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WHY DID "THE DOMINO EFFECT" NOT REACH ALGERIA?

Limitations and prospects of socio-political transformation

Abstract:

The year 2011 will be one of the most memorable in the modern Arab history because of the wave of revolutions which led to the overthrow of long ruling autocrats in Egypt, Tunisia, Yemen and Libya. Algeria is so far the only country in North Africa that has not experienced sustained mass protests calling for a political change. This paper intends to explain why the Arab Spring has not spread to Algeria? This question becomes apparent bearing in mind that Algeria shares the same explosive factors that have provoked mass revolutions in the neighbouring countries: corruption, disproportion in the regional development, pauperization of society and the lack of civil and political rights. There are several explanations for this "immunity to revolution". First – the fragmentation of Algerian opposition. Second – the fear of the return to the violence which Algerians have lived in for 50 years owing to two brutal conflicts – the war of independence and the civil war of the 90s. Third – the announcement of a raft of political and constitutional reforms by the present regime. Finally, the social peace was bought by the promise to resolve Algeria's long-lasting economic problems starting with unemployment, the promise of implementation of the structural reforms and especially the direct and indirect transfers of public money (rise of salaries, subvention of basic commodities etc.).

Key words: Algeria, transformation, limits of democratisation

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“The domino effect” is a phrase often repeated to describe the phenomena of contestation of power undertaken by the societies of North Africa and Middle East, which in recent years have led to the collapse of multiannual regimes. The trigger was the protests, which began in Sidi Bouzid in December 2010 in Tunisia, and which then spread across the country, forcing the authoritarian president Zine-el Abidine Ben Ali, in power for over 23 years, to leave the country. The fervour of revolutionary uprising swept through most of the country's regions taking more or less drastic form. Algeria is an exception in the constellation of declining regimes. The question arises: why did the scenario of events that took place in the neighbouring countries (Libya, Tunisia) did not repeat itself in Algeria, even though the factors that led to the revolutions in those countries also appear here: corruption and nepotism in the government administration structures, strong socio-economic inequalities, limiting the fundamental rights and civic freedoms?

On the other hand, stating that the Arab Spring passed unnoticed in Algeria is untrue. The “bread protests” took place in bigger cities of Algeria in January 2011, shortly before Tunisian and Egyptian revolution. None of these regular forms of protest turned into factors that would undermine the *status quo*, established over twenty years ago. The reasons for such state of affairs can be sought in the political weakness of Algerian opposition or a skilful simulation of political reforms by the regime, guaranteeing its continuity. The factor impacting the stability of the system is, undoubtedly, the fear of a repetition of the civil war scenario from the years 1990-1999 or, not so unrealistic in the context of events in Egypt and Tunisia – the prospect of Islamisation of the country. The unequivocal factor allowing the survival of the regime of Abdelaziz Bouteflika is the position of Algeria in the American strategy of *Global War on Terror* (GWOT). Finally, Algeria's significant oil resources are also of great importance, allowing the rulers the temporary alleviation of social tensions. The strategy of “buying the social peace” is an efficient tool in the hands of the ruling party, which Egypt and Tunisia do not have.

Conditions of political and social transformation in Algeria

The Arab Spring did not touch Algeria to such extent as it did Egypt, Tunisia, Libya or Syria; however, it is worth noting that this country experienced an upward revolt, which started the systemic changes. Protests of October 1998 that engulfed almost entire country and began the process of implementation of political reforms, aiming to end the single-party system and *de facto* the ruling of the National Liberation Front, holding the reign of power continuously since 1962.

The reasons for contestation in the 1980s Algeria are almost identical to those that led to the fall of regimes in the countries of MENA region in the years 2010-2011. In that period the conflict between the society and government accelerated. The latter was not only accused of inept economic policy, but also of lack of democracy, as well as corruption and clientelism. The protests against the government's

policies and opposition to the "appropriation of state" by narrow ruling elite took the form of mass street protests in Algiers in the autumn 1988. Huge crowds of protesters came out on the streets, demanding the withdrawal of the increase of prices on the necessary articles, improvement of supply, elimination of the ruling elite's privileges, implementation of the fundamental political reforms, and the guarantee of civil liberties¹.

Constitution introduced on 23rd February 1989 ended the quarter-century era of the National Liberation Front's (NLF) monopoly of power and opened the way to the multi-party system. The plans for changes in that period were related to ensuring the freedom to nominate the candidates in the municipal and national elections and independence of social and political organisations. Between 1989 and 1990 almost 44 parties were registered. Former opposition groups, including the Socialist Forces Front, were legalised. In September 1989 also the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) returns to the political game, campaigning for an immediate introduction of Islamic republic in Algeria².

First multi-party municipal elections from 12th September 1990 modified the political scene of Algeria, until then monopolised by the NLF. The Islamic group (FIS) gained a significant advantage over the ruling party³.

The result of the municipal elections, devastating for the ruling party, brought closer the vision of losing the parliamentary elections. As expected, legislative authorities elections confirmed the discrediting of the presidential party and support for the Islamic group. In the first round of elections which took place in December 1991, the Islamic Salvation Front gained 188 seats. The second place was also won by the opposition of the regime – the Socialist Forces Front, gaining 25 seats. The third position (18 seats in the parliament) fell in the hands of the National Liberation Front⁴.

As a consequence of the results of parliamentary and local elections, the Algerian regime faced the alternate choice between systemic solution, providing for the end of social unrest and integration of opposition parties, including Islamic ones, within the political scene, or maintaining the political relationships in the current state. The second option prevailed, which was directly connected to closing the process of democratisation and using force. Fearing the loss of own position and facing the threat of Islamic integralism, in the autumn 1992 the ruling regime chose the "way of the force"⁵. Afraid of the FIS' victory in the second round of

¹ Most research confirms that the *number of victims* was up to 500 killed. Thousands suspected of being involved in organisation of the riots have been arrested, E. Szczypankiewicz, *Region Maghrebu w polityce Unii Europejskiej*, Kraków 2010, p. 108.

² E. Frederic, "Algérie. La fin du monopole du FLN. Les députés votent la loi autorisant le multipartisme", *Le Monde*, 4 August 1989, p. 47.

³ FIS gained 54,3% votes ant FLN 33,7%. B. Stora, *L'histoire de l'Algérie depuis l'Indépendance*, Paris 1994, p. 95.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ A. Lahouari, "Les partis politiques en Algérie et la crise du régime des grands électeurs", *Le Quotidien d'Oran*, 12-13 October 2003.

elections, the High Council of State decided to suspend the electoral process. Islamic Salvation Front was dissolved. The country plunged into the long-term civil war between the army, subordinate to the authoritarian regime, and the Islamic militias⁶.

Since 1992 the power in Algeria has effectively been in the hands of the army. Keeping up the appearances of democracy, the superficial political reforms are introduced, and the regular elections to the representative bodies are carried out. The real executive power rests in the hands of presidents, “anointed” by the generals, successively since 1992: Ali Kafi, Liamine Zérroual, Abdelaziz Bouteflika. The parliament is controlled by the so-called coalition of the president, the parties that are friendly towards the regime: National Liberation Front, National Rally for Democracy and the Movement for the Society of Peace – not very socially representative group of moderate Islam. Islamic Salvation Front remains deprived of the possibility of having the parliamentary representation, and some of the opposition groups, including the Socialist Forces Front, decided to boycott the elections to the legislative authorities, which in the view of its leaders are deprived of any ability to make an impact, and are only serving the current regime. The state of emergency introduced in 1992 has allowed controlling the society, as well as unpunished use of repressive measures, including behaviours against the system. An important element of the regime remains highly developed apparatus of coercion and the position of army in the system⁷.

The authoritarian nature of the system is strengthened by the actions aimed to concentrate the executive power in the hands of one man. In 2007 the amendment to the constitution was introduced, abolishing the limiting of the presidential terms to two, opening the way for Abdelaziz Bouteflika’s presidency for life.

Other elements of procedural democracy and assemblies are not guaranteed. All association and media activity is controlled. Between December 1999 and January 2012 no new political party was registered. Despite the liberalisation of the Code of Press in 1990, abolishing the monopoly of the state in the field of information, the journalistic activity is subject to restrictions. The provisions of the Code of media guarantee the freedom of speech, except cases of questioning “the dignity of individual, the imperatives of foreign policy and national defence”. The Code of Criminal Procedure provides for a wide range of punishment, including prison, for slander or insult of state institutions⁸.

⁶ About situation in Algeria between 1900-1992 see more in: A. Kasznik-Christian, *Algérie*, Warszawa 2006, pp. 449-457.

⁷ See more about the results of parliamentary election in 2002 in: Inter-Parliamentary Union, Report, Algeria, [on-line] http://www.ipu.org/parline-f/reports/1003_arc.htm, 30 April 2013; see more about parliamentary election in 2007: [on-line] http://193.194.78.233/ma_fr/stories.php?topic=07/04/09/8619480, 30 April 2014.

⁸ A. Aghrout, Y.H. Zoubir, „Algérie: des reformes politiques pour eluder le Printemps arabe”, *Alternatives Sud (Le Printemps arabe: un premier bilan)* Vol. 19, 2012, no. 2, p. 139; E. Szczepankiewicz, *op. cit.*, pp. 295-296.

The indicated factors are the reason why the traditional sources of legitimacy of power based on the affiliation with the independence movement and political base of NLF, are weakened. The phenomenon of lack of identification of society with the ruling power is becoming more and more visible, as evidenced by the low election attendance, around 30-40% in the last decade (35.6% in the parliamentary elections in 2007)⁹. A survey of the independent Algerian journal, *El Watan*, conducted in 2011, showed that 75% of respondents do not trust the parliament, seeing in it an institution with little political influence, in which the MPs defend their own or their supporters' interests¹⁰. Clientelism and nepotism in the administration and business are not the only conflict-inflicting factors in the Algerian society. The lines of social divide occur between the francophone and arabophone elites, between the Arab and Berber communities, and finally between the politically and economically privileged higher class and the pauperised residents of provinces located further away from the metropolis.

The analysis of conditions which may lead to the societal contestation of power cannot be short of economic factors. Algerian model of economy is characterised by similar elements that caused overthrowing the political regimes in neighbouring countries. In Algeria, similarly as in other Arab countries, from the moment of gaining independence, the economic model of the so-called patrimonial capitalism has been developed, in which the loyalty of the citizens was maintained in exchange for the guarantee of economic and social stability. In other words, the subordination of the society ensured the provision of certain services by the state, such as education, health services and benefits, employment in the public sector, economic privileges, guarantee of supply of the basic articles, subsidisation of food, etc.¹¹

In the system of patrimonial capitalism in the longer-term perspective there are phenomena negative from the point of view of the economy. First of all, the state is over-represented in the economy, which is reflected in the significant size of the public sector, bureaucracy, and high level of employment in the public sector¹². In fact, the public sector is the biggest employer. The unemployment among the young people remains problematic, equal to approx. 21% in the age group of 18-25 years, as well as the size of the informal market, evaluated at the end of the first decade of the 21st century as approx. 40% of the annual GDP. The weakest link remains the dependency on the energy sector. Compared to other countries of

⁹ „L'Algérie à contre-courant du Printemps arabe”, *Le Monde*, 12 May 2012, [on-line] http://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2012/05/12/l-algerie-a-contre-courant-du-printemps-arabe_1700317_3212.html, 20 October 2014.

¹⁰ A. Aghrou, Y.H. Zoubir, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

¹¹ O. Schlumberger, “Structural reform, economic order and development: patrimonial capitalism”, *Review of International Political Economy* Vol. 15, 2008, no. 4, p. 17, [on-line] <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09692290802260670>.

¹² S. Ben Néfissa, “Les révolutions arabes: les angles morts de l'analyse politique des sociétés de la région”, *Confluences Méditerranée* Vol. 77, 2011, no. 2, p. 78, [on-line] <http://dx.doi.org/10.3917/comc.077.0075>.

MENA region, rich in oil and gas, Algeria has the least diversified production – 97% of its export is oil and its derivatives. Moreover, in recent years the share of the energy sector in GDP increased from 30% to 50% in 2008 and to almost 70% in 2011¹³. In accordance with the indicators of the World Bank in 2011 *Doing Business*, Algeria took the 136th place amongst the 183 researched countries¹⁴. Unfavourable investment climate is the reason why the country is not able to attract foreign investors. Furthermore, 40% of direct foreign investments are made in the energy industry, sector generating less than 5% jobs per year.

Arab Spring in Algeria

The beginning of 2011, when the protests in the countries of North Africa and Middle East took place, was not peaceful also in Algeria. Between 3rd and 7th January 2011 mass strikes swept through Algeria, caused by the increase of prices of the staple food products¹⁵. Caused by the price increase of mainly two products: oil and sugar, they were named “oil strikes” by the media, referring to “bread protests” that rocked the political scene of Algeria in 1980s. The media discourse highlighted purely economic character of the social claims, although this was more often accompanied by the hopes for political change. Their embodiment became the National Coordination for Democratic Change (CNCD), established on 21st January 2011. The initiative was formed with the participation of Algerian League for Human Rights, a number of autonomous trade unions and political parties. This informal platform uniting various opposition groups had specific goals: abolition of the state of emergency, liberalisation of media, wider political participation of the citizens and release of prisoners detained during the January demonstrations. Despite the attempts to mobilise the society through organising a series of protests, the opposition movement did not grow to such extent like in the other countries of the region. The culminating moment was to be the demonstration planned for 12th February 2011 in the capital city. The intentions of the organisers, however, were torpedoed by the preventive measures of the local authorities and the police. The City Council’s decision of 7th February banned the organisation of the march, citing the regulation issued in June 2001, prohibiting the organisation of public gatherings in the capital and the necessity to preserve the public order¹⁶. Nevertheless, CNCD

¹³ H. Darbouche, *Algeria's failed transition to a sustainable polity*, MEDPRO technical Report no. 8, October 2011, [on-line] <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/isn/Digital-Library/Publications/Detail?ots591=0c54e3b3-1c9c-bc1e-2c24-a6a8c7060233&lng=en&id=134566>, 30 April 2013.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ According to the statement of Ministry of Interior in Algeria, five persons have died and eight hundreds have been injured (majority among the policemen) during the riots (A. Aghrou, Y.H. Zoubir, *op. cit.*, p. 140).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

upheld the earlier decision to organise the protesting march. The demonstrators were dispersed by police forces, sent to the place where the march began, in the number of 20 thousand policemen.

In addition to the effective preventive activities, the regime also took action to calm the social tension through a number of concessions and proposals for socio-political reforms. First one was to satisfy the postulate of protesters to abolish the state of emergency, in force since 1992. The Cabinet Council's decision of 22nd February 2011 was supported by the words of president Bouteflika, who said that "the abolition of the state of emergency after nineteen years will open a new page in the history of the country, which must be accompanied by the political reforms"¹⁷. Following these statements, the National Commission for Consultation on Political Reforms was appointed, which was to serve the purpose of a special communication tool in the relations between the ruling party and opposition, and a field for discussion on the subject of the proposed by both parties changes.

In result of the consultations, the president was provided with the report which contained the projects for electoral reform, guarantees of a wider representation of women in the parliament, and the reform of media law. The report was adopted by both houses of parliament in the autumn 2011.

While it is still too early to assess the attempts of "political thaw" made by the authorities, a few comments can be made here. Some controversy may be induced by the very members of the Commission for Consultation. Its appointed chairman was Abdelkader Bensalah, the president of National Council. Two close advisors of president Bouteflika, Mohamed Touati and Mohamed Ali Boughazi, were appointed as vice-presidents. During the two-months' long operation, the Council's consultation included nearly two hundred parties, associations and civic organisations. Majority of them refused the dialogue, demanding the appointment of a wider platform of international debate. Remarkable is the fact that the former presidents (Chadli Bendjedid, Ali Kafi, Liamine Zérroual) and Prime Ministers (Mokdad Safi, Mouloud Mamrouche, Ali Benflis) refused to participate in the presidential initiative.

The superficial character of activities is additionally confirmed by the reform to increase the representation of women in the parliament. In the originally assumed version, the parity envisaged for women was to equal minimum 33% of the total seats in the National Assembly. As a result of the parliamentary majority of votes (a coalition of presidential parties – RND and FLN), the solution was adapted where the number of female MPs was dependent on the number of seats allocated to the individual electoral districts¹⁸. Another step serving the "refreshing" of the political scene was issuing the authorisation in October 2011 for the formation of new political parties¹⁹. Additionally, the increase of the number of seats in the

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 142.

¹⁹ Various mainstream parties (national, Islamic ones) took part in the election of 1997, 2002, 2007 and 2012. However their possibility of action was limited. The majority in chosen parliaments has always belonged to the regime supported parties.

National Assembly from 389 to 462 was intended to widen the participation of political formations in the parliament. As a result of legalising the new parties, their number rose to 43 in 2011. Such large atomisation of the political scene is *de facto* a beneficial situation for the tight presidential parties' coalition. It was not weakened even by the exit from the coalition of the party of moderate Islam: Movement for the Society of Peace. The new act on political parties raised criticism for one more reason²⁰. In accordance with its terms, the consent for the so-called "political nomadism" was introduced, i.e. the transfer of members from one group to another during the same terms of the assembly, which to a large extent favoured the large parties (National Rally for Democracy, National Liberation Front) at the expense of smaller, newer parties. Secondly, the amendment left in force the ban of forming new political parties on the members of Islamic Salvation Front, thereby leaving the largest opposition party outside of the political scene.

Another action taken by the regime, aiming to neutralise the social contestation, is making governmental money transfers. The redistribution policy of income from oil sales is an indisputable tool in the hands of the rentier state regimes. Its effectiveness cannot be overestimated, and in the perspective of regimes' stability it counteracts popularisation and politicisation of the social and economic needs of citizens. In accordance with the Budget Act estimated for the year 2012, 1500 billion Algerian Dinars (approx. 15 billion Euros) were programmed. Additionally, the increase in spending is expected of approx. 10% in relation to 2011, of which 2 8850 billion DA for clerical salaries, 1 300 billion for social services, and 200 billion DA for the subsidy of food products (sugar, oils, cereals, milk)²¹. Another category of people benefiting from the direct distribution are pensioners. Starting from January 2012 all provisions increased on average by 15 00 DA (150 Euros), which on average costs the budget 630 million Euros annually²². The fact of undertaking the number of activities for young people affected by unemployment, who are – as shown by the events in neighbouring countries – the major force behind the revolution, is also not surprising (the system of preferential investment loans, financial incentives for young entrepreneurs, and support for the creation of new jobs).

The proposed reforms, which were included in the agenda of changes, such as the guarantee of women's equality, freedom of media, free election campaigning, did not introduce a new quality on the Algerian political scene. The parliamentary elections of 12th May 2012 seem to confirm the above thesis. An absolute majority in the National Assembly remained with the coalition of two presidential parties: National Liberation Front and National Rally for Democracy, winning 288 seats out of 462. Bouteflika's party's strength remained, even despite the exit from the

²⁰ "Ce que dit la nouvelle loi sur les partis politiques", *Le Quotidien d'Oran*, 18 January 2012, [on-line] http://www.algeria-watch.org/fr/article/just/loi_partis.htm, 30 April 2013.

²¹ A. Aghrout, Y.H. Zoubir, *op. cit.*, pp. 62-63.

²² Budget project for 2012, Ministry of Finance of Algeria, [on-line] http://www.mf.gov.dz/article_pdf/upl-90dc5c0c14f92b300a7cf779bf579cfc.pdf, 30 April 2013.

coalition of the party of moderate Islam – Movement for the Society of Peace. On the similar level, in relation to the previous elections, the voter turnout was maintained: approx. 42.9%, and in the region of Kabylie, one of the most opposing to the current rulers, below 30%²³. The regime adopted the strategy of half-measures and superficial reforms, clearly indicating that it is not intending to share the power with the society. As rightly noted by the expert on the Algerian political scene, Charef:

“(...) planned reforms and undertaken actions as a result amounted to absurd activities, involving the replacement of laws which remained a dead letter – by the others, which also will not be followed (...)”²⁴.

The factors neutralising the processes of transformation in Algeria

The actions undertaken by the regime in response to the social protests effectively eliminated the insurrectionary fervour in Algeria. “The strategy of neutralisation” of the Arab spring consisted mainly of combined use of two elements – mobilisation of significant police forces in order to break up the demonstrations, and considered strategy of political concessions and economic reforms, even short-term, aiming to alleviate the arising social discontent²⁵.

Trying to determine the nature of the opposition movement in Algeria, in that specific for the region period of 2011-2012, one should pay attention to the frequently emerging term: “Algerian syndrome”, which to some extent explains the country being less prone to the phenomenon of the Arab Spring. Two events should be mentioned here, which recorded themselves tragically on the pages of history of Algeria in the 20th century. First was the independence war in a period 1954-1962, one of the bloodiest wars of the colony with the metropolis, in this case – France. The second are the events of the civil war of 1992-1999, which set on the opposite sides of the barricade the government forces and Islamic militia. The memory of the bloody events of the period in 1990s is an element blocking all actions aiming to overthrow the current system. Ahmad Aghrouit writes of Algeria as of the country, which “(...) has not yet recovered from the events of the civil war, and in which

²³ “L’Algérie à contre-courant du Printemps arabe”, *Le Monde*, 12 May 2012, [on-line] http://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2012/05/12/l-algerie-a-contre-courant-du-printemps-arabe_1700317_3212.html, 30 April 2013.

²⁴ A. Charef, “Par où commencer la réforme”, *Le Quotidien d’Oran*, 28 April 2011, [on-line] http://www.lequotidien-oran.com/index.php?text=%22commencer+la+reform%22&category_id=0, 30 April 2013.

²⁵ S. Chena, “L’Algérie dans le Printemps arabe. Entre espoirs, tentatives et blocages”, *Confluences Méditerranée* Vol. 2, 2011, no. 77, p. 106, [on-line] <http://dx.doi.org/10.3917/come.077.0105>.

the society is affected by the syndrome of the post-traumatic stress”²⁶. The course of revolutions in Syria or Libya seems to mute all revolutionary movements and explain the indolence of society.

“The Algerian exception” can also be explained by a weak coordination of activities of opposition groups, which were unable to create one front of opposition joining various segments and social interests. “The great absentee” of the National Coordination for Democratic Change was the Socialist Forces Front. This one of the largest opposition parties of Algeria refused to participate in the collective marches of those dissatisfied, opting for more pacifist and interactive form of pressure²⁷. The propagandist tone of the media that presented it as an initiative inspired by the Berber activists and the Rally for Culture and Democracy or the formation connected to the radical Islam also worked to the disadvantage of the Coordination²⁸.

Moreover, the weakness of the opposition and its internal divides decided that in lieu of the movement of general social contestation, smaller sector or industry demonstrations were organised. Scattered protests were easier for the government to control than the social revolt.

Additional factor in silencing all actions undertaken towards the political change is the support of the US administration for the country of Bouteflika as a key element in the American strategy in the fight against international terrorism. On the territory of the city of Tamanrasset a joint military headquarters and intelligence centre are located. Algiers plays an important role in the Trans-Sahara Counter Terrorism Partnership, the American initiative from 2004²⁹. The threat of Islamic radicalism within individual countries (Salafists, the Muslim Brotherhood, En-Nahda) and internationally (MUJAO – Unity Movement for Jihad in West Africa, the Al-Qaida of the Islamic Maghreb), exacerbated by the events of the Arab Spring, allows the Algerian regime to persist, from time to time playing the “card of the terrorist threat” and enjoying the support of the West. It is worth noting that this “terrorist annuity” (French: *rente du terrorisme*) is used by the Algerian regime not for the first time. Even before the events of 11th September 2011 and the announcement of the American strategy of fighting international terrorism (GWOT), A. Bouteflika manipulated the threat of Islamic integristism in the region of Sahel, in order to ensure the backing of the US and, what follows, the supply of weapons and support for the program of modernisation of the army³⁰.

²⁶ A. Aghrou, Y.H. Zoubir, *op. cit.*, p. 63. Similar argumentation is proposed by Mansouria Mokhefi in: M. Mokhefi, “Maghreb: révolutions inachevées?”, *La politique étrangère* 2012, no. 1, p. 78, [on-line] <http://dx.doi.org/10.3917/pe.121.0071>.

²⁷ L. Addi, “Le régime algérien après les révoltes arabes”, *La Découverte* Vol. 2, 2011, no. 66, p. 95, [on-line] <http://dx.doi.org/10.3917/mouv.066.0089>.

²⁸ A. Baghzouz, “L’Algérie et les révoltes arabes: ni exception ni domino”, *Outre-terre* Vol. 3, 2011, no. 29, p. 168, [on-line] <http://dx.doi.org/10.3917/oute.029.0159>.

²⁹ “Trans Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP)”, *GlobalSecurity.org*, [on-line] <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/tscti.htm>, 30 April 2013.

³⁰ In foreign scientific literature, especially the French one, there are many theories suggesting that Algerian Secret intelligence Service have cooperated with the members of Isla-

The Summary

In case of Algeria the term “Arab Spring” takes a special meaning. If we understand it as an uprising of the society for democratisation of the system, then it should be assumed that the revolution in this largest African country took place in the end of 1980s. A short chapter of democratisation, started by the social disorder, whose reasons we find in analogous uprisings in Tunisia or Egypt over twenty years later, was quickly closed by the regime, which was not willing to share the power. The period of 1988-1992, which can be called the “opening of the system”, and the subsequent decade of the civil war, determined the directions and dynamics of further changes. In other words, the events of the end of the 20th century made Algeria resistant to the syndrome of Arab Spring of 2011.

The factors that contributed to the “Algerian exception” can be synthetically summarised in seven sections:

1. Fear of return of violence known from the times of civil war in 1990s. The sense of relative stability, provided by the regime, with the constant terrorist threat inside Algeria and from neighbouring countries.

2. Negative turn of events in the neighbouring countries experiencing the “Arab Spring”. The examples of Egypt and Libya, which succumbed into chaos, or Tunisia, which entered uncertain and arduous path of democratic changes, do not support the positive image of the revolution’s aftermath.

3. Pretend democratisation from above by the military regime through functioning of the institutions of parliamentary and presidential common and secret elections, introducing reforms increasing the scope of civil liberties, independence of media, and the possibility to form associations and political parties.

4. The weakness of civil society movements in Algeria and no possibility to mobilise both from the side of the democratic front and the radical Islam.

5. Developing the rentier state type of economy, in which the income from selling the energy resources allows maintaining the clientelist system of dependencies supporting the regime, and also easing the social tensions with the financial transfers.

6. The frequency of outbreaks of discontent and strikes, which preceded the mobilisation in Algiers at the beginning of 2011, led to their trivialisation. The regime leaves a margin of freedom for gatherings, allowing the organisation of sector demonstrations, mainly of economic nature, at the same time weakening the possibility to organise the general social occurrences, carrying with them the demands for political change.

7. The stability of the system shaped in 1962 was built based on the balance maintained between several clans, who, remaining in the net of close relationships,

stand behind the most important political and economic decisions. *De facto*, the Algeria's regime is hard to personalise, identify with one person or even one family, in order to blame them for the dysfunctions in the country, as it happened, for instance, in Tunisia, identified with the Ben Ali-Trabelsi family, or in the case of the family of Husni Mubarak in Egypt.

The Algerian regime emerged victorious from the confrontation with Arab Spring. This does not mean that its position is not threatened. The structural economic problems have not been resolved, and only temporarily drowned. The political crises and legitimacy of government combine with the economic problems of the country. The main force of demonstrations in 2010 and 2011, but also in the earlier ones of 1988, was youth, born long after 1954, not remembering the times of independence war. As Albert Bourgi notes: "The outbreak of discontent, which has struck Algeria, revealed many divisions within the society (...) and sharpened the conflict between the ruling team, which has held the reins of power since the independence, and the generation of people who did not take part in that fight and have not got the same political memory as the political leaders of NLF³¹". In the eyes of majority of the society the political leaders are hermetic caste, whose members share the positions, privileges, wealth. The expression of current system rejection were further anti-system demonstrations, organised at the time of the presidential campaign in March and April 2014, when the citizens, as an act of protest against the fourth term of Bouteflika, carried the banners with the slogan: *Barakat* ("it's enough")³².

According to the observers of the Algerian political scene the election of Bouteflika for the fourth term is the compromise choice, with lack of agreement between the real centres of power (Intelligence and Security Agency, DRS, the leaders of the NLF, the Supreme Command of the Armed Forces) as to the person that would be a successor. *De facto* the selection of ill politician for the head of the country is a move preceding bigger manoeuvres on the political scene of Algeria. The post-Bouteflika era has already been opened during the election campaign, when Abdelmalek Sellal, the prime minister responsible for the campaign of the general, indicated that "the transfer of power to the younger generation will take place in 2015 at the latest"³³.

Two scenarios await Algeria. According to the first, the so-called transformation, or rather transferring power before the elections, will take place. The current president, unable to fulfil this function due to health reasons, will delegate its prerogatives to the indicated by the triangle of power candidate, who will be,

³¹ J.-J. Lavenue, *Algerie. La démocratie interdite*, Paris 2000, p. 24.

³² A. Boubekeur, "L'Algérie. L'après-Bouteflika a commencé", *Le Monde*, 15 April 2014, [on-line] http://www.lemonde.fr/idecs/article/2014/04/15/algerie-l-apres-bouteflika-a-commence_4400889_3232.html, 30 September 2014.

³³ "Algérie « Un simulacre de transition ne réglera rien »", interview with Muhammad Hachemaoui, 28 April 2014, *Algeria-Watch*, [on-line] http://www.algeria-watch.org/fr/article/pol/amp_presidence/hachemaoui_simulacre_transition.htm, 30 September 2014.

similarly as his predecessor, the emanation of the “hyper-presidential” system, and in reality – the executor of the decisions made on the backstage of the political scene. According to the second, more positive scenario, the power will come to the representative of the younger generation of militaries, e.g. Ali Benflis, whose name was already mentioned in the presidential campaign of 2014; he, on the other hand, will undertake the coordination of the process of political transformation, opening the way to the consultations with the widely understood civil society. There is no doubt, however, that any political change in Algeria will not take place without the involvement of the army.

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