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The Evolution of Authoritarian Rule in Algeria: Linkage versus Organisational Power

Abstract

This paper draws on the Algerian regimes of Chadli Benjedid and Abdelaziz Bouteflika to critically evaluate Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way's dimension of linkage. The paper shows that, despite the intensification of the country's ties to the European Union (EU) from one regime to the other, the willingness and ability of Brussels to put democratising pressure on Algiers decreased rather than increased. This development challenges Levitsky and Way's thesis and the importance they place on linkage in relation to their other dimensions of leverage and organisational power. The paper concludes that: strengthening linkage does not always result in greater EU or Western democratising pressure; and, the balance of importance Levitsky and Way strike between their dimensions is open to question.

Keywords

Algeria; Levitsky and Way; linkage; organisational power; Arab Spring; Black October

Introduction

This paper draws on the Algerian regimes of Chadli Benjedid and Abdelaziz Bouteflika over the periods of the Black October (1988-92) and Arab Spring (2011-13) protests respectively to critically engage with Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way's celebrated model for analysing and explaining regime development and outcomes.¹ More specifically, the paper uses these cases to interrogate two of Levitsky and Way's key claims: that the stronger a country's ties are to either the European Union or the United States the more likely it is to democratise; and, that linkage is the most influential and important of the three dimensions that comprise their model.²

The paper undertakes this interrogation by using Levitsky and Way's model to analyse and compare the Benjedid and Bouteflika regimes over the periods of the Black October and Arab

Spring protests. It does so to determine the extent to which Algeria's political development between these two orders conforms to their thesis. Thus, it applies their model in accordance with their specifications, without deviation, alteration or exception. In so doing, it identifies several subtle yet significant differences between the two orders. The most notable of these variations are the increased strength of Algeria's links to the European Union under Bouteflika, the EU's weakening leverage over Algiers, and the greater organisational power of his regime.

The paper argues that these developments, when considered alongside the endurance of authoritarian rule over this period, challenge Levitsky and Way's thesis in two important ways. First, they show that strong and strengthening ties to the European Union do not always bring about democratisation.³ The intensification of Algeria's connections to the EU did not lead to the country becoming democratic. Second, and by extension, this seeming failure of linkage, combined with the growth in organisational power of the regime, challenges the balance of importance Levitsky and Way strike between the core dimensions of their model. The European Union's greater capacity to put liberalising pressure on Algeria was offset by the Bouteflika regime's enhanced ability to resist.

Algeria is an important case because it is one of the least studied countries in North Africa, has been authoritarian since independence and has been governed by the same elite since the war of liberation.⁴ This continuity matters because it helps limit and nullify the variable of inconsistent 'gatekeeping' on Algeria's relations with the European Union.⁵ More specifically, it better ensures that successive regimes, including those of Benjedid and Bouteflika, have similar attitudes and policies towards the EU, that they do not take markedly different approaches that could significantly affect the range and strength of links the country developed and sustained with the bloc. This consistency, therefore, helps ensure that the way in which Levitsky and Way's model is applied to Algeria more closely matches their vision and thesis.

The paper focuses on the periods of the Black October and Arab Spring protests for three main reasons. First, they provide comparable contexts in which to assess the robustness of the

Benjedid and Bouteflika regimes. By evaluating the strength of these orders in similar circumstances, the paper can undertake a more consistent cross-examination. Second, both the European Economic Community (EEC)/European Union's focus on and ability to affect political change in Algeria during these periods, should have increased as a result of the demonstrations and the regimes' responses to them. By evaluating the strength of the EEC/EU's ties to the country at these times, the paper can better assess the maximum extent of Brussels' appetite and capacity to press Algiers to reform and, therefore, the importance of linkage to bringing about political liberalisation. Third, the scale of these protests put the security forces under considerable pressure. By considering how they responded to these demonstrations, the paper can better assess their scope and cohesion and also their willingness and ability to use high intensity coercion against protestors.⁶ Arguably, the extent of a security force's non-material cohesion and readiness to engage in this type of violence can only really be determined during periods of significant and sustained unrest such as the Black October and Arab Spring protests.

In advancing this argument, the paper makes three important and original contributions. Its comparison of the Benjedid and Bouteflika regimes is unprecedented and offers new insights into the composition and capabilities of each order. Its use of Levitsky and Way's model to compare two regimes in the same country is also unique. While Levitsky and Way always chart the origins and development of every regime they examine, they do not apply their framework to the orders that precede the one they are examining. This means that earlier regimes are not analysed either in the same ways or to comparable depths as those that are the main focus of their attention. In undertaking this temporal comparison, therefore, the paper extends the utility of their model.

This is also the first study to use Algeria to interrogate Levitsky and Way's thesis and, in particular, their dimensions of linkage and organisational power. Earlier works that apply their model to the country do so largely uncritically,⁷ while those that probe their thesis do not draw on Algeria to develop and substantiate their arguments.⁸ This paper complements these works,

therefore, by drawing on an under-examined country to develop new and important insights into Levitsky and Way's framework.

In pursuit of these objectives, the paper is divided into three sections. In the first, it sets out Levitsky and Way's understanding of linkage along with their other core dimensions of leverage and organisational power. In the second and longest section, it applies these dimensions to the Benjedid and Bouteflika regimes over the periods of the Black October and Arab Spring protests respectively. And finally, in the third section, it highlights and explains the key similarities and differences between these regimes and the challenges they pose Levitsky and Way's thesis.

Overview of Levitsky and Way's Model

Levitsky and Way set out their model for explaining regime transitions in their highly influential book, *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes after the Cold War*. It incorporates ideas and arguments that they initially developed in a series of individually and jointly authored articles published over the previous decade. Together, these papers analyse the impact of the end of the Cold War on autocratic regimes,⁹ define competitive authoritarianism,¹⁰ expound their views on the political playing field,¹¹ and outline their dimensions of linkage, leverage and organisational power.¹² These papers also iterate and reiterate the centrality of the West to their analysis and thesis.¹³ They observe that 'democratic ideas and institutions did not diffuse evenly across the globe' following the collapse of the Soviet Union, 'but ... were contingent upon geographic and cultural proximity' to either the United States or the European Union.¹⁴ A core objective of their model, therefore, is to chart and measure the strength of the West's ties to non-democratic countries around the world,¹⁵ and its willingness and ability to pressure regimes to make and entrench democratic reforms.

Levitsky and Way's model is ideally suited to structure the paper's comparison of the Benjedid and Bouteflika regimes. First, and generally, it will ensure consistency of analysis, that the same aspects of each regime are assessed in identical ways and with comparable rigour. Second,

and more specifically, it pays greater attention than other frameworks to the influence of external actors and the international context on regime development. Acknowledging and analysing the global and regional dimensions of the Black October and Arab Spring demonstrations is essential given that both rounds of protest were informed by, and contributed to, much broader transnational bouts of upheaval. Third, it allows for and seeks to explain all possible regime outcomes. It does not assume that autocracy is either a temporary state or a stepping stone to eventual democratisation. And their concept of competitive authoritarianism denotes and explains a novel hybrid condition in which regimes can exist for many years.¹⁶

The three dimensions that comprise Levitsky and Way's model are arranged sequentially starting with linkage. It is defined as 'the density of ties ... and cross-border flows (of capital, goods and services, people, and information) between particular countries and the United States and the EU'.¹⁷ It is multi-faceted and 'encompasses the myriad networks of interdependence that connect individual polities, economies, and societies to Western democratic communities'.¹⁸ To help catalogue and assess both the range and strength of these links, Levitsky and Way identify and focus on six categories of connection: economic ('flows of trade, investment, and credit'); intergovernmental ('including bilateral diplomatic and military ties as well as participation in Western-led alliances, treaties, and international organizations'); technocratic ('the share of the country's elite that is educated in the West and/or has professional ties to Western universities or Western-led multilateral institutions'); social ('flows of people across borders, including' tourists, migrants 'and diaspora networks'); information ('flows of information ... via telecommunications, Internet connections, and Western media penetration'); and civil-society ('local ties to Western-based NGOs, international religious and party organizations, and other transnational networks').¹⁹

The second dimension is leverage. It is defined as the vulnerability of regimes 'to external democratizing pressure' and 'encompasses both ... [their] bargaining power vis-à-vis the West' and the 'potential impact ... of Western punitive action' on their 'economic health or security'.²⁰ The amount of leverage the West has over a country is based on several factors. The most

important of these is the size and strength of the target state's economy as that largely determines its ability to withstand outside pressure. Another is whether 'Western powers have countervailing economic or strategic interests' in that state as autocratic governments are often able 'to ward off external demands for democracy by casting themselves – and regime stability – as the best means of protecting those interests'.²¹ And another is whether the target state has the backing of a so-called black knight, a major global power 'whose economic, military and/or diplomatic support helps blunt the impact of US or EU democratizing pressure'.²²

On the basis of these assessments, Levitsky and Way designate the strength of the West's links to and leverage over a country as high, medium or low. When 'linkage and leverage are both are high ... external democratizing pressure is consistent and intense.' In such instances, 'autocracies are least likely to survive' and most likely to democratise.²³ When 'linkage is high, but leverage is low' then 'external democratizing pressure will be diffuse and indirect but nevertheless considerable'.²⁴ In such circumstances, regimes 'are not pushed directly to democratize', but still 'face intense scrutiny from ... [the global] media, transnational human-rights networks, and internationally-orientated domestic constituencies'.²⁵ When 'linkage is low, but leverage is high ... international pressure may be significant but ... limited and sporadic.' In such situations, pressure is often restricted to ensuring 'the holding of minimally acceptable elections' which means that even if 'autocrats fall, regimes may not democratize'.²⁶ Finally, when 'linkage and leverage are low ... external pressure is likely to be minimal.' In such cases, 'serious abuses may fail to trigger ... strong international reaction[s]' and punitive measures are 'unlikely to have ... significant impact'.²⁷

On these occasions, therefore, when linkage and leverage are lower, regime outcomes are largely determined by Levitsky and Way's third dimension of organisational power. It is defined as 'incumbents' capacity to resist opposition challenges'.²⁸ This capacity is based on three capabilities of unequal importance, namely, the scope and cohesion of the target state's security apparatus and ruling party and, to a lesser extent, the amount of discretionary control it exercises over the country's economy.²⁹ A regime's organisational power is highest when both its security and party

structures are strong, and it retains a considerable influence over the economy. When linkage is low, therefore, 'high organizational power should bring authoritarian stability' even if leverage is high.³⁰

The Benjedid and Bouteflika Regimes

Through their respective leaders and other key personnel, both regimes were connected to the ruling elite that has dominated Algerian politics since independence. The primacy of this presiding network is rooted in its role in successfully prosecuting the war of liberation against France. Every head of state – including Benjedid and Bouteflika – and Chief of the General Staff of the armed forces took part in the struggle. Indeed, being able to demonstrate participation and membership of the National Liberational Front (Front de Libération Nationale, FLN) or National Liberation Army (Armée de Libération Nationale, ALN) has long been an essential pre-requisite to assuming the highest offices of state.³¹ Thus, the Benjedid and Bouteflika regimes shared the same points of origin and similar antecedents.

The Benjedid and Bouteflika regimes also each had to deal with some of the most serious protests to take place in Algeria since independence. The Black October demonstrations began on 2 October 1988. Two days later the first riots broke out in the Bab El-Oued district of Algiers. The violence soon spread to other towns and cities and continued until the Benjedid regime, in a desperate attempt to re-impose order, authorised the army to use lethal force. Over the next few days between 200 and 500 people were killed and around 3,500 were arrested including many children. A significant number of those who were detained were tortured.³² The regime's willingness to use high intensity coercion and the ferocity of the army's response greatly shocked the Algerian public. Their reactions not only forever changed the way ordinary people viewed the military but led to the political reforms that in turn resulted in the bloody violence of the 1990s and the country's transition to competitive authoritarianism.³³

The legacy of the Black October riots shaped how the armed and security forces responded to the Arab Spring protests. This time, they did not respond with the same level of brutality. Instead, they defended 'key urban areas in central Algiers around the Parliament, the Senate, and other government buildings', but otherwise 'simply abandoned the suburbs to the rioters'.³⁴ So even though the riots of late December 2010 and early January 2011 'were of an intensity not seen since the October 1988 ... they dissipated as suddenly as they began, with no bloodshed'.³⁵ Further protests were held throughout early 2011 and with less frequency and smaller scales in 2012 and 2013.

Nevertheless, the two orders were not identical. At the time the Black October protests began, the Benjedid regime was fully autocratic whereas that of Bouteflika was competitive authoritarian. Its hybrid condition was, in part, a consequence of the measures Benjedid introduced in response to the Black October riots and the military's subsequent reaction to his reforms and their effects. The Black October protests, therefore, mark an important juncture in the longer-term development of authoritarianism in Algeria. Up until Benjedid responded to them with his programme of political reforms, the country was fully authoritarian. Then, after a period of less stable autocracy, it finished its transition to competitive authoritarianism shortly before the Arab Spring began following Bouteflika's completion of his second term in office.³⁶

Algeria under Benjedid had high linkage, medium leverage and high organisational power. The strength of its economic ties to the West increased over the period of the Black October protests as a result of the liberalising reforms Benjedid introduced in response to the country's mounting fiscal and balance of payment problems.³⁷ Its growing reliance on European lenders and Western-dominated International Financial Institutions (IFI) also fortified its inter-governmental links to the West. These, though, were of medium strength given the jealousy with which successive regimes had guarded the country's hard-won sovereignty and their subsequent commitment to anti-colonialism and the non-aligned movement.³⁸ Its technocratic ties, in contrast, were high owing to the educational and professional backgrounds of many members of the ruling

elite.³⁹ So too were its social links in light of the substantial number of its citizens living and working in Europe.⁴⁰ This trans-Mediterranean community helped ensure that its information ties were also strong by keeping those Algerians still living in North Africa better informed of Western views and opinions. And these links were further augmented by the steady increase in the number of households that had access to satellite television.⁴¹ Its civil society ties, however, were weaker although they quickly grew stronger in response to the bitter and bloody violence that shortly followed the Black October protests.

The West's leverage over Algeria was medium because of the size of the country's economy and importance as an energy provider. In 1990, its GDP was \$62.04 billion, and it extracted around 800,000 barrels of oil per day (bbl/d).⁴² Most of this output – both crude and refined – was sold abroad to Western governments and companies. Indeed, of all the crude oil and petroleum products that it exported that year, 95.6 percent and 91.7 percent respectively went to Europe and North America.⁴³ The country did not have a black knight patron for the same reasons that it had medium inter-governmental links to the West; because it wished to keep its reliance on other, external powers to a minimum.

The Benjedid regime had high organisational power. In addition to its large and capable security apparatus, it dominated mainstream politics through the FLN and exercised extensive control over the national economy. While the FLN's capacity to mobilise the Algerian people was dramatically exposed in the local and parliamentary elections of June 1990 and December 1991, it had been the country's only legal political party until 1989. As such, the Benjedid regime had been able through it to dominate Algeria's National Assembly and other mainstream political institutions. Furthermore, it attained a breadth and a depth of presence in the country that no other party has been able to match, and which helps explain its re-emergence as a major (pro-regime) political force under Bouteflika.

By 1990, Algeria's regime was committing and spending more on its armed and security forces than any other Maghreb country.⁴⁴ This material support enabled the military to achieve

both high scope and cohesion. And its unity was further strengthened by the shared experience of its leaders fighting against France. For the ‘highest levels of cohesion’ are often ‘rooted in solidarities forged in ... context[s] of violent struggle, such as war, revolution, or liberation movements’.⁴⁵ Khaled Nezzar (Minister of Defence), Abdelmalek Guenaïzia (Chief of the General Staff) and his immediate successor, Mohamed Lamari, all took part in the war of liberation. So too did Mohamed Mediène who established, led and expanded the Department of Intelligence and Security (Département du Renseignement et de la Sécurité, DRS), which focused on internal security and counter-espionage, and his longstanding lieutenant, Smaïn Lamari.

Despite the Benjedid regime’s introduction of liberalising reforms from the early 1980s onwards, Algeria’s economy remained state-centric throughout his time in office. By late 1991, around 52 percent of the country’s workforce was still employed in the public sector.⁴⁶ A majority of Algerians, therefore, depended on the state for their incomes and as such were vulnerable to any pressure the regime might exert through their employers and managers.

Algeria under Bouteflika at the start of the Arab Spring had high linkage, low leverage and high organisational power. Its economic ties to the West were strong because of its importance as an energy provider. By 2011, the country depended on oil and gas sales abroad for 70 percent of its annual budget and 98 percent of its export earnings.⁴⁷ In that year, it extracted an average of 1.27 million bbl/d and exported around 750,000 bbl/d, of which, 40.5 percent went to North America and 38.5 percent to Europe.⁴⁸ The strength of this trade in a strategic commodity helped forge strong inter-governmental links between the Algerian regime and its Western counterparts. Nevertheless, these ties were not as strong as those of either Morocco or Tunisia, as Algiers – in keeping with its traditional recalcitrance – is a reluctant member of the EU’s Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP)/Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and has refused to join the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). The country’s technocratic and social links to the West were also strong given the high number of Algerians educated and living in Europe. In the 2011/12 academic year, there were 23,735 Algerian nationals studying at French universities,⁴⁹ and 877,398 living in

the EU.⁵⁰ By 2011, its information and civil society links were also stronger as 96.7 percent of the population had mobile phones,⁵¹ and organisations like the Algerian League for the Defence of Human Rights (Ligue Algérienne pour la Defense des Droits de l'Homme, LADDH) had joined the transnational EuroMed Rights network.⁵²

Despite the strength of these ties, the West's leverage over Algeria was only low because of the size of the country's economy and its importance as an energy provider. Between 1990 and 2011, its GDP had more than tripled in size to \$200.19 billion.⁵³ This growth was mainly fuelled by the sharp rise in world energy prices and increased production. From pumping around 800,000 bbl/d of crude oil in 1990, the country extracted an average of 1.27 million bbl/d in 2011. Even more dramatic was the exponential increase in natural gas production from 44.5 billion cubic feet (cf) to 2.9 trillion cf over the same period.⁵⁴

The Bouteflika regime had high organisational power. In addition to its large and capable security apparatus, it had a close working relationship with the country's two largest political parties – the FLN and the National Rally for Democracy (Rassemblement National Démocratique, RND) – and exercised significant control over the national economy. While Algeria under Bouteflika was no longer a single-party state, his regime's dominance of mainstream politics was nearly as great as that of Benjedid prior to 1989. For Bouteflika's regime had a symbiotic relationship with the RND and, in particular, the FLN whereby, in return for their support, it helped them win elections.⁵⁵ Moreover, in courting and collaborating with multiple parties, the regime was less reliant on any one set of party leaders. In this way, the Bouteflika regime had reduced its vulnerability to elite defections.⁵⁶

By 2012, Algeria's defence budget (\$9.37 billion) was nearly three times larger than Morocco's (\$3.37 billion), and more than double that of both Morocco and Tunisia (\$1.21 billion) combined.⁵⁷ This material investment enabled the country's military to achieve both high scope and cohesion. And its unity was further strengthened by the experience of successfully using high intensity coercion against Islamist insurgents in the 1990s. Crucially, this experience reinforced

that generated by the war of liberation. This earlier conflict, and the subsequent control of the ‘top state positions’ by the ‘generation of elites’ that led the fight against France, meant that the regime already had enough ‘cohesion, self-confidence, and “stomach” to use force’ against the insurgents.⁵⁸

Despite the gradual liberalisation of Algeria’s economy throughout the 1990s and 2000s,⁵⁹ the Bouteflika regime retained significant control over it. In addition to dominating its most important sectors (oil and gas), in 2009 the regime passed the Complementary Finance Law which requires all private companies to be at least 51 percent Algerian-owned.⁶⁰ By the end of 2011, therefore, 40 percent of the country’s labour force still worked in the public sector.⁶¹

Regime Comparison and Levitsky and Way’s Model

Based on Levitsky and Way’s model, the Benjedid and Bouteflika regimes can be said to have exhibited several notable similarities and differences over the periods of the Black October and Arab Spring protests. Most crucially, they each entered and emerged from these episodes of unrest as authoritarian. Neither of them became fully democratic although their respective responses to these rounds of protest included the introduction of some liberalising reforms. Indeed, the type of authoritarianism (competitive) practiced by the Bouteflika regime was in large part a result of Benjedid’s reaction to the Black October demonstrations and riots. The resilience of authoritarian rule over and between these periods provides the governance benchmark against which the effectiveness of the European Union’s linkage to and leverage over the country must be assessed and, by extension, the context in which any differences and similarities between these two orders must be considered.

An important difference between the regimes was the strength of their respective ties to the European Union. While they both had high linkage to the bloc, the Bouteflika regime had strong ties in all six categories of connection whereas the Benjedid regime had them in only four. Furthermore, in those categories in which they achieved the same overall scores – economic,

technocratic, social and information – the Bouteflika regime's ties were still stronger. This means that the Bouteflika regime not only had stronger links to the EU in more categories of connection, but that its ties were stronger in those categories in which the Benjedid regime also scored highly.

According to Levitsky and Way, Algeria's high linkage to the European Union over these periods should have given Brussels sufficient motivation and adequate means to punish regime abuses, support pro-democracy forces and bring about the country's liberalisation. Furthermore, the strengthening of these links between the Black October and Arab Spring protests ought to have increased the EU's willingness and capacity to put liberalising pressure on Algiers. Indeed, the European Union should have been more determined and better able to press Bouteflika's regime to reform than it had been Benjedid's. Yet not only did Algeria remain authoritarian over both of these periods, but the European Union's readiness to punish regime abuses and press for liberalising change actually decreased between them. Neither the EU nor its member states nor any of its Western allies tried to discipline the regime during the Arab Spring as they had done following the military's intervention in the democratic process in 1992.⁶²

One reason for the failure of these strengthened ties to bring about Algeria's democratisation, according to Levitsky and Way, was the decline in the European Union's leverage over the country. Paradoxically, this contraction took place at the same time that Brussels' links to Algeria were intensifying. The bloc had medium leverage over Benjedid's regime, but only low over Bouteflika's. This reduction was due to the increased size of Algeria's economy and greater importance as an energy provider especially to certain EU member states. Either one of these developments would have been sufficient by itself to reduce the European Union's leverage over the country.⁶³

Another supplementary reason identified by Levitsky and Way for the decline in the European Union's leverage over Algiers was the country's emergence in the early 1990s as the site of 'a major security-related foreign-policy issue' of great concern to the US and the EU.⁶⁴ The army's ousting of Benjedid in January 1992, cancellation of the legislative election that was taking

place, outlawing of the Islamic Salvation Front (Front Islamique du Salut, FIS) that was on course to win, and persecution of the party's members and supporters, triggered an Islamist insurgency which continues – albeit in much reduced form – to this day. The seriousness of this violence, out of which such factions as Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) have emerged, and the surge in Western concern over Islamist terrorism following the 9/11 attacks, led the United States and European countries to view and embrace Bouteflika as an ally in the global war on terror.⁶⁵

The decline in the EU's leverage over Algiers, however, did not end Brussels' ability to press the Bouteflika regime to change. As Levitsky and Way note, when linkage is high, and leverage is low, 'external democratizing pressure' is 'diffuse and indirect but *nevertheless considerable*' (emphasis added).⁶⁶ Ultimately, the strength of a country's ties to the EU and the US determine the amount liberalising pressure they can put on it. If the connections are numerous and deep then this pressure will be great, and the country is much more likely to democratise. Low leverage determines less the amount of pressure that is exerted, therefore, and more its effectiveness.

On this basis, whatever *focus* the EU's liberalising pressure on Algiers lost over the period between the Black October and Arab Spring protests because of its declining leverage over the regime, was offset by the increase in the *amount* of pressure it was able to exert as a result of its intensifying links to the country. This should have meant, according to Levitsky and Way, that by the time the Arab Spring began the European Union had sufficient linkage to Algeria to press the Bouteflika regime harder to democratise than it did. Moreover, the strengthening of its ties to the country should have ensured that it was better able to pressure Bouteflika's regime than it had Benjedid's.

Both regimes also had high organisational power built mainly around the country's security apparatus. That of the Bouteflika regime, however, was greater, largely because of the significant expansion and upgrade the armed forces underwent in response to the Islamist insurgency of the 1990s and early 2000s. To deal with this threat, the defence budget was increased from 4.4 percent of government spending in 1991 to 7.5 percent in 1992. It was then raised again to 10.1 percent in

1994, 11 percent in 1996, and 12.8 percent in 1998.⁶⁷ And while these budget increases were not introduced by the Bouteflika regime, it inherited the strengthened armed forces that they helped create and also kept defence spending at this elevated level. Indeed, throughout Bouteflika's time in office, the military received an average of 11.3 percent of all annual government spending.⁶⁸

In addition to these material enhancements, the violence of the 1990s and early 2000s helped strengthen the country's armed forces in other ways. By responding to the insurgents with high intensity coercion and helping the state ultimately to prevail over them, the military has turned the conflict into an important source of non-material cohesion both for itself and the regime. Thus, the regime had sufficient cohesion – due in part to non-material factors – to use high intensity coercion against the Islamist guerrillas and, in doing so successfully, engendered a new source of non-material cohesion that has reinforced their resilience and effectiveness. So, while the Benjedid regime also had non-material cohesion, that of the Bouteflika regime is greater, in part, because it was born of more recent experience.

Both regimes exercised high control over the country's mainstream political institutions albeit in distinct ways. Until 1989, the FLN was the country's only legal political party and even after that, despite its disastrous performances in the 1990 and 1991 ballots, it continued to dominate the National Assembly for the remainder of Benjedid's time in office as the parliamentary election that might have ended its primacy was never completed. In contrast, the Bouteflika regime allowed a range of parties to exist and operate openly, and worked closely with not just the FLN but also the RND. While this arrangement compelled his regime to engage in electoral politics, it enabled Bouteflika twice to change the constitutional limits on the number of terms he could serve, remain in office for two decades (despite being physically unfit to discharge his duties for several years) and survive the Arab Spring. This electoral requirement reflects Algeria's transition from full to competitive authoritarianism.

The Benjedid regime, in contrast, had more control over the country's economy. While the Bouteflika regime wielded significant influence, and dominated the vitally important

hydrocarbon sectors, the levels of private and overseas investment in the economy under him were higher than they were under Benjedid. As a result, by 2011 a smaller proportion of Algeria's workforce was employed in the public sector. The percentage of the labour force on which the regime could exert political pressure through their employers and managers, therefore, was lower than when Benjedid was in office.

The strength of the Benjedid and Bouteflika regimes' organisational power, when combined with the failure of Algeria's high linkage to the EU to affect its democratisation, challenge the balance of importance Levitsky and Way strike between their three dimensions. They argue that strong 'linkage should have a democratizing effect *even where organizational power is high*' (emphasis original).⁶⁹ Indeed, strong linkage should not only have a greater influence on regime development than either one of the other two dimensions but be able to override them both even when they together encourage an alternative outcome. Algeria's non-democratisation upsets this balance as this outcome is different from that supported by the country's high linkage to the EU.

The significance of the Bouteflika regime's increased organisational power to the resilience of his order over this period, is confirmed by the decline in the EU's leverage over the country. Given that, according to Levitsky and Way, the European Union's failure to bring about the democratisation of Bouteflika's regime *cannot* be attributed to the decrease in its leverage over the country, and given that the bloc's linkage to Algiers had never been stronger, then this outcome (the non-democratisation of Bouteflika's regime) has to rest on their model's third (and final) dimension of organisational power. The case of Algeria over this period, therefore, challenges the balance of importance Levitsky and Way strike between their three dimensions. For if leverage is of less significance, then organisational power *must* exert greater influence and be able to counter-balance and nullify the effect of high linkage.

Recent political developments in Algeria also appear to confirm this thesis. Since February 2019, the country has experienced a succession of mass protests. Starting in the Kabyle town of Kherrata, the demonstrations have quickly spread to other urban centres including Algiers,

Tlemcen, Oran, Constantine and Sétif. They have also come to involve not just Berbers and youths, but many other sections of society. Initially, the protestors' main grievance was against Bouteflika's plan to stand in the 2019 presidential election despite being too old and infirm to adequately discharge the duties of office. Yet, in retaliation for his regime's bruising and tone-deaf response to their early admonitions, they have increased both the number and scope of their demands.

To date, the protests have achieved a number of dramatic and unprecedented changes. On 10 March, Lieutenant General Ahmed Gaïd Salah, the head of the country's armed forces, appeared to side with the protestors against Bouteflika when he declared that the 'army and the people had a common vision of the future'.⁷⁰ The following day, the government announced the resignation of Prime Minister Ahmed Ouyahia, a longstanding regime loyalist and apparatchik, and the postponement of the presidential election scheduled for 18 April. More importantly, it also revealed that Bouteflika would not seek re-election. Despite this concession, the demonstrations continued, leading, on 2 April, to the announcement of Bouteflika's own immediate resignation. This outcome was unprecedented. Never before has a sitting president been forced from office in this way. Yet, as an indication of the extent to which the political situation had evolved since the protests had begun, the demonstrations continued. As a result, on 4 May the government confirmed the arrests of Saïd Bouteflika, the former president's influential younger brother and widely rumoured heir-apparent, and Athmane Tartag, a former head of the hated Central Directory of Army Security (*Direction centrale de la sécurité de l'armée*, DCSA).

Nevertheless, these developments continue to bear out this paper's critique of Levitsky and Way's thesis. First, even though Bouteflika has gone, the broader regime endures. Indeed, its survival is one of the reasons why the protests are continuing. Despite the resignations and arrests, certain key figures – most notably Lieutenant General Salah – remain in place. Second, Bouteflika's demise was the result of domestic pressures and, most crucially, the shift in the army's support from him to the protestors. That is, his resignation was not the result of the EU's high linkage to

the country, of any significant or sustained liberalising pressure put on the regime by the bloc. And third, even though Bouteflika has stood down as president there are no guarantees at this time that the country will democratise fully. The country's political structures and processes may be in the process of liberalising, but they are not yet fully democratic.

Conclusions

This paper has drawn on the Algerian regimes of Chadli Benjedid and Abdelaziz Bouteflika over the periods of the Black October and Arab Spring protests respectively to critically engage with Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way's model for explaining and categorising regime outcomes. By using this framework to analyse and compare these two orders, the paper has been able to test whether Algeria's political development over the period between them conforms to Levitsky and Way's thesis. More specifically, in identifying the key similarities and differences between the regimes, the paper has been able to contrast the country's governance trajectory with that which Levitsky and Way say it should have followed.

The paper identifies one vital similarity and three important differences between them. Both orders were authoritarian. Even though the Bouteflika regime was more competitive than the Benjedid, neither was a democracy. Crucially, this is the enduring outcome that Levitsky and Way need to explain. While both orders had high linkage to the European Union, Bouteflika's was stronger. According to Levitsky and Way's thesis, this means that the EU's willingness and ability to bring about Algeria's democratisation should have increased from the Benjedid to the Bouteflika regime. Despite the European Union's greater ties to Algeria under Bouteflika, Brussels had less leverage over his regime than Benjedid's. This difference was due to the country's economy getting bigger, its increased importance as an energy provider and its emergence as a site of a major security related foreign policy issue of grave concern to the West. Finally, while both regimes had high organisational power their respective strengths were slightly different, and that of Bouteflika's regime was cumulatively greater than that of Benjedid's.

On the basis of this comparison, the paper has drawn three conclusions about Levitsky and Way's thesis. The first is that strong and strengthening linkage does not always lead to the regime outcome that they identify. The intensity of the EU's ties to Algeria under Bouteflika should have resulted in the democratisation of his regime. And while the liberalising pressure that they generated was made less effective by the bloc's loss of leverage over Algiers, it should still have been sufficient to achieve the country's democratisation. Second, this failure to do so upsets the balance of importance Levitsky and Way strike between their three dimensions. Seemingly, high organisational power has a greater bearing on what has happened in the country than their model allows.

And third, the European Union's willingness to press Algiers to liberalise decreased while its ties to the country increased. The EEC and individual member states were more prepared to discipline Algiers for abuses during the Black October protests than the EU was during the Arab Spring. Indeed, the failure of the EU's strengthened links to Algeria to bring about democratisation highlights an intriguing paradox in Levitsky and Way's model. The stronger Brussels' ties to the country became, increasing both its reasons and ability to pressure Algiers to liberalise, the more it seemed to prioritise regime stability over reform and the greater its reluctance to press for change grew.

In undertaking this examination, the paper has made at least three important and original contributions. Not only is its comparison of the Benjedid and Bouteflika regimes over these periods unique, but so too its use of Levitsky and Way's model to analyse two regimes in the same country. To date, their framework has only been used to compare regimes in different countries. It is also the first study to use Algeria to interrogate their model. Finally, despite falling outside this paper's specific periods of focus, recent political developments in the country appear to confirm its central thesis. Specifically, the circumstances surrounding Bouteflika's resignation highlights both the limited effectiveness of the EU's high linkage to the country and point to a more equitable

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¹ This paper adopts Frédéric Volpi's 'notion of regime as a particular set of codified interactions between the state and the citizens – a political regimen in the old sense of the term. This means a form of governance that is relatively independent from the personalities of those in power and that can last regardless of changes in leadership. In this sense, it is possible to have situations of elite change without regime change, and of regime change without elite change (such as the democratization process orchestrated by President Chadli Benjedid in Algeria in 1989-91).' Volpi, *Revolution and Authoritarianism*, 37-38.

² The other two dimensions are leverage and organisational power.

³ The paper defines democratisation as the process by which a country becomes democratic. It adopts Schedler's zero-sum threshold whereby 'partial compliance with democratic norms does not add up to partial democracy'. Schedler, 'The Menu of Manipulation', 41.

⁴ Werenfels, *Managing Instability in Algeria*, 2.

⁵ Tolstrup argues 'that domestic elites should not be perceived as mere objects of external influence, which they in structural accounts' like Levitsky and Way's, but rather as gatekeepers that actively facilitate or constrain ties to external

actors. By upgrading or downgrading these ties, gatekeeper elites directly affect the capacity that determines the strength of the external actor'. Tolstrup, 'When Can External Actors Influence Democratization', 718.

⁶ 'Scope refers to the effective reach of the state's coercive apparatus' while '*cohesion* refers to the level of compliance *within* the state apparatus' (emphasis original). Levitsky & Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism*, 58 and 59.

⁷ See: Hill, *Democratisation in the Maghreb*.

⁸ See: Tolstrup, 'When Can External Actors Influence Democratization?'; Nohdia, 'External Influence and Democratization'; and Hill, 'Global International Relations and the Arab Spring'.

⁹ Way, 'Resistance to Contagion'.

¹⁰ Levitsky & Way, 'Elections Without Democracy'.

¹¹ Levitsky & Way, 'Why Democracy Needs a Level Playing Field'.

¹² Levitsky & Way, 'Linkage versus Leverage'; Levitsky & Way, 'International Linkage and Democratization'; Way & Levitsky, 'The Dynamics of Autocratic Coercion after the Cold War'.

¹³ Levitsky and Way define the West as the United States, the EU (and pre-2004 EU members), and Western-dominated multilateral institutions.' Levitsky & Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism*, 43.

¹⁴ Levitsky & Way, 'Linkage versus Leverage', 382.

¹⁵ Levitsky and Way argue that democracy has five essential features: '(1) free, fair, and competitive elections; (2) full adult suffrage; (3) broad protection of civil liberties, including freedom of speech, press, and association; ... (4) the absence of nonelected "tutelary" authorities', and (5) 'the existence of a reasonably level playing field between incumbents and opposition.' Levitsky & Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism*, 5-6.

¹⁶ According to Levitsky and Way competitive authoritarian orders 'are civilian regimes in which formal democratic institutions exist and widely viewed as the primary means of gaining power, but in which the incumbents' abuse of the state places them at a significant advantage vis-à-vis their opponents.' Levitsky & Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism*, 5.

¹⁷ Ibid., 23.

¹⁸ Ibid., 43.

¹⁹ Ibid., 43-44.

²⁰ Ibid., 40-41.

²¹ Ibid., 41.

²² Ibid., 41. On this basis, the West will have low leverage if the target state has: either a large economy (GDP of \$100 billion); is a major oil producer (1 million barrels per day); or has nuclear weapons. The West will have medium leverage if the target state: has either a mid-sized economy (GDP of \$50-\$100 billion); is a secondary oil producer

(between 200,000 and 1 million barrels per day); is experiencing a ‘major-security related foreign-policy issue’ of importance to the West; or has the backing of a black knight. And the West will have high leverage if the target state does not fulfil any of these criteria. Levitsky & Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism*, 372-373.

²³ Ibid., 53.

²⁴ Ibid., 53.

²⁵ Ibid., 53.

²⁶ Ibid., 53-54.

²⁷ Ibid., 53.

²⁸ Ibid., 54.

²⁹ Ibid., 54-67.

³⁰ Ibid., 71.

³¹ The ongoing practicality and desirability of maintaining this sometime-formal requirement represents a critical moment in Algerian politics. Since independence, it has influenced and been used to justify the appointment of the country’s leaders and other senior state officials. Accordingly, it has informed and help legitimise the generational gap that exists within Algerian public life. When it finally ceases to be enforceable, therefore, the ways in which these appointments are made and explained will not only have to change but will involve the younger generations to a greater extent.

³² Stone, *The Agony of Algeria*, 64.

³³ Evans & Phillips, *Algeria*, 105-106.

³⁴ Volpi, ‘Algeria versus the Arab Spring’, 107.

³⁵ Parks, ‘Algeria and the Arab Uprisings’, 101.

³⁶ Levitsky and Way designate a regime as stable authoritarian if its ‘governments or their chosen successors remain in power for at least three presidential or parliamentary terms following the establishment of competitive authoritarian rule.’ Levitsky & Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism*, 368-369.

³⁷ The collapse of the global price of oil in 1986 had a devastating impact on Algeria’s export and foreign currency earnings, and ability to service its external loans. Over the following two years, its debt service ratio jumped from 68 percent of GDP to 86 percent forcing the government to accept International Monetary Fund (IMF) Stand-By assistance in 1989, and World Bank Economic Reform Support and Financial Sector Adjustment loans in 1989 and 1991 respectively. Lowi, *Oil Wealth and the Poverty of Politics*, 114; World Bank, ‘Algeria – Structural Adjustment Loan’, 1.

³⁸ In addition to joining the Non-Aligned Movement and hosting its 1973 summit, Algeria provided Eldridge Cleaver, an early leader of the Black Panther Party, with asylum. Sauvant, 'From Economic to Socio-cultural Emancipation', 55; Malley, *Call from Algeria*, 3.

³⁹ For example, Sid Ahmed Ghazali, the last prime minister appointed by Benjedid, studied at the École nationale des ports et chaussées de Paris.

⁴⁰ Indeed, by 1990 around 614,000 of Algerian nationals were based in France alone. Mezdoor, 'The Algerian Immigrant Community in Europe', 241.

⁴¹ Sakr, *Satellite Realms*, 11.

⁴² World Bank, 'Algeria'; Hodd, 'Algeria', 37; Aïssaoui, *Algeria*, 131.

⁴³ Aïssaoui, *Algeria*, 175 and 176.

⁴⁴ The Military Balance, 'The Middle East and North Africa', 104 & 117 & 124.

⁴⁵ Levitsky & Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism*, 60-61.

⁴⁶ IMF, 'Algeria', 17.

⁴⁷ EIA, 'Algeria', 1.

⁴⁸ EIA, 'Algeria: Country Analysis Briefs', 2-3.

⁴⁹ IIE, 'International Students in France'.

⁵⁰ EUI, 'Algeria', 1.

⁵¹ World Bank, 'Algeria'.

⁵² The LADDH joined the network upon its creation on 1 January 1997. EuroMed, 'Our Members'.

⁵³ World Bank, 'Algeria'.

⁵⁴ The conversion of cubic metres to cubic feet was made by the author. Aïssaoui, *Algeria*, 139; EIA, 'Algeria', 9.

⁵⁵ In the National Assembly election of May 2017, 'the ruling FLN and RND won a combined 261 seats ... An unpublished European Union (EU) assessment of the polls, acquired by the Algerian newspaper *Liberté*, noted serious deficiencies in the electoral process, including a general lack of access to voter lists and opaque vote-counting processes. Opposition parties and other observers alleged widespread electoral fraud, and media outlets carried videos taken by voters that appeared to depict ballot-box stuffing and other irregularities. Vote buying was also reported'. In the 2014 presidential election, Bouteflika stood and won as the FLN candidate. Freedom House, 'Freedom in the World 2018: Algeria'.

⁵⁶ As Levitsky and Way note, 'regimes are vulnerable to internal crises triggered by splits within the governing coalition, which result in opposition takeovers of the legislature or strong electoral challenges from erstwhile regime insiders.' Levitsky & Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism*, 65.

⁵⁷ The Military Balance, 'Chapter Seven', 370 & 394 & 405.

⁵⁸ Levitsky & Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism*, 61.

⁵⁹ Meliani, Aghrout & Ammari, 'Economic reforms and foreign direct investment in Algeria', 94.

⁶⁰ U.S. Department of State, '2013 Investment Climate Statement — Algeria'.

⁶¹ Oxford Business Group, 'The Report', 28.

⁶² Le Sueur, *Between Terror and Democracy*, 106.

⁶³ Levitsky & Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism*, 374. Nearly all aspects of Algeria's oil and gas industries continue to be dominated by the state owned and operated company, Sonatrach.

⁶⁴ Levitsky and Way use this criterion to designate medium leverage. It can be used here, however, to reinforce the case for low leverage. Levitsky & Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism*, 372.

⁶⁵ Le Sueur, *Between Terror and Democracy*, 85.

⁶⁶ Levitsky & Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism*, 53.

⁶⁷ SIPRI, 'Military Expenditure by Country as Percentage of Government Expenditure'.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Levitsky & Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism*, 70.

⁷⁰ RFI, *Algérie*.