
Variations among North African Military Regimes

Algeria and Egypt Compared

ABSTRACT This article explores the differences between two North African military regimes—Egypt and Algeria—which have been selected due to the continuity of military dominance of the political systems. Still, variations have marked their political development. In particular, the Algerian army’s approach to civilian institutions changed after a civilian president was chosen in 1999. This was not the case in Egypt after the demise of the Hosni Mubarak regime of 2011. Other important variations are to be found in the way power has been distributed among the military apparatuses themselves. In the case of Egypt, a principle of collegiality has been generally preserved within a body, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), which is absent in the case of Algeria, where conflicts between military opposed factions are more likely to arise in case of crisis. How differences generally impact the stability of military rule in these two cases is the main contribution of this paper. **KEYWORDS** military power, authoritarianism, dominant coalitions, civil–military relations, North Africa

INTRODUCTION

Since the fall of Ben Ali’s regime in Tunisia (January 2011), authoritarianism in the Arab world has been the theatre of radical challenges, widespread popular protests, collapse of states and civil wars.

Nonetheless, after ten years, with the exception of the Tunisian transition, the overall impact of the “Arab Spring” is disappointing. It has rather produced a readjustment of the regimes in power (Heydemann 2013; Stacher 2015; Hinnebusch 2016, 2018), characterized by a variation between reforms managed from the top—Morocco—to violent self-entrenchment of the regimes in office (Syria), and, in one case, a military counter coup (Egypt).

According to Middle Eastern studies in general, a common feature of Middle East and North Africa (MENA) regimes before the Arab Spring was

the existence of extensive instruments of coercion (Bellin 2004; Barany 2011). These apparatuses were identified as a factor of regime stability and endurance, and therefore the most important obstacle to a possible transition to democracy (Cook 2007; Heydemann 2013; Hinnebusch 2016).

The aim of this paper is to describe and evaluate the political role of the military apparatuses within two North African regimes. Egypt and Algeria were using an “almost similar” case design.¹ Nonetheless, together with the many similarities, there are crucial differences in the power structures, the interactions of military power with the economic sphere, in the degree of “fusion” of the military apparatus with other important organizations, and finally the degree of personalization and factionalism as opposed to cohesion and collegiality. Since resources are not distributed equally within the military, it is crucial to ascertain how much the competition of factions undermine cohesion and collegiality within the armed forces (AFs). Cohesion and collegiality are considered as safeguards for the conservation and prominence of the role of the military as a unified institution. In particular, the impact that factionalism has on the likelihood of intervention, directly after a period of crisis, rather than acting indirectly, is assessed in this study. The article argues that collegiality limits, at least in the short term, the impact of crises during succession at the top of the political system. Crises of this kind occurred twice in Algeria (1988–92² and 2019–present)³ and once in Egypt

1. Other cases were originally considered but excluded after scrutiny. Because of the particular political development after independence, the Tunisian army was never politicized and was kept separate from government and the authoritarian party with no role played by army members in the economic sector (Camau and Geisser 2003). In 2011, after favoring the regime change, the army ceased to interfere with the political power. Further attempts or plans of military coups during the political transition, between 2011 and 2014, are a matter of speculation and were deterred by measures taken by the coalitional governments (see Kinney 2021 for more details). In the case of Morocco, the army is completely subject to the authority of the monarch (Saidy 2018). In this case, the political arena is defined by the king’s intervention (Leveau 1993). Finally, the collapse of the Libyan state after 2011 demonstrate how weak the military/repressive apparatuses were, given their fragmentation and internal factionalism (Vandewalle 2006).

2. In 1989, the political opening (*infitah*) that followed 1988 social unrest led to the proliferation of political parties, among them the *Front Islamique du Salut* (FIS). Popular and radical, the FIS won the local elections on 12 June 1990, and was going to win the legislatives in 1991, but the army interrupted the electoral process and took effective control of the country in 1992, banning the FIS and putting its cadres in jail.

3. In order to avoid being entangled in the power dynamics created by the Algerian political crisis after the demise of Bouteflika’s presidency, it was decided to limit the analysis to 2019. Notwithstanding, developments that followed are interesting in the perspective of the persistence of the military as a political factor. So far, these developments fit well into the framework characterized by the political dominance of the army.

(2011–13). Such crises tested the ability of the political system to survive and, in particular, the role the military was called upon to play.

This paper also argues that these differences initially developed due to the measures that the military adopted in order to adapt to the changing international environment. This gradual adaptation started to develop during the 1970s and 1980s and produced a transition from populist authoritarianism (PA) to post-populist authoritarianism (PPA) (Hinnebusch 2006). Adaptations were different because of differences of the impact of the economic reforms those systems were forced to adopt. Succession crises intervened further with the process.⁴ How these differences will affect the stability of military rule is the main empirical and theoretical contribution of this paper.

The paper is organized as follows. After a critical scrutiny of the literature on the military factor in politics, the main pillars of the dominant coalitions⁵ in the two countries are identified in the second section. How the armies have successfully maintained their crucial political role during economic liberalization and the transition from PA to PPA is stressed in the third section. Power relations between the various components of these coalitions and, in particular, within the military are analysed in the fourth section, which is split in several sub-sections. The aim is to assess the degree of autonomy and/or mutual interpenetration between these components. In other words, the problem is to verify whether other sectors, for example, the economic one, were subject to direct or indirect control by members of the military or part of them (e.g., military intelligence). Here it is argued that direct control gives the military stronger power in relation to civilian institutions, which are consequently completely subjugated.

Following Finer (1962, 149), “military regimes” are here considered those where “there must be evidence that the government is in the hands of the AFs or that it acts entirely or predominantly at their command.” “Military dominance” is therefore intended both as indirect or direct control of, and influence on, government activity. The same AFs could exercise direct control in certain domains (e.g., the economy) and an indirect control in others (e.g., the bureaucracy) at the same instant. The degree of control/influence could be complete or limited. In the latter case, the specific domain enjoys a certain

4. The 1988 Algerian crisis was the result of an economic crisis and the social costs of liberalization, while the 2011 Egyptian crisis and the 2019 Algerian one were also intensified by a crisis of succession.

5. “Dominant coalitions” are here considered to be made of institutions that are necessary for regime survival (Acemoglu et al. 2008, 987).

but limited autonomy. Time span is also important. Here it is argued that military dominance is a long story that dates back to the early 1950s, in the case of Egypt, and since independence, in the case of Algeria (1962). That the military “retreats” during delicate times (Kinney 2021) or seems to do so (Albrecht and Bishara 2011), just to come back as powerful as ever (Stacher 2020), is again evidence of the difficulty of getting rid of them when so much power has been accumulated by them or their interests are so entrenched, while at the same time civilian institutions and society are so weak and divided.⁶

The police and the many intelligence agencies also pose a problem, since the former and some of the latter generally depend on ministries of the interior and enjoy a certain autonomy. However, many of them have also been infiltrated by the military hierarchy. Their position is therefore generally subordinate, but the degree of subordination or autonomy from the military must also be ascertained.⁷

THE MILITARY FACTOR AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT IN LITERATURE

The relevance of the military factor in the political development of Arab regimes is widely covered in the literature. The military is considered an obstacle to democracy (Bellin 2004; Albrecht and Bishara 2011) or as having specific interests to defend when facing major changes in the economic and international spheres (Heydemann 2004, 2007; Cook 2007; Richter 2007; Kinney 2021). Owen (1992/2004) counts the military and security apparatuses among the agents of state formation, and Ayubi (1980, 2009) focuses on the role of extensive bureaucracies and hegemonic parties. In particular, this was the case of those republican regimes (Kamrava 1998) that emerged during the PA phase described by Hinnebusch (2006, 380). PA developed between the 1950s and the 1960s, founded on an alliance between an emerging urban middle class, the working class and the peasantry, at the expense of the old oligarchy.

Egypt and Algeria are no exceptions. In Egypt, the army was at the core of the modernization efforts undertaken by the state. Both government

6. Kinney (2021) explains how much the Tunisian successful transition is in debt to the elite consensus and cohesion within civil society after 2011. This condition was missing in Egypt.

7. The police and internal security have been understudied in research in civil–military relations. Their precise relation with the military certainly deserves further inquiries, which are outside the scope of the present analysis.

expenditures and bureaucracies increased after the military coup of 1952 (Harb 2003, 274; Owen 1992/2004, 23–28). Similar developments occurred in Algeria after Boumédiène’s military coup in 1965 (Owen 1992/2004, 25). Parallel to state expansion, the army similarly expanded. It is not by chance, therefore, that Nasser’s Egypt is found in the literature as a leading case of the role of the military as state-builders (Abdel-Malek 1968; Vatikiotis 1961, 1968). The evidence of the political role of the military has driven important academic investigations on the “militarization” of the state, most recently by Abul-Magd (2017).

Algeria is treated differently.⁸ The reason for this is, on the one hand, the prolonged political role of the *Front de libération nationale* (FLN), which was a liberation movement with its own military wing, the *Armée de libération nationale* (ALN), was still a civilian political organization, and, on the other, there was the rise of a civilian presidency after 1999. Although, since Houari Boumédiène (1965–78) the ALN dominated the Algerian political system, there is little reflection of this dominance in the literature after the 1999 election of Bouteflika, a civilian, as President of the Republic. Works that appeared before 1999 highlighted the political role of the military (Zartman 1972; Knauss 1980; Entelis 1983; Harbi 1985), but generally thereafter works on the political elite, such as that of Werenfels (2007), question the role of the AFs, and include the military elite only among others, assigning it a crucial but not a dominant role. Cook (2007, 41) makes the exception. He clearly states that the power system is designed by and for the benefit of the military elite and its “allies,” that is, the political and economic elite, but considered the latter as dominated by the AFs. Bouteflika’s rise to power indeed questions the dominance of Algeria’s military apparatus in literature.

MILITARY ADAPTATION TO REGIME TRANSFORMATIONS

Authoritarian regimes are built around dominant coalitions (Acemoglu et al. 2008). Coalitions are made up of bureaucracies that ensure the functioning of the state machine, whether with dominant or single parties. These deal with citizens’ demands and co-opt crucial social sectors, but the military and repressive apparatuses are entrusted with the monopoly of violence and the role of controlling civil society and crushing opposition. Within coalitions, the relations between these three institutions are unequal. In Egypt and

8. See Addi (2001, 162) on this point.

Algeria, the dominant role of the AFs developed during the PA phase (Hinnebusch 2006, 380). At that time, the AFs' dominance took the form of a "fusion" between organizations. Generally, members of the military were found in the other two institutions—the dominant party and the bureaucracy—in top positions in order to ensure a minimum degree of control of the same. "Fusion" does not mean that the party or the bureaucracy did not retain a certain degree of autonomy, but that they were subject to a form of direct control by the AFs. For example, under Nasser, although declining, the numbers of military in the Arab Socialist Union (ASU) secretariat were significant.⁹ In Algeria, during the PA, both Boumédiène and Bendjedid held the office of FLN president, and the party secretaries who succeeded each other after the Boumédiène coup (1965) have almost all inevitably played a role in the ALN.

That the AFs, at certain historical junctures, seem to "withdraw" from politics into protected "enclaves" (Springborg 1998; Harb 2003, 269–90; Cook 2007, 14–31) and accentuate their "professionalization" has not altered their dominance, although their withdrawal may have led to an increase in autonomy and, as a result, of influence, of parties and/or bureaucracies. This happened during the following PPA phase, when the role of the parties changed, and from an instrument of mobilization, they became mere patronage machines.

The PPA was marked by various degrees of political and economic liberalization over a long time span which varies also in intensity according to the country. Hinnebusch (2006, 386) discusses "several structural adaptations" to point to the many differences that can be found in Arab countries.

As far as political liberalization is concerned, and in particular the relations between the party and the military, in the case of Egypt, party rules in the National Democratic Party (NDP), the organization that replaced the ASU, forbade the military to play an active role in the party. Since Anwar Sadat (1970–81), the party was there only to provide a linkage between the regime and the population. The aim was to ensure stability and support through non-free and manipulated elections. In Algeria, rules were different and the regime remained a single-party system until the 1988–89 crisis, but the military intervention of 1992, which annulled the election results of the same year, prompted the adoption of a new constitution (1996) which allowed a façade of multi-partyism. The FLN ceased to be the sole reference

9. A total of 75.0 percent in 1962 and 42.9 percent in 1970 (Harb 2003, 274).

for the AFs, and the acting military were banned from taking an active part in party politics in Algeria, as had happened previously in Egypt.

Apart from the many differences, in both cases they contributed to a general decline of the party as decision-maker to the benefit of technocrats who were called up to fill the top positions in the bureaucracy and from these positions were imposed on the same parties. Governments' technocratization also caused a decline in the number of men in uniform in government positions, with the notable exception of the two crucial ministries of Defense and the Interior.¹⁰ Men in uniform, however, maintained in Egypt crucial political roles in the governorates.¹¹

With the transition from the PA to the PPA phase, an important role was also given to the private economy because of economic liberalization.¹² Even if the business community gained influence, its position, in both cases, remained, nonetheless, strongly subordinated to political power and to the military, although such subordination varied. Given the lesser importance of the private sector in Algeria, the business community proved to be very weak, while in Egypt, its role was much more important, at least under Mubarak (1981–2011). In such a case, the army reacted by carving out a direct economic role by producing goods, to a point today where the functioning of some market sectors is altered, and where military contractors benefit from preferential treatment. This trend became macroscopic after the coup of 2013 (Springborg 2017; Sayigh 2019), since, with the 2011 revolution, the business community lost its direct link to the party through Gamal, the son of Mubarak, himself a prominent businessman, who was put under arrest.¹³

10. While at the end of the 1960s military men holding ministerial portfolios were between forty-one and sixty-six percent (Harb 2003, 277–78), by the end of Sadat presidency they were reduced to thirteen (Cooper 1982, 144). After Boumédiène's coup, during the 1960s, in Algerian governments, roughly one-third were covered by military men (Quandt 1969, 251).

11. In 1964, under Nasser, among twenty-six governors, twenty-two came from the military ranks. In 1980, under Mubarak, there were only five (Harb 2003, 275). However, between 2000 and 2011, they rose again to forty-four percent (plus twenty who came from police ranks) (Bou Nassif 2013, 517). Governors are appointed by presidential decree and traditionally dominate local politics (Sayigh 2012, 13–14).

12. Economic liberalization started in 1974 in Egypt, while the first attempts to bring in economic liberalization in Algeria date to 1981. However, in Algeria, economic liberalization was less profound during the 1980s and seriously came back only in 1994 when a Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) was adopted (Bustos 2003). In the case of Egypt, the impact of economic liberalization on the development of an autonomous private sector is seriously questioned by Osman (2010).

13. Estimation of the control of the civil economic sector by the military is put as high as a thirty to forty percent and even more by some (Parsons and Taylor 2011, 20). According to Sayigh (2019,

This phenomenon is unparalleled in the Algerian case.¹⁴ Here the weakness of the business community does not derive from the military occupation of the economy but rather by the major strength of the public sector (El Mestari 2018). In this case, the military is less directly involved but single or associated members of the business community need the protection of military factions or party factions sponsored by different military ones.¹⁵ The military and the intelligence services (the ubiquitous *Département du Reinsegnement et de la Sécurité*—DRS) benefit more from the control of rent distribution, in Algeria's case (Bourrat 2012, 33; Martín Muñoz 1999, 92).

In Egypt, sources of rent are more diversified and are found in important international financial and military aid, which are largely kept outside of parliamentary scrutiny,¹⁶ and in the control of the Suez Canal. It is through the direct or indirect oversight of rent that military control of the state is exercised. How much of these resources is directly controlled by the military is important.¹⁷ It indicates the lack of dependency that the AFs enjoy in relation to civilian institutions (the bureaucracy, the executive and parliament). This degree of autonomy is more pronounced or more evident in the Egyptian case, while the opacity is greater in the Algerian one.

The role of Gamal Mubarak indicates a degree of power personalization that reached its pick under the presidency of Hosni Mubarak and has no equal in Algeria due to the lesser importance of the private sector.

27–29), such estimates are based on little data and probably inflated since they confuse ownership, control, and influence. It remains that the military has become an effective and central actor that can reshape the entire political economy of Egypt for its own benefit.

14. Werenfels (2007, 64) includes the Algerian business class among the “core élite.” However, its power is doubtful and rather limited by the influence of the military's exercise of control over it. Most of the leading businessmen associated in 2000 with the *Forum des Chefs d'Entreprise* (FCE) in order to lobby those in government. In April 2019, Ali Haddad, the FCE president, was arrested and charged with fraud and corruption.

15. The International Crisis Group (ICG) (2018, 10) mentions “eleven generals who control the most important import markets.” Imports are highly attractive because of the weak industrial base of Algeria. Military officers employed by the *Ministère de l'armement et des liaisons générales* (MALG) entered into business activity during the 1990s (Garçon 1999, 346).

16. According to the Constitution, the military budget is discussed by a mixed governmental–military body, the National Defence Council (NDC), which also includes Members of Parliament (the Speaker and the heads of certain parliamentary committees). In fact, civilians only play a ritual control.

17. According to Parsons and Taylor (2011, 4) about 41.6 percent of military expenditure between 2006 and 2009 (eighty percent according to Gaub 2014, 2, in 2012) were covered by US aid and constituted additional extra-budget resources, on which the Egyptian Parliament had no control.

TABLE 1. The Transition from Populist Authoritarianism (PA) to Post-Populist Authoritarianism (PPA) in Egypt since the Late 1970s and in Algeria since the Late 1980s

Country	PA	PPA
<i>Egypt</i>		
Fusion of army and party	Yes (the army dominates)	No longer maintained
Fusion of army and bureaucracy	Yes (the army dominates)	Weakened
Fusion of party and bureaucracy	Yes (the party dominates)	Weakened
<i>Algeria</i>		
Fusion of army and party	Yes (the army dominates)	No longer maintained
Fusion of army and bureaucracy	Yes (the army dominates)	No longer maintained
Fusion of party and bureaucracy	Yes (the party dominates)	Weakened

Neo-patrimonialism (Brownlee 2002) had poor effects on the ultimate power of the AFs, however, as is evident from the outcomes of the 2011 crisis in Egypt. These were the demise of both the party in power and Mubarak’s family and the reassertion of the military. The “retirement in the barracks” of the military was therefore misleading. Even if governments were made of a mix of technocrats and top civilian bureaucrats in addition to a new cohort of influential businessmen who emerged with powerful access to the very top of the political system, Mubarak remained a military man attached to the military apparatuses.

Table 1 summarizes changes in the coalitions as a result of political and economic “liberalization.” Since “liberalization” followed different sequences and produced different social and political outcomes at different times, the two cases are placed in two different rows.

The most outstanding and common result was the new role that the army was willing to play within the dominant party: it simply decided to disengage from party politics, limiting its role to a distant form of control. In general, the military took a position that was one of indirect control over civilian institutions rather than having their men at the top of them, with the major exception of the military political economy in Egypt.

Another variation emerged as the result of the severe political and social crisis produced by transition in the case of Algeria. The crisis started in 1988

and was concluded in 1999. In 1999, a civilian president was elected—Bouteflika—with the endorsement of the military.¹⁸

As far as dominant parties were concerned, it is enough to assume that elections and party systems were maintained only to serve secondary purposes: (1) to maintain a resemblance of democratic legitimacy (Szmolka 2006) and (2) to ensure a certain degree of co-optation of civilian staff and civil society.

The main difference between the two countries is that Algeria, which was a one-party system centered around the FLN since independence (1962) until the crisis of 1988,¹⁹ is now a two-party system structured around parties which end up forming coalitions: the FLN and the *Rassemblement National Démocratique* (RND), which was formed in 1997 by supporters of the former President Liamine Zeroual (1994–99). The same RND was created by the military in order to control and “punish” the FLN, at that time represented by Abdelhamid Mehri, for its soft approach to the Islamic opposition.²⁰ The entire party system²¹ is still heavily infiltrated by the intelligence services, which also regulates its functioning (Bourrat 2018, 27).²²

Similar solutions have not yet been pursued in Egypt after Abdel Fattah al-Sisi’s coup. Both regime crises jeopardized the relation between the dominant party and the AFs. The immediate result was, in this case, the collapse of the ruling party and its dissolution. This has not yet been followed by the creation of a new ruling one, despite the recent requests of parliamentary

18. He was actually chosen as a candidate by the military (Bourrat 2012, 28), which returned to their barracks, starting a “pacted transition” with civilians, but keeping their control over the defense budget and foreign policy.

19. The 1988 crisis that ended with the military coup of January 1992 was caused by an important economic crisis: the decline in oil prices, which created a condition of social unrest, and the amendments of the Algerian Constitution (November 1988) allowing other parties than the ruling FLN to operate legally.

20. In 1995, Mehri, at that time Secretary General of the FLN, supported the Sant’Egidio platform with the aim of ending the civil war and starting a reconciliation process with the FIS. He was expelled from the party central committee for that.

21. Since 2017, the government block—the FLN plus the RND—can control an absolute majority in Parliament. Some “religious” parties were also admitted into government coalitions, but before the 2012 elections they decided to create an opposition alliance.

22. Despite a decline in legitimacy, the FLN remains an important instrument of redistribution. The FLN, thanks to the control of certain organizations, in particular, the *Union Générale des Travailleurs Algériens*, the *Union Nationale des Paysans Algériens*, and the *Organisation Nationale des Moudjabidines*, has a broader constituency than that of the RND, which is limited to the administration. Party dualism satisfied the factional game in the military, preventing that one of the two prevailed, while representing, at the same time, different constituencies.

groups in this regard (*The Arab Weekly* 2018). In Egypt today there is no longer any ancillary party, of any significance, to the military. In the final analysis, parties remain largely unpopular, but at the disposal of the military. They could be easily disbanded, outlawed, or sacrificed in response to popular protests and their cadres charged with corruption by a complaisant judiciary.

As far as the second variation is concerned, in Egypt, presidents were always military men, except for the short interlude under Morsi (June 2012–July 2013), while in Algeria, military presidencies ended with Zeroual. Since 1999, a different solution was found in the figure of Bouteflika, who maintained this role until 2019, staying for a long twenty years in power. This difference is of some importance and must be explored. According to the major literature on Algeria, it created a condition of balance between the AFs and civilian power (Werenfels 2007; Lowi 2009, xi). Actually, here it is argued that such a relation is structured differently from Egypt, hiding the real role of AFs.²³ In particular, it is asserted that such a solution cannot be fully understood without looking to the factional struggle within the Algerian AFs.

VARIATIONS IN MILITARY REGULATIONS: COHESION VERSUS FACTIONALISM IN THE ARMED FORCES

AFs in the two countries are robust and the military apparatuses are resilient. Data may differ, but in Algeria the army was estimated to consist of about 130,000 soldiers, according to Global Fire Power (2021) to which at least 130,000 men in the National Gendarmerie must be added.

In Egypt, about 440,000 members of the AFs were recorded.²⁴ Another 400,000–450,000 members of the Central Security Forces (CSF; *Al-Amn al-Markazi*) must be added to the final count. Their functions overlap with those of the police. They are formally employed by the Ministry of the Interior. Although the ministry has a defined role with respect to that of the Ministry of Defense and a separate staff, its position is subordinate to the latter.²⁵ First, the existence of police units, dependent on the Ministry of

23. For similar arguments, as far as the Algerian political system is concerned, see Ghanem-Yazbeck (2018).

24. This figure is an estimation of active personnel according to the 2020 Global Fire Power.

25. In Egypt, the Ministry of the Interior employed about 1.5 million personnel (ICG 2011, 1), although not all of them were men in uniform. In Algeria, between 130,000 and 200,000 belonged to the *Sûreté nationale* (Ministry of the Interior).

Defense, implies an overlap of roles with those of the Interior. This is further reinforced by the role played by the intelligence services (*mukhabarat*). Second, the military is often positioned at the top of the Ministry of the Interior and men trained in the AFs fill medium rank positions in the same (Sayigh 2012, 5).

Egypt: The Role of AFs' Governing Body

In Egypt, the SCAF is the highest decision-making body of the AFs, chaired by the President of the Republic. It is upon this organ that we must concentrate. The SCAF headed Egypt after the fall of Mubarak for more than a year (February 2011–June 2012), before the election of Morsi. Today, it consists of twenty-six senior officers and includes, in addition to the Minister of Defense (MoD) (military), the Chief of Staff (CoS) and commanders of various armies/divisions, and other prominent officers.

The SCAF is called upon to play a political role in emergency situations. It was founded by Nasser in 1968. Morsi suppressed it with the intention of depriving the military of a formal political body, but that was not enough to prevent the 2013 coup and it was reconstituted after this event. According to the Constitution, it would no longer be chaired by the President of the Republic but by the MoD, who should be appointed with the approval of the SCAF. In fact, al-Sisi has profoundly modified it since 2013 (Gamal 2018), forcing the resignation of as many as thirty-three members, not least Sedki Sobhi, MoD from March 2014 to June 2018 (Gamal 2018, 2).²⁶ In so doing, not only has the composition of the SCAF been altered, but also so has the command chain, since SCAF is made of the commanders of operational armies. The SCAF is ultimately an instrument for co-opting and promoting the highest ranks of the AFs in the decision-making process. Those who ascend to or leave this body give an interesting representation of the factional conflict in the AFs, but this has not altered the role of SCAF, namely, to ensure cohesion within the AFs. By changing its composition, al-Sisi wanted to assure its loyalty, imposing his dominance. However, that one man exerts more power than others did not reduce his dependence on the top ranks of the AFs. The recent promotion of Ahmed Zaki as the new

26. Since 2013, only three SCAF members maintained their posts. The most important among them is Lt. Gen. Mohamed Farid Hegazi, who is now CoS. He is the only man with the authority to give orders to troops on the ground.

MoD demonstrates this.²⁷ This presidential intervention in the composition of SCAF is not new, however, and is not contrary to previous practices.²⁸

According to several authors, including Parsons and Taylor (2011, 18), co-optation is indeed the most important instrument of cohesion in the Egyptian army, together with extensive economic privileges and government posts granted to senior officers. It was rather the slow rhythm of turnover at the top, that, in the past, produced dissatisfaction by generals of the “second row” against flag officers, thus challenging established hierarchies rather than cohesion. The 2011 revolution was therefore an important opportunity for a changeover from which al-Sisi benefited.²⁹ Nevertheless, the extensive changes at the top made by al-Sisi since 2013 did not benefit younger officers, since men in their sixties were replaced by men of the same age, judged more reliable and loyal. The concentration of privileges at the top could thus fuel new resentments (Transparency International (TI) 2018, 16) but it will be difficult to undermine the dominance of the AFs over the political system.

Algeria: Solving the Problem of Factionalism in the AFs in the Absence of a Governing Body

The Algerian AFs were never ruled by a body such as the SCAF. The *Haut Comité d'État*, which ruled over the country during the transition between January 1992 and January 1994, was rather a mixed civil–military body, albeit with the creation of the AFs’ high command under the leadership of Khaled Nezzar, who was CoS at the time (Lowi 2009, 121). The results have been less cohesive within the AFs compared with Egypt. Under Boumédiène, the control at the top was strictly hierarchical and cohesion kept under the *Conseil de la Révolution*, which was disbanded in 1979. Thereafter, Algeria was informally ruled by the top echelons of the army. Their power emerged

27. Changes that occurred under al-Sisi saw the promotion of prominent members of the Republican Guard, which is a unit under the direct control of the presidency and not under the CoS. The Republican Guard is the only unit admitted into Cairo and is clearly intended to protect the presidency. In Algeria, the Republican Guard has much smaller numbers and does not play a particular role in the power dynamics within the army.

28. Under Sadat, too (Harb 2003, 276), and Mubarak, officers of the Republican Guard were promoted to top positions.

29. In 2011, hardliners were found among the youngest military staff (Parsons and Taylor 2011, 16). However, it was precisely the youngest among them WHO were to benefit from the revolution (al-Sisi was the youngest member of the SCAF), and this created an opportunity to get rid of the older generation.

clearly during the 1988–92 crisis, when the party (the FLN) also entered a state of crisis. This same crisis, however, showed how deeply divided the AFs were themselves. In 1992, Benjedid, a military man, considered ambiguous towards the FIS, was forced to resign by other top generals.

Formally, it is the President of the Republic who assumes the functions of MoD: Bouteflika since 2002. This has affected collegiality within the AFs, since competition between factions would no longer be resolved within the AFs themselves but would have to find a balance of power elsewhere. How this role in recent years has been played by Bouteflika, some argue (Werenfels 2007, 55; Bourrat 2012), is, however, ambiguous. This Algerian peculiarity deserves some attention, but serious doubts remain about the real power of the president on security issues.

In Algeria, the state developed from a national movement (FLN) with a dominant military branch (ALN). Since the start, factionalism in the Armée Nationale Populaire (ANP) was a feature that characterized the Algerian regime. Such factions developed during the struggle for independence and were structured thereafter. They were essentially two: one that came out of the *maquis* and one made by those who deserted the French army (*déserteurs de l'armée Française*—DAF). The latter dominated the system from the 1989 crisis to 2004, the year of the second election of Bouteflika, although Zeroual came from the former.³⁰ They alternated power up to the first Bouteflika term in office and found in his presidency an initial balance. Bouteflika proved to be very able to float between these factions. At the same time, his civilian profile ensured that the military would dominate, as always, behind the scenes of the civilian presidency. In fact, it was in the intelligence apparatus, the DRS, that the system found its unstable equilibrium, at least until 2016. And it is precisely thanks to the relationship with the DRS that Bouteflika managed to emerge as a point of balance in the system, because he was supported by the former (Bourrat 2012, 29). This solution was very different from what characterizes Egypt where AFs prefer to act directly.

Although the DRS' cadres were made up by senior military officers, its decisions tended to prevail over the top of the AFs, and not vice versa. During the long term of office of Bouteflika (1999–2019), the DRS was the only

30. Boumédiène had assigned to the DAF the important task of reorganizing the army (Quandt 1972). In Algeria, the *janviéristes* are known as the authors of the 1992 coup and the most ardent “eradicators” of the Islamic opposition. They included not only old members of the DAF faction but also many young officers (Bourrat 2012, 25) who are now prominent in the top echelons of the army.

TABLE 2. Ministers of Defense and Chiefs of Staff in Algeria

President	Years	Minister of Defense (MoD)	Chief of Staff (CoS)
Ben Bella	1963-65		
Boumédiène	1965-79	Boumédiène	Boumédiène (1967-79)
Bendjedid	1979-92	Bendjedid (1979-90) Nezzar (1990-93)	Various (1984-90) Guenazia (1990-93)
Zéroual	1994-99	Zéroual (1993-99)	Mohamed Lamari (1993-2004)
Bouteflika	1999-2019	Bouteflika (since 2002) Guenazia (2005-13) Gaïd Salah (2013-)	Gaïd Salah (2004-)

security organization under the same director—Mohamed Mediène “Toufik”—from 1990 to 2016.³¹ Thanks to this continuity in office, the DRS was able to carve out for itself a political role which it disputed successfully with the CoS. During the same period, the senior ranks of the AFs were subject to readjustments, in particular the CoS,³² which remained nevertheless an important actor (table 2). CoSs were imposed by the AFs on the president, and not the contrary, even if the presidency was covered by military personnel, as in the case of Benjedid and Zeroual.³³ Since 2002, defense was formally put under the control of Bouteflika, as it was under Boumédiène, but contrary to the latter, this control should be understood as a mere façade. Interpreting this as a dominance of the president over the military would be a wrong since it does not take into account the role of the DRS. Furthermore, since 2005, a vice-minister actually runs the ministry and is a military man.

Finally, in January 2016, the power of the DRS was finally curtailed when Gen. Mediène was dismissed and the DRS transformed into the *Département de Surveillance et de Sécurité* (DSS), separated from the AFs and placed under

31. The DRS was actually created in 1990 for “Toufik” by Khaled Nezzar, who was also a member of the DAF faction. The DRS centralized all the intelligence sector previously divided between different agencies. Bendjedid, at that time still President, lost control over the intelligence services to the advantage of the Minister of the Defense, Nezzar.

32. The CoS was created by Houari Boumédiène in 1960 when the ALN became the ANP. Boumédiène weakened the political branch of the ALN and the army became increasingly autonomous from the party.

33. In the case of Benjedid, in 1990 he was forced to give up the Ministry of Defense to Nezzar.

the direction of the presidency.³⁴ It is assumed that this transformation is probably formal because it is doubtful that there would be the acquiescence of both the AFs and the DSS to the presidency. Rather, it was the demise of Toufik's power that reduced the role of the DRS and brought the CoS back to center stage, as it had been until 2004, at that time in balance with the DRS. The same extensive dismissals forced through by Bouteflika on the military in the summer of 2018 are to be doubted as they came from an independent decision by the president, which is ambiguous given his precarious health condition. It was rather a struggle of succession that saw on one side the CoS, Ahmed Gaïd Salah, in opposition to the DSS director, Othman Tartag (*Mondafrique* 2018), who in April 2019 was forced by the same Gaïd Salah to resign together with Bouteflika. As a result of this crisis at the top, the DSS was finally put under the control of the Ministry of the Defense (i.e., the CoS), by a decree of the acting President Abdelkader Bensalah in December 2019.

The Intelligence Services in Relation to the AFs

In Algeria, the intelligence services have played a crucial role at the top of power relations. Although called upon to undertake important tasks also in Egypt, the relation of the many agencies with the AFs have been differently arranged and generally dominated by the latter. In Egypt, the intelligence services are made up of three independent agencies: one has strictly military tasks; one is controlled by the Ministry of the Interior; and, the most important of all, is the General Intelligence Directorate (GID; *Gihaz El Mukhabarat El 'Amma*), known to the public as *mukhabarat*. This is an agency constituted in majority by the military and who report directly to the President of the Republic. From 1993 to 2011, the GID was directed by Maj. Gen. Omar Suleiman, for long time designated as a possible successor of Mubarak and the de facto right-hand man of the latter. Since June 2018, the GID direction has been taken over by Maj. Gen. Abbas Kamel who comes from the CoS. The GID operates within the country and is seen as an important instrument of the military in internal affairs (Parsons and Taylor 2011, 18).

Therefore, it should be pointed out that even, in this way, in Egypt, military dominance over both internal affairs and intelligence services has

34. In September 2013, the AFs gained again their own intelligence branch—*Direction central de la sécurité de l'armée* (DCSA)—placed so far under the DRS.

been established. Hence, if it is true that under Mubarak the budget of the Ministry of the Interior equaled that of Defense (Sayigh 2012, 6–7), this was compensated by the growth of military personnel functions in the Ministry of Interior (Sayigh 2012, 5). This “fusion” did not entirely rule out tensions between the two ministries, as the events of the 2011 crisis demonstrates, but all these tensions have always been resolved in favor of the AFs.

Compared with Egypt, Algeria shows again some variations. The DRS’s control and oversight at the top of the system has been mentioned; however, the AFs have always been able to avoid a complete dominance by the former. The intensity of the fight against terrorism gave the army room for maneuver outside the DRS. For example, in 2004, the DRS gave out some prerogatives on fighting terrorism to a department of the Ministry of the Interior (Bourrat 2012, 32), which was placed under the control of a military man. The dissolution of the DRS, in 2016, and its replacement by the DSS, which is a coordinating intelligence body formally dependent on the presidency, was anticipated by the transfer of the military intelligence to the CoS in 2013 (Bourrat 2018, 26). In other words, in 2016, the DRS lost influence over the AFs. It was downsized, but this must not be understood as increasing the power of the president, rather the contrary: it increased the dependence of the latter on the CoS. The CoS and consequently the ANP, the main branch of the AFs, gained in autonomy, with respect to both the presidency and the DRS/DSS (figure 1).

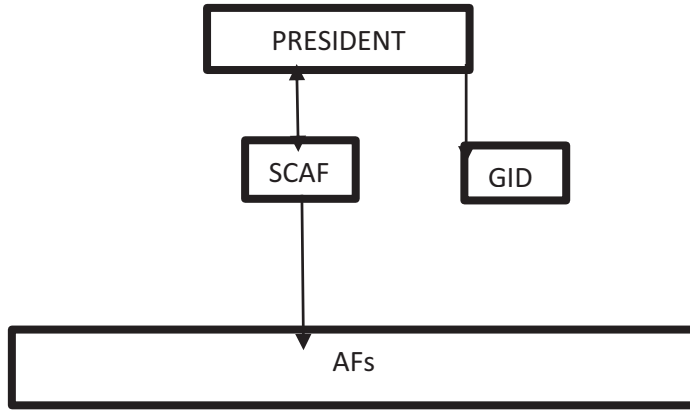
CONCLUSIONS: VARIATIONS WITHIN A SIMILAR PATTERN

Some conclusions can be drawn. First, there has been a significant continuity in the political role of the military in both countries. It varies in intensity in time and also according to relations with civilian institutions, but it has never ceased to work. The recent crisis in Algeria shows the difficulties of coming to terms with the military, which have, so far, proved capable of surviving regime crises. Civilian institutions have been shaken, but the military leadership continues to interfere and uses the opportunity to solve the challenges posed by the intelligence services, with which it was a rival during the years of Bouteflika.

What were the variations (table 3)?

The most noticeable factor is that the Algerian AFs’ control exerted over civilian institutions is mainly indirect. This variation could be of small importance, but a closer look reveals a particularity in the Algerian system

Egypt



Algeria

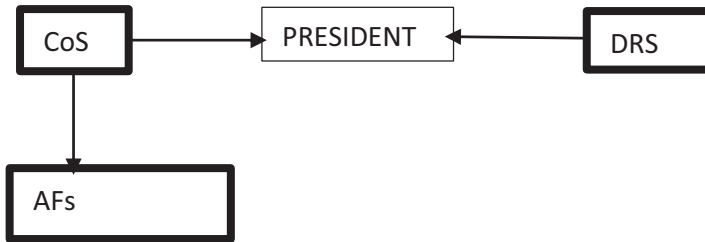


FIGURE 1. Power Relations at the Top

Note: Military is Highlighted in Bold; Arrows = Influence and/or Control

that could have some effects after the fall of Bouteflika. Having opted to remain behind the scenes of a civilian presidency reduces the options of the army in the event of a crisis, forcing the military into a constitutional route and limiting its arbitrary role. The definition of the Algerian military power as an “enclave” (Cook 2007, 14–31) is therefore suitable if compared with

TABLE 3. Variations in Military Control

	Algeria	Egypt
Presidency	Indirect (civilian since 1999)	Direct (military; the exception is Morsi's interlude)
Control over bureaucracy	Indirect	Direct
Control over economic resources	Indirect	Direct
Relation to the party system	Indirect (two-party system since 1997)	Indirect (fluid party system since 2015)

the Egyptian case. The military in Egypt occupy important positions in the bureaucratic apparatus, in both the functions of control and of local government, while in Algeria, the military acts only indirectly with a power of influence and veto. These differences are not marginal. Power is more indirect, therefore more confined and limited. The same is true in relation to the economic arena. How much these differences have to do with the transformation that occurred during the transition from the PA and PPA is difficult to say. It is possible to consider that given the stronger dependency on hydrocarbon production in Algeria and its stronger economic vulnerability, this transformation came at the same time as a social and political crisis. This furthered the decision to “withdraw” but also to strengthen the instrument of social and political control, as the intelligence services, which were military, but largely autonomous, at the top of the hierarchy of the AFs.

In the introduction, an emphasis was placed on the principles of collegiality and cohesion. This too has proved to be more solid in Egypt than in Algeria. In Egypt, a specific body does exist: the SCAF. In Algeria, a similar organ is absent. The existence of a collegial body is of utmost importance in the regulation of the factional and generational conflict within the military apparatus. It is true that the repeated interventions of al-Sisi in the top military ranks and on the composition of the SCAF, as well as his growing reliance on the senior ranks of the Presidential Guard, indicate a defensive posture vis-à-vis other factions in the AFs. However, this personal factor is probably only reflecting the not-yet-solid position of the President of the Republic. Therefore, it is difficult to evaluate its impact on the principle of collegiality. The question is rather how much co-optation could satisfy the

TABLE 4. Variations in Relation to Factionalism

	Algeria	Egypt
Military governing body	No	Yes
Relations between the army and the intelligence services	Diarchy (between the Chief of Staff (CoS) and the Intelligence services)	Dominance (by the army)

younger generation of second row officers against flag officers. The economy capture serves this objective by enlarging opportunities. Factionalism indeed affects collegiality and, most importantly, cohesion, as patrimonialism or personalization of political power. These factors are not to be excluded and play a continuous role in ensuring the progression of career and power promotions. Any authoritarian regime implies a concentration of power in few hands, but qualifying the two cases as “personal” or “patrimonial” (Brownlee 2002) seems misleading and it did not stand up to serious political crises. “Personalization” has therefore poor explanatory power. The outcome of the Egyptian post-“revolution” transition was clear: the “dynasty” fell and after a two-year transition was supplanted by another military regime. It is possible to extend the same arguments to Algeria. Despite the many media reports in recent years about the important role played by relatives of President Bouteflika, in particular his brother Said, this power of influence proved to be short-lived. These regimes remain firmly anchored in the military apparatus, which are not completely dominated by a single man even during lasting presidencies.

This cohesion within the military is also understandable by looking at the dominant position acquired by the military in relation to the crucial intelligence agencies. In Egypt they still represent the *longa manus* of the military which is exercised over various arenas, the political and the economic ones, and vis-à-vis the judiciary. The Algerian case varies in relation to this factor. During the twenty-year term of Bouteflika, the intelligence services were not actually subordinated to the military, but together with the latter, constituted a diarchy where the former regularly prevailed, at least until the retirement of Mediene in 2016 (table 4).

Thereafter, during the final two years in the term of Bouteflika, the intelligence services started to weaken, ending up as the major loser against the military during the recent crisis. Thus, the army also finally prevailed in this case, this time firmly in the hands of the new strongman,

Gaïd Salah.³⁵ It is therefore doubtful that these political developments resulted in a surrender of the army of its power of influence over politics to the point that, eventually, a strong civilian and democratic power, which gradually diminishes interferences, could be established. ■

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35. Gaïd Salah DIED in December 2019 AFTER suffering a heart attack. He was rapidly replaced by Saïd Chengriha as acting CoS. As it is well depicted by the press, these events prompted a repositioning of factions within the military and again the intelligence services, with its corollary of infightings, nominations, demotions, arrests, corruption charges and the like.

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