

Immune to the Arab Spring?

Algeria and Morocco Maintain the Delicate Balance between Gradual and Radical Reform

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Outline:

Research Question: Can these countries sustain their avoidance of a violent and radical wave of popular reform amidst the delicate systems they have put in place, with the moderate and relatively slow-paced changes they have made and continue to make?

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I. The Arab Spring: A Brief Overview

The Arab Spring is often referred to as a revolutionary wave of popular demonstrations, protests, riots, and civil wars in the Arab world which began on the 18th of December 2010 in Tunisia with the Tunisian Revolution, and spread throughout the countries of the Arab League and its surroundings.¹ Both violent and non-violent popular actions throughout this period are incorporated within the ‘Arab Spring’ label. Moreover, the Arab Spring was illustrated in a series of anti-government protests, uprisings and armed rebellions which spread across the Middle East in early 2011. Their purpose, success and overall outcomes remain largely disputed amongst Arab countries, foreign observers, and world powers looking to take advantage of the changing map of the Middle East.

The label “Arab Spring” was popularized by Western media outlets in early 2011, whereby a similarity in pattern and nature was struck between the successful uprising in Tunisia against former leader Zeine El Abidine Ben Ali, and the anti-government protests in the majority of the Arab countries. The phenomenon is often compared to the turmoil which took place in Eastern Europe in 1989 (also known as the “Autumn of Nations”), when seemingly unconquerable Communist regimes commenced their breakdown under pressure from popular demonstrations in a ‘domino effect.’ Following these demonstrations in Eastern Europe, the majority of countries within the former Communist bloc adopted democratic political systems with a more liberal approach to their market economy. However, the ‘domino effect’ in the Middle East took on more of a less ‘straightforward’ direction. Egypt, Tunisia and Yemen fell victim to an uncertain transitional period; Syria and Libya were drawn into a civil ongoing conflict, while the more economically superior monarchies in the Persian Gulf remained relatively unshaken by the events.²

A major slogan of the demonstrators in the Arab world is “the people want to bring down the regime” – laying the foundation for the obvious question which is “how do the people intend to replace the regime once it is brought down?”

¹ Blight, Pulham and Torpey (2012), The Guardian, Retrieve at: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/interactive/2011/mar/22/middle-east-protest-interactive-timeline>

² Sarker (2014), Peace and Security Review, Vol. 2, No.2, Chapter 3, p. 45

The main legacy of the Arab Spring is in crushing the myth of Arabs' political passivity and the perceived invincibility of big-headed ruling elites. Even in countries that avoided mass unrest, the governments take the dormancy of the people at their own peril. Moving from this concept, it is widely noted that countries such as Algeria³ and Morocco⁴ have not only avoided the wave of revolutions of the Arab Spring for almost five years now, but have also managed to become models for other states in transition in their own rite. Through their more 'forward vision' and their more tactical approach to the region falling victim to a domino effect of revolutions, both states have been able to sustain their 'peaceful' transitions through both political and economic reform. However, the question remains: Can these countries sustain their avoidance of a violent and radical wave of popular reform amidst the delicate systems they have put in place, with the moderate and relatively slow-paced changes they have made and continue to make?

This paper will aim to answer this question through tackling both Algeria and Morocco as two separate case studies, while highlighting the context in 2011, as well as the facts and catalysts on the ground at the time. Each case study will be complimented by the reforms each country introduced on both the socio-economic and political levels, and will conclude with the current situation in each of the states aforementioned. The aim of this paper is to draw a comparison between both Algeria and Morocco in the areas of reform, current status, and sustainability of their internal shifts, in order to conclude with answering the question of whether or not these shifts are sufficient to avoid the Arab Spring in these countries entirely and on a more permanent basis.

II. Algeria: Across the Arab Spring

The uprisings that spread across the Arab world in the year 2011 almost completely 'passed Algeria by.' While there were erratic popular demonstrations which called for political amendment, mainly in the Algeria's capital Algiers, they rapidly fizzled out because of lack of

³ Khan and Mezran (2014), Atlantic Council: Rafic Hariri Center for the Middle East, Retrieve at: http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/images/publications/No_Arab_Spring_for_Algeria.pdf

⁴ Tawil (2013), Combatting Terrorism Center at Westpoint, Vol. 6, Issue 5, Retrieve at: <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/v2/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/CTCSentinel-Vol6Iss56.pdf>

sustenance and support from the general public.⁵ Unlike in the cases of Egypt, Libya, and Tunisia, the political authority, as well as the regime accompanied with it, in Algeria remained unharmed. Abdel Aziz Bouteflika's autocratic government, in place since 1999, re-attained total political control, concluding this re-attainment with Bouteflika's re-election on the 17th of April 2014 for a fourth consecutive term in complete disregard of his deteriorating health.⁶

It is definitely worthy to question the underlying reasons behind why the revolutions in neighboring countries did not result in a similar political and economic shift in Algeria. Algeria had several of the same components present within its system that created the uprisings in all of Egypt, Libya, and Tunisia. Primarily, Algeria was governed by an authoritarian regime that manipulated the security and military apparatus of the country to limit political freedoms and rights of the Algerian population, and to operate a highly monitored 'façade democracy'⁷ which didn't permit citizens any real choice in selecting their leaders. Additionally, the economic conditions predominant within the country: slow economic growth, unemployment, lack of job opportunities, widespread and prevalent corruption, as well as almost a quarter of the population living below the lines of poverty all pointed towards a possible revolution.⁸

According to Mohsin Khan, and Karim Mezran (2014) of the Rafic Hariri Center for the Middle East,⁹ Algeria avoided the periods of instability experienced by the other Arab countries in transition for two main reasons. Primarily, Algerians give a very substantial priority to both the notions of stability and of security. The memory of the Algerian Civil War¹⁰ of the 1990s, whereby over 200,000 people were killed, renders the Algerian population highly guarded in forcing changes that might lead to a reconstruction of that collective memory which is still very fresh in their minds, and which is still a major historical event in recent years that the population

⁵ TIME Magazine (2011), Retrieve at: <http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2048975,00.html>

⁶ BBC (2014), Retrieve at: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-27062474>

⁷ Coined by Robin Nicole Merritt, in her M.A. thesis 'FAÇADE DEMOCRACY: DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION IN KAZAKHSTAN AND UZBEKISTAN', 'façade democracies' are states with constitutions which outline them as democracies – yet lack free press, freedom of association, religious freedom, and free speech. These states hold popular elections, but much of their electoral processes are under the control of the executive branch of government - calling into question whether or not these states can really hold "fair and competitive" elections.

⁸ World Bank, Country Dashboard, Algeria: <http://povertydata.worldbank.org/poverty/country/DZA>

⁹ The Rafic Hariri Center for the Middle East provides timely, in-depth country analysis and innovative policy recommendations regarding political, economic, and social challenges in the region, and creates communities of influence around critical issues.

¹⁰ The Algerian Civil War was an armed conflict between the Algerian government and various Islamist rebel groups which began in 1991 following a coup negating an Islamist electoral victory.

has yet to completely recover from. Moreover, the violent outbreaks presently taking over the countries undergoing revolutions endorses the Algerian population's restraint to aim for dramatic shifts that are predominantly only achieved through potential for violence. Furthermore, even Algerian voices of opposition are merely demanding for gradual reform so as not to drastically attack the system and incite the state's total collapse before an alternative is reached. The Bouteflika government has been able to play upon these emerging fears in order to persuade the general population that it is the sole authority that can prevent the outburst of violence by moving slowly but surely in reforming the political system.¹¹ A clear example of this is illustrated in the lifting in February 2011 of the country's 'state of emergency,' which had been in place since the year 1992.¹²

Secondly, as a key oil and gas producer, the Algerian government has adequate financial resources at its disposal to 'purchase peace.' In February 2011, immediately after protests emerged in the capital, the government reviewed the state's annual budget to increase public spending by an unprecedented 25%.¹³ The additional spending went towards increased subsidies, housing, and public sector wages and employment. These measures were intricately designed to pacify the population through meeting their basic demands.¹⁴

Moreover, it is also worthy to note that several reforms on both the political and economic levels. The Algerian government was highly tactical in imposing a quota system in the newly introduced electoral law which fluctuated between 20% and 50% for overall female representation in the party's lists of elected candidates. This opportunity was the founding reason as to why women were able to attain around 1/3rd of the seats (145 of 462 to be exact), a matter that settled well within the eyes of the international community and Western powers.¹⁵

Furthermore, geopolitical aspects of Algeria's current status play a major role in its 'resilience' to the uprisings. First, Algeria's geographic size¹⁶ (alone, more than 4 times the size

¹¹ Khan and Mezran (2014), Atlantic Council: Rafic Hariri Center for the Middle East, Retrieve at: http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/images/publications/No_Arab_Spring_for_Algeria.pdf

¹² CNN Wire Staff (2011), CNN, Retrieve at: <http://edition.cnn.com/2011/WORLD/africa/02/24/algeria.emergency/>

¹³ IMF (2014), Algeria: 2013 Article IV Consultation, IMF Country Report No.14/32

¹⁴ Khan and Mezran (2014), Atlantic Council: Rafic Hariri Center for the Middle East, Retrieve at: http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/images/publications/No_Arab_Spring_for_Algeria.pdf

¹⁵ Achy (2012), Carnegie Middle East Center, Retrieve at: <http://carnegie-mec.org/publications/?fa=48277>

¹⁶ Algeria, Geography: <http://www.algeria.com/geography/>

of France), its wealth in natural resources: oil and gas (alone, the 4th largest crude oil producer in all of Africa and the 6th largest gas producer in the world¹⁷), coupled with its population of around 37 million, the European Union and the U.S. both see Algeria as a key player in the region, and on some level, as a potential regional leader amidst a changing and shaky Middle East. Economically, Algeria is the European Union's 3rd largest energy provider.¹⁸ The EU is also Algeria's largest trading partner, and absorbs approximately 50% of all Algerian exports.¹⁹ Several European states which include Spain, France, Portugal²⁰, as well as Italy²¹, import a noteworthy percentage of their energy resources from Algeria. The U.S. accounts for around 25% of Algeria's exports.²² Algeria is also among the top three U.S. trading partners in the MENA region.²³ Algeria is also a key partner of the U.S. and the EU in their aim to counter terrorism. Algeria launched the Trans-Saharan Counterterrorism Initiative²⁴ with the aim of reinforcing security cooperation and tackling the main reasons for the instability in the Sahel. Finally, despite the fact that Algeria's current main military supplier has conventionally been Russia, the U.S. and Algeria have recently improved their military relationship.²⁵

Highlighting Algeria's military capabilities is of importance due to the fact that in spite of its wide-ranged capabilities, as well as its strength, it has not been solicited within the Algerian transition towards reform at all. The Algerian People's National Army is the armed forces of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria. Algeria has the second largest army in Africa and in

¹⁷ Nagraj (2013), Gulf Business, <http://gulfbusiness.com/2013/04/top-10-countries-with-the-worlds-biggest-oil-reserves/#.VguPNy6qpHw>

¹⁸ With 96.7 % of EU imports from Algeria in 2014 being fuel and mining products, Algeria ranked as EU's third largest energy provider in 2014, at a value of € 28.41 billion. Chemicals represented the second most important product group in EU's imports from the country. (European Commission, 2014)

¹⁹ The European Union is Algeria's largest trading partner and absorbs half of Algerian international trade (54.1%). Total trade between the EU and Algeria amounted to €52.76 billion in 2014. (European Commission, 2014)

²⁰ Oliver and Buck (2015), ft.com/Europe, Retrieve at: <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/056e89b0-19b1-11e5-a130-2e7db721f996.html#axzz3nCnAp4Yr>

²¹ Reuters (2015), Retrieve at: <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2014/06/25/italy-algeria-gas-idUKL6N0P62RH20140625>

²² Ahmed (2014), Al Arabia, Retrieve at: <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/views/news/africa/2014/04/10/The-U-S-Algerian-security-pact-secretly-strengthening-al-Qaeda-.html>

²³ Ahmed (2014), Al Arabia, Retrieve at: <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/views/news/africa/2014/04/10/The-U-S-Algerian-security-pact-secretly-strengthening-al-Qaeda-.html>

²⁴ The Trans-Saharan Counterterrorism Initiative (TSCTI) is an interagency plan by the United States government, combining efforts by both civil and military agencies, "to combat terrorism in Trans-Saharan Africa. The military component of TSCTI comprises the U.S. efforts of Operation Enduring Freedom - Trans Sahara.

²⁵ Prince (2011), Foreign Policy in Focus, Retrieve at: <http://fpif.org/us-algeria-counterterrorism-partnership-a-marriage-of-convenience/>

the Arab World after Egypt.²⁶ It is worthy to note that it is also the tenth largest in the world.²⁷ Annually, over 672,000 individuals reach military age, and of them, over 500,000 are active front line militants. The People's National Army includes ground forces, the Algerian Air Force, the Navy, and the Algerian Air Defense Force. It is equipped with over 1000 tanks, 1800 armored fighting vehicles, and over 400 aircrafts. The forerunners of the army were the conventional military units formed in both Morocco and Tunisia during the war of independence from France. The armed forces have not been involved in hostilities against a foreign power, despite the fact that their combat capabilities in defense of the country have thus remained untested, in spite having a budget of over USD 10.5 bn.²⁸

These factors clarify Algeria's strategic role in not only promoting stability in the Maghreb, but also in fighting against al-Qaeda threats in Algeria, and in assisting weaker states in the Sahel. As the U.S. and EU cannot afford to lose Algeria as a key player in the region, both parties endorsed the parliamentary elections (in 2012) as significant progress towards reform and development.²⁹ Moreover, on the other end of the spectrum, Algeria has been central to Russia's foreign policy for many reasons, primarily rooted in the fact that from 2000 to 2012, Algeria purchased USD 6 bn worth of arms from Russia.³⁰ Moving from this reality, Russia would not like to lose Algeria as a key player in the region either.

According to Rabah Ghazali (2011), Associate Professor of Economics at Sciences-Po in Paris, on the social level, Algerian society is 'too fragmented' for concentrated action regardless of independent movements of resistance within the trade unions.³¹ The regime not only plays upon these divisions, but also plays Algerians off against each other along the lines of: French vs. Arab-speaking, Arab vs. Kabyle, and "Islamist" versus "Liberal/Democrat" – not to mention

²⁶ AnswerAfrica (2015), Retrieve at: <http://answersafrica.com/7-african-countries-with-highest-military-strength.html>

²⁷ TheRichest.com (2014), Retrieve at: <http://www.therichest.com/rich-list/the-biggest/the-10-biggest-armed-forces-in-the-world/>

²⁸ GlobalFirePower.com (2015), Retrieve at: http://www.globalfirepower.com/country-military-strength-detail.asp?country_id=algeria

²⁹ Voice of America News, Retrieve at: http://www.voanews.com/content/eu_us_congratulate_algeria_on_elections/566329.html

³⁰ Schneider (2013), Muftah.org, Retrieve at: <http://muftah.org/russian-pragmatism-in-the-middle-east-success-in-algeria/#.VjhgpUrLcs>

³¹ Ghezali (2011), The Huffington Post, Retrieve at: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/rabah-ghezali/why-has-the-arab-spring-n_b_844182.html

some of the historical ethnic and tribal tensions. Aside from the aforementioned divisions on the levels of the population itself, Algeria is also unique in the relationship between its capital and its other provinces. Throughout the revolutions in countries such as Egypt and Tunisia, there was an interaction and collaboration among the capitols and the provinces. Cairo was rapidly backed by the rest of Egypt. Moreover, an uprising in a small provincial area in Tunis had ramifications upon the entire country. On the other hand, demonstrations in the Algiers have had mild ramifications upon the rest of Algeria, pointing to the fact that there is little-to-no solidarity among Algiers and the other provinces of Algeria. The lead of the relatively ‘defiant capital’ is not necessarily trailed.³²

One more factor Ghezali discusses is ‘political vacuum.’ He states that the very nature of the authoritarian rule in Algeria is to deny the possibility for the development of any legitimate opposition. This form of rule prohibits or restricts organized political actors' activities and in turn prevents opposition that can deliberate or present alternative solutions across different sectors from emerging. In Algeria today, there are no political parties which can offer the country a reliable vision or plan of action. Consequently, the unorganized and independent popular movements which emerge can only ever be defensive in that sense. What these movements can achieve quite simply, is be successful in acting as voices in the face of oppression and the socio-political dynamics in the country.³³

These realities indeed laying the foundation for what it anticipated to be bumpy road towards stability for the Algerian government, this rooted in the fact that there is currently no ‘political’ alternative, and no organized political entity which can act as a catalyst in the further stages towards this transition.

III. Morocco: Across the Arab Spring

Despite the fact that it may still be early to discuss the outcomes of Morocco’s dodge of the Arab Spring, there are a several lessons that can be drawn from the manner in which the country has undergone its conversion into what is aimed at becoming a more representative

³² Ghezali (2011), The Huffington Post, Retrieve at: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/rabah-ghezali/why-has-the-arab-spring-n_b_844182.html

³³ Ibid

government that adheres to more democratic values and principals. Moving from this reality, Morocco provides a model for other countries undergoing these conversions to immolate. Specifically, the model provides a highly evident example of a country which is achieving gradual and tactical reform without having to undergo the bloodshed and instability generally coupled with this kind of reform. Morocco's gradual transition may be most effectively described as the monarchy's readiness to permit moderate Islamists to function as a legitimate and legal political party. Furthermore, Morocco's Islamists, have also shown readiness to accept a measured, gradual reform process, contrary to the Islamists in neighboring countries who were aiming for a completely new regime, as was the case in all of Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt more recently.³⁴

Although the toppling of the government is generally regarded as the first demand of a revolution, in Morocco, the government has remained very much in power interesting enough, and has even managed to integrate the moderate Islamists gradually as well. The PJD³⁵ of Morocco has always been legitimate and recognized as an opposition party by the Moroccan government. However, despite this reality, it did not play a role in previous Moroccan governments, which may be one of the main reasons for its success in elections, Tawil (2013) states.³⁶ He further elaborates, on this fact by stating voters did not view the Islamists as 'collaborators' with the corrupt regime, but rather as a 'fresh start' and new alternative to a government that has been paralyzed and ineffective for decades. Also, the manner in which the PJD responded to protestors' demands in 2011, contributed drastically to the general public's perception of the party. The party pursued a calculated and peaceful approach in how it pressured the King for reform; it did not resort to causing any form of instability or violence, or to instigating any severe responses from the regime in place. On the other hand, in Tunisia, Libya and Egypt, protestors demanded a complete and immediate regime change which resulted in violent outbreak across the country – a matter the population of Morocco was pleased to avoid. With violence in neighboring countries, the Islamists in Morocco exhibited willingness to

³⁴ Tawil (2013), Combatting Terrorism Center at Westpoint, Retrieve at: <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/v2/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/CTCSentinel-Vol6Iss56.pdf>

³⁵ The Justice and Development Party is the ruling party in Morocco since the 29th November 2011. The PJD advocates Islamism and Islamic democracy.

³⁶ Ibid

compromise with the King. They accepted his concessions in spite of fragmented groups of demonstrators' demands for toppling and complete annihilation of the regime.³⁷

Furthermore, the regime adopted rather immediate constitutional changes which lessened the pressure upon the government in power. The king appointed an advisory committee tasked with the preparation of the draft of the new constitution under the supervision of legal expert Abdul-Lateef al-Manooni.³⁸ Along with the committee, King Mohammed VI commissioned his advisor Mohammad Mutasim to carry out consultations with the leaders of different political parties and unions regarding proposals for what would be the newly adopted constitution.³⁹ The first draft was published in early June of 2011. This draft was followed by a referendum for its adoption which was conducted on the 1st of July of 2011. It registered a record-high participation with an overall 70% turnout. The constitutional reforms passed with a 98% approval rate.⁴⁰ Consequently, the final date of the parliamentary election was set to the 25th of November, 2011.⁴¹ The overwhelming majority of Moroccan parties, both member and non-member of the government (30/34 parties), viewed the king's initiative as one that 'outweighed all expectations.' Many described it as a 'royal revolution' by which Morocco will heading in the direction of a democracy which takes into account Moroccan particularities (demographic aspects, tribal aspects, economic aspects, and linguistic barriers).⁴²

Consequently, the new Moroccan constitution entered into force on the 1st of August, 2011, and enlisted several new civil rights. These rights included constitutional guarantees of the freedom of expression, social equality for women, rights for the preservation of minority languages, and even enlisted the independence and transparency of the judiciary.⁴³

³⁷ Global Non Violent Action Database (2012), Retrieve at: <http://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/content/moroccan-youth-protest-constitutional-reform-2011>

³⁸ Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies (2011), Policy Analysis Unit- ACRPS, Retrieve at: <http://english.dohainstitute.org/release/c0c2a631-7718-4525-a30c-f7101e5cd767>

³⁹ Ibid

⁴⁰ Ibid

⁴¹ European Forum for Democracy and Solidarity, Country Updates, Morocco (last updated June 4, 2014), Retrieve at: <http://www.europeanforum.net/country/morocco>

⁴² Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies (2011), Policy Analysis Unit- ACRPS, Retrieve at: <http://english.dohainstitute.org/release/c0c2a631-7718-4525-a30c-f7101e5cd767>

⁴³ Ottaway (2011), Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Retrieve at: <http://carnegieendowment.org/2011/06/20/new-moroccan-constitution-real-change-or-more-of-same>

Amendments to both the electoral and administrative laws were highly significant. The king withdrew his power to appoint the Prime Minister, and in turn confined himself to appoint a member of the party that wins the highest number of seats in the parliamentary elections. Furthermore, The Office of the Prime Minister was given the powers to appoint senior civil servants and diplomats, but in consultation with the King's Council of Ministers. The Prime Minister also replaced the King as the Head of Government primarily, as well as the Chair of the Government Council. This in turn gave the Prime Minister the ability to dissolve the parliament.⁴⁴

According to the new constitution, the voting system was also altered so that the number of parliamentary seats decided on the basis of constituency was increased to 305 seats (previously 295 seats). Moreover, additional seats were reserved for election from national party lists, 60 which solely consisted of female candidates and 30 of male candidates under the age of 40. Following the referendum and the new constitution's entry into effect, parliamentary elections were held on the 25th of November 2011.⁴⁵

Thirty parties participated in the 2011 elections. Eighteen of the parties gained seats. The majority of the seats was won by three main political groups: the Islamist Justice and Development Party (PJD); an eight-party "Coalition for Democracy" headed by Morocco's incumbent Minister of Finance Salaheddine Mezouar; and the Koutla (Coalition) Alliance of the incumbent Prime Minister Abbas El Fassi.⁴⁶ Results of the elections were announced on the 27th of November, 2011. The PJD won 107 seats, giving it the title of the largest parliamentary representation, although not the majority. Consequently, based upon the new constitution, this made its leader, Abdelillah Benkirane, the Moroccan Prime Minister.

One of the major changes Morocco made as well was in the area of Women's Rights – as the constitutional amendments of July 2011 meant that each party can present 1 list, consisting of

⁴⁴ Madani, Maghraoui and Zerhouni (2012), International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, Retrieve at: http://www.idea.int/publications/the_2011_moroccan_constitution/loader.cfm?csModule=security/getfile&pageid=56782

⁴⁵ Ibid

⁴⁶ Ottaway (2011), Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Retrieve at: <http://carnegieendowment.org/2011/06/20/new-moroccan-constitution-real-change-or-more-of-same>

a maximum of 60 women candidates.⁴⁷ The changes also include article 19 of the constitution which grants women equal civil, political, economic, social, cultural and environmental rights.⁴⁸

With Morocco touching upon issues in a more comprehensive and holistic manner (taking into account gradual reforms in the areas of politics and even touching upon women's rights), the Moroccan approach to reform is regarded as a trailblazer politically, in spite of the fact that it does not possess the economic resources to do so.

IV. How Sustainable are the Algerian and Moroccan Reforms?

With Bouteflika in power for the upcoming four remaining years of his term, and with predominantly unchanged military and civilian advisors, the prospects for sustainable political and economic changes in Algeria are questionable. Primarily, there is the inescapable reality that the dissatisfied, marginalized, and mostly unemployed youth, who are generally untainted with the gruesome memories of the recent Algerian Civil War, will eventually move their aggravation to the streets. However, at least for the time being, Algeria has the amenity of upholding the status quo in the short-to-medium term, generally due to its oil revenues.⁴⁹ Moreover, despite this reality, achieving political stability and sustainable growth on the long term would mean that Algeria would need to make the transition towards a more democratic and pluralistic political system, and in turn, a more market-oriented economic one. Many within the governing Algerian elite deem these changes necessary. A particular example of this is former Prime Minister Abdelmalek Sellal's announcement in March 2014 which encouraged the latest Bouteflika government to introduce political reforms to reinforce democracy and economic ones in order to augment the role of the private sector and in turn eventually produce some forms of foreign investment.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Sadiqi (2011), Common Ground News Service, Retrieve at: <http://www.commongroundnews.org/article.php?id=30326>

⁴⁸ Badri (2014), Morocco World News, Retrieve at: <http://www.morocoworldnews.com/2014/04/128229/moroccan-women-cling-to-article-19-of-the-constitution-on-gender-equality/>

⁴⁹ Cipriani (2012), McGill University, Graphite Publications, Retrieve at: <http://graphitepublications.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Oil-Wealth-and-Regime-Stability-in-Light-of-the-Arab-Spring.pdf>

⁵⁰ Ahmed (2014), Reuters, Retrieve at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/03/18/algeria-election-idUSL6N0MF4PY20140318>

As of yet, there are but mere banalities and promises with no particulars on what the Algerian government is really intending. While political reforms may be postponed, the move towards the private sector and the diversification of the Algerian economy will probably be the only leg the Algerian government has to stand on if it wants to avoid its downfall. With both oil and gas production flat, as well as the drastic decline in the world's oil and gas prices as an immediate outcome of the marketing of shale oil and the most recent gas discoveries, the Algeria is going to be struggling to fulfill its 'social contract' vis-à-vis its population and will also struggle to provide subsidies and public employment which were distracting the population from the government's control of the economy.⁵¹ It is anticipated that it is going to be the private sector, and not the government who will eventually be the sole source of job creation, and will be the only sector in place able to absorb the growth of the new generations of Algerians coming into the labor market. In his report entitled 'Algeria: Stabilization and Transition to Market', Nashashibi predicted in 1998, the need for this shift long before the Arab Spring, and the call for this shift is seen to be more relevant today than ever. The Algerian government will not be able to distract from this indispensable reality much longer.⁵²

The optimum approach in tackling political and economic reform in Algeria is for the government to immediately commence with their economic reforms while it still has abundant financial resources in order to make the adjustment costs less harsh. On the other hand, on the political level, Algeria might not face instant pressures to make amendments. However, as stated previously, it will not be long before the youth population, which does not connect with the Black Decade⁵³ at all, will engage in violent measures to secure their rights and futures – further prolonging the current situation without allowing for new opportunities of economic and political participation. In conclusion, unless a durable reform strategy is introduced, the Arab Spring is not far behind in Algeria.

As for Morocco, and despite the rather smooth transition in the areas of reform, there is still a significant discussion about the effectiveness of these reforms across the country. Criticisms mainly stem from the reforms the King has made in the areas of his own powers. The

⁵¹ Riedel (2014), Al-Monitor, Retrieve at: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/12/algeria-bouteflika-economy-oil-gas-military-police.html#>

⁵² Nashashibi (1998), International Monetary Fund, Algeria: Stabilization and Transition to Market, pp. 43-47

⁵³ The Civil War In Algeria is also referred to as The Black Decade, 1991-1999

criticisms point to the fact that the King has retained too much power, particularly in the areas of the military and in the religious sectors despite claiming to have ‘stepped down’ in this regard.⁵⁴ However, counter-arguments point to the fact that the reforms are more than sufficient, particularly taking into account the amount of power that the King enjoyed under the old constitution.⁵⁵

Irrespective of whether or not the reforms were actually able to transform Morocco into what can be described as a “true democracy,” the PJD is presently content with the political amendments, and furthermore has proven to be in favor of a steady and gradual reform process. Evidently, the PJD’s restrained and calculated approach was remunerated in the elections of November 2011 where it not only became the lead party in the Moroccan Parliament, but also managed to get more than double the seats it had in the last parliament (107 seats currently, up from the 46 seats).⁵⁶ Not only did this permit the PJD to now form a government in coalition with other parties but also allowed it strengthen ties with the Nationalist Istiqlal Party, which won 60 seats, placing it second after the PJD.⁵⁷ Nonetheless, the PJD continues to face major hindrances. Morocco not only suffers from a population growing at a rapid rate, but also suffers from limited natural resources, elevated rates of unemployment predominantly among its youth, as well as from geopolitical challenge; include the Western Sahara dispute which came close to causing hindrance in U.S.-Moroccan relations.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ The Guardian (2011), *Why I Reject Morocco's New Constitution*, Retrieve at:

<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/jun/23/morocco-new-constitution>

⁵⁵ The Guardian (2011), *Moroccan Voters Set to Back King's New Constitution*, Retrieve at:

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/jul/01/morocco-voters-bac-king-constitution>

⁵⁶ Al Arabia (2011), *Morocco's Moderate Islamist PJD Party Wins 107 Seats*, Retrieve at:

<http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/11/27/179546.html>

⁵⁷ European Forum for Democracy and Solidarity, Country Updates, Morocco (last updated June 4, 2014), Retrieve at: <http://www.europeanforum.net/country/morocco>

⁵⁸ Al-Mansar Slimi (2009), Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Retrieve at:

<http://carnegieendowment.org/2009/06/17/united-states-morocco-and-western-sahara-dispute>

In conclusion, it is early to judge whether or not the PJD's handling of Morocco's obstacles has had any repercussions upon the party's popular support. The only concrete suggestion has been the final results of the partial elections which took place in five districts to elect what would be the new MPs in March of 2013.⁵⁹ The PJD, along with its partners in the coalition government were able to win every disputed seat. If this is any indication, then the reputation of the PJD-led government is seemingly intact amid the voting population of Morocco – a matter that will not only strengthen the credibility of the party, but also a matter that will allow it to push forward in reform in the same attitude it had adopted before its reign into power.

Both Algeria and Morocco have pursued what has often been referred to as 'cosmetic reforms'⁶⁰ in response to the turmoil in their neighboring countries. It is unclear whether these measures will continue to silence and further satisfy their citizens. Cautious of surrendering any 'real power,' the governments may be coerced into more genuine reform. Given these dynamics, the success or failure of reforms in the countries to the east will be decisive to forecasts for smooth shifts in Algeria and Morocco, providing either models or cautionary tales for the shifting region as a whole. With Morocco attempting to reform more gradually, and in resort to more political rather than economic shifts, it is highly more likely for it to avoid the Arab Spring than Algeria is.

⁵⁹ Tawil (2013), Combatting Terrorism Center at Westpoint, Vol. 6, Issue 5, Retrieve at: <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/v2/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/CTCSentinel-Vol6Iss56.pdf>

⁶⁰ Walker and Tucker (2011), FreedomHouse.org, Retrieve at: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/algeria/overview-essay>