-encompassing one-party rule under the FLN, a strong civil society could not flourish in Algeria and a general political apathy became widespread in Algerian society. Nevertheless, labor unions became more influential and strikes and protests became somewhat common in Algeria especially under the Bendjedid rule and after. In 1988, people took the streets for widespread protests which later became an important cause behind the process leading to the constitutional reform. A relative development in Algerian civil society is observed in that period as the core civil society index of V-Dem shows in Figure 6. Yet, this progress did not continue for a long time. In the post-coup period, Algeria had only occasional important protest movements like the so-called Black Spring by the Berber minority in 2001 in Kabylie region. Still today, Algerian civil society remains relatively weak to oppose the authoritarian order.

Separate indicators of civil society, on the other hand, show some ups and downs in Algerian civil society in the course of time. During the one-party FLN rule, the regime did not provide a participatory environment to civil society while most associations were state sponsored. The constitutional reform period was an important development in this respect: yet, the authoritarian reversion led to a regress in this area limiting the number of voluntary associations. The indicator “CSO entry and exit” refers to a similar situation in which the regime has always had a substantial control in licensing civil society organizations which becomes an obstacle to the flourishing of civil society.

Figure 6. Selected Civil Society Indicators.

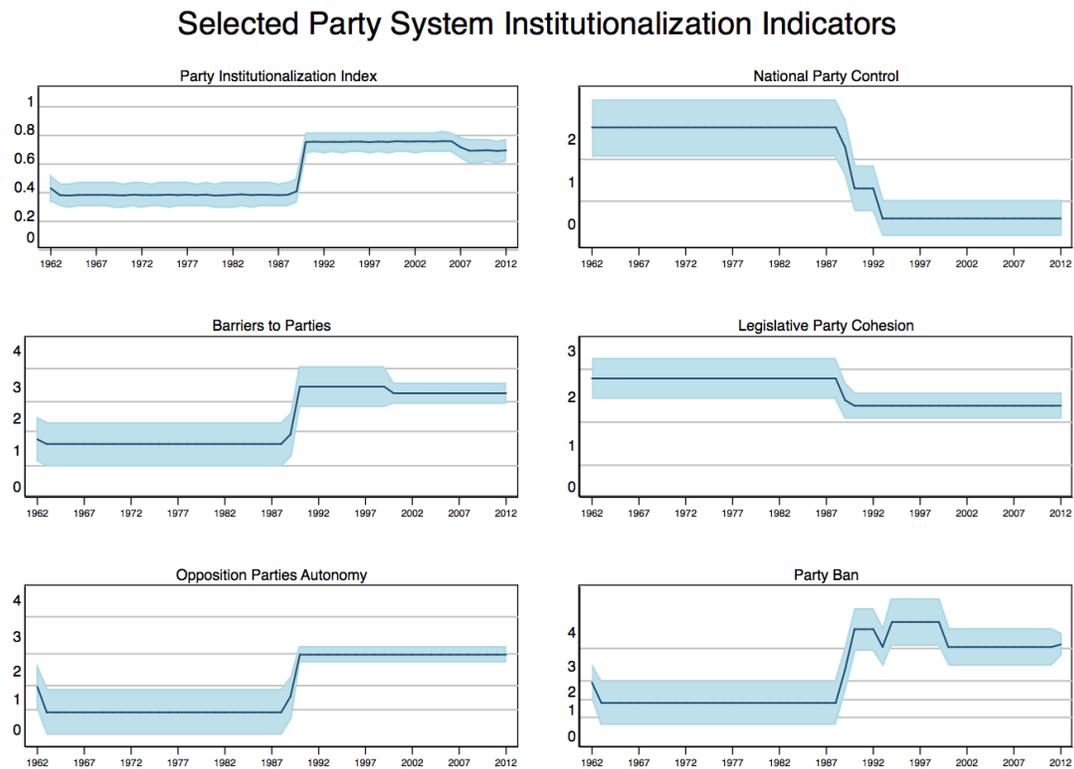


The post-coup period in Algeria was a time in which anti-system movements became very active (top right). The main reason behind this was the armed Islamic groups which fought against the Algerian army during the civil war. These groups, that were the combination of small but many militia factions, became widespread in Algeria, some with a discourse of destroying the anti-Islamic order. V-Dem indicates a decline in anti-system movement activities after the end of civil war under the Bouteflika's restoration project.

Party System: Bright Side of a Sad Story

One of the most drastic developments in the post-independence Algerian political history was seen in the party system. For around thirty years after independence, the country had only one legal party, the ruling FLN. Although there was not a multiparty system, since the FLN was a very well institutionalized party with strong organization, coherent party platform and cadres of party activists, Algerian party institutionalization score was not very low (Figure 7). The constitutional reform of 1989 that allowed opposition parties changed the scene of Algerian party politics and provided very high levels of party institutionalization. More positive than other aspects of the Algerian politics, the party system survived despite the coup d'état of 1992 and the 8-year long civil war.

Figure 7. Selected Party System Institutionalization Indicators.



Although the Algerian political system today does not let opposition parties to take over the power, there is still a vibrant party system under this authoritarian setting. Almost thirty parties and alliances participated in the last parliamentary elections of 2012. Among these parties, certain political groups and parties are in the forefront. First, there are two parties in which the ruling elites rotate: the FLN (*Front de Libération Nationale*) and the RND (*Rassemblement National Démocratique*). The FLN is no more the non-changing ruling party of Algeria; however, the government is rotating between these two elite parties of the FLN and the RND. The other parties are still in the opposition with no real hope of winning victory over these two parties in the elections. In that opposition camp, one faction is the group of moderate Islamist parties like Hamas (the MSP or *Mouvement de la Société pour la Paix*), Nahda (*Mouvement de la Renaissance Islamique*) and Islah (the MNR or *Mouvement pour la Réforme Nationale*). The other important group in the opposition is the two Kabylie parties representing the Berber ethnic minority, the FFS (*Front des Forces Socialistes*) and the RCD (*Rassemblement pour la Culture et la Démocratie*). There are also relatively minor parties from a variety of political ideologies such as the socialist PT (*Parti des Travailleurs*).

V-Dem indicator, national party control, presents a very interesting correlation with party institutionalization in Algeria. As seen in top right corner of Figure 7, the single party FLN controlled both executive and legislative branches of the national government for decades making national party control indicator extremely high. During this period, due to the absence of opposition parties, party institutionalization score remained low. When the constitutional reform allowed opposition parties and these parties threatened the FLN's authority, national party control declined and party institutionalization consequently increased.

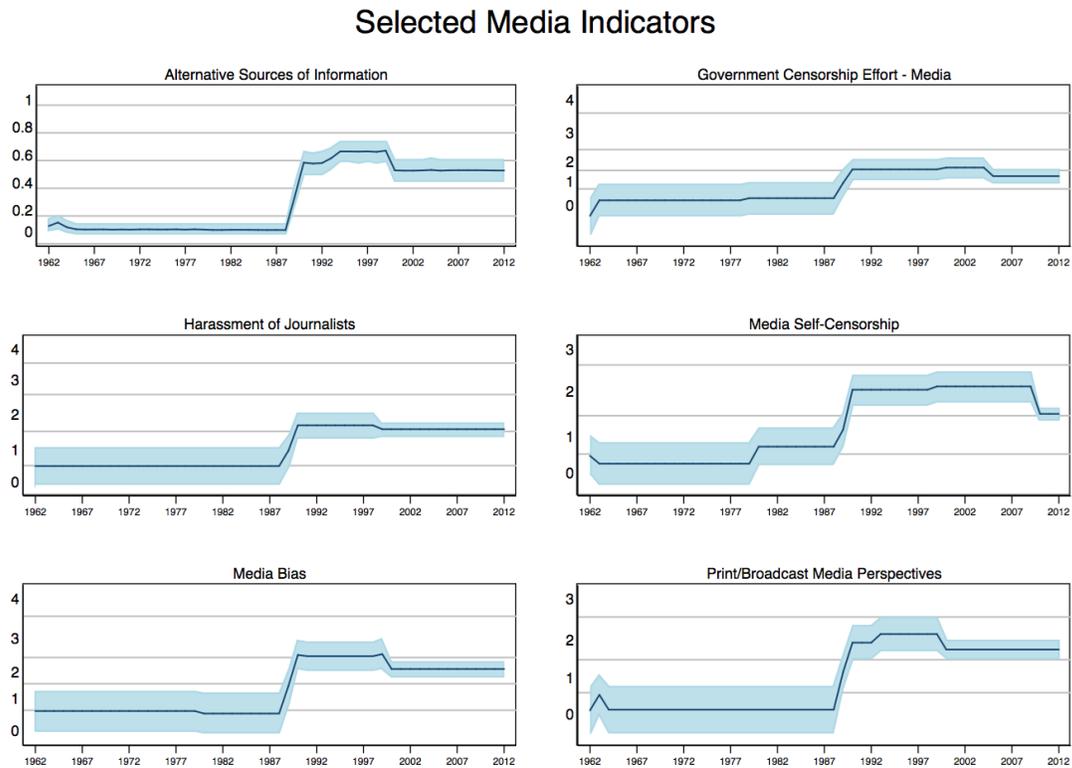
The other indicators of party system also prove how crucial the constitutional reform of 1988 was for Algerian politics. Almost all indicators of parties changed that year. By the reforms, party ban (bottom right) ceased to be a serious problem for Algeria. Yet, a decline in party ban score is observed in 1993, the year when the army-dominated government banned the FIS. Barriers to parties show a similar tendency with party ban score indicating that barriers were lowered after the constitutional reforms. However, since the FLN made some constitutional engineering in 1988 by allowing parties with some restrictions, Algeria does not reach a full score on that indicator. Likewise, opposition parties became somewhat autonomous after the constitutional reform although they failed to be fully autonomous from the regime. Whereas almost all aspects of Algerian party system improved after the constitutional reform, V-Dem shows that there was a decline in party cohesion at the same time. Since the FLN was a very strong and coherent party, there was very high party cohesion during the one-party era. However, since not all opposition parties are as coherent, this score declines in the multiparty era.

Media: Developing, yet Still Weak

Media is an area Algeria has developed after the constitutional reform and protected the gains of that process. Under the FLN rule, there was a widespread control of media. After the reforms in 1989, media became a relatively free area in which different groups and private enterprises can work in. However, this is still not enough to say that Algeria has a free media. Freedom House's *Freedom of the Press* index defines Algeria as "not free" (Freedom House 2013) while *Reporters without Borders* call Algerian case a difficult situation (Reporters without Borders 2015). V-Dem's indicator of alternative sources of information is the aggregated index indicating a country's

press freedom. This index measures if the coverage is unbiased, critical of the regime and representative of different perspectives. As seen in Figure 8, V-Dem's index validates these two reports showing that press in Algeria is not free enough. Yet, unlike these measures, V-Dem describes Algerian press freedom in a rather average level.

Figure 8. Selected Media Indicators.



The selected indicators of media freedom show the same tendency with the index measure. According to these indicators, under the FLN rule, no journalist dared to engage in journalistic activities offending powerful actors because of common case of harassment of journalists (center left in Figure 8), the government was directly and routinely censoring the media (top right) and media was biased in favor of the ruling party (bottom left). Thanks to reforms in the late 1980s and the early 1990s, there is a progress in each of these areas but the media today is not free enough either. There is still occasional harassment of journalists, some degree of censorship by the government and although opposition parties are covered too, the coverage time is not equally distributed. In a more positive aspect of media in Algeria, today the branches of media are relatively good at presenting different perspectives in the society (bottom right).

Conclusion

Algeria has now been independent for more than 50 years. Leaving behind the French rule, Algerian people fell into a one-party rule under the nationalist and socialist FLN with a strong military backing. After the 27 years of one-party rule, the government allowed opposition to operate in the political system by the constitutional reform; yet the process of democratization was ended by the coup d'état in 1992, in the 30th year of the independence. After this failed attempt of democratization and the civil war that left a very tragic memory in the society, people are living under the order and limited representation of Bouteflika's rule without real democracy.

For the same reasons, Algeria has experienced the period of Arab uprisings relatively mildly. Both the tragic memory of backlash and the relative openness under the current authoritarian regime played an important role to prevent the protests from growing too much in Algeria unlike the other regional neighbors like Tunisia, Egypt and Libya. Yet, as V-Dem successfully showcases, even though Algerian political system is more open today than its history of one-party rule, there is still too much room to make reforms and even bring a democratic transition in the future.

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