

## The Algerian Movement/ Hirak 22 February 2019: Challenges and prospects in the New Algeria

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received: 15/11/2023

Accepted: 10/06/2024

*Published: 30/06/2024*

### **Abstract:**

The deterioration of the political and socio-economic situation of Algerian society as a result of the mismanagement and looting of the country's resources by the gang in power for two decades has led to the explosion of the Algerian street in a movement of peaceful protest on February 22, 2019, which freed him from the domination of the Oligarchic class. The movement has yielded positive results despite multiple attempts to infiltrate and politicize it internally and externally, but the awareness of the Algerian people has made it possible to avoid the destabilization of Algerian state institutions. However, the movement experienced shortcomings and failures that led to its withdrawal from the arena of protest, especially during the health crisis when the elective process ended. Elections in Algeria have seen a low turnout, indicating the lack of trust between the majority of the people and the ruling authority. Moreover, given the current circumstances that the world is going through, from the global economic crisis to the Russian-Ukrainian war, the Algerian street remain exposed to any new protest movement, whether political or economic and social.

**Keywords:** Hirak 2019; the protest movement; New Algeria; Arabic spring; Democratic transformation.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Algerian street movement on 22nd February 2019 was a response to the dismal political, economic, and social conditions faced by the Algerian people, especially the impoverished class. This dire situation caused a surge of discontent among the populace, resulting in the eruption of protests across the country. Initially centered on political demands, the movement arose due to the ruling authority's violation of constitutional rules pertaining to the organization of presidential elections. As the movement gained momentum, it evolved into a recurring event, taking place every Friday and Tuesday, with university students joining in, demanding accountability and an investigation into the corrupt ruling authority that had misappropriated public funds for the past two decades. The protest movement received backing from the Algerian military, which supported the demands of the demonstrators to preserve Algeria's security and stability, ultimately convincing the protesters to accept the presidential elections.

The movement became known as the "revolution of the smile" due to its nonviolent nature, despite the police's arrests and attempts at repression. However, the movement faced a disadvantage in the absence of representative figures who could effectively negotiate with the ruling authority. Furthermore, the outbreak of the 2020 Corona pandemic led the protestors to temporarily halt their demonstrations through a unilateral decision. During this lull in protests, the ruling authority proceeded to hold presidential elections, amend the constitution, pass legislation, and conduct municipal and state elections, all without the involvement of the protest movement. Surprisingly, the participation rate in these elections was twice that of previous ones, which can only be attributed to the deep-rooted lack of trust between the ruling authority and the majority of the Algerian people.

The choice of this subject for study is partly driven by personal involvement in the movement with the hope of bringing about genuine democratic change in Algeria. Additionally, the uniqueness of the movement's peaceful and spontaneous nature, despite numerous attempts to infiltrate, politicize, and exploit it from various angles, presents compelling and the objective reasons for its investigation.

The subject's significance stems from the widespread belief that the protest movement has ceased to exist. However, it remains dormant, capable of resurgence through any political, economic, or social occurrence. This possibility is especially relevant given the challenging circumstances Algeria currently faces due to the global financial crisis, which has been further compounded by the ongoing health crisis.

The primary objective of this research paper is to explore and elucidate the strategies and mechanisms for establishing trust between the ruling authority and the governed should the protest movement reemerge. Additionally, it seeks to learn from the errors made by both the ruling authority and the previous protest movement, with the aim of preventing their recurrence in the future.

Due to the global economic crisis, the protest movement in Algeria is poised to mobilize more effectively in the future, expressing political, economic, and social demands on the streets and public spaces. In the aftermath of the 22nd February 2019 movement, how can trust be restored between the ruling authority and the citizens of Algeria ?

Additionally, the following sub-questions are incorporated :

- What political and socio-economic factors contributed to the eruption of the Algerian street movement ?
- What are the deficiencies in the movement that resulted in its suppression ?
- What are the legitimate grievances and demands driving the protest movement ?
- How can trust be reestablished between the ruling authority and the people in the new Algeria?

### **Hypotheses :**

- The objective of the movement is to enhance political and socio-economic conditions.
- Both the ruling authority and the Algerian people have the potential to foster trust and rebuild a new Algeria.

The initial section focuses on the Algerian protest movement, exploring its challenges and risks. It delves into the pre-movement political and socio-economic conditions before its eruption on February 22, 2019, and subsequently analyzes the reasons behind its ultimate failure.

The second section, titled "The future possibilities and ambitions of the protest movement in Algeria" examines the genuine demands put forth by the movement and presents strategies for fostering trust between the governing regime and the people.

### **I-The Algerian protest movement : Navigating challenges and risks :**

During the four terms of the late President Bouteflika, Algeria enjoyed a period of security, political stability, and social harmony. The nation thrived economically, benefiting from the surge in oil prices triggered by the invasion and occupation of Iraq in 2003. However, the corruption within the ruling authority and

the squandering of public funds eventually led to the eruption of the Algerian street movement on February 22, 2019.

This peaceful protest movement emerged in opposition to the prospect of a fifth term for the ailing president and the continuation of the ruling elite's grip on power. Despite facing repression and arrests of its members, the movement unfolded in a manner unprecedented in the world's history.

Given this backdrop, it becomes imperative to delve into the political and socio-economic conditions prevailing before the movement's inception. Furthermore, a thorough examination of the reasons behind the movement's failure to attain its legitimate demands is essential, along with an analysis of the factors contributing to its suppression in Algeria.

### **1- The prevailing socio-economic and political conditions in Algeria before the commencement of the movement :**

Algeria's economy heavily relies on hydrocarbons, and this wealth has led to significant disparities in terms of economic and social development. In the past, there existed a middle class in Algerian society, but it has dwindled due to the dominance of a corrupt rentier bourgeoisie, particularly during President Bouteflika's tenure. This corruption has inflicted severe damage on the national economy, and it was not feasible to count on it for contributing to the establishment of a robust economy on which Algeria's dependence lies. Politically, the presence of multiple parties and a free press only reflects a semblance of democracy in Algeria, while the need for an independent judiciary remains crucial to hold the corrupt elements within the system accountable.

#### **1-1- The state of the socio-economic conditions prior to the eruption of the movement :**

The abundance of hydrocarbon wealth in Algeria has allowed for substantial accumulation of riches; however, it failed to rejuvenate the real economy of the country, resulting in inevitable consequences such as increased unemployment and poverty. People relying on hydrocarbon revenues anxiously await fluctuations in the daily oil barrel prices on the global stock exchanges<sup>(1)</sup>.

Since gaining independence, Algeria's economic and social situation has encountered challenges. The populace, eager for development and reparation of colonial injustices, sought to achieve social progress. Despite liberal reforms in the 1980s, the decline in oil prices compelled the Algerian state to implement reforms dictated by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, owing to the

burden of external debt on the national treasury. This led to a heavy reliance on fuel exports and unrestricted imports.

This policy in Algeria engendered a corrupt bourgeois class, deepening the chasm between the wealthy and the impoverished. The Algerian economy became parasitic, and the government's adoption of austerity measures following the decline in oil prices adversely affected the poorer class at the expense of the bourgeois minority benefiting from hydrocarbon revenues. This rent-seeking economy required institutions to cater to the ruling political class at the time, resulting in bribery and corruption, ultimately contributing to the outbreak of street protests on February 22, 2019<sup>(2)</sup>.

During President Bouteflika's administration, his political, economic, and social program was aligned with the principles of good governance, focusing on reinforcing democratic norms, upholding the rule of law, supporting Algerian society as a whole, bolstering institutions, and strengthening the national economy. The government aimed to facilitate the country's transition to a market economy that would align with international standards. Emphasizing good governance as a primary driver of modernization, stability, development, and prosperity, the state swiftly implemented constitutional, political, economic, and social reforms that had a positive impact on the nation's well-being. These reforms were designed to promote justice and equity, ultimately benefiting the overall quality of life in Algeria<sup>(3)</sup>.

This is a report originating from page 462 of the African Peer Review Mechanism.

**MAEP** stands for "Mécanisme Africain d'Evaluation par les Paires," which is a part of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) program. NEPAD is also known as "Nouveau Partenariat Africain pour le développement" in French.

Despite describing the political and socio-economic situation in Algeria as being at its best due to successful government reforms at the time, this assessment cannot be considered reliable or taken into account. Is it reasonable to evaluate political governance by the same members in question?

While it is true that Algeria experienced a period of security and stability strategically after emerging from the black decade, the economic prosperity was partly attributed to the occupation of Iraq in 2003 by the United States and its allies until the outbreak of the Arab Spring revolutions in 2011, which caused instability in oil-exporting countries<sup>(4)</sup>. As a result, the price of a barrel of oil surged to more than

\$100. However, this economic windfall led to the mismanagement of funds by the ruling authorities, resulting in the destruction of the national economy through the wasteful actions of the ruling elite.

### **1-2- The prevailing political conditions prior to the onset of the movement :**

The lack of transparency and the escalating corruption within the ruling state power and its institutions highlight the existence of a kleptocratic political system<sup>(5)</sup>, characterized by an oligarchy that emerged during the period of oil windfall from 2005 to 2015, enabling this class to establish itself as a significant component of the political structure. The appointment of certain members of the presidential family to positions of authority further validates the regime's cronyism, particularly during the tenure of former President Abdelaziz Bouteflika from 1999 to 2019. His close circle, including family members, have been involved in political and financial affairs on numerous occasions.

The Algerian political system can also adopt a "non-democratic" nature, wherein those least capable of governing are elected by those least capable of producing, and other segments of society elect individuals who are less able to support themselves or achieve success in their careers. These elected officials are rewarded with goods and services paid for by expropriating the wealth and labor of productive members of society, leading to a continuous decline in their numbers<sup>(6)</sup>.

Since gaining independence, the Algerian citizens have persistently struggled for a decent life and the establishment of a genuine democratic political system. Despite facing challenges and the civil war of the 1990s, Algeria managed to maintain its constitutional institutions, ultimately overcoming terrorism through civil harmony, a resolution strongly endorsed by the Algerian people through a transparent referendum. This demonstrated Algeria's resilience in the face of destruction and devastation that afflicted the nation for more than a decade. Notably, President Bouteflika's first term saw significant mobilization in the Kabylie region during the spring of 2001, triggered by the death of a young man at the headquarters of the national gendarmerie. These actions resulted in a series of demands calling for the protection of individual freedoms and the enhancement of democratic practices<sup>(7)</sup>.

Amidst the Arab uprisings in 2011, Algeria remained relatively unaffected, as the haunting memories of the black decade still haunted the populace. The nation had suffered a heavy toll during the civil war, with over 250,000 lives lost, and the responsibility for this conflict was attributed to the political class or the elite. The subsequent descent into corruption resulted in the disappearance of hundreds of

billions of dollars from Algeria's hard currency reserves, leading to a financial disaster. Consequently, people took to the streets, expressing their disappointment and calling for an end to the dominance of this "elite," all in a peaceful manner.

On February 22, 2019, the protest movement rapidly spread across Algeria, embracing pacifism and infusing a renewed spirit into the Arab Spring of 2011. If successful, these peaceful protests could serve as a model not just for the Arab world but also for the global community at large.

## **2- The factors contributing to the protest movement's failure in Algeria :**

The protest movement in Algeria exhibited a peaceful and diverse nature, with well-organized and clean demonstrations, both during and after the gatherings<sup>(8)</sup>. Participants came from all walks of life, including conservatives, progressives, entire families, children, elders, young people, working and non-working women, and even pensioners.

As the protest movement expanded in numbers and diversity, particularly in its peaceful demeanor, the military intervened under articles 102, 7, and 8 of the Algerian Constitution to remove President Bouteflika. It is important to remember that the military institution in Algeria has been a significant pillar of the regime since independence, playing a key role in the war of liberation and subsequently influencing the appointment and dismissal of successive heads of state in Algeria. In this instance, the military removed President Bouteflika as a transitional figure or as a means to assert its own direction. However, what set this occasion apart was that it was the Algerian people who demanded the president's removal and called for a genuine democratic path<sup>(9)</sup>.

Nonetheless, the health crisis that affected Algeria and the rest of the world led to the suspension of peaceful demonstrations. When the movement resurfaced in early 2021, on the second anniversary of its initiation, it faced significant challenges and encountered a substantial setback for various reasons, which we will endeavor to summarize in this section of the research.

### **2-1- Lack of representatives of the movement :**

Some political analysts view the Algerian movement as the final chapter of the Arab Spring, which began in 2011 as a quest by Arab peoples to break free from totalitarian and corrupt regimes following their liberation from colonial rule. The demonstrations that swept the streets of Algeria demanded the establishment of a rule of law, seen as crucial for the country's future and its economy. The movement made timely and appropriate decisions, particularly embracing non-violence, which was evident during the presidential election process in December 2020. The voting

process was not marred by objections or sabotage, a testament to the collective maturity of the Algerian people<sup>(10)</sup>.

However, despite this recognition of the movement's maturity in maintaining peace amidst violations and repression, a significant mistake led to one of the main reasons for its failure. The movement failed to appoint representatives or, at the very least, a spokesperson within a year of its struggle before the health crisis unfolded. Many political analysts of the Algerian protest movement concur that the lack of representatives or the absence of a spokesperson, a national committee, or a defined list of demands for negotiation with the regime contributed to its failure. The movement demanded the departure of the regime, while the regime insisted on completing the electoral process, creating a deaf dialogue between the parties<sup>(11)</sup>.

## **2-2- Repression of peaceful protests :**

During a 2021 interview with Al Jazeera TV, the Algerian president emphasized that the initial blessed movement rescued Algeria from a group that nearly dismantled state institutions, squandering close to \$1000 billion over the past two decades. On the other hand, the post-election movement was merely a march without clear organizers. They lacked unity in their ideas, demands, and even slogans<sup>(12)</sup>. Nevertheless, repression and arrests commenced on the second day of the Hirak movement's outbreak (February 23, 2019), and these arrests persisted in each subsequent demonstration, culminating in 108 detentions by April 12, 2019. Following trials, 76 detainees<sup>(13)</sup> were released, leaving approximately 142 prisoners of conscience still incarcerated until 2020<sup>(14)</sup>. As of February 1, 2022, the number of prisoners increased to 333<sup>(15)</sup>.

After more than two years since its inception, the protest movement remains an autonomous entity and not a political force. If the movement continues to retain its independent nature and refrains from integrating into Algerian institutions, there is a risk of it dissipating and being co-opted by political parties<sup>(16)</sup>.

In spite of the authorities' attempts to curtail demonstrations during the pandemic for nearly a year, the movement persisted with its protests in major cities, resulting in continued arrests. Although the presidency's official spokesman denied the presence of prisoners of conscience, human rights associations asserted that there were 70 such prisoners at the beginning of 2021<sup>(17)</sup>.

To appease the protest movement, the Algerian president declared a presidential pardon for approximately 60 prisoners of conscience. However, he acknowledged that even after releasing some prisoners, others were still subjected to repression and imprisonment<sup>(18)</sup>.



The ban on demonstrations and the health crisis compelled the protest movement to turn to social media as an alternative to the streets and public squares for expressing their demands. However, this shift resulted in the imprisonment of many individuals. The National Committee for the Liberation of Detainees reported that over 70 people associated with the movement were in prisons, with more than 90% of the cases linked to their social media posts. As a consequence, private associations advocating for civil rights strongly condemned the regime's harsh stance on these cases<sup>(19)</sup>.

The closure of public spaces has severely affected the horizontal dynamic movement, stripping it of political opportunities due to the rulers' stubbornness in preserving the status quo by suppressing opinions shared on social media. However, this virtual movement can only serve as a temporary solution, and something better than relying solely on these online platforms is needed<sup>(20)</sup>.

### **2-3- Casting doubt on the legitimacy of the movement :**

In all countries transitioning towards a democratic system, the military cannot be excluded from the process, and its members often act as a political apparatus resistant to democratic change. Despite considerable criticism directed towards the Algerian military institution, it commands great respect and legitimacy, earned through its association with the National Liberation Army. Therefore, it is not seen as a repressive entity compared to security services like the police and national gendarmerie, which facilitates the democratization process<sup>(21)</sup> in Algeria and the acceptance of the military as a significant actor in this transition.

However, some question the credibility of the movement, considering it spontaneous and apolitical. There are even beliefs that the Algerian military establishment orchestrated the uprising of the Algerian people on February 22, 2019, setting limits from the outset to maintain the status quo. To create an illusion of massive support, the military allegedly inflated the number of protesters each Friday and promoted the movement as the "revolution of smiles," depicting the Algerian people as happily revolting against their tyrant. The police and security forces initially reassured and guided protesters, while the media intensified signals of reassurance to the middle class, encouraging their involvement without fear of civil war or foreign intervention like Libya. All of this supposedly happened under the protection and security of the Algerian secret police, aiming to ensure a "peaceful revolution."<sup>(22)</sup>

These attempts to undermine the credibility of the movement, among other reasons, contributed to the failure of the protest movement in Algeria, causing it to

gradually retreat until it faltered. Not all intellectuals and politically conscious activists could distinguish between spontaneity, direction, or politicization for purposes other than those that initially sparked the movement – to prevent President Bouteflika's fifth term.

## **II- The future possibilities and ambitions of the protest movement in Algeria :**

Although the movement experienced failure, certain regions still witness diverse local protest activities, anticipating any trigger for a new wave of democratic uprisings to emerge. The Algerian regime has become stagnant and incapable of rejuvenating itself biologically, intellectually, politically, and socially, depleting all its resources. Prior to the movement, Algeria seemed like a nation without a president, and now it has transitioned into a state where the president lacks genuine public support, evident in widespread abstention from the ballot box<sup>(23)</sup>. This inevitable outcome reflects the current political climate in the country. If a future uprising occurs on the Algerian streets, demanding legitimate demands for a transition to democracy, these demands should be formulated within the confines of the Algerian Constitution, while safeguarding the security and state institutions. Rebuilding the trust that was lacking in the previous movement and learning from the mistakes made by all parties is essential to establish a solid foundation for genuine discussions leading to a peaceful transition towards a democratic system in Algeria.

### **1- The demands of the protest movement : Between legitimacy and susceptibility to external manipulation :**

The situation remains unchanged on the part of the ruling authority, which is mired in the global economic crisis resulting from the misappropriation of Algerian funds by the ruling gang. Health conditions have deteriorated, the Algerian dinar has devalued, and commodity prices have soared, burdening the daily lives of citizens, particularly those belonging to the poor class. These developments have negatively impacted the protest movement, shifting its priorities from demanding a peaceful transition to democracy to the pressing need of meeting basic daily needs for Algerian families. This situation may potentially lead to future street unrest, similar to what occurred in October 1988 and on February 22, 2019.

Despite the challenging circumstances faced by the Algerian citizens, the demands of the protest movement remain steadfast. The call for a transition to democracy necessitates upholding freedom of expression and safeguarding

individual liberties, including freedom of the press and an independent judiciary. These legitimate demands are enshrined in international conventions ratified by Algeria and reiterated in the country's various constitutions, most recently in the 2020 Constitution. However, it cannot be overlooked that powerful nations have established programs and institutions with the intention of intervening and manipulating popular revolutions, directing them to serve their own interests. This is particularly apparent in countries with regimes hostile to the policies of these great powers.

### **1-1 The legitimate and rightful demands of the Algerian protest movement :**

The demands initially emerged within the protest movement opposing President Bouteflika's fifth term and seeking the removal of the corrupt government led by Minister Ouyahia. Broadly, these demands centered around fostering greater democracy and curbing corruption within society, as evident in the slogans chanted during the widespread demonstrations across various Algerian cities. A unified slogan resonated among the demonstrators, calling for « the removal of the entire ruling elite from power »<sup>(24)</sup>. Following the fulfillment of these demands, new aspirations surfaced, including the call for a transitional period that facilitates dialogue between the people and the regime, with the ultimate aim of transitioning to a democratic system under the banner of national unity<sup>(25)</sup>.

However, the regime opted for elections to fill the vacant presidential position, which was effectively carried out in December 2019. While the new president aimed to foster tranquility and reconciliation with the protest movement by granting a presidential pardon to numerous activists, and still others remained imprisoned, he did not yield to the core demands of the movement. These demands included a commitment to initiate a genuine transition towards an open democracy that accommodates opposition voices. One of the pivotal demands was the election of a constituent assembly, similar to the one held in neighboring Tunisia in 2011<sup>(26)</sup>.

### **1-2 The involvement of external forces seeking to manipulate the Algerian movement :**

According to the analysis of Belgian journalist Michel Collon, the Algerian protest movement follows a similar pattern observed in Libya, Yugoslavia, and Venezuela. This scheme aims to enable major powers to exert influence over these countries by leveraging legitimate protest movements to install their agents and followers in positions of power within these regimes. Collon asserts that France, including both the regime and multinational companies, cannot be considered a friend of Algeria. History has shown that powerful nations have intervened under

the guise of promoting democracy and human rights, leaving nothing but devastation and poverty in their wake, which is indicative of neo-colonialism. Therefore, the authenticity of the protest movement's demands for genuine democracy and the equitable distribution of resources to improve social conditions must be carefully assessed, as there exists a possibility of manipulation by external forces serving their own interests<sup>(27)</sup>.

Following the remarks made by the President of the Algerian Republic, the army newspaper affiliated with the Algerian military establishment published information regarding the presence of social media pages engaged in a propaganda campaign against Algeria. The report indicated the existence of approximately 500 pages in Morocco, 150 pages in France, and 20 pages in Israel, all promoting the idea of a resurgence of the protest movement on the Algerian streets in 2021. The focal point of their message is the demand for a civilian state rather than a military-led one<sup>(28)</sup>.

Regarding the United States of America, the spokesperson for the Department of Foreign Affairs expressed their support for the protest movement advocating for democracy in Algeria. According to Washington, everyone has the right to freely express their opinions and assemble to peacefully demonstrate<sup>(29)</sup>.

Western media, particularly French outlets, are attempting to distort the reality of the Algerian movement and exploit it to destabilize nations that resist following the agendas of imperialist forces. These media channels have been implicated in several international crises, held responsible for their involvement in the Rwandan genocide, and supporting dictatorial regimes aligned with their interests. Additionally, the role of NGOs should not be overlooked, as they have been actively participating in destabilizing numerous countries and intervening in protest movements to align them with the agendas of these imperialist regimes<sup>(30)</sup>.

### **1-3 The intervention and involvement of Great Powers in the Arab Spring Revolutions of 2011 and 2019 :**

NGOs played a pivotal role in the eruption of the Arab Spring uprisings in the Arab region in 2011, facilitated through the "Middle East Partnership Initiative"<sup>(31)</sup> program (MEPI), an American initiative aimed at empowering citizens in the Middle East and North Africa to foster diverse, thriving communities. Since its establishment, the program has become a flexible mechanism for providing direct support to local populations, with financial assistance closely aligned with U.S. diplomacy. This direct involvement of the United States in the Arab uprisings in the

Middle East and North Africa was evident through NGOs that received resources from U.S. embassies<sup>(32)</sup>.

During the 2019 protests in the Arab regions, commonly referred to as the "return of the Arab Spring," the involvement of US or US-affiliated organizations surfaced, much like during the original Arab Spring in 2011. Sociological studies conducted on the countries affected by the Arab revolutions at that time revealed diverse and distinct characteristics. The participation of British and American intelligence agencies left little doubt about their influence, as the concept of the "Arab Spring" was initially envisioned by the Director of British Secret Intelligence (MI6) back in 2005. This concept drew parallels to the historical revolutions led by Lawrence of Arabia in 1916 against the Ottoman Empire. However, the focus shifted from empowering "Wahhabis and Saudis" during World War I to supporting the Muslim Brotherhood. In 2005, British Prime Minister Tony Blair presented this project to the United States, and it was executed five years later with the assistance of individuals like Jane Sharpe, a student of the Albert Einstein Institute<sup>(33)</sup>.

After the "Arab Spring" failed to achieve its intended objectives against Iran, MI6 withdrew its agents. The initial plan was to counter Iran's growing influence, which extended to countries like Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Yemen after the fall of the Iraqi regime in 2003. This expansion posed a threat to Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the Gulf states, as they were concerned about the Shiite regime's growing power. To counter this threat, the idea was to support the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood to power, as they were seen as a transitional belt for Anglo-Saxon imperialism in the Middle East and North Africa<sup>(34)</sup>.

The "Albert Einstein Institute" in the United States pursued a distinct strategy in the 1980s to destabilize the Middle East and North Africa, utilizing non-violence as a method of political action for various purposes. NATO showed interest in employing this approach to organize resistance in the event of a Soviet invasion. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) continued to utilize this unique technology to overthrow governments perceived as rebellious (Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, and Syria) without attracting significant international dissent. The philosopher Gene Sharp laid the groundwork for the "Albert Einstein Institute," which emphasized the ethics of non-violent means of action, making it difficult to question the legitimacy of such actions. This concept equated non-violence with democracy, effectively downplaying undemocratic covert operations<sup>(35)</sup>.

## 2- Mechanisms for fostering trust between the government and the populace in the new emerging Algeria :

When addressing the topic of establishing trust between the authorities and the citizens, it becomes evident that the level of trust is low, and this is reflected in the citizens' hesitance to participate in various polls. According to the Algerian authorities, the official voter turnout was 39.83% in the presidential elections, 23% in the referendum on amending the constitution, and 23.7% in the legislative elections.

The given percentages indicate that the Algerian people have consistently boycotted the entire electoral process since the fall of the Bouteflika regime. Moreover, these figures reflect the majority's steadfast commitment to peaceful protest, without resorting to disrupting the electoral process or pressuring fellow Algerians who support it. This demonstrates the people's political and social consciousness and their maturity, as mentioned earlier, by avoiding violence and not falling into the regime's attempts to reignite the protest movement<sup>(36)</sup>.

One crucial aspect to foster trust between the regime and the protesters is reaching an agreement with the vibrant forces of the nation, who have been peacefully expressing their positions and demands since 2019 through the Hirak demonstrations. Engaging in constructive discussions and negotiations, coupled with a genuine transformation of democracy, can serve as a solid foundation to build mutual trust and address the concerns of both sides<sup>(37)</sup>. Additionally, preparations could be made to establish a transitional committee, a transitional national government, or a national consensus body, followed by the election of the Algerian Constituent Assembly<sup>(38)</sup>, or an alternative approach might involve a transitional phase through a national conference<sup>(39)</sup>.

Within the protest movement, various groups, including "Call 22," an independent initiative advocating for national consultation, are demanding a commitment to peaceful mobilization. Their objectives include securing "the right of Algerian men and women to establish a new political contract reflecting the popular will" and ensuring "full sovereignty of the people within a civil and democratic system undergoing a transition that upholds state continuity and the citizens' right to construct institutions and freely elect public officials."<sup>(40)</sup>

Governance encompasses a multitude of concepts and is applicable across diverse regions, both small and large. It involves various democratic principles, sometimes with conflicting ideas, highlighting the existence of numerous governance models. Nevertheless, recognizing the world's diversity, we can find

common ground among these forms. This entails welcoming new participants in the decision-making process and subsequently diminishing the dominating authority of ruling regimes within each state<sup>(41)</sup>.

Hence, fostering trust between the ruling authority and the protest movement in Algeria requires embracing the concept of compromise. Currently, both parties lack this mechanism, with each perceiving the other as an adversary that must be eliminated.

The military should maintain its professionalism and adhere to its constitutionally designated roles, especially considering the substantial popular support it enjoys. Moreover, it is not acceptable for the ruling authority to use foreign interference as an excuse to evade negotiations with the protesters. The people are well aware of such external influences and remain cautious of any attempts to destabilize the country.

### **Conclusion :**

Since gaining independence, the political, economic, and social situation of the Algerian people has been in decline, negatively impacting citizens' lives, except for a period during President Bouteflika's tenure. Algeria was able to amass a substantial reserve of hard currency, surpassing \$1000 billion, which presented an opportunity for genuine economic progress. However, this national wealth was mostly appropriated by a small group of bourgeois individuals, prompting the eruption of protests across Algeria. The demands of these protests included a genuine democratic transition, equitable distribution of the country's wealth among its people, increased transparency in political affairs, and holding those responsible for squandering public funds accountable. The lack of trust, not only among the ruling authorities and protesters but also within society, has exacerbated the country's political, economic, and social crisis.

The persistent crisis between the majority of the people and the ruling authority in Algeria is due to the lack of a culture and tradition of compromise. Despite the suppression and weakening of the protest movement, the underlying tension remains, and the situation can easily escalate for any reason, even something as basic as the absence of essential resources for the Algerian citizens, as seen in the events of October 1988. To avoid repeating past mistakes, both the authorities and the people must work towards creating a conducive environment for dialogue and negotiations. However, this should not compromise the principle of a peaceful transition to democracy, transparency in governance, and holding those in power accountable through an independent judiciary.

In the face of any future crisis, similar to the one that triggered the eruption of the Algerian street, the ruling regime should take the initiative to propose viable solutions. This includes ensuring the protection of public freedoms and fundamental rights, as enshrined in the Constitution, in accordance with Article 34 of the 2020 Constitution.

On the other hand, the Algerian people should learn from past mistakes and, if necessary, appoint representatives when expressing their grievances, demonstrating a willingness to negotiate and find a middle ground to resolve disputes. In the event of any future political or socio-economic crisis, the Algerian street must also consider the current security conditions in Algeria, especially with regards to the proximity of the Zionist presence at the country's borders due to the Arab-Israeli normalization campaigns. It is essential to ensure that the state institutions of Algeria remain stable and not subject to destabilization.

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