



Algeria — Va-PoReg Country Report

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11/04/1848 Start Direct Rule Colonial Regime [of France]: Prior to French occupation on 11/04/1848 Algeria was a semi-autonomous province of the Ottoman Empire (Choi 2016, Barclay/Chopin/Evans 2018). The Tafna Treaty promised Arab leader Abd'el Qadir control of the interior in exchange of recognizing French presence, but later France gradually annexed Algeria and made it officially a part of France in 1848 (Choi 2016, Barclay/Chopin/Evans 2018). Algeria was integrated into the administrative apparatus of the French state in 1848 under the auspices of a governor general, who reported back to the French Ministry of the Interior (Choi 2016, Barclay/Chopin/Evans 2018, Roberts 1986). This period is therefore coded as a direct rule colonial regime, instead of indirect rule. As agreed by the Tafna Treaty, Muslim Algerians had the status of non-citizens without self-government nor representation in government. They were ruled by French mayors and administrators who even handled matters of Muslim law (Roberts 1986). Between 1900 and 1903, France continued its 'Pacification of Algeria'. This was a series of military operations aimed at ending the tribal rebellions, razzias, and massacres of French settlers that occurred in the countryside. French forces engaged in a scorched earth policy against the Algerian population.¹ Both LIED and V-Dem's PCLI classify political liberties as absent for this period. Based on our observations, no multiparty executive or legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. On 11/10/1946, French multiparty legislative elections were held in Algeria, introducing male suffrage (LIED).² Until independence, the EF&FI by V-Dem scores elections in Algeria's either not or ambiguously free and fair. Their CEI scores the elections consistently as not clean in this period. Political liberties were absent for this period according to LIED and V-Dem's PCLI. According to LIED only multiparty legislative elections were held until 1952 and no multiparty executive and legislative elections were held in 1953. For the relevant regime period, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were limited, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were robust. On 11/01/1954, the National Liberation Front (FLN) initiated an armed struggle against French rule, marking the beginning of the Algerian War of Independence. During this period, political liberties were effectively suspended, and the colonial regime intensified direct military and administrative control. V-Dem's PCLI and LIED confirm the absence of political liberties for this period. The indigenous population's participation in governance was severely restricted. According to LIED no multiparty executive and legislative elections were held in 1954, in 1955 and 1956 only multiparty legislative elections were held, from 1957 to 1961 no multiparty executive and legislative elections were held. For 1955-1956, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were limited, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were robust. During the years 1957-1961, V-Dem's JCE is classified by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were limited, whereas V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were comprehensive. For 1962, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were limited, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were robust.

07/05/1962 End Direct Rule Colonial Regime [of France, Liberal Democracy]/Start One-Party Autocracy: On 09/19/1958 Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic (GPRA) was proclaimed. On 07/03/1962 French President Charles De Gaulle pronounced Algeria an independent country and on 18/03/1963 a peace

treaty was signed (Evian Accord).³ However, 07/05 became a national holiday as Independence Day (Jackson 1977: 55-56, 70-73, 104, Marshall 2018b, Casey et al. 2020: 58). The FLN, which had led the fight for independence and established a provisional government, seized power among a chaotic transition (near civil war). The non-electoral transitional one-party regime became permanent. On its independence from France, Algeria granted equal voting rights to all men and women.⁴ On 08/08/1962 a political crisis between Benkhedda and the more popular Ben Bella sparked a violent civil war which was resolved by the forced resignation of Benkhedda. On 09/25/1962 Algeria became the People's Democratic Algerian Republic. In the 1962 Algerian Constituent Assembly elections a single list of 196 National Liberation Front (FLN) candidates was put to voters to approve. Following the mass exodus of many Europeans in 1962, the FLN regime undertook extensive confiscation of property, including farms, homes, and businesses. (Casey et al. 2020: 59, Ruedy 2005: 198-99). Throughout his term, Ben Bella faced political conflicts with past leaders of the FLN, such as Mohammed Khider, Ferhat Abbas, Mohammed Boudiaf, and Hocine Aït Ahmed. Ahmed established the Front des Forces Socialistes (Socialist Forces Front) (FFS) as a means to oppose Ben Bella, and the remaining leaders joined in response to their dissatisfaction with Ben Bella's autocratic leadership.⁵ According to Polity5, during this period, the executive's constraints fell into Intermediate Category 1, between unlimited authority and slight limitations. Presidential elections, albeit unfree and -fair, were held in 1963. Therefore, based on our observations, only executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. Political liberties remained absent per LIED and V-Dem's PCLI. According to LIED executive and legislative elections, which weren't multiparty, were held. For the relevant regime period, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were limited, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were absent.

06/19/1965 End One-Party Autocracy/Start Military Autocracy: A military coup led by General Houari Boumédiène overthrew Ben Bella's government on this date. Before the coup, Boumédiène was minister of defense and vice president in the government. Boumédiène took over the power as Chairman of a 26-member Revolutionary Council, eliminated the constitution and the institutions emplaced by the previous regime.⁶ In 1976, his administration promulgated a National Charter and subsequently introduced a new constitution, both ratified through a referendum.⁷ The document reaffirmed socialism as the unequivocal choice of the Algerian people and affirmed the exclusive legitimacy of the socialist party. On 12/29/1976, the president issued an executive order specifying principles and procedures for electing the Assembly. It seems this regime change has been overlooked by (Geddes/Wright/Frantz 2014: 40). This explains the misclassification as a party regime. As classified by FH for this regime period, the country is scored from 11 to 14 as not free, which corresponds to our interpretation of not free. Based on Polity5's assessment, during this period, the executive operated with unlimited authority, facing no institutional checks on power. Based on our observations, no multiparty executive or legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. Political liberties remained absent according to LIED and V-Dem's PCLI. During this regime period, V-Dem's JCE is classified by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were limited, whereas V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were absent.

06/27/1976 End Military Autocracy/Start One-Party Autocracy: On this date the referendum committed Algeria to socialism adapted to third-world conditions. It was officially approved by 98.4% of voters. While the regime elite was the same the pattern of legitimation of the regime became significantly different through this act. Until Algeria was a one-party state, with only the National Liberation Front being authorized as a political group. Since then, political parties have been allowed to form, but have faced restrictions and have needed to obtain government permits to operate legally (Lansford 2015). Both the EF&FI and CEI of V-Dem score elections during this time as not really free, fair or clean. Political liberties were absent for the entire period according to LIED, and did not really exist afterwards. V-Dem's PCLI is classified by us as absent until 1988 and as not really present in 1989. From 1990 to 1992 the state of political liberties is classified as

ambiguous by V-Dem PCLI. Until 1988, based on Polity5's assessment, during this period, the executive operated with unlimited authority, facing no institutional checks on power. Since 1989, as per Polity5's classification, the executive's authority was subject to minor institutional constraints during this time. For 1977, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were limited, and V-Dem's LCE is similarly interpreted as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were also limited. During the years 1978-1988, V-Dem's JCE is classified by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were limited, whereas V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were absent. For 1989-1992, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were limited, and V-Dem's LCE is similarly interpreted as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were also limited. While presidential and legislative elections took place in 1976, pluralism and participation were heavily restricted. According to LIED only executive elections were held in 1976 and executive and legislative elections, which were not multiparty, were held from 1977 onward. Despite significant political liberalization after 1989, Algeria did not transition to electoral autocracy at any point before the military intervention of January 1992. While the constitutional referendum of 02/23/1989 formally ended the FLN's legal monopoly on power and permitted the formation of opposition parties, the FLN retained unchallenged control over the national executive and legislature. The municipal and regional elections of 06/12/1990, though genuinely competitive at the local level, did not constitute a national electoral contest over executive or legislative power and therefore do not meet the threshold for electoral autocracy. The parliamentary elections of 12/26/1991, which would have represented the first genuine national multiparty contest, were annulled by the military after the first round before any transfer of power could occur. Since electoral autocracy requires that national elections actually function as the primary mechanism of political competition (however unfairly), the aborted 1991-1992 electoral process represents a failed transition rather than a completed regime change. Algeria therefore remained a one-party autocracy under FLN dominance from independence in 1962 until the military coup of 01/11/1992, with the period between 1989 and 1992 best characterized as a liberalization phase within the existing regime rather than as a distinct regime type.

01/11/1992 End One-Party Autocracy/Start Military Autocracy: Concerned with the results of the national election which favored the Islamists, the military hindered the election. Benjedid was ousted. The High Council of State became the ruling body and the constitution was suspended (Metz 1994, Ruedy 2005:256,260).⁸ While the military constituted a crucial support base for the regime prior to 1992, the following era is recognized as distinct due to the initial years post-coup, during which the FLN - the previously dominant party - was sidelined from exerting influence and holding office (Toth 1994, Bouandel 2003, Ruedy 2005:256,260, Geddes/Wright/Frantz 2014: 40). On 07/02/1992, after the assassination of the nominal civilian head of government, the effective ruling power, the High State Committee military junta, emerged as the effective ruler by appointing General Nazzar as its figurehead and new effective leader of Algeria. Between 1992 and 1994, as per Polity5's classification, the executive wielded unrestricted authority without any formal limitations during this time. Since 1995, based on Polity5's assessment, the executive faced slight limitations on power during this period. According to LIED no multiparty executive and legislative elections were held in 1992 to 1994, in 1995 and 1996 only executive elections were held. According to FH, the country is classified as not free during this period, scoring between 11 and 14 and falls under the not free category in our interpretation. Political liberties remained absent according to LIED and ambiguous following V-Dem's PCLI. During this regime period, V-Dem's JCE is classified by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were limited, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were also limited.

06/05/1997 End Military Autocracy/Start Electoral Autocracy: A referendum was held on 11/28/1996. A new constitution was approved. It permitted political parties, but not if based on a separatist feature such as race, religion, sex, language or region (Lansford 2021:93). On 06/05/1997 elections took place, which cannot be considered free and fair.⁹ After four consecutive terms, the loss of military backing played a significant role in

Abdelaziz Bouteflika's resignation in 2019 after facing large popular protests (Hirak movement) (Lansford 2021).¹⁰ He was replaced by Abdelkader Bensalah on an interim basis, however due to the influence of the military, army chief of staff General Ahmed Gaïd Salah was considered the de facto leader.¹¹ Before the elections in December five candidates were presented by the newly established National Authorities for Elections (ANIE) which had notably all served as ministers in Bouteflika's cabinet. Protests called for a different selection, and Bensalah met them with crackdowns and mass arrests. The elections were won by former prime minister Abdelmadjid Tebboune in an election with a turnout rate between 20 and 40%.¹² The army chief of staff continues to wield considerable influence under his presidency.¹³ While a constitutional reform package intending to address some demands of the protest movement was passed in 2020 with 67% of voters participating, turnout was as low as 24%. Protest groups such as protesters for the autonomy of Kabylie region were criminalized and labeled terrorists.¹⁴ The government continues to enforce laws threatening media freedom and restricting civil liberties, with protesters and journalists regularly facing arrests and prosecution.¹⁵ Presidential elections took place, and Tebboune, won again. His opponents, Cherif and Aouchiche, challenged the results in Algeria's Constitutional Court, which ruled that Tebboune had won the election, though with a lower voter turnout than originally anticipated.¹⁶ FH classified Algeria as not free every year except from 1988 to 1990 when it classified the country as partly free. Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. LIED categorizes elections during this time as not competitive. V-Dem's EF&FI scores fluctuate between being ambiguous, not really free and fair and not at all free and fair. V-Dem's CEI consistently scores election as not really clean since 1997. According to FH's classification for the assessed regime period, a score between 11 and 14 makes the country not free, which we also place in the not free category. V-Dem's PCLI classifies political liberties as ambiguous until 2020 and as not really present afterwards. According to LIED political freedoms were absent. Until 2003, according to Polity5, the executive encountered slight limitations on decision-making power imposed by other institutions. Afterwards, based on Polity5's assessment, the executive encountered substantial institutional limitations on power. For the year 1998, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were limited, and V-Dem's LCE is similarly interpreted as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were also limited. For the rest of the regime period, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were absent, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were limited.

Electoral Autocracy as of 07/01/2025 continued.

Additional sources (Axtmann 1999, Bouandel 2003, Choi 2016, Lansford 2012a, Lorch/Bunk 2016, Moore 1970, Ruedy 2005, Toth 1994)

Notes

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pacification_of_Algeria

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/November_1946_French_legislative_election_in_Algeria

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C3%89vian_Accords

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women%27s_suffrage

⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ahmed_Ben_Bella

⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1965_Algerian_coup_d%27%C3%A9tat

⁷ <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Houari-Boumedienne>

⁸ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/High_Council_of_State_\(Algeria\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/High_Council_of_State_(Algeria))

⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1997_Algerian_legislative_election

¹⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/President_of_Algeria

¹¹ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/algeria/freedom-world/2020>

¹² <https://freedomhouse.org/country/algeria/freedom-world/2020>

- ¹³ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/algeria/freedom-world/2022>
- ¹⁴ <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2022/country-chapters/algeria>
- ¹⁵ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/algeria/freedom-world/2021>
- ¹⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2024_Algerian_presidential_election

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