



Received 16/08/2016

Published 01/12/2016

American-Algerian Relations in the 1990's: How George Bush Sr and Bill Clinton Dealt with the Algerian Crisis

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Abstract

This paper examines American policies regarding the political crisis that hit Algeria in the 1990's. The article discusses how the Bush and the Clinton Administrations approached the Algerian civil strife from 1992 to 1999. The problem began under Bush, but worsened under Clinton. The United States had serious doubts about the future of the country because of the deteriorating conditions over the years. However, the Clinton Administration had even worse concerns about Eastern Europe; especially Yugoslavia in the period 1995-1999. In that world context, both presidents kept a hands-off policy in Algeria, but Clinton stood out more by focusing on bilateral economic relations to help the Algerian situation.

Key words: Bush Sr., Clinton, Algerian crisis, Law of Pardon, Eizenstadt Initiative.

1. Introduction

This paper looks into American-Algerian relations during the presidency of both George Bush Sr. and Bill Clinton during the 1990's. It focuses on Algeria's crisis between 1992 and 1999. Generally speaking, the world situation in that decade was one of rapid political change, owing to the sudden global transformation that followed the end of the Cold War and the fall of the USSR. As unilateral leader of the world, the United States had to deal with the problems of the day such as Eastern Europe, the Gulf Conflict and other urgent crises. These issues began under Bush (1989-1992) and continued under Clinton (1993-2000). In Eastern Europe, the shift from Communist rule to liberal democracy entailed national dislocation and wars in many countries; particularly Yugoslavia. In the Arab Gulf region and in Algeria more specifically, there were local conflicts and serious political instability. First, the Gulf region experienced the Kuwait War of 1990-1991 and its aftermath. Then, beginning in 1992, Algeria fell in a complex civil conflict that attracted world attention; notably the United States. In that context, the United States, as an old actor in Arab politics, was to have an increasing role in Algeria's crisis. For good or bad, Algeria could not be immune to America's hegemonic influence while coping with its internal crisis. Anyway, by January 1993, President Bush had already left his mark on Arab politics notably in the Gulf War and passed on the role to Bill Clinton to play his part. With reference to this background, the article discusses the policies of both presidents with respect to the Algerian crisis from 1992 to 1999.

2. Bush and the Post-Cold War Era

The Cold-War era wound up with the end of the Reagan presidency in 1988 and the takeover by President Bush in 1989. However, the most challenging question for Bush arose in the Arab Gulf in relation to Kuwait towards the end of 1990. It surpassed even the overwhelming issues of the Cold War and the emerging new Europe and Russia*. The Second Gulf War, as the Iraq-Kuwait War became known, was a short military campaign of only seven weeks, but it was technologically the most sophisticated conflict ever. So much so, it was dubbed the ‘Computer War’†. It displaced classical warfare in terms of long range bombing, precise missile targeting and satellite operation management. In a nutshell, the war broke out because Iraq invaded Kuwait in early August 1990 on the contention that Kuwait had been territorially part of Iraq in previous times as an extension of the Basra province. Only British colonialism in the nineteenth century separated it to become a puppet monarchy depending on the West for national security and survival. Therefore, Iraq was determined to keep Kuwait for itself ignoring all United Nations and Arab ultimatums to leave the country under the threat of forced military expulsion.

America’s participation in the war was naturally a necessary requirement as the United States had the military capability and political leverage on the governments of the Gulf region. Additionally, not only did the United States have its own vital national interests in the large Middle East, but it also had to exercise the responsibilities of its unilateral leadership of the world after the USSR had been neutralised. The whole American expeditionary mission in the Gulf War fell to the care of Secretary of Defence, Donald Rumsfeld, and the Coalition top Commander; General Norman Schwarzkopf. The United States was acting in accordance with a United Nations programme but providing the largest contribution to the war. It was followed by lower contributions by the United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia and other minor participants. Beginning on 7 August 1990, President Bush announced that he would use force to prevent Iraq from annexing Saudi Arabia as it did to Kuwait. Hence, U.S. troops were moved to the Saudi Kingdom on the following day with tactical weapons such as fighter jets and deterrent units while nuclear submarines and aircraft carriers followed as needed thereafter.

Though a series of United Nations Resolutions demanded the withdrawal of Saddam’s troops from Kuwait, it was Resolution 678 of 29 November that fixed the deadline of 15 January 1991 to use force against Iraq. The sheer number of the coalition armada surrounding the country from Turkey to Saudi Arabia made the Iraqi military strength insignificant. There were thirty-four countries involved in the campaign with the United States taking charge of its management. The war broke out from 17 January till 28 February 1991 when a ceasefire came

* On the end of the Cold War, see: Jonathan Lew, Cold War: Conclusions, 1989-1991, CNN, 21:30 U.S. ET, 16 November 2014. The documentary featured 17 episodes on the Cold War from 1945 to 1991 and was screened between March and November 2014.

† “Gulf War”, available at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gulf_War#cite_note_36. Retrieved on 31 October 2015.

into place with Iraq accepting the surrender conditions of the U.N. Coalition. However, the war did not practically end until 30 November 1995 when the final details of the defeat were endorsed by Iraq. Under Britain's pressure, President Clinton -who replaced Bush in January 1993- imposed no-fly-zones in northern and southern Iraq to protect Kurdish and Shiite secessionist tribes in those areas[‡]. This decision led the creation of autonomous regions that are likely to separate from Iraq in the course of time. As it happens, as late as 2014, Iraq's Kurdistan government announced it would go independent when the time comes.

During the intensive Kuwait fighting, Algeria tried to play a mediatory role. It made a last-ditch attempt to reconcile Iraq and Saudi Arabia so as to prevent the coming of the war, but the two belligerent countries stuck to their guns. In all cases, Algeria rejected Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, but when the war broke out, it did not approve the use of force to destroy Iraq either. In other words, Algeria was not supportive of the American military effort as it targeted an Arab country indicating Algeria's strong feelings towards pan-Arabism. As it turned out subsequently, in the excitement of war action, Iraq caused terrific oil burning and facility destruction by torching 650 Kuwait oil wells[§]. What is worse, the United States field-commanders too tested low-nuclear grade shells and chemical weapons on Iraqi troops and civilians rather wilfully. The shells sprayed the targets with as much as ten times of radioactive dose as a person would normally receive from natural environment over a whole year. Actually, seasonal storms and winds could transport the radioactive pollution as far as North Africa in a short time as is scientifically known, and so this controversial bombing issue is far from over^{**}. It proved that the war went beyond the objective of liberating Kuwait to that of polluting Iraqi soil and environment instantly and for decades to come. In all cases, this condition left thousands of innocent victims to suffer long after the end of hostilities. Hence, severe accusations were directed to the leading powers of the Coalition especially the United States for exceeding its role in the war.

In contrast to the Algerian government's stance, the common man on the street went out of bounds in denouncing the Gulf War^{††}. Algerian political opposition parties and the mass media called for a tougher answer to the Iraq War. In particular, they asked for sanctions on the leading powers of the Coalition. Many opposition leaders asked the government to stop oil supplies for the West and that Algerian military structures start training Algerian volunteers for the Gulf War. In other words, this was a call for an all-Arab uprising against the Coalition forces for representing Western imperialism and acting as invading forces. Yet,

[‡] Extracted from <http://www.bbc.com/help/web/links>. Retrieved on 10 August 2015. The Iraq-Kuwait War is one of the most researched topics. See for example the concise study: Lawrence Freedman, and Efraim Karsh, The Gulf Conflict: 1990 – 1991, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993).

[§] Production Department, Aljazeera TV Channel, Desert Storm: Oil as a Weapon. Documentary film, 2005. Programme aired on 27 February 2008, 21:00 GMT.

^{**} Abdelkrim Amioune, Producer /Translator, Aljazeera TV Channel. Black Box, Imbilage Company, 2015. Programme aired on 29 September 2015, 17:00 GMT. (Arabic Version)

^{††} See private discussions in high official circles in: Khaled Nezzar, Memoirs of General Khaled Nezzar, (Batna: Manchourat Al Chihab, n.d. [1996?]), pp. 242-43. (Arabic)

the war destroyed Iraq and entailed severe consequences for the country. For example, it increased American military bases in the Arab Gulf states, the application of harsh United Nations sanctions on Iraq and the dislocation of its national unity. Another direct consequence of the Gulf War was the alienation of the Palestine Question in some Arab countries, notably Kuwait, in retaliation for the alignment of the Palestinians with Saddam Hussein during the conflict^{††}.

3. Algeria's Crisis

This period of the Gulf War was also the beginning of the countdown for the Algerian crisis that broke out in January 1992 under President Chadli Benjedid. The crisis is still a blank space in academic terms as very little has been disclosed about it in spite of its importance as a historical theme^{§§}. Hence, it is sensible to survey here summarily the presidency of Benjedid from 1979 to 1992 to appreciate the quality of American-Algerian relations during his time. It is a fact that both the Ronald Reagan and George Bush Administrations (1980-1992) strove hard to improve relations with Algeria after their deterioration in previous decades. This attempt at rapprochement between the two sides stemmed opportunistically from Algeria's role in freeing the American hostages in Iran in the period 1979-1981. In parallel with this godsend overture, America's objective was to dissociate Algeria from previous revolutionary militancy and encourage its efforts to liberalise the economy as implied in the Constitution of February 1989. As a matter of fact, there was a gradual shelving of Boumediene's legacy of socialist values and dogmatic radicalism after his death in 1978. Then, a gradual politico-economic reform programme did away with the inherited ideological orientation especially that of Algeria as a revolutionary model nation that had been publicised since Ben Bella's days. Thus, Algerian influence and image abroad began to alter as a consequence.

The reason behind this transformation was that Benjedid's government became more concerned with Algeria's internal problems of governing and state management over the years. Indeed, in the mid-1980's, a kind of political malaise developed around new ideological preferences between Socialism and Liberalism on the one hand and governing methods between the existing one-party approach and the opposition's claim for multiparty systems on the other. In a way, it seemed to echo the changes from socialism to liberalism that were taking place rather more dramatically in Eastern Europe by that time. As a consequence, factional in-fighting set in among the country's leadership in Algeria highlighting the need for new ways to manage the state. The turmoil got more complicated

^{††} Zait Kamal, "Playing with fire with the Islamists!", *Al Khabar Al Usbuii*, [News Weekly] no. 97, 10-16 January 2001, p. 7. (Arabic)

^{§§} The weak interest in the topic is reflected in the limited coverage to few authors. See: Ahmed Taleb Ibrahim. *The Algerian Problem: The Crisis and the Solution, 1989-1999*, 4thed, (Algiers: Sharikat Dar Al Oumma Li Tibaahwa Nashr, 1999) (Arabic). See also: Ibrahim, Dr. Abdelhamid. *To the Roots of the Algerian Crisis: 1958-1999*, (Beirut: Markaz Dirasat Al Wahda Al Arabiya, 2001) (Arabic)

with the involvement of hitherto unknown opposition groups and radical Islamic movements that flourished during the 1980's^{***}. It all climaxed in a national uprising in October 1988 over constitutional reforms which opened a dormant Algerian Pandora's Box of ills in the following decade.

In substance, the crisis of October 1988 with its complex economic and constitutional dimensions snowballed unavoidably into the unhappy events of the next decade. In particular, it caused the abortion of the parliamentary election of December 1991 which led to Benjedid's resignation in January 1992^{†††}. From mid-1992, the country experienced severe political tensions between the government and the opposition over election issues and power sharing. Algerians call it "The National Tragedy". Henceforth, Algeria gradually sank into a bloodbath that placed it in the spotlight of world attention; especially the United States. In describing the deterioration of that pre-crisis prelude, one leading analyst wrote:

"Clearly, his [Benjedid's] rule of thirteen years, particularly the transition period [1989-1992], not only did away with the legacy of the previous presidents notably Algeria's prominence in international politics, but it also shifted the people's ambition from the revolutionary ideals of 1962 to the narrow needs of the daily struggle for minimal subsistence and survival"^{‡‡‡}.

This was the Algerian situation as it unfolded by 1992 in President Bush's time.

There is no doubt that American officials watched the Algerian scene all along while focusing on other hotter international questions. Indeed, as this period was dominated by the problems of Eastern Europe, the Algerian issue was naturally overshadowed, but nonetheless it became an undercurrent of deep concern in United States governmental institutions^{§§§}. American Congressional documents reveal plainly the position taken by the Bush Administration towards Algeria by the end of his presidential term. They state the following:

"...On January 13, 1992, following the change that upset Algeria's burgeoning democratic system, the United States issued a formal but low-key statement condemning....the (takeover). Twenty-four hours later, Department of State

^{***} Abdelhafid Abdassamii, "Islamic Movements in Algeria: Truths and Secrets", Episode 43, (Arabic), Numidia News TV (Switzerland), Aired on 20 November 2014: 20:00 GMT.

^{†††} See the detailed examination in: Nezzar, Chs 10 and 11, pp.191-207.

^{‡‡‡} Mohammed Bouacha, 'Assiyassa Al Kharijia Al Jazairya:...', [Algerian Foreign Policy: From Expansion to Dislocation], in Al Kenz Ali, Filalilah and al., (The Algerian Crisis: The Background...), (Beirut: Markaz Dirasat Al Wahda Al Arabiya, 1996), pp. 145, 184. (Arabic).

^{§§§} See for example early Congressional concern about the Algerian problem in the following sources:

1) **U.S. Congress. House.** Committee on International Relations, Insurgency-Algeria. 1990, One Hundred, Second Session, 1991. (Washington D.C: G.P.O, 1991) Available at: http://wwwc.house.gov/international_relations/109/9959. Retrieved on 30 June 2013.

2) **U.S. Congress. House.** Committee on Foreign Affairs, Crisis in Algeria: One Hundred Third Congress, Second Session, March 22, 1994. 1995. See: <http://catalog.loc.gov/cgi-pwebrecon>. Retrieved on 30 June 2013.

spokesmen retracted the statement, calling for a peaceful resolution but offering no condemnation of the (takeover)...”****

So, up to this point, the United States was still making its mind about the developing Algerian crisis. It adopted a ‘wait and see’ strategy as the situation remained unclear.

Hence, in terms of American-Algerian relations proper, Bush’s term of office can be considered dead time. His administration stood still except for the symbolic financial aid of \$25.8 million granted to Algeria in 1990 or the launching of experimental university linkage programmes such as placing Algerian English-Language teachers in host training schools in the United States. There was also the sale of American technical equipment worth about \$1 billion to Algerian companies^{††††}. However, even the ground-breaking peace talks of 1992 between Israelis and Palestinians that got off to a start by then in Madrid did not benefit from Algerian inter-Arab consultations as it used to be the case in the past on such occasions. Algeria was left to decide her fate on her own and may be deprived of its customary role in such Arab major events. In the light of this American reserved stance on Algeria, it is evident that the Algerian problem remained superficial, but touchy, at least till 1992 ^{††††}.

From Bush to Clinton

Being at the end of his presidential term, Bush harboured muted worries about Algeria but could not conceive yet how to tackle the issue as he was running out of time. Hence, it was Clinton’s lot to live the worst of the Algerian crisis and the struggle of the Algerian authorities to end the problem. Clinton came to power at a time of internal American recession when Eastern Europe was sinking in deep trouble while Western Europe began completing the last stage of its continental European Union project^{§§§§}. They inevitably became top priorities on his overburdened agenda.

Regarding Eastern Europe, Clinton had to focus firstly on the Western Balkans notably Yugoslavia because of the murderous civil war that was developing there between its seven component regions. There were the Catholics, the Moslems, the Christian Orthodox ...etc. In imitation of the ethnic break-up of other former Communist countries, Yugoslav minorities too separated from their federal country to put an end to the long domination of the Serb majority over them. The Serbs had wielded all the power ever since Marshall Tito imposed Communism on the country at the end of the Second World War. But, most minorities wanted to be independent states in their own right.

The Yugoslav civil war started in Slovenia in 1991 and expanded to other areas by 1995. Professional fighting armies acted like terrorist groups or unscrupulous criminal gangs.

**** U.S. Library of Congress: “Country Studies”, at <http://www.state.gov>. Retrieved on 16 June 2015.

†††† Ibid.

†††† The New York Times, January 19, 1992, p. 1. Also the following issues of the month.

§§§§ On the presidential transition from Bush to Clinton, see: Neil Brown, ‘America Changes Leaders’ and ‘An Interview with Bill Clinton’, Dialogue, 1/1993, (Washington: DC, USIS, 1993), 2-8.

In the end, the warring factions practiced systematic ethnic cleansing to eliminate each other. Bosnia and Kosovo saw the worst ethnic violence. So much so, in 1995, the United Nations was alarmed to the point of asking N.A.T.O for military intervention to stop the bloodshed in Bosnia first. Next, in 1999, another UN request was made for Kosovo for the same purpose.

In both cases of Bosnia and Kosovo, President Clinton allowed N.A.T.O intervention on humanitarian grounds. It took months of military operations to bring the two conflicts to an end with much suffering to follow for the survivors in the war aftermath. One typical case of mass murder that attracted great publicity and continued as a legal battle in the International Court of Justice at The Hague through the 2010's was the Srebrenica massacre of July 1995 in Bosnia. Seven thousand Moslem Bosnians were killed in a few days in that month by the Catholic Serbs under the watch of their ethnic leaders; namely: Mladic and Karadzic.

This is a quick recall of one episode of that mass tragedy to illustrate the point. Some three hundred of the Bosnian civilians initially took refuge in a United Nations camp that was managed by Dutch troops, but they were sent to General Mladic who was a fanatic Serb leader. The latter wickedly promised them safe stay on his military camp before proceeding to their extermination^{*****}. In the end, after long repetitive wars, Yugoslavia split up in seven states that joined the European Union on different dates. Undoubtedly, the end of the Cold War and America's successful handling of Yugoslavia as a European security problem to stop the serial genocide conflicts there epitomises the new role that befell the United States as the leading superpower in the post-Cold War era.

In this context, it is sensible to examine briefly the development of the European Union project in the 1990's to highlight its importance to America's policy in Europe and North Africa. After the founding phase of the 1950's till the 1980's, the European Economic Community moved faster towards political integration⁺⁺⁺⁺⁺. Beginning in 1993, it adopted the Maastricht Treaty which created the European Union. Then, there was the Schengen Agreement in March 1995 which cancelled border controls for all kind of economic traffic between the member states. Finally, in 1999, the European Union adopted the common currency; namely, the Euro, which became operational in 2002. The growing success of the European Union brought new members over the years till it reached 28 countries by 2016.

The gradual rise of the European Union in combination with United States policy in Eastern Europe as reflected by Yugoslavia coincided timely and impacted their views on current issues. In particular, these strategic developments of the 1990's made the two trans-Atlantic power blocs interact more tightly in different areas notably in security matters to supervise the developing New Order across the European continent and the Mediterranean area by extension. This transformation had inevitable ramifications for the Algerian troubled situation as a new security concern for both the United States and Western Europe. The two

***** Philippa Thomas, "Interview with Allan Little (Yugoslavia War Correspondent)", on [BBC World News \(London\)](#), 16 July 2014, 19.00.GMT.

+++++ See the origins of the European Union and American backing for the project in: Max Beloff, [The United States and The Unity of Europe](#), (London: Faber and Faber, 1993), pp. 14 ff.

trans-Atlantic power blocs simply could not ignore the events and changes taking place on the southern shoreline of the Mediterranean and particularly North Africa.

In post-Cold War geostrategic terms, the future of Europe and its long term security requirements depend to some extent on the stability of the Mediterranean region notably North Africa and its surrounding Sahara Desert areas. In addition to the security dimension, one has to remember that most of Europe's needs of oil, gas and raw materials come from North Africa in the same way that much of Europe's exports have their markets there too by way of trade reciprocity agreements. Hence, Algeria as an old customer of France and a reliable supplier of raw materials since the colonial days became even more a necessary player in this North-South strategic tripartite partnership linking North Africa, Western Europe and the United States from the 1990's onward. Therefore, it is understandable why the United States worried about the Algerian problem from President Bush's time onwards.

4. American Overtures to Algeria

In this context, Clinton had to further focus on Algeria. Accordingly, his Administration tried to help bilateral relations emphatically as a rule of thumb in order to juggle the Algerian crisis. There was more emphasis on economic programmes in particular to ease the pressure on the country. First, there was the Casablanca Economic Summit of 1994 to stimulate trade relations in the North African region. Next, there was the follow up programme called 'the Eizenstadt Initiative' in 1998. This plan aimed to integrate the markets of the three countries of Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria. It centred on a joint project of America-North Africa economic collaboration with the aim of attracting American investments to the area. One analyst of this economic approach wrote:

“...The Eizenstadt Initiative revealed an important change in US policy with regard to the Maghreb; the United States no longer considered the Maghreb as France's or Europe's preserved market. United States officials considered the Maghreb market big enough for [both] the United States and the European Union.....”^{****}.

In other words, Clinton's interest in Algeria was more comprehensive than ever before. Unlike previous governments, now he was expanding American ties with Algeria to new areas of bilateral cooperation in the larger context of North Africa. Yet, a lingering uneasiness towards the Algerian political crisis continued rather strongly in Congress up until then^{§§§§§}.

During the critical period between 1994 and 1998, the Algerian authorities combined approaches of political reforms and peace restoration programmes to put an end to the violence that was raging across the country. After the brief emergency collegiate presidency of the Supreme State Council (S.S.C) from January 1992 to January 1994, there was the

^{****} Yahia H. Zoubir, “The Rise of Religious Fundamentalism and the Future of Democracy in North Africa”, *Middle East Policy*, Vol. 9, No. 1, (March 2002), 75.

^{§§§§§} United States Congress, House, Committee on International Relations. Subcommittee on Africa. *Algeria's Turmoil*. Hearing before the Subcommittee on Africa of the Committee on International Relations, February 5, 1998. (Washington, D.C.: G.P.O, 1998). Available at: <http://catalog.loc.gov/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon>

appointment of former Defence Minister, General Liamine Zeroual as caretaker Head of State until the presidential election of November 1995. On election in 1995 and up till his resignation in September 1998, Zeroual allowed peace talks between the anti-government rebels and the security forces to achieve reconciliation. This peace initiative led to an agreement under the next president; namely: Abdelaziz Bouteflika in 2000^{*****}. In other words, President Zeroual left a legacy of reconciliation strategies that ultimately brought the fighting sides of the Algerian civil strife to agree to a peace deal. It materialised in the form of the 'Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation' in 2005⁺⁺⁺⁺⁺. Clearly, the United States government let Algeria decide for itself its internal problems limiting America's role to reinforcing bilateral economic exchange and diplomatic consultations on shared international issues.

When Bouteflika's took over from Zeroual in mid-1999, the Clinton government confirmed its desire for more cooperation with Algeria. This policy was emphasised during the visit of Martin Indyk to Algiers in 1999. Indyk was Assistant Secretary of State and the highest American diplomat to come to Algeria during the country's crisis in the period 1992 - 1999. He asserted that Washington viewed Algeria as a regional force capable of playing a role regarding the Maghreb and the Middle East. So, the United States was kindly reminding President Bouteflika of old patriotic duties dating back to Algeria's 'Gilded Age' of the 1970's concerning the necessity of Maghreb cooperation and solving the Palestine problem. Indeed, Indyk also wanted Algeria to reactivate the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) which had been stillborn since its creation in 1989 and help to solve the Western Sahara problem with Morocco⁺⁺⁺⁺⁺.

The crux of the matter was that the United States believed the AMU to be instrumental not only to rally the North African States economically but also to erase deep-rooted disagreements in Algerian-Moroccan relations. In an attempt to win Algeria's goodwill to its strategy, the United States promised to help any country intending to join the World Trade Organisation; meaning implicitly to support Algeriatoo. Concerning the Western Sahara, Indyk's view implied that Algeria had the key to end the problem, but held it back. This interpretation had been United States official understanding of the question since the beginning of the problem in the mid-1970's and directly played in favour of the Moroccan position against Algeria. In sum, Indyk singled out the two main bones of contention in US-Algerian relations so far; namely: Palestine and the Western Sahara. Clearly, at this point, the United States had less worries about the Algerian crisis and rather indicated more interest in winning its goodwill for future cooperation.

***** Yasser Larbi, 'Facts on the Mythical Man [General Lamari Smail]', Ennahar el Jadid, Daily (Arabic), 27 November 2013, p. 6. See also: Slimane M'Hira, "How did Zeroual Come to Power?", Al Khabar (Algiers), 24 January 2014, p. 8. (Arabic)

+++++ See details in: F. Jamal, "...The Charter was Forced on Algerians", Al Khabar, 29 September 2015, p. 3.

***** U.S. Department of State, "Algeria: Background Notes", available at: <http://www.state.gov>, Retrieved on 16 June 2015.

In a way, Indyk came to revive the friendly offers contained in the Casablanca Economic Summit of 1994 and the Eizenstadt Initiative of 1998 by way of connecting with the new leadership of post-crisis Algeria; namely: Bouteflika. It implied American readiness to work with the new authorities after the seven years of uncertainty about Algeria's future. More importantly, by then, American interest in Algeria extended to military questions. This area had been missing in American-Algerian relations since 1962. Because of past colonial conditions and Cold War considerations, the former USSR had been the main military partner of Algeria with the new Russia continuing routinely after 1991.

However, in the 1990's, the shaky situation of Europe and the reshaping of NATO had an indirect impact on Algeria. The fear of Islamist expansionism in North Africa made Algeria the focus of some NATO attention inevitably. In the main, some countries; notably France, wanted an extension to the South §§§§§§. In other words, France sought to involve its former North African colonies especially Algeria in the rising European Union-NATO defence system. One can understand that the consequence of this approach would have neutralised the Islamist threat in view of the fact that Algeria was becoming a security concern in the Mediterranean. Ultimately, following long multilateral negotiations, in 1999, the United States started planning programmes for eventual future joint exercises with the Algerian Navy openingthereby a new chapter in the two countries' relations*****. This was definitely a breakthrough after the long decades of bilateral suspicion and uneasy diplomatic interaction between the two countries.

It also meant that the Clinton Administration closed the door on any attemptthat might have sought to involve the United States in Algerian affairs during the crisis. In fact, this topic also remains a no man's land in academic terms to date. So far, no research has looked into the question whether any opposition groups had considered American official backing or collaboration with some American organisations to pressure the Algerian government into agreeing to any political objectives or making particular concessions.

It is well known, as a rule, Algeria condemned any interference in its national affairs by foreign countries. This was particularly illustrated by the Sant-Egidio Conference which

§§§§§§ AbdelkaderReziqM'Khadmi, The Atlantic Alliance: From the Cold War to the Wars of Hegemonic Occupation, (Algiers: Office des Publications Universitaires, 2014), p. 104. (Arabic)

***** Op cit, [http:// www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov). Retrieved on16 June 2015. See also background story in: « Les-rapports-Algérie-nato [sic]», available at: www://Bouteflika.skyrock.com/4558047062.html. Retrieved on 9 October 2015. See also: « Relations multilatéralesAlgérie-OTAN », available at:http://www.mae.gov.dz/news_article/214_a_220.aspx. See also: [http://www.mae.gov.dz/new_category.aspx? cat_id=2](http://www.mae.gov.dz/new_category.aspx?cat_id=2), and <http://www.mae.gov.dz/documents/82.aspx> a 84.

raised some suspicion about American meddling in the background⁺⁺⁺⁺⁺. The Conference gathered leaders and representatives of Algerian opposition parties in Italy and called for the restoration of the aborted elections of 1991-1992. There was no official accusation lodged about eventual American underbelly blows or dirty tricks. On the other hand, Iranian media criticisms of the Algerian crisis received severe warnings from the Algerian government and entailed prolonged cooling of Algerian-Iranian diplomatic relations. In any case, the coming of Bouteflika in 1999 and the departure of Clinton in 2000 closed a chapter and opened a new one in American-Algerian relations projecting new horizons of wider bilateral cooperation.

One last investigative hypothetical curiosity of this study which may cross people's minds, as a legitimate query, is whether the United States considered any intervention in Algeria. As a matter of logic, it is unlikely for American officials of the day to think of such an option. The reason is that the United States was already engaged militarily in many parts of the Arab world and fully aware of the many risks and negative consequences for its national interest. The American Army was supervising the no-fly-zones in Saddam's Iraq and destroying his remaining Scud missile batteries. It was also running unpopular expeditionary missions in Somalia while keeping Libya under naval quarantine and harsh embargo control. Furthermore, by 1998, the bombing of the U.S. Embassies in East Africa entailed American retaliatory strikes in Lebanon, Sudan and beyond. Therefore, the United States should only be eager to limit its interventionist campaigns to the minimum. Seen otherwise, Clinton's America had its eyes on Algerian events, for sure, but its mind was on more sensitive war zones.

5. Conclusion

On assessment, it appears that both Presidents Bush Sr. and Clinton were concerned with the Algerian situation in different degrees and ways. Bush saw the outbreak of the crisis for about a year only, but he had to leave the issue to Clinton on failing re-election in November 1992. Therefore, he took no action on Algeria. He was content to follow a 'wait and see' policy for lack of time on the one hand and deal with the urgent concurrent hotter international questions elsewhere in the world on the other.

Next, Clinton took over for a longer presidential term to carry out the legacy of the unfinished business of his predecessor. By the end of his presidency, the United States solved most of the hanging issues relating to the termination of the Cold War. Europe was reshaped in time to include East European countries in the emerging European Union and NATO was overhauled. All along, the United States expanded its military and economic domination over the globe with the disappearance of the Communist Bloc.

With respect to Algeria, the Clinton Administration worried about the country's future for a start, but decided to use diplomatic and economic means to deal with the topic. With the launch of reconciliation and peace restoration programmes by President Zeroual in the mid-

⁺⁺⁺⁺⁺ APS (Algerie Presse Service), « Bouteflika's Press Conference », 6 November 2001, available at:

<http://www.aps.dz.fr>. Retrieved on 20 August 2015.

1990's, Clinton offered American economic help to hurry the recovery process. To that end, the Clinton Administration urged Algeria to take its international responsibilities anew so as to stabilise the region for the sake of peace and security in the Arab world, the Mediterranean Basin and the European Union.

On this basis, it is evident that for the United States, the Algerian crisis was minimal in scope and secondary in terms of priority. On the international level, when measured against the changing balance of power or terror between the major superpowers, the Algerian problem did not qualify enough to be considered as determinant as the bloody civil wars of Eastern Europe. The fact that Clinton allowed NATO military intervention in the Western Balkans on two occasions shows the strategic difference between these crises and why Clinton limited his approach in Algeria to extending the hand of friendship to strengthen bilateral economic relations as a priority. In other words, American foreign policy from Bush to Clinton was guided by the major principles of checking the threats of dictatorial regimes and global religious extremisms as represented by the Middle East and Eastern Europe in dealing with the Algerian crisis.

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