



Activating Latent Prejudice:

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Media
in Jordan and Algeria



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ABSTRACT

The origins of discrimination and prejudice continue to be poorly understood. Most scholars agree that the right-wing authoritarian personality trait can strongly predict someone's potential for prejudice. This study aims to determine how authoritarian regimes might attempt to activate this personality trait in order to garner a popular support base for their authoritarian rule. Specifically, it will look at dominant and competing discourses and how these discourses shape the identity of the in-group and of the possible out-group(s). To test the hypothesis that authoritarian regimes will attempt to activate right-wing authoritarian personality traits in their society, we conducted a critical discourse analysis of regime-friendly media outlets in Jordan and Algeria two weeks prior to the parliamentary elections in the former, and two weeks prior to the national referendum on constitutional reform in the latter. The decision to focus on these national decision-making events was made for the reason that these events are expected to function as ideal opportunities for incumbent regimes to set the agenda and disseminate their approved narrative. The results of the analysis show that the dominant discourses in the Algerian texts were different to the dominant discourses in the Jordanian texts as the former texts focused particularly on internal out-groups and made extensive use of 'othering,' while the latter texts focused particularly on external out-groups and engaged less actively in 'othering'. When taking into account the sociocultural context, we suggest that weak incumbent regimes will engage more actively in 'othering' compared to regimes that are relatively stable.

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1. Introduction

In 2011, long-standing authoritarian regimes in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) faced mass uprisings that were later branded as the Arab Spring. While viewed by many as a hopeful attempt to shrug off oppressive regimes that persecuted minorities and allowed little to no space for democratic participation, some ten years later the outcome in most countries has shown that this hope has, so far, not been met with any real positive change. However, what the protests did succeed in doing was that they laid bare the fragility and weaknesses of the incumbent regimes at that time. It also demonstrated the capacity and willingness of a new generation to protest against their authoritarian regimes whilst knowing that the odds were against them. The Arab Spring has functioned as a focusing event for the regimes in power as it made them realise that their system of domination was fragile and might be contested and shattered if popular support for the regime was too low.

We propose that authoritarian regimes will attempt to gain and/or consolidate popular support by activating the latent right-wing authoritarian (RWA) traits in their societies as this would provide the regimes with a popular support base and subsequently more stability. We explain that the activation of RWA traits will most likely lead to an increase in prejudice and hostility within a society towards any individual or group that is considered to be a threat to the in-group of that society, i.e. the group which the incumbent regime will want to affiliate itself with. Prejudice and hate speech that targets minorities can make them “vulnerable to attacks, but also influence majority populations and potentially make them more indifferent to the various manifestations of such hatred” (Izsak, 2015 as quoted from Olteanu, 2018). We hope that a better understanding of the causes of prejudice and hate speech will strengthen the resilience of individuals and societies in their attempts to prevent and/or counter exclusionary attitudes and the potential violence and conflicts that may result from it.

We hypothesise that regime-friendly media outlets are one of the important channels for incumbent regimes in their attempts to shape the national discourse. We expect to see significant attempts to construct in-group identities and out-group identities prior to national decision-making events, such as elections or referendums. Whether elections and referendums are genuinely free or not, according to democratic standards, does not change

the fact that these are agenda-setting events for the incumbent regime and opportunities to set out a national campaign that promotes the regime's endorsed discourse over any other possible competing discourse.

To test this hypothesis, we rely on Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional model to conduct a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of a regime-friendly media outlet in Jordan, 'The Jordan Times', two weeks prior to the national parliamentary elections on November 10, 2020, and a regime-friendly media outlet in Algeria, 'El Moudjahid', two weeks prior to the national referendum on constitutional reform on November 1, 2020. The data is taken from the opinionated genre, namely the 'opinion' section of the Jordan Times and the 'editorials' section of El Moudjahid.

The following chapter elaborates further on the theoretical framework of this study and we explain the concept of right-wing authoritarianism and its relation to authoritarian regimes. This chapter also briefly considers the importance of the media for authoritarian regimes, as well as the importance of elections and referendums. The subsequent chapter provides an account of CDA as a research approach and the three-dimensional framework on which we base our methodology, before then detailing how we have selected our data for the analysis. The next three chapters, the analysis, look at the discourse practices, sociocultural practices, and the actual text, respectively. The findings of these three chapters are summarised and connected so as to provide a clear picture of the discourses and context that we found to be relevant. The final chapter discusses the limitations of the study and provide readers with ideas and pathways for future studies.

2. Theory

Right Wing Authoritarianism and Prejudice

Following the end of the Second World War, psychologists and social scientists were eager to provide an explanation as to why humans would accept and support a fascist regime. In his book *The Authoritarian Personality*, Theodor W. Adorno (1950) developed the f-scale, the 'f' standing for fascist. The test that accompanied the scale intended to differentiate between individuals with authoritarian personalities that were more prone to fascism and individuals that are more tolerant and open-minded.

Altemeyer continued on a similar path in the 1980s when he introduced the more refined Right-Wing Authoritarian (RWA) Likert scale. The questionnaire for this is designed in such a way that it is meant to reveal one's personality trait and to what extent this personality trait is RWA or not. Scoring high on the RWA scale means that the subject has a predisposition, according to Altemeyer's (1981) definition, to submit to in-group conventional norms and values, to submit uncritically to established in-group authorities, and to feel a readiness to aggress towards persons or groups that are believed to be violators of the in-group norms and values and who are not willing to submit to authorities.

Subsequent studies have demonstrated that people scoring high on the RWA scale are more likely to display prejudice and hostility towards groups that are perceived by them to be threatening the social order, in-group ideology and traditional societal in-group norms, in-group stability, safety and security (Altemeyer, 1981; Duckitt, 2001; McFarland, 2001; Ekehammer, 2004; Kreindler, 2005; Cohrs & Asbrock, 2009; Asbrock et al. 2011; Beck & Plant, 2018). The core idea behind RWA is that people have a relatively higher sensitivity towards threats and differ in their psychological management of uncertainty and fear (Ekehammer et al. 2004). This leads to a situation where the looming threat of societal collapse can be stopped by authorities and traditional order (Duckitt, 2001).

As it concerns notions of ideology, traditions, norms, and so on, the threats are often of a symbolic (Asbrock et al. 2011) and more abstract nature. For example, the threats can be

posed by immigrant groups (Stephan et al. 2005), but in essence it can be any unrelated out-group as long as different values and norms are primed to play a significant role (Dru, 2007) and the out-group is not perceived to be conforming to tradition (Crawford et al. 2013). Bilewicz (2015) points out that it can also mean that acts of prejudice, such as hate speech, are out of line with tradition and therefore authoritarian individuals would oppose such behaviour.

The sociocultural context thus plays an instrumental role in determining what and whom the threat to the in-group might be. In this vein, Kreindler (2005) suggests that it primarily revolves around norm differentiation. However, norms are not a fixed phenomenon and can change over time. We discuss this idea in more detail in the methodology section where Critical Discourse Analysis is not just a method of data analysis, but also a theory on how reality is partly constructed through discourse and vice versa.

If we accept that norms can change over time, and particularly through discourse, then we can expect the presence of actors that attempt to shape discourse and norms within a society. The regime in power will have to convince a significant number of people that it is representative of the in-group identity. This in-group identity, and the corresponding norms and traditions, can thus, as certain norms and traditions could have become sedimented, be emphasised to some extent as one that allows for dynamics of prejudice and closed-mindedness, or one that promotes diversity and open-mindedness. Deciding on the former would make latent RWA predispositions more salient.

Authoritarian Regimes, Elections and Media

Whereas democratic regimes get most of their legitimacy from the fact that they adhere to democratic norms and are part of a legitimate democratic system, authoritarian regimes are less stable and are more dependent on 'performance legitimacy' (Huntington, 1991). It should be noted, however, that this relative advantage for democratic regimes disappears when the chosen representatives fail to deliver in areas such as prosperity, justice, domestic order, and external security (ibid). There are several different legitimisation strategies available to an authoritarian regime that will help them to survive. For example, institutional foundations,

local institutions, economy co-opting elites, the threat of instability or successful political repression. In this study we look at another possible legitimation strategy which is the construction of an in-group identity that is threatened by an external or internal out-group, the imagined enemy. The logic of this legitimation strategy lies in the idea that the ruling regime will portray itself as the one and only alternative to keep the in-group safe in face of the constructed threat.

By emphasising that the in-group identity of a country is under threat, the regime can activate RWA predispositions and consequently consolidate a support base in society that provides the incumbent with the legitimacy to rule. The concept of legitimacy is “mushy” (Huntington, 1991) and definitions differ slightly but offer the same principle. Nathan (2003: 13), for example, defines legitimacy as “the public’s belief that the regime is lawful and should be obeyed,” whereas Hechter (2009: 280) defines legitimacy as “the extent that [the government’s] rules are considered rightful by both dominant and subordinate members of society”. A definition of legitimacy that resonates more with this study is the one proposed by Lipset (1959: 86 as quoted from Terzyan, 2020: 46) who defines legitimacy as “the capacity of a political system to engender and maintain the belief that existing political institutions are the most appropriate and proper ones for the society”. In the context of this study, the capacity of a political system refers to its ability to activate enough RWA predispositions by effectively communicating a condition of insecurity following the threats posed by out-groups.

In a critical discourse analysis of the Russian and Azerbaijani leaders, notably Putin and Aliyev, Terzyan (2020) demonstrated how authoritarian regimes rely on conspiracy narratives, the externalisation of domestic problems, and a simultaneous emphasis on their personal characteristics and ability to protect the nation against any possible internal or external demonised enemy to mobilise their society and sustain power. According to Terzyan (ibid: 51), “the necessity of standing up to the external enemy serves as a convenient pretext to suppress dissent and pluralism across the country by labelling opposition activists as ‘spies’, ‘traitors’ who are involved in the enemy’s conspiracies”. This designation of an internal or external enemy also serves the purpose of diverting attention from domestic socioeconomic and/or political problems (ibid). According to Hansen (2005: 6), “security discourses have

traditionally constituted a national Self facing one or more threatening Others, whose identities were radically different from the one of the Self". This securitised and polarised environment where any anomaly is scrutinised and distrusted has a resemblance to an environment in which latent RWA predispositions would flourish and prejudice would thus materialise.

Hostility towards groups that are perceived to be threatening will be particularly eminent once respected authority figures (appear to) support such behaviour (Altemeyer, 1996 from Beck & Plant, 2018). The manipulation of information plays an increasingly important role in attaining legitimacy and for regime survival (Guriev & Treisman, 2018). Elections, even if they are rigged, can play an important role of agenda-setting. While it is not only a good opportunity to cast a positive light on the incumbent regime, it also functions as an important moment to paint a negative picture of the opposition, emphasise the characteristics of the in-group identity, and identify the internal and/or external enemies of the regime. The opposition is often relatively very weak as they have minimal access to media channels (Geddes et al. 2018). If there is strong opposition, then they will most likely be outlawed, depending on whether the strength of the incumbent regime allows for such measures to be effective. In addition to elections, referenda have a similar function. Having a large percentage of your people coming out to vote in favour of a new law that benefits you as a leader is expected to play a role in the countering of criticism at home and abroad (ibid).

The media is an important channel for the incumbent regime to communicate its message to the people. Journalists have the power to shape the discussion as it is their task to inform the people on what is happening in the society. This inherently involves making decisions. The decisions that must be taken are not limited to the topics and events they will report on, but also on the words that they choose to describe actors, decisions, and events. By selecting events to report on, journalists make the inevitable decision to not report on other events. Readers might thus disagree on the content of the article, but, as Richardson (2007: 13) explains, "it can at the very least influence what you have opinions on". Regime-friendly media outlets will have a particularly high influence on those who with high RWA predisposition as this contributes to stability and acts in accordance with the established authority.

We propose that authoritarian regimes will attempt to activate latent RWA dispositions among its subjects by communicating, through available media channels, a condition of insecurity with constructions of an in-group identity and out-group identities and an emphasis on differences between these groups in terms of norms, traditions, and values. We expect a particularly intensified commitment to such discourse in the short-term period prior to elections or referenda as these events function as agenda-setting opportunities for incumbent regimes and the natural moment in time where incumbent regimes invest more time in explaining why they are and should remain in power. The activation of RWA dispositions would increase levels of prejudice present in a society as it reinforces a condition of mistrust and polarisation between a dominant in-group and oppositional out-groups. To test this hypothesis, we use Critical Discourse Analysis to analyse all of the opinion articles published by a media outlet in Jordan two weeks prior to the national parliamentary election in 2020 and all of the editorials published by media outlet in Algeria two weeks prior to a national referendum in 2020.

3. Method of Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis is a multidisciplinary field with different approaches that all look at language use. The epistemological basis of most approaches within discourse analysis is social constructivism which states that truth and knowledge is the outcome of the continuous processes of social interaction and interpretation, the so-called 're-production of social reality' (Richardson, 2007: 26). Identity is understood as something that has been "established through a set of collectively articulated codes, not as a private property of the individual or a psychological condition" (Hansen, 2005: 6). In contrast to positivist research, which states that there is an external and independent social reality that is determined by absolute laws which can be derived through empirical observation, discourse analysis looks at how reality was produced and relies on interpretation as well as lacking a clear set of procedural steps. According to Jørgensen and Phillips (2002: 75), the subjectivity lies in the fact that 'texts have several meaning potentials that may contradict one another, and are open to several different interpretations'. However, each approach within discourse analysis has certain principles and models that a researcher can use when determining what discourse should be analysed and how. For this study we are mainly guided by Fairclough's interpretation of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and the three-dimensional model he proposes that researchers could use. CDA is very appropriate to understand identity construction (Richardson & Langford, 2015) as it provides the researcher with the tools to systematically deconstruct the collective identity of a group (Fairclough, 2003).

CDA is an approach within discourse analysis that not only looks at the discursive practices, i.e. that what is said, but also takes into consideration the wider socio-cultural and political context in which language is used. It is the objective of CDA to shed light on the 'relationship between the text and its social conditions, ideologies, and power-relations' (Wodak, 1996 from Richardson, 2007). CDA is critical because it attempts to expose, understand, and resist discursive practices that enable inequality and impose the unequal power of one group over other groups (Fairclough, 1992; Van Dijk, 1998; Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). The effects that these discursive practices have on power relations between social groups are understood as

ideological effects (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). Ideologies are “ideas” or “belief systems” with “social representations that define the social identity of a group” and “control and organize other socially shared beliefs” (Van Dijk, 2006b: 116 as quoted from Abdulmajid, 2019: 4). The objective of CDA is to uncover how inequalities are normalised in texts through ideologies and how social reality is portrayed, and thus consequently how social reality is not portrayed, thereby shutting down opportunities of change. In order to do so, researchers should not only commit to textual analysis, but also to an analysis of the relevant discourse practice and sociocultural context.

According to Fairclough, the sociocultural practice and discursive practice have a dialectical relationship, meaning that they influence and co-constitute each other. Fairclough pays particular attention to the sociocultural practices as he believes that some earlier discursive struggles face little to no contestation anymore and have thus become ‘sedimented’ (Fairclough, 1992b from Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). The idea of sedimented meanings originates from Gramsci’s theory on hegemony (Simon, 1991) which posits that meaning comes from a process of negotiation, or struggle, out of which a consensus emerges. This consensus is an unstable equilibrium as it has inherent competing elements (Fairclough, 1992b; Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). The oppressed will thus continue to try and challenge the dominant discourse and hegemonic power structures (Fairclough, 1995; Fairclough, 2010). Meanwhile, as explained by Richardson (2007: 36), ‘the hegemony is maintained by the ruling class teaching their ideas and their values in the general public, particularly their central claim to political legitimacy’.

We followed Fairclough’s three-dimensional model by analysing the discourse practices, sociocultural practices, and the textual properties. For the discourse practice analysis, we looked at who produced and who consumed the text, and what this says about the discourse practice under analysis. It concerns questions on the role of those who are involved in producing the text and what the expected effect of this role can be on the decisions that have been made for the text, such as style choice and structure. The sociocultural practice analysis should provide insight into the social, cultural, and political contexts that are relevant to the ways that the text has been produced and consumed. We also looked at the wider context and factors that have played a role in the formation of the discursive practice. By doing so,

the sociocultural analysis informs the study of the competing discourses that might have been relevant to the text under analysis. Based on the sociocultural practice analysis, it can also be revealing to consider the topics or aspects of an event or incident that were not mentioned. The textual analysis concerns the linguistic features of the texts and here we looked at modality, classification, figures of speech, topics, and transitivity.

Data

A few things had to be considered when selecting the texts for analysis. Firstly, the texts had to be in either the English or the French language as our knowledge of Arabic or any other language that is common in the region is not of a level that allows for discourse analysis as it requires an analyst to have a good understanding of the meaning and connotation of words. Secondly, we needed to find media outlets that had demonstrable links to the regime. Journalists at most media outlets will argue that they are working independently and without interference from the regime. However, in the chapter on discourse practice analysis, we explain in more detail why we believe it is fair to say that the two media outlets under analysis are under the influence of the regime, if not directly then at least indirectly due to the conditions of the media landscape in both countries. Thirdly, we decided to include texts prior to a referendum and to an election that occurred within two weeks of each other as this proximity in time benefits the internal validity of the study.

The two media outlets that we have analysed are 'The Jordan Times' for two weeks prior to the Jordanian national parliamentary elections on 10 November 2020, and 'El Moudjahid' for two weeks prior to the Algerian national referendum on 1 November 2020. We confined ourselves to the editorial and opinion sections of the online media outlets. Editorials are opinionated takes on the latest events by the journalists that work for the media outlet, while opinion sections usually have opinionated takes on the latest events by invited specialists, for example people with a background in the business or finance sector, academics or politics.

At the time of analysis, the Jordan Times had published 35 opinion articles on their website from 27 October up to and including 10 November. However, only 11 of the 35 were editorials written explicitly for the Jordan Times. 24 of the opinion articles were retrieved from Project

Syndicate which is an international provider of commentaries. Although we do not deny that there might be some analytical value in the articles that the editors of the Jordan Times have selected for publication on their website, we decided to focus solely on articles that were produced for the outlet itself. This left us with 11 opinion articles which consisted of 10,390 words in total. From 17 October up to and including 30 October, El Moudjahid published 12 editorials on their website which consisted of 5,458 words in total.

4. Analysis

4.1. Discourse Practices

It is the function of editorials to state the opinion of the journalists that are employed by the media outlet that publishes them, while articles in the opinion section contain commentaries by invited specialists. Editorials are usually explicit on topics that concern identity and policy (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999 from Hansen, 2005). This specific function of this genre of opinionated articles makes them very suitable for critical discourse analysis as this approach aims to uncover the construction of identities, social relations, and power dynamics. A genre affects to some extent the discourse that can be expected as “a genre reflects, constructs, and reinforces the values, epistemology and power relationships of the group from which it developed and for which it functions, though the force fullness of that reinforcement might vary in different kinds of groups and in different kinds of genre sets” (Devitt, 2004: 64 as quoted from Le, 2009: 1272).

As the opinionated genre contains high levels of subjective evaluations and comments, we can expect the regular occurrence of modality in the textual analysis (Richardson, 2007). When we look at modality, we look at, for example, how knowledge is presented – whether it is claimed as true and precise, or whether perhaps room is allowed for nuance and contradicting views (Van Dijk, 2005) -, which modal auxiliary verbs are used (e.g., must, may, can, should, etc), and which modal adverbs are used (e.g., likely, probably, possible, definitely). The speaker, in this case those who write the texts, will want to persuade the audience that his or her expressed opinion is correct and legitimate, whether it is an interpretation of events, a critique of an event, or an appraisal of an event or action.

While formal political authority plays a minimal role in independent media, government-controlled media forms the exception (Hansen, 2005). With independent media, the news outlet would usually distance itself from the stances that are articulated in the opinion texts (ibid). However, when the media is controlled or influenced by the incumbent regime, then we can expect its direct or indirect influence to operate as a substantial filter.

The newspaper industry in Jordan has suffered from years of government-imposed restrictions (Fanack, 2020). The Jordan Times is owned by the Jordan Press Foundation (JPF) which is majority-owned by the government (ibid). Although the Jordan Times is not as popular as al-Rai, its Arabic-language sister newspaper that is one of the most popular newspapers in Jordan, the Jordan Times still attracts a “sizable audience, particularly online” (ibid). The decision to start an English newspaper is said to have been made with the intention of flattering the image of Jordan abroad (to “expatriates and the diplomatic corps”) as it would allow for more “liberal” and “open policies” to be articulated (Jones, 1998: 20). According to Reporters Without Borders (RSF, 2020), the media landscape in Jordan is one of continuous scrutiny and surveillance by the intelligence services. The 2015 cyber-crime law is particularly relevant to the Jordan Times (an online media outlet) as journalists can receive prison sentences for broaching vague terrorism laws.

All the texts under analysis have been copy-pasted on the Middle East North Africa Financial Network (MENAFN) website, a regional platform (with an office in Amman, Jordan) that provides content on financial developments and technology relevant to the whole region. Articles 4¹, 5², 6³ and 10⁴ were widely shared on other newspaper websites and blogs, while articles 8⁵ and 9⁶ were shared twice, including MENAFN, on MZM and EEC Press respectively. Documents 4, 5, 6 and 10 were not only shared on Egyptian, Pakistani, Palestinian, and Yemeni newspapers and blogs, but also on “israelgenocide.com” and Muslim websites. This displays the outlet’s attempt to create a sense of unity in the Arab world and around their interpretation of Islam as the shared articles concerned topics relating to Arab Americans, Palestine, and France’s ‘Muslim problem’. The topic of article 10 concerned the elections in the United States. Two articles, written by James Zogby, were published on the Media Monitor Network before they were published in the Jordan Times

While Arabic-language newspapers in Algeria are the most popular in terms of numbers, the French-language newspapers are “seen as the preserve of the elite” (Fanack, 2020). According

¹ ‘Poll: How Arab Americans will vote and why,’ November 2 2020.

² ‘Escalating the demographic war: The Strategic goal of Israeli racism in Palestine,’ November 3 2020.

³ ‘Confronting France’s Muslim problem should be through dialogue,’ November 3 2020.

⁴ ‘These things are clear,’ November 9 2020.

⁵ ‘Palestinian hunger strike,’ November 7 2020.

⁶ ‘After Vienna’s operation, do we expect a new wave of terrorism?’ November 8 2020.

to Fanack (ibid), El Moudjahid is a state-owned newspaper. The instability of the political regime in Algeria (in the next chapter we elaborate further on the socio-political conditions in Algeria and Jordan) has been accompanied by threats to media freedom, as proven by the many incidents where journalists have been arrested for reporting on the Hirak protests in 2019 (and to a lesser extent 2020). El Moudjahid was first published in both the Arabic and French languages during the Algerian War of Independence (1954–1962). Since the newspaper was used for spreading pro-independence propaganda, the newspaper's journalists decided that they did not want to be affiliated with either the Arabic or Berber cause as such a decision was seen as controversial because it would potentially imply that they were taking sides. Furthermore, all FLN (*Front de Libération Nationale*) members spoke French, so the newspaper could be read by all (Stanton, 2012).

El Moudjahid 's website displays the number of views each single article gets and also allows for comments to be posted. No comments have been posted on the analysed texts, but when comparing with other articles on the website one can see that there are scarcely any comments. As for the number of views, they range from 5 to 52, with an average of 25 views per article. Compared to the views of other news around the same dates, this is not much (42 views/article on the 21/10; 95 views/article on the 24/10 and 152 views/article on the 28/10; maximum views were 2158).⁷

The next chapter discusses the sociocultural context of both Jordan and Algeria. However, there are a few issues which we would like to address first. Stating that a media outlet is government-controlled or influenced is not always a straightforward black-and-white observation. However, we argue that the context in which media outlets operate is often sufficiently telling as to the extent to which a media organisation can operate freely, as far as this is possible in the first case. If the media landscape is tarnished by restrictive media and freedom of speech laws that (threaten to) execute prison sentences for those whose speech falls within vaguely defined media and terrorism laws that include words such as 'intended'⁸

⁷ As of the 24th November 2020.

⁸ For example, the Cybercrime Law No. 27 of 2015, defining hate speech "[e]very writing and every speech or action intended to provoke sectarian or racial sedition, advocate for violence or foster conflict between followers of different religions and various components of the nation".

or ‘disturbing,’⁹ then we can assume that the existing media will be far less likely to contest the discourse that has been set out by the regime in power. We therefore suggest that the government-controlled or semi-independent media outlets, such as the Jordan Times and El Moudjahid, are similar in the sense that they will be most likely to take the incumbent regime’s side in the struggle of competing discourses.

⁹ For example, the 2006 Prevention of Terrorism Act contains sentences such as “disturbing public order” or “disturbing relations with a foreign country”.

4.2. Sociocultural Practices

This step in Fairclough's three-dimensional model intends to provide the social, cultural, and political background, as well as the context of the environment in which the texts have been produced. It is supposed to contextualise the texts within a broader network of possible competing discourses. First, we provide a brief overview of the political (modern) history of both Algeria and Jordan, then elaborate further on the relevant (media) laws that play a role in Jordan and in Algeria, and finally highlight the recent protests in Algeria and Jordan and the limitations of the electoral system in Jordan.

The Recent Political History of Algeria

The modern history of Algeria is very much marked by its time as a French colony. After 132 years of being a French colony, and then a *département*, Algeria gained independence in 1962 following the Évian Accords (18 March, 1962). Algerians had a relatively small say in political matters as deputies to the French parliament were equally divided between French and Algerians, despite there being 8 times more Algerians than French people to be represented. The local assembly was subjected to French control and most Algerians were unemployed and poor while (most of the) French, the *Pieds-Noirs* (black-feet), were privileged in the job market relative to the Algerians.

On 1 November, 1954, a new political movement, the *Front de Libération Nationale* (FLN), announced its establishment while marking the event by carrying out coordinated attacks throughout Algeria and distributing leaflets in which they declared that the *Front* would fight for independence until the French left. When the FLN abandoned its policy of avoiding civilians and implemented instead a policy of "collective repression", the French Prime Minister at the time, Guy Mollet, increased the French military presence in Algeria. An endless cycle of violence then began. The FLN perpetrated many guerrilla attacks while the French carried out a reign of terror by arresting, torturing, and murdering Algerians at random. Eventually, the new French Prime Minister, Charles de Gaulle, realised that the crisis could not be solved with military power alone and offered Algeria an option of "self-determination" with three different variations, one of them being full independence.

The announcement angered the *Pieds-Noirs* community and the French military that was still located in Algeria. They created a new movement, the *Organisation Armée Secrète* (OAS), and attacked Algerians at random with the intention of provoking a reaction from the FLN which would then force France to intervene and deploy its army to reinstate control and stability. Meanwhile, Algerians in general showed more and more support for the FLN. France could then no longer continue to pretend that the FLN was merely representing a small portion of the population. Even though the OAS remained active and continued to orchestrate attacks and even putsches, the *Pieds-Noirs* failed to prevent the full independence of Algeria.

After independence, Algeria was a one-party system with the FLN dominating the political scene for less than two decades. Despite their authoritarian rule, the FLN seemed to be popular amongst Algerians as they were benefitting from an extensive welfare system (free education, free medical care, and subsidised food). In 1988, when the welfare advantages could no longer be offered by the state due to falling oil revenues and poor economic planning, Algerian citizens took to the streets. The government responded by sending in the military which resulted in thousands of wounded and some 500 people killed. The President, Chadli Bendjedid, tried to resolve the crisis by organising a constitutional referendum: power would be decentralised and concentrated into the hands of the Algerian Parliament rather than the executive. Most importantly, however, President Bendjedid agreed to separate the FLN from the state, meaning that Algeria was no longer a one-party system.

One of the first parties that was created was the *Front Islamique du Salut* (the Islamic Salvation Front – FIS) which did very well in the local elections as it won a majority in most of the major cities. The army, realising that the outcome of the democratic process was not in its favour, attempted to prevent the national elections from occurring by constantly postponing them and by imprisoning opposition leaders.

When the elections finally did take place, in 1991, the FIS still managed to win the first round with a substantial majority. The FIS won 188 out of the 231 available seats. The FLN won only 16. The Defence Minister, Khaled Nezzar, forced President Bendjedid to dissolve parliament and resign. In his place, a *Haut Comité d'Etat* (HCE) consisting of five senior officials was established to rule the country. The FIS was banned and its leaders were arrested, newspapers were shut down, and all political activities in mosques were banned. The head of

the HCE, Mohamed Boudiaf, tried to push for civilian leadership and an end to corruption, but before he could lay out his programme he was assassinated by his bodyguard. The assassin claimed he murdered Boudiaf for religious reasons, but the Algerian people believed it was a secret military operation which further damaged the public image of the military. The violence that followed was “reminiscent of the independence war” (Meredith, 2013): with cases of secret detention, torture, and enforced disappearance. Opposition figures were murdered and the Islamists attacked the government, westerners, and other Islamists. The FIS’ armed branch, the *Armée Islamique du Salut* (IAS) fought the more extreme *Groupe Islamique Armé* (Armed Islamic Group – GIA).

The new president, Liamine Zeroual, a former general, organised elections in November 1995 which he won easily as most opposition parties were banned or were made ineffective. He pushed through constitutional reforms which included a limitation of the presidential terms to two and the creation of a new bicameral parliament with proportional representation. The 1996 constitution also banned any affiliation with a religion, a specific language or ethnicity (e.g., Arabic or Berber) by political parties and allowed the executive to overturn any law voted in by the legislative. However, the reforms did not put an end to the violence, although the AIS did announce a ceasefire. The GIA actually increased its attacks, killing more than 1,000 people in less than two months. This decade (1991 -2002) is commonly known as the *décennie noire*, the black decade. It is estimated that 150,000 people died in this black decade (Le Sueur, 2010; Meredith, 2013).

In 1998, President Zeroual declared that he was bringing his mandate to an end and would organise elections. He had lost both the support of the military because of his contact with the Islamists, and of the Islamists who did not have very much confidence in his abilities. The announcement caused great enthusiasm within the country as this would be the first election since the 1992 coup. However, the army was quick to choose a favourite, a man named Abdelaziz Bouteflika, and made sure that he had significantly more resources and positive media coverage. The main opposition subsequently boycotted the elections. Bouteflika had campaigned on one key promise: to bring peace to Algeria. He promised to do so by granting immunity to combatants on all sides if they agreed to lay down their arms and renounce terrorism. The amnesties were criticised by human rights groups as it would deprive the victims of justice. Bouteflika worked to detach the state from the military in order to “revive civilian leadership”. As defence minister, Bouteflika managed to purge the army. Although

Bouteflika at first limited the army's control, he eventually "fell prey to his own excesses". Most privatisation deals were given to elite businessmen linked to power. Then, when the Kabyle people (a Berber ethnic group) protested in 2001, they were ruthlessly repressed by the army and the police stayed in Kabylia to "maintain order". Bouteflika amended the constitution in 2008 so that he could stay in office once the two terms limit would be passed. Subsequent elections in Algeria have been boycotted by the opposition due to allegation of corruption (Le Sueur 2010; Meredith 2013).

Recent Protest Movements and Controversial Laws

Under President Bouteflika, the regime did not experience any particular disturbances or provoke an outcry when the constitution was reformed in order for President Bouteflika to stand for a third and fourth consecutive mandate. Algeria was also not affected by the Arab Spring protests that stirred up the region in 2011 and the years thereafter. However, when Bouteflika announced that he would be running for a fifth term at the beginning of 2019, the Algerian people peacefully took the streets. Bouteflika had been suffering from a stroke since 2013 and was rarely seen in public from that time onwards. The *Hirak*, the "movement" in Arabic, first demanded the withdrawal of Bouteflika from the race for the presidency. Later on the movement demanded his immediate departure. The protests did not stop after Bouteflika left office. The *Hirak* movement wanted a complete reform of the regime, from a 'military state' to a 'civil state', and the end of corruption.

The new man in charge, General Ahmed Gaïd Salah, openly acknowledged the *Hirak* movement and praised its popular sovereignty. This did not stop the regime from arresting and harassing peaceful protesters. In one year, more than 1,500 people were prosecuted for participating in protests. The December 2019 elections, organised by General Salah, were boycotted by the *Hirak* movement. The popular front went back to the streets as soon as the results were announced. Abdelmadjid Tebboune, a 74 year-old FLN member who served under Bouteflika's government, was said to have won the elections.

The Covid-19 pandemic meant that the *Hirak* movement had to halt its protests as this would risk infecting an uncontrollably high number of people. The weekly Friday protests were taken online, particularly on social media platforms. Meanwhile, President Tebboune initiated the drafting of a new constitution that would be, according to the regime, the cornerstone of a

“new Algeria”. However, experts have warned that the changes are only superficial and that the key powers will remain in the hands of the executive. In addition, human rights groups have decried the hypocrisy of pretending that the constitution is based on the *Hirak’s* demands while, at the same time, a large number of protestors have been jailed. While the constitution states that no press offense shall be punished by imprisonment, the government nonetheless manages to circumvent this provision by charging protesters and journalists with vaguely defined crimes, such as “undermining national unity,” “calling for illegal gathering,” and/or “denigrating Islam” (HRW. 2020). The reformed constitution was accepted but the 23% referendum turnout rate was low and set a new record for this (Le Sueur, 2010; Reporters Without Borders, 2020; HRW, 2020; Al Jazeera, 2020; iReMMo, 2020).

The Recent Political History of Jordan

The royal family, the Hashemites, were installed as head of state in Jordan (at the time the Emirate of Transjordan) by the British in 1921. At the same time, the family also ruled the kingdoms of Hejaz (1916-1925) and Iraq (1921-1958), and for a short time Syria (1920) a year before. The family is considered to have a direct link with the Islamic prophet Muhammad (through his great-grandfather). Sharif Hussein Ibn Ali was appointed as the Sharif and Emir of Mecca in 1908 and his family subsequently played a large role in the Arab Revolt, a military uprising against the Ottoman Empire with important backing from the United Kingdom.

The son of Sharif Hussein Ibn Ali, Abdullah I, was the first ruler of the Emirate of Transjordan and it remained a British protectorate until 1946 when it became the Hashemite Kingdom of Transjordan. Within a few years, Abdullah I and his forces captured and annexed the West Bank territory (before losing it again in 1967 and officially in 1988) and changed its name to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. The odds have long been against the Hashemite royal family in their fight to stay in power. Although Abdullah I was never seen as the first choice by the United Kingdom, as they deemed him unreliable (Barr, 2011), he managed to stay in power until he was assassinated by a Palestinian because he was suspected of becoming friendly with Israel.

The son of Abdullah I, Talal I, only ruled for about a year before he abdicated and gave the throne to Hussein I in 1952. Hussein I and his cousin, King Faisal II of the Kingdom of Iraq, formed the Arab Federation in 1957 until King Faisal II was deposed and murdered in a coup d'état in 1958. Hussein I tightened ties with the tribes and tried to make them feel included in order to stand strong in times of conflict with Israel and the territorial ambitions of the leaders of Syria and Iraq (Yom, 2014). The tribes were part of the royal court and had informational and institutional privileges, for example frequent consultations and political and military promotions (ibid). The current king, Abdullah II, reduced the influence of the tribes and relies more on the urban bourgeoisie as he implemented neoliberal policies and privatised many sectors (Yom, 2014).

During the rule of Hussein I, many Palestinians took refuge in Jordan and all the Palestinians in the West Bank were offered citizenship. Political tensions grew between the Palestinians and the ethnic Jordanians, as illustrated by the infamous 1970 Black September conflict (16-27 September). The Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) and the Fedayeen, who were fighting Israel, grew in strength and called for the overthrow of the monarchy in Jordan, as well as twice attempting to assassinate King Hussein I. The Jordanian army then carried out a military offensive and the PLO was dealt a heavy blow. The government of Jordan subsequently closed down many newspapers in the wake of the civil war (Massad, 2008). The PM started a new newspaper in 1971, Al-Rai, which is said to be the currently most-read Jordanian daily (ibid; Fanack, 2020).

As a result of the influx of Palestinians, Jordan has a far from homogenous demography. The majority are Palestinians, followed by ethnic Jordanians, Syrians, Iraqis (following the 1991 Gulf War and the 2003 US invasion of Iraq), and smaller numbers of Assyrians, Armenians, Chechens, Circassians, Mandeans, Egyptians, Filipinos, and people from Sri Lanka (Tobin, 2012). With 89 refugees for every 1,000 inhabitants, Jordan has one of the highest refugee per capita rates in the world, only behind Lebanon (UNHCR, 2017). Jordan's status as a host country for refugees has reinforced the image of the country as a beacon of stability within a region that has known many years of turmoil in the past decades. The large number of Palestinians has traditionally led to a strong pro-Palestinian sentiment when it concerns the Israel-Palestine conflict, although relations between ethnic Palestinians and ethnic Jordanians

domestically are traditionally viewed as tense (especially following the conflict between the PLO and the Jordanian army in the 1970s). However, the regime does have diplomatic relations with Israel, a contradiction which has been a factor of discontent among Palestinians over the years.

Maira Seeley (2015: 23 as quoted from Mencütek & Nashwan, 2020) noted that “Syrians are sometimes perceived by Jordanians as holding an unfair advantage over Jordanians due to the support the refugees receive from international organizations and NGOs”. Refugees are tended to be seen as groups that would be targeted by, for example, hate speech (Al Serhan & Elareshi, 2019). The Syrian Civil War seemed to make matters worse as an alleged one million people or more sought refuge in Jordan (Tobin, 2018), to the worries of politicians, security services, and analysts (“Carefully watched”, 2014). As a result, the Jordanian regime has reinforced a narrative of a national Jordanian identity which is free of sectarian divisions (Tobin, 2018) and is true to the ‘moderate’ Islam.

The emphasis of the regime on the dominance of ‘moderate’ Islam can be explained as a result of a few developments. While Jordan might be demographically homogenous, the country has remained a strongly Sunni-dominant country. Therefore, it had relatively little sectarian violence as, for example, has often been the case in neighbouring Iraq and Syria. However, the Syrian Civil War has caused some disruption in the country (Tobin, 2012), not only because of the influx of refugees who might not be Sunni and are more accustomed to sectarian conflict, but also because of the rise of ISIS in Iraq and Syria and the relatively large number of Jordanians who travelled to these countries in support of the extremists. With estimates of 3,000 foreign fighters traveling to Syria and Iraq, Jordan had the highest per capita number of foreign fighters (Speckhard & Shajkovci, 2018). This illustrated once again the breeding ground that Jordan seems to be for extremist Salafi-jihadi ideology as many top-level jihadists have, over the years, spent significant time in Jordan (e.g. Abdullah Azzam, al-Maqdisi, Abu Qatada, al-Uraydi, and al-Zarqawi). Extensive studies on terrorist profiles in Jordan have highlighted different pathways into jihadism where one of these pathways is characterised by radicalisation through the media coverage of atrocities in the regions that particularly affect Sunnis (Hanieh & Rumman: from Gratrud, 2020).

The rivalry between Iran and Jordan has also played a role in the shaping of the Jordanian identity. The Hashemite monarchy has been an outspoken critic of the Shi'a regime and its proxies in the region (Tobin, 2018). King Abdullah II sees the influence of Iran's proxies as a direct threat and coined the term 'Shi'a Crescent' in 2004 (ibid). Robbins and Rubin (2013 from Wagemakers, 2020) explained that Jordan began promoting the 'moderate' and 'official' Islam as a counterbalance to Iranian influence. It has, however, been argued that the strong emphasis on the difference between the Shi'a and Sunni branches of Islam has been manipulated and instrumentalised as a 'fear-mongering tool' for mass mobilisation and the regime's own gain and interests (Malmvig, 2015; Tobin, 2018). The escalation of the Syrian Civil War has been marked by a proliferation of anti-Shi'a hate speech online (Abdo, 2013).

Recent Protest Movements and Controversial Laws

While Jordan has positioned itself, and to some extent it has been positioned by Western countries, as a beacon of stability and peace, it is mostly only one in relative terms. Crenshaw (1981) warned that inconsistent government reactions that weaver between tolerance and repression are the most likely climates to encourage terrorism. King Abdullah II continues to seek the fragile balance between tolerance and repression. The Hashemite Kingdom has survived many challenges and has managed to stay in power. The Arab Spring has not affected Jordan as much as its Arab neighbours. There was, however, a significant incident, namely the *Hirak* ('the movement' in Arabic), when different tribal groups protested throughout the country in 2011 – there were as many as 40 different *Hirak* movements. The *Hirak* movement demanded the reform of the monarchy, the Electoral Law, and an end to corruption. What is also noteworthy is that the *Hirak* did not build on the usual Palestinian-Jordanian divide, nor on purely economic issues (most of the protesters were employed and did not have particular economic difficulties).

The General Intelligence Directorate spread rumours that the *Hirak* had actually been created by Palestinian provocateurs, appealing to the rest of the population's anti-Palestinian sentiment (Yom, 2014). Prince Hassan, an uncle of the king and known to be a liberal, condemned the movement. By doing so, it created infighting between the older members of the tribes and the younger members (ibid). In response, King Abdullah II sacked the cabinet

and appointed a new Prime Minister. The *Hirak*, however, was not satisfied by this move as they demanded a reform of the regime itself, not of the government. Even if there was a new PM, the main two powers (the King and the General Intelligence Directorate) were still the real ones in power (ibid). A new PM would be as likely to follow the king's orders as the old Prime Minister. King Abdullah also announced a constitutional reform, but the changes were only minor and did not affect the monarchy's powers.

Online social networks played a large role in the *Hirak* protests in 2011 (Al-Tarawneh, 2014 from Al Serhan & Elareshi, 2019). This in combination with the rise of Islamist extremism, both domestically and abroad, was used as a pretext to enact vaguely formulated laws that have limited freedom of speech. The Electronic Crimes Law (No. 27, 2015) penalizes online defamation, or hate speech, with a fine and at least a three months prison sentence. This is a law that can also be applied to journalists that are published on their media outlet's website (Freedom House, 2020b; Avraz, 2020) which "independent journalists see as an attempt to discourage criticism of the government and encourage self-censorship" (Alami, 2015). Amendments to the Anti-Terrorism Law in Jordan contains a vague definition of terrorism which includes acts that "threaten the country's relationships with foreign states or expose the country or its citizens to retaliatory acts on them or their money," "disturbing [Jordan's] relations with a foreign state," "expose Jordanians to danger of acts of revenge against them or their money," "any information system or network that facilitates terrorist acts, supports or spreads ideas of a group that undertakes an act of terrorism, or subjects Jordanians or their property to danger of hostile acts or acts of revenge," and "forming a gang with the intent to commit thievery or infringe on people or money" (HRW, 2014). The risk of expanding the definition of terrorism and including more vaguely worded acts is that those who face charges under the Anti-Terrorism Law will most likely face more severe penalties, including longer prison times and a lower threshold for death penalties. The Anti-Terror Law also grants authorities the jurisdiction to access private communications and monitor people suspected of terrorism (Freedom House, 2020b).

Overall, the Hashemite monarchy has successfully kept a grip on power and has arguably remained the most stable country in the region. Tobin (2012) argues that the prosperity and stability of Jordan is, above all, a relative observation. Relative political and economic stability

“will continue as long as the political situations in neighbouring countries are worse than in Jordan” (ibid). Essentially, the monarchy remains in full executive power, regardless of the attempts of appearing as a democracy (ibid) and family and tribal allegiances still play a significant role for MPs (Al-Khalidi, 2020). Surveys have shown that Jordanians want less corrupt and more democratic governments (Yom & Sammour, 2017), originating from a lack of trust in government that also explains why voter turnout has been historically low during the past few elections, especially among the youth (Al Sharif, 2020; Freedom House, 2017). It is in a context like this that we can expect the regime to put effort into the building of a national identity with the intention of ensuring that people will continue to support the regime.

4.3 Textual Analysis

Modality

Algeria: El Moudjahid

The analysed articles have been written extensively in the *indicatif* (indicative) tense. The *conditionnel* (conditional) and the *subjonctif* (subjunctive) tenses are only used once in the complete body of texts. In French, there are three main *modes*: the *indicatif*, which is used by the speaker to describe a fact or when (s)he considers what (s)he is saying is the truth. The *conditionnel*, which is used if the future is considered to be unsure, i.e. when it depends on a certain event or a certain condition. For example, ‘if I win the lottery’. The *subjonctif* is used to express an opinion or doubt. The fact that the articles of the El Moudjahid are mainly written in the *indicatif* tense shows that the speaker wants to present or considers the content to be factual. This speaker’s affinity with what is communicated is therefore high. The *indicatif* tense is used even when there are clear competing discourses, for example in the following two sentences where it is stated, as a fact, that there is a strong majority that supports the reforms and that the reforms reinforces civil and political rights.

La future Loi fondamentale renforce les droits civils et politiques des Algériens, ouvre des perspectives très encourageantes pour la société civile¹⁰ (doc. A1)

Une forte majorité se dégage nettement, pour consolider les bases de la nouvelle République, en adéquation avec les revendications du Hirak populaire¹¹ (doc. A4)

The speaker favours the future tense of the *indicatif* rather than the *conditionnel*, especially when referring to the referendum, as if the outcome of the referendum is certain. By using the *future de l’indicatif* rather than the *conditionnel*, the speaker considers the future to be certain, i.e. according to him, it does not depend on an event or a condition (in this case that the majority will vote yes).

¹⁰ The future fundamental Law reinforces Algerians’ civil and political rights, opens very encouraging prospects for the civil society.

¹¹ A strong majority clearly stands out, to strengthen the basis of a new Republic, in accordance with the popular Hirak’s demands.

L'adoption par les électeurs du projet de révision de la Constitution sera un signe de leur adhésion en faveur de [l']Algérie¹² (doc. A11)

Une étape décisive sera franchie par le peuple algérien, avec l'organisation du référendum sur le projet de révision de la Constitution, le 1er novembre 2020¹³ (doc. A12)

Even when, according to the rules of French grammar, the speaker should have used the *conditionnel*, the speaker decides to use the *indicatif* tense. In that way, by disregarding the grammatical rule, the speaker opts for a statement that sounds like fact.

L'amendement constitutionnel, au cas où il est plébiscité [sic], nécessitera l'adaptation de nombre de lois dans le cadre d'une réforme globale de l'État¹⁴ (doc. A9)

Le peuple, au cas où il adopte [sic] la Constitution amendée et enrichie, rassembleuse, aura certainement l'occasion de poser les jalons d'une Algérie affranchie des pesanteurs de la mauvaise gouvernance¹⁵ (doc. A12)

Finally, the speaker never uses terms like *si* (if) or "it is possible that". The modality used in El Moudjahid illustrates a high affinity level, making the discourse dominant and, as a consequence, closes the struggle for discourse (or ignoring the existence of such a struggle in the first place).

Jordan: The Jordan Times

We have seen in the previous French texts that modality can be assessed by looking at the tenses and the modes. In the English language, modality can be derived from the use of modal verbs (e.g. can, may, must, shall, will, could, might, should, would, etc.) We found that, in the analysed articles, the speaker often uses the modal verb 'must' when referring to the Jordanian people, Israel, and France.

¹² The adoption by the voters of the Constitution's reform's project will be a sign of their adherence [to] Algeria.

¹³ A decisive step will be overcome by the Algerian people, with the organisation of the referendum on the project of the Constitution's reform, the 1st of November 2020.

¹⁴ The constitutional amendment, if it is supported, will need adaptation of a number of laws in the framework of a global reform of the State.

¹⁵ The people, if it adopts the amended, enriched and gathering Constitution, will certainly have the occasion to establish the foundation of an Algeria which is liberated from the weights of bad governance.

As far as the people are concerned, they must observe the rules to the letter; and there is no room for laxity (doc. J3)

Israel must end its unjust and inhumane system of administrative detention (doc. J8)

This must be done through dialogue and cooperation rather than incitement (doc. J6) – about France’s Muslim problem

By using the modal verb ‘must,’ the speaker commits to obligation modalities: Jordanians, Israel, and France have an obligation to do what the speaker suggests. This high modality makes it difficult to counter the speaker’s discourse. The speaker uses lower modality sentences, but mainly when (s)he is referring to someone else’s thought, therefore only opening up space for competing discourses when it concerns the speech of someone else.

The terrorist attack was claimed to be the revenge (doc. J2).

French president’s statements, [...] "no concessions" would be made in a new drive to eradicate what he claims are extremist teachings in schools and mosques, caused outrage in the Muslim world (doc. J2).

Nevertheless, there are instances in which the speaker employs ‘should’ instead of ‘must’ which is less compelling and allows for competing discourses.

Following the two murders Macron should have shown moral leadership that is needed in a polarised society (doc. J6).

He is now a lame duck president who should be working with President-elect Joe Biden to facilitate a smooth transition by January 20 (doc. J11).

The texts reveal that the speaker sometimes leaves space for discussion. In the following example, the speaker acknowledges the other side’s opinion, accompanied by the use of high modality sentences.

Freedom of expression is a principle that deserves to be respected and protected (doc. J2).

The state is right to curtail foreign intervention but it must also provide alternatives and give young French Muslims the opportunity to succeed (doc. J6).

In conclusion, although most of the sentences have high modality, the discursive struggle is not completely closed in the analysed articles of the Jordan Times as the other views are taken into account and softer modal words are employed when the speaker tells others (France, Israel, Donald Trump) what to do.

Classification

Algeria: El Moudjahid

Through classification, the speaker can create a sense of self and a sense of others by, for example, associating certain qualities with groups and/or individuals. We found that the editorials of El Moudjahid constructed an identity of the 'self' that represents Algeria and in which the Algerian people are portrayed as one homogeneous body. The speaker does so by referring to *le peuple* (the people), *les Algériens* (Algerians), and a combination of both with *le peuple algérien* (the Algerian people). The speaker uses pronouns like *nos* and *nous* (our and we/us) to emphasise unity. Furthermore, El Moudjahid emphasises the common history of the Algerian people in an attempt to unify: the speaker repeatedly underlines that the referendum will be occurring on the 66th anniversary of the beginning of the independence war, (s)he draws a parallel between the approval of the new constitution and Algeria's independence from France, and (s)he insists on an Algerian collective memory and heritage.

Le 1er novembre 2020, qui coïncide avec la célébration du 66e anniversaire du déclenchement de la lutte de Libération nationale¹⁶ (doc. A12)

Elle est amplement révélatrice de la volonté largement partagée par l'ensemble des Algériens de renouer avec des valeurs et des principes qui ont permis de s'émanciper du colonialisme français et de surmonter toutes les adversités¹⁷ (doc. A9)

Le rendez-vous du 1er novembre est perçu comme une réappropriation de l'histoire et des valeurs de la glorieuse Révolution, à travers la constitutionnalisation de la Déclaration du 1er Novembre¹⁸ (doc. A10)

¹⁶ The 1st of November 2020, which coincides with the 66th anniversary of the start of the fight for national Liberation

¹⁷ It is highly revealing of the will largely shared by all Algerians to reconnect with the values and principles that allowed for emancipation from French colonialism and to overcome adversity

¹⁸ The 1st of November meeting is perceived as a reappropriation of history and values of the glorious Revolution, through the constitutionalisation of the 1st of November Declaration

Ils [les amendements] valorisent la mémoire collective et ses symboles¹⁹
(doc. A1)

Le devoir de mémoire intangible et inaliénable caractérise un engagement de la nouvelle Algérie, prête, plus forte que jamais, à la fête démocratique du 1er novembre, pour défendre l'héritage novembrien²⁰ (doc. A2)

The sense of Algerian unity is asserted by explicitly referring to a unified Algeria.

Une Algérie souveraine et unie²¹ (doc. A10)

La nouvelle Algérie, plus que jamais unie²² (doc. A6).

For El Moudjahid, the government is part of this unified 'self'. Furthermore, the speaker praises and employs positive adjectives when speaking about the government's acts.

L'Algérie [...] disposant d'un capital de crédibilité et de confiance exprimées par tous les dirigeants, les acteurs de la société civile et les tribus²³ (doc. A8)

Les chiffres satisfaisants constatés récemment font de l'Algérie un pays qui a réussi à riposter efficacement à la Covid-19, confirmant la fiabilité de sa stratégie de lutte dès l'émergence du virus, conformément aux instructions du chef de l'État, Abdelmadjid Tebboune²⁴ (doc. A3)

The 'other' is not clearly defined. The deictic pronoun *ceux* (those) or the word *bande* (band, gang) is used to refer to the other. The vagueness of the terms makes it easy to include anyone into the 'other' group. And, according to the speaker, it is not flattering to be part of the 'other', as 'others' are defined in strongly negative terms.

Mercenaires et traitres²⁵ (doc. A7)

Apôtres du chaos²⁶ (doc. A10)

¹⁹ They [the amendments] promote the collective memory and its symbols

²⁰ The duty of intangible and inalienable memory characterises a commitment of the new Algeria, ready, stronger than ever, for the democratic party of the 1st of November, to defend the November heritage

²¹ A sovereign and unified Algeria

²² A new Algeria, more than ever united

²³ Algeria [having] a capital of credibility and confidence expressed by all leaders, civil society actors and tribes

²⁴ The satisfying recently recorded numbers make Algeria a country which managed to effectively counter the Covid 19, confirming the reliability of its strategy to fight, since the emergence of the virus, according to the head of State's instruction, Abdelmadjid Tebboune

²⁵ Mercenaries and traitors

²⁶ Apostles of chaos

Leurs pratiques qui ont failli plonger le pays dans une faillite généralisée²⁷

(doc. A1)

Ceux qui ont voulu détruire le pays²⁸ (doc. A11)

In addition to using demeaning terms, the speaker further undermines the 'other' by stating they are only a small minority.

Les partisans du boycott et du rejet du projet de la révision constitutionnelle constituent une minorité en crise de représentativité et de légitimité²⁹

(doc. A11)

En adéquation avec les revendications du Hirak populaire et bien loin des agissements d'une minorité qui se recrute dans une opposition divisée³⁰

(doc. A9)

We found that there is, on the one side, the government and Algeria which is only described positively and as being unified, and on the other side, the 'others' who are described in vague terms and strongly criticised (and for what is not particularly clear). There is a strong classification and dissociation between the two groups.

Jordan: The Jordan Times

On the one hand, the speaker does classify, as a distinction is often made between the Arab world and the West, between Palestine and Israel, between moderate and extremist Muslims, and between American Republicans and Democrats. Furthermore, the speaker does not hesitate to criticise Israel, France, and the United States in strong words.

Israel has impunity for its illegal and unjust actions, does not face any accountability, and faces no sanctions for these actions (doc. J8)

How can these values [human rights, democracy] be shared with Israel when it violates them on a daily basis? (doc. J8)

²⁷ Their methods nearly plunged the country into generalised bankruptcy

²⁸ Those who wanted to destroy the country

²⁹ The supporters of boycotting and rejecting the constitutional reform's project are a minority in crisis, looking for representativity and legitimacy

³⁰ According to the popular Hirak's demands and far away from the actions of a minority which is hired in a divided opposition

To add insult to injury, the French president's statements, that preceded the French teacher's murder by few weeks, describing Islam as a religion in crisis (doc. J2)

It is as if France learned all the wrong lessons of the American response after 9/11 and decided to repeat them (doc. J2)

The US-led invasion of Iraq and the chaos it unleashed all over the region (doc. J2)

Trump, [...] his narcissism, ignorance and irrationality (doc. J7)

When the speaker focuses on one specific person (i.e. the president of France or the United States), such strong language can be considered as criticism. However, when the focus is on a group (France, Trump supporters, Israel), then the use of negative nouns and adjectives can be seen as a means of 'othering' and creating an 'us' versus 'them' condition.

On the other hand, we found that the speaker likes to create bridges between different identities. The speaker shows that the boundaries between the different communities are not impermeable. Nevertheless, it still places people in restrictive groups, albeit less restrictive than otherwise.

Arab Americans (doc. J4)

Israeli citizenship for any Palestinian Arab (doc. J5)

French Muslims (doc. J6)

Islam, like other religions, opposes all kinds of violence, aggression, injustice, cruelty or unkind treatment of others even when the others belong to a different faith (emphasis added, doc. J2)

But the world will breathe a sigh of relief that the tide of Trumpism, for now, has been checked (doc. J11)

The speaker also addresses classification and othering and criticises it. Nonetheless, as seen above, it does not prevent the speaker from engaging in othering.

It is also true of the crimes of Daesh, which were often collectively blamed on Muslims (doc. J2)

Trump used Islamophobia to drum up support from his base while demonising China for stealing American jobs and later for spreading the virus (doc. J11).

Figures of Speech

Algeria: El Moudjahid

We found that the speaker uses several recurring metaphors which are linked to the same idea: an Algeria that is changing. The first recurring metaphor is that Algeria is moving forward, like a train.

Elle est la locomotive de l'Algérie de demain, ouverte sur le monde des innovations, de la technologie et de la diversité culturelle et linguistique³¹
(doc. A6)

Le train du changement radical a démarré³² (doc. A7)

We have interpreted this metaphor as meaning to provide a sense of separation between the past and the present/future. Algeria is only going forwards, and at a fast pace (considering the associated speed of a train).

The second recurring metaphor is that Algeria is being built by the Algerian people, a process in which the constitutional referendum can be seen as the first test.

L'amendement de la Constitution constitue la pierre angulaire dans le processus d'édification d'une Algérie³³ (doc. A9)

Cette Constitution vous interpelle, vous écoute, vous insuffle de l'espoir en vous et vous confère la responsabilité de contribuer à l'édification de la patrie», a affirmé le Premier ministre, Abdelaziz Djerad³⁴ (doc. A10)

We interpret this metaphor as an attempt to unify Algerians in their mission of creating a new Republic, a new Algeria. By focusing on the referendum as part of Algeria's identity, the speaker creates a situation in which it becomes a logical consequence to exclude anyone as an outsider if (s)he disagrees with the referendum.

³¹ She is the locomotive of tomorrow's Algeria, opened to the world of innovations, technology and cultural and linguistic diversity

³² The radical change train has started

³³ The constitutional amendment constitutes the cornerstone in the process of building an Algeria

³⁴ This constitution calls to you, listens to you, injects hope into you and confers you the responsibility to contribute to the building of the country" affirmed Prime Minister, Abdelaziz Djerad

We also found that the speaker employs repetition. One repetition in particular is used rather often in El Moudjahid: Algeria + a positive adjective:

*Algérie plus que jamais unie*³⁵ (doc. A12)

*Algérie fière et conquérante*³⁶ (doc. A11)

The most common repetition is *l'Algérie nouvelle* (the new Algeria).

Jordan: The Jordan Times

We found two recurring figures of speech in the articles from the Jordan Times. The first one was the use of metaphors when referring to the situation in France, the French “Muslim problem” as the speaker calls it. The metaphors that are used in this case (‘waves of Islamophobia’, ‘dark clouds looming ahead’) are vivid and dramatic. Both imply enormity. By using metaphors like these, the speaker gives the impression that France’s problems are insurmountable.

Another figure of speech, which is used more frequently, is the use of the questions. The speaker makes extensive use of three types of questions: rhetorical questions, genuine questions, and questions to open a subject. All types of questions have different objectives. First, rhetorical questions are used as a critique of the other’s argument, it undermines the argument as well as emphasising the speaker’s argument.

If free speech is really an absolute value, then why does France not allow these kinds of speech as well? (doc. J2)

How can these values be shared with Israel when it violates them on a daily basis? (doc. J8)

The second type of question, genuine questions, can be used to engage with the audience as it requires the receiver to think about the question, and even in some cases take action. It also often implies that the premise of the question is true and correct. For example, the first sentence implies that ‘our people’ cannot do ‘the same’.

Why cannot our people do the same? (doc. J3) – about the Covid-19 pandemic

What can be done to save the life of Maher Al Akhras? (doc. J8).

³⁵ Algeria more than ever united

³⁶ Proud and conquering Algeria

And finally, the third type of question, questions which open a subject, aim at establishing a connection with the audience. It can give the receiver the idea that (s)he is in an honest and mutual conversation with the speaker, even though the receiver is unable to participate and has the questions posed to him/her answered by the speaker. Such questions might also present an opportunity to the speaker to discuss a controversial or difficult topic. A sort of invitation, or excuse, is needed to approach such a controversial topic, and the speaker creates this invitation themselves by posing a question.

Why Charlie Hebdo? (doc. J2)

But how is Israel to deal with its own Palestinian Arab population, which now constitutes a sizeable demographic minority and an influential, often united, political bloc? (doc J5).

Topics

Algeria: El Moudjahid

We found four recurring topics in the El Moudjahid articles. The first one was the focus on the upcoming constitutional referendum as, out of 12 articles, 7 referred to the vote. The second topic was the extensive attention given to concepts related to democracy, such as the respect for human rights, popular sovereignty, multipartyism and the respect of all different political opinions, government liability, and the respect of presidential campaign promises.

The third recurring topic was the *Hirak*, the protest movement that has been challenging the regime since it first began protesting in February 2019. By acknowledging the movement, by suggesting that the speaker is supporting the movement, the speaker provides the audience with the idea that they are in favour of democracy and inclusion.

Une forte majorité se dégage nettement, pour consolider les bases de la nouvelle République, en adéquation avec les revendications du Hirak populaire³⁷ (doc. A4)

³⁷ A strong majority clearly emerges, to consolidate the basis of the new Republic, in accordance with the popular Hirak's demands

La bataille du 22 février n'est pas terminée³⁸ (doc. A11)

However, this inclusion seems to be superficial. The speaker claims that the demands that have been set out by the *Hirak* movement have been met, but the speaker does not go into any details as to what these demands were. It is not mentioned whether the representatives of the *Hirak* movement agree with the constitutional reform and the referendum in general. And, finally, El Moudjahid continues to criticise the *Hirak* movement, but in a concealed and implied manner which allows the speaker to deny that (s)he is criticising the *Hirak* movement.

Pourtant, certaines voix, se plaçant à contre-courant de l'histoire et refusant de s'affranchir de leurs illusions, invoquent des arguments trompeurs pour tenter de discréditer l'acte de vote³⁹ (doc. A5)

La bande qui tente, de leurs lieux de détention, de manœuvrer pour empêcher l'avènement de l'Algérie nouvelle⁴⁰ (doc. A11)

The last topic is on change and breaking up with the past.

Le changement à portée du scrutin⁴¹ (doc. A11)

L'espace réservé au dialogue et aux débats renseigne sur la volonté de rompre avec les méthodes du passé⁴² (doc. A12)

The speaker does distinguish between the far away past (the independence war), which is praised, and the near past (the Bouteflika era) which is criticised. There is the *passé glorieux* (glorious past) and the *autocratique et prédateur* past (autocratic and predatory past). By praising the first and criticising the second, the speaker is trying to, on the one hand, bring the people together by emphasising a shared history and the momentum of independence, and, on the other hand, to distance the current government from the ousted government of Bouteflika.

Jordan: The Jordan Times

Interestingly, especially when compared to El Moudjahid, the Jordan Times articles do not mention the upcoming Jordanian elections at all. The topics range from the aviation industry

³⁸ The 22nd February fight is not over

³⁹ For some voices, going against the current of history and refusing to be freed from their illusions, invoke misleading arguments to try discrediting the voting act

⁴⁰ The band who tries, from where they are detained, to maneuver

⁴¹ The change within the vote's range

⁴² The space reserved for dialogue and debate informs on the will to break with the past's methods

being impacted by Covid-19 to the American presidential elections and France's response to terrorist attacks.

We found that two main topics would reappear. These two topics are linked. The first one is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Some texts are fully devoted to this topic while other texts solely refer to the conflict as an example.

Escalating the demographic war: The Strategic goal of Israeli racism in Palestine (doc. J5) – title of the document

Palestinian hunger strike (doc. J8) – title of the document

The second recurring topic is Islam. The speaker implicitly distinguishes him or herself as a defender of the one and only correct interpretation of Islam. The focus on Islam is incidental to the focus on terrorist attacks as three articles discuss recent terrorist attacks which occurred in Europe. We have found that the speaker attempts to distance the terrorist attacks from Islam by arguing that terrorism is not inherently Islamic and that true Muslims would not commit terrorist acts.

It was the depraved act of an individual, not of "Islam" or of Muslims collectively (doc. J2)

For example, in document J9, on the recent terrorist attack in Vienna, the speaker never mentions Islam. The speaker refers to North Africa and Central Asia but at no point uses the term Islam. The attacks are, nonetheless, discussed and repeatedly condemned in the strong terms.

Horrific terror crime that deserves the utmost condemnation (doc. J2)

These are revolting murders (doc. J6)

Transitivity

Algeria: El Moudjahid

“Transitivity describes the relationships between participants and the roles they play in the processes described in reporting (Richardson, 2007: 55).” To understand transitivity, we must look at the “actions that appear in a text, who does them and to whom they are done” Mills, 1995: 143-144 as quoted from Richardson, 2007). We found that the speaker in the El Moudjahid texts makes extensive use of passive sentences and nominalisation

(impersonalisation of the process which removes a sense of specificity and responsibility of the actor) when referring to the referendum.

Un projet d'amendement constitutionnel sera soumis au référendum populaire⁴³ (doc. A9)

Des moyens considérables, humains, logistiques et un dispositif sécuritaire sont mobilisés pour le bon déroulement de la consultation référendaire⁴⁴ (doc. A12)

La révision constitutionnelle⁴⁵ (doc. A11)

L'organisation du référendum⁴⁶ (doc. A12)

By doing so, the speaker presents the constitutional referendum as a natural phenomenon, without the inclusion of an creative or producing agent. It is never explicitly stated who had organised the referendum, it can only be guessed from context that the government took the initiative of organizing the referendum. The speaker does use active sentences which have the government as its subject, but then the sentence focuses on the political campaign that is pushing for the yes-vote rather than on the organisation of the referendum itself.

Le staff gouvernemental [...] sillonnent le territoire à l'effet de convaincre le citoyen d'aller voter⁴⁷ (doc. A1)

Les membres du gouvernement présents en force sur le terrain⁴⁸ (doc. A10)

Jordan: The Jordan Times

When referring to Israel, France, and the French President, Emmanuel Macron, the speaker often uses active sentences.

The Israeli government of right-wing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu plans to expand the jurisdiction of the Jewish town of Harish in northern Israel by 50 per cent (doc. J5)

Israel's judicial system as applied to Palestinians disregards the notion of equality for all before the law and has become a tool in the overall system

⁴³ A project to amend the Constitution will be submitted to popular referendum.

⁴⁴ Considerable human, logistic means and a security mechanism are mobilised for the good execution of the referendum consultation

⁴⁵ The constitutional reform

⁴⁶ The organisation of the referendum

⁴⁷ The government's staff [...] visits the territory with the goal of convincing the citizen to go vote

⁴⁸ The members of the government strongly present on the ground

of oppression of an entire people. Israeli courts accept principles, such as administrative detention, settlement expansion and home demolitions that openly violate basic requirements of justice and respect for human rights (doc. J8)

Yet, sadly, the French government [...] close down civil rights groups and charities and harassed and arrested people who had nothing to do with that crime (doc. J6)

He [Macron] is in fact generalising and creating a stereotype that is false, insulting and misleading (doc. J6)

The use of active sentences puts the emphasis on the actor, who is the grammatical subject. It allows for the speaker to focus on the responsibility of the subject, in this case, on Israel and France. Passive sentences are used when discussing Israel's actions, but the sentences are nearly always followed by "by Israel". In principle, passive sentences conceal the responsibility of the speaker as they are not the grammatical subject of the sentence. It is possible to have a passive sentence without any speaker, for example: 'the cat was eaten'. However, in the case of the analysed articles, the passive sentences relating to Israel were followed by specifying the identity of the speaker, therefore not concealing Israel's responsibility.

There are currently 350 Palestinians detained by Israel without charges (doc. J8)

The contingency plan was formulated by Israel's Housing Ministry as a swift response to an internal document (doc. J5)

The only sentences we could find which referred to Israel and that were passive without a mention of the agent, were quotes from Amnesty International or when Israel did something positive.

In a report published in September 2019, the rights group, Amnesty International, revealed that "Palestinian members of the Knesset in Israel are increasingly facing discriminatory attacks" (doc. J5)

After 91 days of hunger strike the Palestinian prisoner, Maher Al Akhras, was finally allowed to see his family (doc. J8)

On the other hand, when discussing terrorist attacks, the speaker favoured nominalising the process and communicating in passive sentences. Only twice was the grammatical agent of the sentence a terrorist.

The heinous murder of the teacher in France (doc. J2)

Terrible murders (doc. J6).

The French history teacher who was brutally murdered (doc. J2).

The decision of the speaker to choose this style could be explained by the speaker's objective to focus on France's response to the attacks rather than on the actual terrorist attacks. It has been observed (see 'topics') that the speaker condemned the terror attacks. However, this nonetheless draws less attention to the agent, the killer, and thus on their responsibility. Likewise, when the killer of the French teacher Samuel Paty is mentioned, he is not the grammatical subject of the sentence.

The recent beheading of French teacher Samuel Paty by an 18-year-old man from Chechenya (doc. J2)

The hideous killing by a young Chechen of a French teacher (doc. J6)

These two sentences show that there is indeed an acknowledgement of the identity and responsibility of the killer, but it is not the focus of the texts. The speaker decided to refer to "the revolting murder" without having to focus on the perpetrator.

5. Discussion of Results

The first thing that we noticed before we began our detailed analysis of the texts was rather surprising and unexpected. Whereas 9 out of 12 Algerian texts included references to the referendum, none of the Jordanian texts included references to the parliamentary elections. This shows that, unlike the *Jordan Times*, *El Moudjahid* had the intention of being engaged in shaping the discourse in this national decision-making event. This could indicate that, compared to the Algerian regime, the Jordanian regime does not feel as threatened by competing discourses. We found this a compelling interpretation, especially considering the tumultuous political situation following the mass anti-government protests that have been particularly active since 2019 until the global Covid-19 pandemic constrained the movement and which allowed the new post-Bouteflika regime under President Tebboune to imprison leading figures of the *Hirak* movement.

The Algerian texts describe the constitutional reform, and the government, in positive terms. *El Moudjahid* focuses on the supposedly positive and beneficial effects on the Algerian democracy that would be brought about by the proposed modifications. The style of modality, and high affinity, of the Algerian texts implies that the speaker is either attempting to close the discursive struggle by solely reiterating the regime's approved discourse, or that they do not even consider there to be competing discourses. The consistent references to the high democratic value that the new proposed constitution would have is ironic when you consider that representatives of the *Hirak* movement, and journalists that have covered the protests, have been imprisoned. This suggests that there are convincing grounds for doubts when supporters of the new constitution claim the salience of 'freedom of speech,' and 'freedom of press and freedom of association'.

The high modality style that we have found in the texts indicates that this side of the debate has been purposely left out in an attempt to undermine the true purpose of those who have protested. The constitutional reform is portrayed as a bottom-up initiative that includes the people affiliated with the *Hirak* movement. We found that the speakers adopt nominalization and passive sentences when references are made to the referendum. The speakers give the idea to the audience that the constitutional reform is some kind of a natural phenomenon by

excluding the productive agent (the Algerian government). This appears to be a tactical decision from the speaker since the *Hirak* movement does not recognize Tebboune as a legitimate president and opposes his government. Therefore, emphasising that the referendum had been organised by Tebboune and his government would probably diminish the already low support for the referendum.

History has also shown that, in practice, constitutional changes in Algeria are most likely to be devoid of any real meaning. After the 1989 constitutional reforms, that allowed for freedom of expression, association, and multipartyism, the 1992 coup d'état wiped out all promises as the opposition was met with ruthless oppression. In 1996, the presidential terms were limited to two terms, although this did not eventually prevent Bouteflika from changing the constitution once again 12 years later on, enabling him to run for a third term. This context of the constitutional reforms in Algeria therefore provides this analysis with a better understanding of what El Moudjahid is dealing with. When it concerns initiatives like these, it is in the interest of the incumbent regime to dominate the discourse. We can see that the speakers are constructing an identity of an in-group that accepts the regime's initiative, and consequently an out-group that refuses to accept the regime's initiative. By emphasising the purported democratic elements of the new constitution and the broad societal support it has, it resultantly produces a threatening out-group when it speaks about those who oppose it.

Compared to the Jordan Times, the El Moudjahid texts are more divisive in their content concerning the classification of groups or events. The Algerian identity is described as being homogenous – 'the government and the *Hirak* movement'. The 'other' is insulted - e.g. "mercenaries and traitors" and "apostles of chaos" – whilst, at the same time, providing little detail as to why these 'others' are being criticised and even who they are. The lack of a clear description of these 'others' makes it out to be a vaguely defined group and, one might argue, therefore makes it easier to be included into that group.

Another difference we found between El Moudjahid and the Jordan Times is that the former often praises the Algerian government while the latter only mentions the Jordanian government once. The Jordan Times refers to the Jordanian government in an article on the Covid-19 pandemic. While the speaker aims their criticism predominantly towards the

Jordanian people in their supposed failure to respect sanitary protocols, the government is also criticised to some extent. The Jordanian texts are therefore more open for competing discourses while the Algerian texts are exclusively positive about the government and leave little to no room for criticism.

We have found that the speakers in the El Moudjahid texts have been trying to assume ownership of the *Hirak* movement. The speaker often refers to an *Algérie nouvelle*, or a 'new Algeria'. 7 out of 12 articles that we analysed from El Moudjahid include references to this new Algeria. This terminology was first used by the *Hirak* movement when it began protesting and demanding the instauration of a new system, the immediate departure of President Bouteflika, and a new Algeria (iReMMo, 2020). In April 2019, a 'Manifesto for the New Algeria' was signed by prominent opposition members (Manifeste pour l'Algérie Nouvelle, 2019). The regime soon appropriated the narrative of the new Algeria. When Tebboune was elected, he stated that he would change the system and create a new Republic. The draft constitution's referendum refers to the building of a new Algeria (Algeria's draft constitution, 2020). This appropriation of *Hirak's* motto has been acknowledged by the movement itself. Today, the movement ridicules Tebboune's 'new Algeria' by posting pictures and videos of ongoing crimes, the ramifications of the Covid-19 pandemic, and by mocking the government by confirming that they have indeed managed to create a new Algeria (iReMMo, 2020).

One explanation is that El Moudjahid, and thus by extension the regime, attempts to create a sense of unity among Algerians, between the government and the opposition. However, this unity is only superficial. El Moudjahid continues to implicitly criticise the objectives and intentions of the *Hirak*, but only as if these 'others' are outsiders and have nothing to do with the *Hirak*. In that way it does not contradict the sense of unity it is trying to create within the supposed in-group. The *Hirak* movement has called for a boycott of the referendum as many protesters are still under arrest or awaiting their trial for participating in the manifestations.

When compared to the Algerian articles, the Jordan Times appears to be more nuanced in 'othering'. The author attempts to create a sense of global unity by referring to 'the world', by highlighting similarities rather than differences. However, this is very much focused on unity between Arabs and Muslims. The recurring topics of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and

Islam allows the speaker to create a sense of community among all Muslims and/or among all Arabs. The focus is on Islam's peacefulness and moderateness by constantly disassociating Islam from terrorism and by using passive sentences when referring to terrorist attacks that were committed by people declaring to have done so in the name of their interpretation of Islam, and thus making it easier for the speaker to then emphasise a sense of Muslim community. By solely focusing on the mental unstableness of the terrorists, the speaker seems to be attempting to close the struggle for discourse in which competing discourses might want to focus on other explanations for terrorism.

This is a particularly relevant subject for Jordan when we consider the sociocultural context. As we have seen in the chapter on Jordan's sociocultural context, the regime has been having problems with extremism throughout its recent history. The regime has consequently strongly adhered to a discourse that isolates a Jordanian in-group identity accompanied with a specific moderate Sunni interpretation of Islam. A fragile relationship has endured between the regime's discourse of a moderate Sunni interpretation of Islam and the idea that Jordan is a stable and free country. Geopolitical realities - e.g. the emphasised threat of Iran, the relationship with and support for the Palestinians while also having normalised relations with Israel, and the influence of Saudi Arabia's Wahhabbi interpretation of Islam – are constant challenges to this narrative.

Overall, the dynamic of 'othering' is much more nuanced in the Jordan Times compared to the El Moudjahid texts. When the speakers criticise others, they elaborate on the underlying reasons for this criticism and do not specifically use what we could call insults, with the exception of American President Trump who is described in strongly negative terms, such as 'narcissistic,' 'ignorant,' and 'irrational'. Although the Jordan Times texts are written in a modality style with high affinity when it concerns criticism of others, the speakers also acknowledge other opinions and even write in high affinity when they refer to other discourses.

Nonetheless, the speaker does engage in othering and a style of classification that enables division. The focus on the Arab/Muslim identity proposes symbiosis between different groups, but it also differentiates these groups with others, consequently creating divisions

between the 'West' (mainly France) versus 'Arab/Muslim' and 'Israel' versus 'Arab/Muslims'. When the speaker refers to Israel and France, they often write in an active style which puts an emphasis on the, in this case negative, actions of the agent. Even when the speaker employs a passive sentence, they still name the agent at the end of the sentence when it concerns a (negative) action of Israel. Another rhetorical strategy that the speaker uses is the application of rhetorical questions. These rhetorical questions mock the opinion and interpretation of the 'other' and consequently strongly dismisses it.

In conclusion, we found that the main difference between the texts is that the Algerian texts are securitising internal out-groups while the Jordanian texts are securitising external out-groups. As regards the Jordanian texts, we found that there are relatively few signs of active 'othering' within the context of the upcoming national parliamentary elections. In the Algerian texts, we found that there are many instances of active 'othering' within the context of the upcoming national referendum. We argue that this can be explained by looking at the stability of the regime in terms of real potential threats to the power of the incumbent regime. The unequivocal societal backlash that the ousted former-President Bouteflika faced in 2019 has lingered on and continues to threaten those who have replaced Bouteflika from the moment they took power, or have remained in power, albeit just with a different figurehead. The regime in Jordan faces much less resistance than the regime in Algeria. Although the Jordanian regime and monarchy is not at all undisputed, as shown by Jordan's own *Hirak* protests at the time of the Arab Spring and the relatively high number of people that have influenced and/or fought for extremist groups, the regime has nevertheless managed relatively well in preserving its power. It could, therefore, be said that the Jordanian regime is more stable than the Algerian regime.

Stability in this sense means that the Jordanian regime appears to be less active in its attempts to activate the latent RWA traits within its society. There are two possible explanations for this. The first explanation could be that the regime is not authoritarian and therefore does not seek legitimacy through the activation of RWA traits. The second explanation is that the incumbent regime believes that it has an adequate domestic popular support base. The low voter turnout (only 30 per cent) for the parliamentary elections indicates low democratic engagement and political trust from the Jordanian population. Whether this means that the

majority is content with the regime and therefore indifferent to whom represents them in the relatively powerless parliament, or that perhaps the majority is largely disillusioned with the status quo and would prefer change, remains to be a question unanswered.

6. Limitations and Further Research

The analysis of this study has been limited to one media outlet in Jordan and one media outlet in Algeria. The decision to limit our analysis to only these two media outlets was made as a consequence of time limitations. Future studies could include more media outlets from a single country as this would provide the study with more data and therefore perhaps more dominant and/or competing discourses. Future studies could also include more countries. It was our initial plan to also include media outlets of other countries in the region, such as Israel, Egypt, Bahrain, and Tunisia. Besides the limitation of time, we were also constrained by our inadequate level of the Arabic language. It would be particularly advisable and worthwhile to include Arabic-language sources in the analysis as these sources would most likely have a bigger audience compared to the French and especially the English-language sources.

Future research could also include other channels of communication, such as television, political speeches, and social media. Especially data from the latter channel might be very valuable as this channel of communication is playing an increasingly significant role in the polarisation of societies (Mondal et al. 2017). The analysis of discourse on social media in the same time-periods could also show to what extent regime/media discourse is accepted and re-established.

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7.1. Annex I: Algerian texts

1. Oct 17,2020 Un vote pour le changement	5. Oct 21, 2020 Un role fondamental	10. Oct 27, 2020 Une Algérie souveraine et unie
2. Oct 18,2020 Vérité, reconnaissance et réconciliation	6. Oct 21, 2020 Le temps de la mobilisation	11. Oct 28, 2020 Le changement à portée du scrutin
3. Oct 18, 2020 Devoir de vigilance	7. Oct 23, 2020 Soutien ferme	12. Oct 30, 2020 Enjeu capital
4. Oct 20, 2020 Un front uni pour le changement	8. Oct 24, 2020 Un tournant prou la paix	
	9. Oct 25, 2020 La portée d'un scrutin	

Total words: 5.458 including titles and dates.

doc. A1. Oct 17,2020
Un vote pour le changement

La campagne de sensibilisation sur le projet d'amendement constitutionnel s'accomplit dans une totale sérénité, loin de tout discours nuisible ou subversif. Il faut donc se féliciter du ton imprimé à ce large débat national.

Le staff gouvernemental, des personnalités nationales, des leaders de partis politiques, des syndicalistes sillonnent le territoire à l'effet de convaincre le citoyen d'aller voter, pour remporter le pari du changement radical et pour l'avènement d'une nouvelle ère.

L'adoption par les électeurs du projet de révision de la Constitution sera un signe de leur adhésion en faveur d'une Algérie qui abolit un présidentialisme quasiment sans contre-pouvoir, qui restaure les fondements de l'État de droit. Le 1er novembre prochain verra la concrétisation d'un des 54 engagements pris lors de la campagne électorale du président de la République Abdelmadjid Tebboune. La rupture avec le passé sera consommée, grâce à une prise de conscience massive du peuple.

Sans trop se justifier ou tomber dans les polémiques, il n'échappe à personne que les articles de l'amendement constitutionnel accordent une place de choix aux constantes nationales et aux principes de la Révolution du 1er Novembre 1954. Ils valorisent la mémoire collective et ses symboles. Une ligne patriotique est ainsi constitutionnalisées servant d'appui ferme à une société rassemblée autour d'objectifs vitaux.

Le legs de Novembre est une précieuse source d'inspiration, notamment pour les jeunes qui sont en devoir d'achever l'action de leurs glorieux aînés.

Le prochain référendum sur la Constitution est une étape décisive, un tournant important dont on mesure la portée. Il n'est pas étonnant que les partisans du statu quo ou de l'immobilisme dans tous les domaines tentent désespérément de compromettre un processus de redressement national irréversible. Il fallait leur signifier le bannissement définitif de leurs pratiques qui ont failli plonger le pays dans une faillite généralisée.

L'hostilité de ces cercles qui s'accrochent à leurs illusions a fait la preuve de leur volonté de contrecarrer les ambitions et les espoirs du peuple algérien et de son Hirak.

La future Loi fondamentale renforce les droits civils et politiques des Algériens, ouvre des perspectives très encourageantes pour la société civile, appelée à participer sérieusement dans la prise de décision à des niveaux élevés. La place est faite à des associations qui militent véritablement sur le terrain, et non pas à celles qui ne lorgnent que les subventions de l'État. C'est un fait inédit dans les annales de la démocratie participative.

Les questions liées au développement économique trouveront progressivement des solutions. Les gages d'une bonne gouvernance s'échafaudent pour le plus grand bénéfice d'une jeunesse formée et entreprenante, avide de faire ses preuves et de donner libre cours à son sens de l'initiative. Pour toutes ces raisons et pour d'autres, le peuple est seul habilité à décider de son destin, le 1er novembre. Il saura faire l'indispensable choix, en séparant le bon grain de l'ivraie.

doc. A2. Oct 18,2020

Vérité, reconnaissance et réconciliation

À la veille du soixantième anniversaire des massacres du 17 octobre 1961, jugés parmi les plus grands commis dans l'histoire contemporaine, interpelle sur le devoir de reconnaissance revendiqué par l'Algérie, engagée dans une démarche politique pour contribuer à un «avenir apaisé» férocement combattu par les nostalgiques de l'Eden perdu et les formations extrémistes xénophobes et racistes. La responsabilité totale et entière de l'État français, occultée des décennies durant par les autorités politiques murées dans un silence coupable et frappées du sceau de la censure imposée à des médias globalement acquis à la thèse de la falsification de l'histoire, est désormais incontournable. Des «gestes forts», a affirmé le ministre de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères, Jean-Yves Le Drian, à l'issue de l'audience accordée par le président de la République, Abdelmadjid Tebboune, structurent la question mémorielle dans «un esprit de vérité et de réconciliation» et avec «un regard lucide et apaisé sur le passé». Les passerelles sont jetées pour exhumer les démons de la haine. Elles sont confortées par la pose par la mairie de Paris d'une plaque commémorative sur le pont Saint-Michel et la baptismation du boulevard du 17-Octobre-1961 devant la préfecture des Hauts-de-Seine, à Nanterre. L'événement est ainsi marqué par l'initiative du député socialiste des Bouches-du-Rhône, Patrick Menucci, appelant à la reconnaissance du massacre collectif, pour favoriser «un espace euro-méditerranéen stable et solidaire», à l'heure des bouleversements géostratégiques et des défis sécuritaires et économiques colossaux. C'est le cas également du mouvement de la paix et d'autres organisations exigeant «vérité et justice» pour les milliers d'Algériens victimes d'une brutalité policière d'une rare barbarie et appelant au rassemblement traditionnel sur le pont Saint-Michel. Partout en France et en Algérie, des voix montent pour lever le voile sur le «crime d'État». Cette quête de vérité historique est le socle

de l'Algérie nouvelle, forte d'un attachement indéfectible de la communauté établie à l'étranger et engagée dans la consolidation de l'Algérie libre et souveraine ouverte aux compétences de tous ses enfants où qu'ils soient. Elle a enregistré des avancées notables, traduites concrètement par le rapatriement des restes mortuaires des 24 chouhada en prélude à la récupération de tous les chouhada et des archives, y compris celles inhérentes aux massacres du 17 octobre. Le devoir de mémoire intangible et inaliénable caractérise un engagement de la nouvelle Algérie, prête, plus forte que jamais, à la fête démocratique du 1er novembre, pour défendre l'héritage novembrien et transmettre le flambeau de la liberté aux générations futures. Le lancement de la chaîne de télévision dédiée à l'histoire et la proclamation de la Journée nationale de l'émigration, en hommage aux sacrifices de la communauté algérienne à l'étranger, participent indéniablement au renforcement de la mémoire collective.

doc. A3. Oct 18, 2020

Devoir de vigilance

Face à la relative augmentation des cas dus à l'épidémie en Algérie, le ministre de la Santé, de la Population et de la Réforme hospitalière, Abderrahmane Benbouzid, a écarté le retour au confinement pour certaines wilayas, excluant une 2e vague de l'épidémie. «Avec plus de 200 cas, nous sommes toujours dans une situation tout à fait admissible pour les épidémiologistes. Nous n'en sommes pas à des milliers de cas avec des foyers très denses et graves», a-t-il affirmé. Il rassure aussi, au sujet de la disponibilité des stocks de traitements et de tests.

Les chiffres satisfaisants constatés récemment font de l'Algérie un pays qui a réussi à riposter efficacement à la Covid-19, confirmant la fiabilité de sa stratégie de lutte dès l'émergence du virus, conformément aux instructions du chef de l'État, Abdelmadjid Tebboune.

Plus que jamais, l'extrême préoccupation des pouvoirs publics, et plus particulièrement celle du Comité scientifique de suivi de l'évolution de la pandémie, est d'éviter une future explosion épidémiologique et l'apparition d'une seconde vague en Algérie.

Par conséquent, l'ascendant sur le virus ne peut pas faire l'économie d'un ancrage de la culture de la prévention, avec tout ce que cela implique en termes de mesures draconiennes.

Il est impérieux de conseiller vivement à la population une vigilance permanente en s'en tenant au respect des gestes barrière, à savoir l'hygiène des mains, la distanciation physique, le port du masque de protection obligatoire, en tout lieu et en toute circonstance, et l'évitement des rassemblements. On ne saurait trop insister sur ce devoir de vigilance. Il est absolument hors de propos d'accréditer toutes ces rumeurs infondées sur la fin de l'épidémie. Et pour cause, le virus est mondial et continue de tuer des dizaines de milliers d'individus. Le risque est permanent et tous les spécialistes demeurent, pour l'instant, absolument circonspects au sujet de l'évolution de ce mal. La médecine ne dispose pas encore de remède ni de vaccin fiable capable d'interrompre totalement la transmission. Depuis l'apparition de l'épidémie, l'État a mobilisé tous les moyens humains et matériels nécessaires, pour la contenir et lutter contre sa propagation. Les efforts considérables consentis ne furent pas

inutiles. De rigoureuses mesures préventives, conjuguées à une large mobilisation de la société civile, ont permis de stabiliser la situation sanitaire et d'éviter les scénarios complexes.

Les citoyens sont dans l'obligation de consolider ces efforts, de contribuer, par leur civisme et leur sens des responsabilités, à agir collectivement et dans la discipline, afin que le pays puisse reprendre progressivement les activités économiques, sociales et éducatives. Il faut renforcer les campagnes de sensibilisation, pour maintenir un haut degré de mobilisation, pour convaincre les récalcitrants que le virus est toujours actif.

Les comportements individuels de la population sont les garants les plus sûrs de la victoire définitive contre la pandémie.

doc. A4. Oct 20, 2020

Un front uni pour le changement

Le processus électoral a franchi une étape importante. À une semaine de la fin de la campagne électorale, la mobilisation de la société civile, des partis politiques et le redéploiement des membres du gouvernement sur le terrain traduisent un large consensus en faveur du changement. Une forte majorité se dégage nettement, pour consolider les bases de la nouvelle République, en adéquation avec les revendications du Hirak populaire et bien loin des agissements d'une minorité qui se recrute dans une opposition divisée. Le front unitaire de l'Algérie nouvelle avance à pas résolus. Depuis Aïn Defla, El-Islah a affirmé que le projet de Constitution est «un gage de rupture avec les pratiques désuètes» et un «rempart» pour la sauvegarde de l'unité nationale, dont les fondements identitaires non négociables, érigés en fonds de commerce, ne peuvent faire l'objet d'un débat, comme a tenu à le souligner à maintes reprises le président de la République, Abdelmadjid Tebboune. L'association Irchad wa Islah a appelé à placer l'intérêt du pays au-dessus de toutes les considérations et à bannir les divergences politiciennes. Le camp du changement, appelant à une participation massive, se renforce. De Tamanrasset, l'aménokal de l'Ahaggar, Ahmed Dabid, a plaidé fermement pour l'avènement de l'Algérie nouvelle porteuse d'une dynamique réelle de développement régional, notamment dans le grand Sud.

Elle constitue, dit-il, une opportunité pour l'accès des jeunes aux plus hautes responsabilités de l'État. Cette démocratie participative, confortée par la constitutionnalisation du rôle de la société civile et la création d'un conseil supérieur de la jeunesse, fonde l'essence de la nouvelle République. En partenaire privilégié, la société civile s'engage pleinement dans la campagne d'explication et de sensibilisation en faveur du changement. De Blida, une caravane de soutien, traversant les wilayas de Médéa et de Djelfa, a été lancée, pour convaincre les jeunes de la nécessité d'une participation massive au scrutin du 1er novembre. Ce rendez-vous historique a suscité un optimisme clairement exprimé par le général de corps d'armée Chanegriha Saïd, chef d'état-major de l'ANP, appelant tout le personnel de l'armée à être à la «hauteur de ses responsabilités constitutionnelles», dans une allocution prononcée au siège de la 6e Région militaire. Depuis Tamanrasset, il a indiqué que l'accomplissement du devoir électoral constitue un engagement pour un avenir prometteur, favorisé par l'esprit de cohésion et la prise de conscience populaire salutaire. Toutes les garanties pour le déroulement du référendum, dans un «climat de sécurité, de paix et de quiétude», sont réunies, pour permettre un scrutin régulier et transparent.

doc. A5. Oct 21, 2020

Un rôle fondamental

La société civile, par sa densité, son impact et son efficacité, est un haut lieu de la pratique démocratique. C'est un des critères qui justifient sa constitutionnalisation. Elle est appelée à jouer un rôle fondamental dans le renforcement de la démocratie participative, ce qui apportera du sang neuf dans la gestion des affaires publiques.

Les acteurs de la société civile se réjouissent du grand intérêt que leur témoigne le chef de l'État, Abdelmadjid Tebboune. Un observatoire national de la société civile, organe consultatif, sera créé, pour émettre des avis et des recommandations relatifs à ses préoccupations, en contribuant à la promotion des valeurs citoyennes et participant à la réalisation des objectifs du développement.

«Je mise sur la société civile pour son honnêteté, et je crois au mouvement associatif qui s'intéresse au quotidien des citoyens», avait affirmé le Président Tebboune.

Il reste qu'une profonde réorganisation de son fonctionnement est nécessaire. Nul n'ignore, par exemple, que des associations sont dirigées par des présidents inamovibles qui les ont transformées en sources de revenus.

La place réservée aux jeunes et leur exhortation à investir le champ politique par le soutien des campagnes électorales augurent d'une réhabilitation du politique. C'est un des aspects positifs du projet d'amendement de la Constitution, soumis au référendum le 1er novembre prochain.

Le président de la République s'est engagé à assurer l'éclosion des énergies, à créer un environnement favorable et attractif pour toutes les potentialités, à la faveur de l'équité, de la liberté, de la paix et de la sécurité. Il a pris acte, avec une grande satisfaction, de l'implication exemplaire de notre communauté scientifique toutes spécialités confondues, en période de crise sanitaire. Une communauté qui est à l'avant-garde du front de lutte contre la Covid-19. Il s'est déclaré convaincu que ces potentialités prometteuses sauront relever les défis et contribuer à la réalisation des aspirations de notre patrie à davantage de progrès, de prospérité et de développement.

Il n'échappe à personne, qu'Abdelmadjid Tebboune a répondu aux revendications du Hirak. Pourtant, certaines voix, se plaçant à contre-courant de l'histoire et refusant de s'affranchir de leurs illusions, invoquent des arguments trompeurs pour tenter de discréditer l'acte de vote. L'objectif est de troubler les esprits, de tenter de convaincre les Algériens à renoncer à leur devoir électoral. Les électeurs ne sont pas dupes. Ils sont coutumiers de ces agissements erronés qui redoublent d'intensité à chaque échéance politique. La méthode est éculée. Le jour du scrutin, les électeurs useront de leur droit de vote, pour dire leur mot librement et sans que personne interfère dans le choix qu'ils se fixeront pour la concrétisation du changement radical escompté.

L'organisation de cet important rendez-vous coïncidera avec la célébration du 66e anniversaire du déclenchement de la Révolution du 1er Novembre ; ce qui confèrera à la consultation populaire, une symbolique chère aux Algériens.

doc. A6. Oct 21, 2020

Le temps de la mobilisation

Le retour aux bancs de l'école de plus de 5 millions d'élèves est le nouveau défi qui sera sans nul doute relevé par la nouvelle Algérie, plus que jamais unie pour assurer un avenir brillant pour la jeunesse au cœur du processus de changement. Elle est la locomotive de l'Algérie de demain, ouverte sur le monde des innovations, de la technologie et de la diversité culturelle et linguistique.

Sur sa page Facebook, le président de la République a adressé ses vœux de réussite pour tous les élèves et les a assurés du soutien de l'État, prêt à les accompagner en y mettant tous les moyens nécessaires.

La visite du Premier ministre, Abdelaziz Djerad, à Batna, à la tête d'une importante délégation, pour procéder au lancement officiel de la rentrée 2020/2021, après une longue interruption des cours imposée par la pandémie, marque une volonté inébranlable d'un retour à la vie scolaire, confortée par la reprise des activités économiques, culturelles et religieuses. Dans un pays érigé en modèle de gestion efficace de la pandémie, il y a lieu de croire aux chances de succès de la rentrée scolaire unique en son genre dans la région aux portes de l'école, hermétiquement fermées, et en Europe, contrainte de renouer avec les exigences du reconfinement. À la faveur de cette expérience pionnière, la maîtrise de la situation sanitaire et la stratégie de prévention adoptée par le ministère de l'Éducation, en étroite concertation avec les partenaires sociaux et les parents d'élèves, contribuent certainement à la sécurisation d'une rentrée pas comme les autres. Elle se fonde sur la prise en charge psychologique, assurée par les conseillers en orientation et de guidance scolaire et professionnelle (COGS), la sensibilisation des élèves sur l'importance des mesures barrières, à travers des cours dispensés dans les écoles et les mesures exceptionnelles d'organisation et de prévention.

La reprise se fera impérativement avec un nouveau système de double vacation (matin et après-midi) sans alternance, le découpage pédagogique en deux sous-groupes et la réduction du volume horaire. Il s'agit essentiellement d'éviter les rassemblements des élèves, de veiller au respect des règles de distanciation et d'hygiène, et de procéder à la désinfection régulière des établissements et des écoles. Mais, incontestablement, l'union sacrée et la mobilisation de la famille éducative, dans toutes ses composantes, restent le meilleur rempart pour garantir un déroulement adéquat de l'année scolaire et préserver la santé des élèves. De Batna, le Premier ministre n'a pas manqué d'appeler les parents à « appuyer les efforts des staffs pédagogiques et administratif ». L'avenir de nos enfants est en jeu.

doc. A7. Oct 23, 2020

Soutien ferme

Dans son message à la corporation de la presse, à l'occasion de la célébration de sa journée nationale, le président de la République, Abdelmadjid Tebboune, a réitéré son attachement

à préserver la pluralité médiatique, la liberté de la presse et d'expression. Il a réaffirmé la position claire de l'Etat en vue d'assurer l'appui et les garanties professionnelles pour promouvoir au mieux, la performance de la presse nationale sans exclusive, en consécration du droit des citoyens à une information juste. Une presse appelée certainement à accompagner l'édification de l'Algérie nouvelle.

A la veille de la tenue d'une échéance électorale décisive, le chef de l'Etat a pris acte du professionnalisme des journalistes qui ont manifesté l'étendue de leur implication lors de la préparation du référendum sur la révision constitutionnelle pour tenir informés la population à propos des différentes étapes de ce scrutin décisif.

Il a relevé avec une grande satisfaction, la qualité du service offert par les médias algériens dans la diffusion de l'information en temps réel, leur interaction avec le thème du référendum.

Cette mobilisation, que l'on peut qualifier d'hautement patriotique, constitue la réponse la plus appropriée aux médias de certains pays, qui ne s'embarrassent aucunement de l'éthique professionnelle, oublient leurs grands discours sur la liberté de la presse et les droits de l'homme, pour tenter de stigmatiser l'Algérie à coup de fake-news. Le procédé est archi-usé à force d'être ressassé en pure perte.

A l'occasion de chaque grand rendez-vous de leur histoire, les Algériens sont soumis au feu roulant d'une campagne de presse orchestrée par des lobbies haineux. Ce n'est donc pas sans surprise que le référendum sur le projet de révision constitutionnelle qui sera soumis le 1er novembre prochain au verdict des électeurs, fasse l'objet d'attaques insidieuses, de tentatives de déstabilisation vouées à l'échec.

Le chef de l'Etat n'a pas manqué de pourfendre des mercenaires et des traîtres qui transforment des sites électroniques en vecteurs de diffusion de discours acharnés visant à provoquer la discorde et à saper le moral des citoyens. «Nous souhaitons que le peuple plébiscite ce document novembriste qui constituera un jalon fondamental dans l'édification de l'Algérie nouvelle qui consacre la démocratie et la bonne gouvernance», dit le président.

Le train du changement radical a démarré et il ne sera, en aucun cas, stoppé par les ennemis de l'Algérie, encore moins par ceux que les décisions souveraines de l'Algérie et ses choix stratégiques dérangent, a-t-il affirmé dans son message.

Le Président Tebboune a rendu hommage à l'Armée nationale populaire, digne héritière de l'Armée de libération nationale. Une armée qui s'acquitte de ses missions constitutionnelles, sans arrière-pensées politiques, sans volonté de domination, soucieuse de défendre la souveraineté, l'intégrité territoriale.

Contexte oblige, il a rappelé, non sans respect et gratitude, les sacrifices du personnel soignant qui a lutté contre la pandémie avec courage et dévouement, «fort de l'appui de l'Etat, de la contribution de la société civile et de l'accompagnement de la presse nationale».

Un tournant pour la paix

Le «bon jour pour le peuple libyen», évoqué par la représentante spéciale du secrétaire général de l'ONU et cheffe de la Mission d'appui des Nations unies en Libye, Stéphanie Williams, est-il enfin arrivé ?

Tout semble indiquer que les Libyens ont résolument décidé de tourner la page de la discorde, pour avancer ensemble vers un avenir de paix et de stabilité dans un pays ravagé pendant une décennie par une terrible guerre par procuration, provoquée par l'ingérence militaire occidentale et aggravée par l'intervention des puissances régionales alimentant en armement et en combattants la poudrière libyenne.

Cette prise de conscience salutaire, perçue lors de l'annonce conjointe du cessez-le-feu en août, est confortée par «un pas important» accompli à Genève. Après 5 jours de discussions, intervenant après une série de rencontres parlementaires et militaires en prélude au rendez-vous de Tunis, prévu au début du mois de novembre, la signature d'un cessez-le-feu permanent sur tout le territoire suscite un immense espoir de règlement de la crise qui n'a que trop duré. De nouveaux acquis ont été enregistrés pour favoriser le retour à la paix. Plusieurs accords ont été conclus. Ils prévoient l'ouverture des principales routes terrestres, des voies maritimes et aériennes intérieures, la mise en place des dispositifs de sécurité conjoints, la reprise de la production pétrolière de la National Oil Corporation, le retour de toutes les unités et des groupes armés dans leurs camps et le départ de tous les mercenaires et des combattants étrangers dans un délai maximum de 3 mois. Cette évolution marque un tournant important, salué par la communauté internationale.

Il offre des perspectives prometteuses pour la relance d'un dialogue inclusif libyen, loin de toutes formes d'ingérence.

À Tunis, le retour à la table des négociations au plus haut niveau s'appuie sur une base solide de nature à permettre, sous l'égide de l'Onu, la mise en œuvre de la solution politique qui s'impose désormais aux parties en conflit et à tous les acteurs régionaux et internationaux.

Cette démarche a été privilégiée, dès le début de la crise libyenne, par l'Algérie aux côtés du peuple libyen en toutes circonstances, à équidistance avec les belligérants et disposant d'un capital de crédibilité et de confiance exprimées par tous les dirigeants, les acteurs de la société civile et les tribus.

En puissance d'équilibre, attachés aux valeurs de la paix et de la stabilité régionale, l'Algérie est légitimement attentive aux progrès enregistrés à Genève annonciateurs d'un retour à la légitimité populaire et à la stabilité constitutionnelle et institutionnelle.

doc. A9. Oct 25, 2020

La portée d'un scrutin

Quelques jours nous séparent d'un rendez-vous politique d'une extrême importance. Un projet d'amendement constitutionnel sera soumis au référendum populaire, le 1er novembre

prochain. C'est une concrétisation du premier des 54 engagements électoraux du président de la République, Abdelmadjid Tebboune.

L'amendement de la Constitution constitue la pierre angulaire dans le processus d'édification d'une Algérie nouvelle affranchie de l'autocratie, «où personne ne sera protégée ni par son immunité ni par son influence», comme l'a assuré le chef de l'État.

La référence à cette date hautement symbolique ne relève pas du rituel. Elle est amplement révélatrice de la volonté largement partagée par l'ensemble des Algériens de renouer avec des valeurs et des principes qui ont permis de s'émanciper du colonialisme français et de surmonter toutes les adversités.

Le rendez-vous du 1er novembre 2020 représente également un retour à la légitimité populaire. La parole reviendra au peuple, seul juge de son destin.

Il aura à choisir ce qu'il estimera primordial pour l'Algérie. Il le fera en toute liberté et souveraineté, et dans le plein exercice d'un droit inaliénable.

D'un avis unanime, la campagne référendaire se déroule dans un climat de sérénité, de respect des opinions.

La préparation de ce projet dans ses différentes phases s'est accomplie avec beaucoup de sérieux, à commencer par l'installation du comité des experts qui a établi une mouture distribuée à la classe politique, à la société civile et à l'ensemble des franges de la société.

Le travail de ces experts a permis de recueillir pas moins de 5.018 contributions et enrichissements.

L'opinion publique a relevé que l'élaboration des propositions relatives à cette révision par des experts de haut niveau traduit une préoccupation constante du chef de l'État à remettre le pays sur le chemin de la bonne gouvernance, ainsi que ses efforts pour asseoir définitivement les fondements d'un État moderne. C'est un choix adopté avec conviction. Il est très utile de rappeler aussi qu'Abdelmadjid Tebboune n'a posé aucune limite préalable à ce projet de révision de la Constitution, hormis celle relative aux constantes nationales. L'amendement constitutionnel, au cas où il est plébiscité, nécessitera l'adaptation de nombre de lois dans le cadre d'une réforme globale de l'État.

Une forte mobilisation est prônée par les animateurs de la campagne référendaire, pour convaincre les électeurs de se rendre aux urnes.

Une large campagne qui mobilise tous les media, écrits et audiovisuels, les sites électroniques et les réseaux sociaux.

Le chef de l'État a pris acte du professionnalisme des journalistes qui ont manifesté l'étendue de leur implication, lors de la préparation du référendum sur la révision constitutionnelle, pour tenir informée la population, à propos des différentes étapes de ce scrutin décisif.

C'est tout le contraire des agissements néfastes de ceux qui tentent de distraire le peuple algérien, de le pousser à renoncer à accomplir son devoir électoral. Cette agitation est d'emblée vouée à un cuisant échec. Les citoyens ont pris conscience de l'inanité de ces tentatives qui portent préjudice à l'image de marque du pays.

doc. A10. Oct 27, 2020

Une Algérie souveraine et unie

À une encablure de la fin de la campagne électorale, la scène politique connaît un approfondissement du débat démocratique animé par les membres du gouvernement présents en force sur le terrain, les forces représentatives clairement définies par l'Autorité nationale indépendante des élections (ANIE) et les associations nationales. Cette mobilisation contribue au renforcement de la dynamique du changement en adéquation avec les revendications du Hirak populaire originel, et une adhésion sans réserve de la classe politique et de la société civile majoritairement acquises au référendum sur la révision de la Constitution. Il s'agit, convenons-en, d'un moyen d'expression de la souveraineté le plus approprié, universellement admis. «Cette Constitution vous interpelle, vous écoute, vous insuffle de l'espoir en vous et vous confère la responsabilité de contribuer à l'édification de la patrie», a affirmé le Premier ministre, Abdelaziz Djerad, dans une intervention à la télévision et à la radio nationales. Le rendez-vous du 1er novembre est perçu comme une réappropriation de l'histoire et des valeurs de la glorieuse Révolution, à travers la constitutionnalisation de la Déclaration du 1er Novembre et la consolidation des fondements de l'identité nationale imprescriptible et inaliénable. Il s'agit de mettre fin aux surenchères politiciennes, plaçant les considérations étroitement partisans au-dessus de l'intérêt national, de combattre la fitna voulue par les apôtres du chaos et de sortir du trou noir imposé par les dérives d'un régime autocratique et prédateur. Le «bond qualitatif» participe à la refondation de l'État national, réhabilité par le mouvement citoyen du 22 février et appelé à s'inscrire dans une nouvelle gouvernance. La remise sur rails d'une Algérie plus forte et plus sûre se fonde sur les principes démocratiques d'alternance, traduits par la limitation du mandat présidentiel et parlementaire renouvelable une seule fois, la séparation des pouvoirs, le renforcement des prérogatives du chef de gouvernement ou du Premier ministre, selon le scénario d'une majorité présidentielle ou de l'opposition, la consolidation de la fonction de contrôle du Parlement et du rôle de l'opposition. Ces avancées importantes s'accompagnent de nouveaux acquis en matière de libertés publiques et des droits fondamentaux qui consacrent l'égalité des droits et devoirs des citoyens et citoyennes, la liberté d'opinion et d'expression, la liberté de réunion et de manifestation, le droit de création des journaux et des associations sur simple déclaration et dissoutes uniquement par la loi. Ces perspectives prometteuses s'appuient sur la promotion de la démocratie participative qui favorise une implication de la société civile et de la jeunesse, en alliées majeures, dans la gestion des affaires publiques et le développement national. Lorsqu'on sait l'engouement observé durant la campagne électorale et les capacités d'innovation d'une jeunesse à l'avant-garde de la bataille technologique, les espoirs d'un changement se doivent d'être transformés en plébiscite en faveur d'une Algérie souveraine, solidaire et unie.

doc. A11. Oct 28, 2020

Le changement à portée du scrutin

Le rideau est tombé sur la campagne électorale prometteuse, pour laisser place au devoir électoral des citoyens interpellés sur le choix de leur avenir en rupture avec «l'ère de la Issaba», vigoureusement dénoncée par le Premier ministre, Abdelaziz Djerad, lors d'une rencontre avec les membres de la société civile de la wilaya d'Alger. La bataille du 22 février n'est pas terminée. Elle suscite le désarroi de la bande qui tente, de leurs lieux de détention, de manœuvrer pour empêcher l'avènement de l'Algérie nouvelle porteuse d'espoir de changement d'une vie digne et décente. En relais de la conjuration, soutenue par les cercles haineux et racistes des nostalgiques de l'Algérie de Papa, une certaine opposition s'active pour revenir à l'avant-22 février des privilèges acquis à la faveur du système des quotas parlementaires et ministériels.

Les partisans du boycott et du rejet du projet de la révision constitutionnelle constituent une minorité en crise de représentativité et de légitimité. Le rempart de l'Algérie en marche vers un destin à hauteur des sacrifices des chouhada et des attentes du mouvement citoyen du 22 février tient bon. Il est solidement ancré dans la forte mobilisation enregistrée, depuis des semaines, sur le terrain. Dans une campagne sereine et calme, les membres du gouvernement, les dirigeants des partis politiques les plus représentatifs, les acteurs de la société civile et les représentants des organisations patronales et syndicales ont opposé un front uni pour combattre les velléités déstabilisatrices des corrompus et de ceux qui ont voulu détruire le pays. L'heure du changement radical a sonné. Il est indéniablement à portée des urnes de l'Algérie nouvelle «en relation étroite» avec la Déclaration du 1er Novembre et jetant les bases d'un «État fort, socialement juste et économiquement prospère». Dans son intervention devant les acteurs de la société civile de la wilaya, le Premier ministre a estimé que le plébiscite du projet de Constitution met sur les rails l'Algérie réconciliée avec son passé glorieux et ses valeurs fondamentales de justice et de progrès, attachée à la promotion avec les libertés publiques et les droits citoyens, et permettant à notre pays de retrouver la place qui est la sienne dans le concert des nations. Cette Algérie de tous les Algériens, fière et conquérante, est entre les mains des citoyens.

doc. A12. Oct 30, 2020

Enjeu capital

Une étape décisive sera franchie par le peuple algérien, avec l'organisation du référendum sur le projet de révision de la Constitution, le 1er novembre 2020, qui coïncide avec la célébration du 66e anniversaire du déclenchement de la lutte de Libération nationale. Ce sont deux événements d'une indéniable portée symbolique, placés sous le signe du changement, de la fidélité au serment des chouhada. C'est un moment fortement privilégié qui consolidera l'émergence d'une Algérie nouvelle.

Des moyens considérables, humains, logistiques et un dispositif sécuritaire sont mobilisés pour le bon déroulement de la consultation référendaire.

Un large travail d'explication, de sensibilisation des citoyens a été accompli par les partis politiques, les membres du gouvernement, les organisations syndicales et patronales.

Il faut souligner que la campagne a été menée dans le respect de la pluralité des idées et des opinions, hormis quelques écarts de comportement ou de langage.

L'espace réservé au dialogue et aux débats renseigne sur la volonté de rompre avec les méthodes du passé qui consistaient à élaborer ou à opérer des révisions constitutionnelles par des spécialistes sans ce nécessaire travail d'explication.

Les consultations avec le monde politique, syndical et associatif se sont accomplies sans velléité d'exclusion ou de marginalisation. Elles se sont caractérisées par de nombreuses propositions, sans conditions ni préalables astreignants.

Le président de République, Abdelmadjid Tebboune, s'est évertué à clarifier sa démarche à l'endroit de nos concitoyens et en direction de ses interlocuteurs sur la base de la confiance mutuelle.

L'approbation escomptée de la future Loi fondamentale est une réponse au Hirak pacifique du 22 février qui a donné la pleine démonstration de son attachement à la patrie.

Un gigantesque mouvement lassé de la corruption, de la prévarication et des privilèges immérités.

Le peuple, au cas où il adopte la Constitution amendée et enrichie, rassembleuse, aura certainement l'occasion de poser les jalons d'une Algérie affranchie des pesanteurs de la mauvaise gouvernance, telle que promise par Abdelaziz Tebboune, lors de sa campagne électorale.

Les Algériens sauront se montrer à la hauteur de la situation, se mobiliser encore une fois pour participer à la réussite d'une échéance capitale pour le présent et l'avenir du pays. Ils sont en face d'un défi qu'il leur faudra relever avec un sens aigu de la responsabilité.

La réalisation du changement radical tant revendiqué dépend du bulletin de vote qu'ils vont déposer dans l'urne le jour J. Le peuple algérien est habitué à répondre à l'appel du devoir. C'est d'autant plus urgent que les changements que connaîtra l'Algérie après le référendum déplaisent à certaines parties non remises de leur échec à freiner le train du renouveau.

Une adhésion massive quant à la consécration de l'État de droit demeure la meilleure preuve à administrer aux apôtres de la division, au scepticisme de ceux qui doutent des capacités du peuple algérien à prendre leur destin en main.

7.2 Annex II: Jordanian texts

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doc. J1. Oct 27,2020

Returning planes and passengers to the skies

Restarting a jet engine is a complex, coordinated engineering process. An electric motor spins the engines' turbines until enough air is flowing to light the engine. Compressed fuel beings to flow and is then ignited, providing thrust. Then the plane, its passengers and its cargo to take to the skies.

The restart of aviation is as complex and requires as much, if not more, coordination as starting a jet engine. In the first half of 2020, passenger demand and revenues collapsed. Airlines are facing bankruptcy, and the sector which powers global travel and trade has nosedived. In this second half of the year, the sector needs to tackle four sets of challenges simultaneously. The aviation sector needs to work together and collaborate to safely return planes and passengers to the skies.

The first challenge to tackle is getting planes air-bound. To weather the pandemic, airlines have slashed ticket sales and pared costs to the bone. Now more than ever, airlines need government support. Otherwise, they will not have the necessary capital to welcome passengers back on board. With airlines around the world struggling to remain solvent, continued government support is essential to getting airborne again.

Airlines will also need to be ready to meet new regulatory requirements. Their personnel, their pilots and their maintenance crews, are critical. They need to be ready to resume operations throughout the recovery period. Their supply chains and infrastructure also need to be operational. That means ensuring slots are available for planes to take off and to land. Ground crews need to support fast turnaround times while maintaining social distancing

regulations, and finally, aviation infrastructure needs to be able to support a return to the skies.

Second, the industry needs to work as one to ensure aviation does not become a vector for spreading COVID-19. Economies need to open up while mitigating the risk of new waves of infection. The International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) has developed and disseminated its “Take-off Guidance”, which incorporates the results of extensive medical consultation in its advice. By following such guidance, the industry can ensure it restarts safely, protecting passengers and employees alike. Governments worldwide also have to implement the guidance as a matter of urgency.

Nations need to use multilateral action to ensure virus-mitigation strategies remain adhered to. National populations need to follow quarantining and social-distancing measures, otherwise the industry’s restart will be at risk of lagging and the public will remain hesitant to travel. Both public health and international economic recovery will be threatened should the right practices not be implemented.

While ensuring public health, aviation also needs to welcome passengers back on board. Currently, many passengers remain grounded due to ongoing government restrictions. It is critical for the industry for these measures to be lifted, where it is safe to do so. Furthermore, passengers need to feel reassured that they are safe while travelling. Passengers are concerned of the threat of contracting COVID-19, or being stranded overseas. Aviation and tourism needs to collaborate and adhere to IATA and ICAO’s guidance. Confidence must be restored in air travel through a careful and measured application of the necessary precautions.

Finally, airlines need to coordinate with tourism authorities to stimulate demand for travel. Passengers need to be enticed to visit destinations by air. To encourage tourists, attractions need to provide incentive packages that welcome international travellers. To stimulate demand, tourism boards, stakeholders and airlines need to work side-by-side. They need to show destinations are as safe, stunning and rewarding as they were before COVID-19.

In the Middle East, aviation supports US\$ 130 billion of economic activity. Some 2.4 million jobs rest on the sector's success. Globally, up to 65.5 million people rely on air-transport for their livelihoods. Each week without planes in the skies puts airlines, their employees, and the entire world’s economic recovery in increasing jeopardy. As such, these four challenges need to be addressed urgently and simultaneously. Together, airlines and governments can lay the runway for aviation's recovery.

Muhammad Ali Albakri, regional vice president for Africa and the Middle East (AME), International Air Transport Association

doc. J2. Oct 27,2020

Murder of French teacher heighten tensions

The recent beheading of French teacher Samuel Paty by an 18-year-old man from Chechnya was a horrific terror crime that deserves the utmost condemnation. It was the depraved act of an individual, not of "Islam" or of Muslims collectively.

Yet, sadly, the French government took it as an opportunity to launch a campaign of incitement and repression targeting millions of its own Muslim citizens. It moved to close down civil rights groups and charities and harassed and arrested people who had nothing to do with that crime.

It is as if France learned all the wrong lessons of the American response after 9/11 and decided to repeat them.

No religion should be blamed for a crime or an act of terror committed by one of its followers, even if the perpetrator claims to have committed the crime in the name of his religion.

But we continue to see Muslims uniquely singled out for this kind of collective guilt and punishment, with very negative effects. There have been countless horrific massacres in the United States, targeting schools, synagogues and Black churches. There were the mosque massacres in Quebec City and Christchurch. Most were committed by white, Christian men, often professing white supremacist, anti-Jewish and anti-Muslim ideologies.

Yet, at no time did governments or large segments of the population or media collectively blame or punish white Christians for those acts, and nor should they.

There are of course Muslim criminals but that applies to all the religions and all other nations. Sadly violence seems to be part of human nature. It is hard to take stock of the complex factors that prompt violent behavior in individuals, throughout history.

Islam, like other religions, opposes all kinds of violence, aggression, injustice, cruelty or unkind treatment of others even when the others belong to a different faith. Islam is known to be a religion of peace, compassion, mercy, tolerance, respect for human life and justice.

As such, Islam does not tolerate any crimes or acts of terror committed by any of its followers, let alone when such crimes are claimed in Islam's name.

The principles of the faith are clearly defined in the Holy texts, The Quran and the Prophets sayings. Therefore, it is not exactly right to talk about "moderate Islam", and an "extremist Islam", a "radical Islam" or "political Islam", because there is no such things. There is one clearly defined Islam and it is right and moderate. But there are extremist Muslims, and there are those who attach a political label to Islam by manipulating the religion for their political purposes.

That, too, is no different from any other religion. Christianity, for example, has been misused to justify every possible atrocity from the genocidal conquest of the Americas to slavery. Judaism too has been twisted and misused to justify Zionism, a racist ideology of ethnic cleansing and colonialism against Palestinians.

All through history, religions have been subject to all kinds of abuse, distortion, manipulation, material greed, personal desires and even crimes and unlawful wars. And on an Earth inhabited by billions of people it will never be possible to account for every individual who may carry out depraved acts citing this or that ideology or belief.

That does not make us powerless, however. With respect to the heinous murder of the teacher in France, this crime was widely and strongly condemned, perhaps more by Muslims than by others. But that has been the case all along vis a vis any similar crime.

It is also true of the crimes of Daesh, which were often collectively blamed on Muslims, when Daesh was really a phenomenon that resulted not from "Islam" but from the US-led invasion of Iraq and the chaos it unleashed all over the region. Remember that Islamic Jihad was formerly mobilised by the US to fight against Soviet presence in Afghanistan. That was an extremely dangerous precedent with chronic consequences.

In France, tensions have been building up since the murders at Charlie Hebdo magazine in 2015. The attack was widely condemned especially by French Muslims as well as Muslim leaders around the world. King Abdullah of Jordan and other Muslim leaders travelled to Paris to offer condolences, show support and to participate in the condemnation demonstration in the center of the French capital.

Why Charlie Hebdo? Because the magazine had published derisive caricatures of Prophet Mohammad (May God's peace and blessings be upon him), unmindful of how offensive such an act could be to more than 6 million Muslims in France and a billion and half more worldwide.

The terrorist attack was claimed to be the revenge. But Neither Islam nor Muslims accepted that kind of revenge regardless of how strongly they also rejected the French magazine's caricatures.

The Holy Quran says: "(prophet) Call the way of your Lord with wisdom and goodly and kind exhortation, and argue with them in the most pleasant and best manner. Surely your Lord knows very well who has gone astray from His path, and he knows very well the guided ones to the right path." (Soura Al Nahl, 125).

It is often problematic to try to explain any act of violence, even if for the sake of objective diagnosis that may help prevent recurrence, as that could be construed as justification of the crime, even if that follows condemnation.

But it is more problematic to ignore factors that contribute to any unruly human behaviour, violence specifically, that threatens peace and normal life anywhere.

No meaningful investigation of any crime can be complete without digging into the root causes that once identified provide great help to prevent repetition.

Rather than acknowledging the scale of the offence done to Muslims by the caricatures, rather than assessing the tragic consequences and the resulting cost in blood and public

peace, the French insisted that the publication of the caricatures was justified as "freedom of expression" and should even continue.

The French history teacher who was brutally murdered was addressing the freedom of expression issue by displaying those caricatures.

Freedom of expression is a principle that deserves to be respected and protected. But whether freedom of expression justifies and provides cover for totally unnecessary and spiteful attacks, insults, contempt and even disrespectful mockery of other people's beliefs and religious symbols is a matter that needs to be better examined.

Many observers ask why France seems uniquely to insist that mocking and dehumanising Muslims is "free speech," while it criminalises other forms of speech including Holocaust denial and calling for boycotts of goods from Israel. If free speech is really an absolute value, then why does France not allow these kinds of speech as well?

That leads many to feel that hostility to Islam and Muslims is a major factor.

To add insult to injury, the French president's statements, that preceded the French teacher's murder by few weeks, describing Islam as a religion in crisis, and insisting that "no concessions" would be made in a new drive to eradicate what he claims are extremist teachings in schools and mosques, caused outrage in the Muslim world. Such incendiary remarks can only heighten already existing tensions and provoke dangerous reaction.

If the Holy Quran instructs Muslims to debate such problems with "wisdom and kind exhortation" and that they should always do, what about the fanatics, those who react violently and irrationally to any provocation? Careful consideration of such fanatic violent retaliations, however irrational, criminal and wrong, should not be seen as submission to intimidation, or as compromising the freedom of expression right. It can also be prudent and wise. It would have been prudent, wise and even courageous to learn the lesson of the caricatures and to ban their publication not as a reward to the murderers but as signal of respect for those Muslims who were deeply exasperated by the deliberate recklessness; and as an official responsible action to extinguish the rising flames of hatred and social fragmentation.

Every religion has its fanatics and some may be people who for personal reasons are suffering from mental illnesses that may or may not manifest in violent ways. The insistence on the continued publication of the caricatures plays into the hands of the extremists and the fanatics, while at the same time it antagonises all moderates by blaming them for wrongs they never did. It shuts down the space for genuine dialogue and understanding.

French authorities' endorsement and encouragement of the abrasive cartoons is generating a new round of sharp criticism in the Muslim world and needless tension in a world where we have more than enough problems.

In Jordan, the Senate president, the Foreign minister and the Grand Mufti condemned the caricatures as incitement for hatred, religious tensions, social discord and exclusion. Similar

condemnation and even calls for boycotting French goods are coming from many other Muslim countries. All that could have been wisely avoided. Let us at least hope it does not lead to more violence.

doc. J3. Nov 01,2020

Joint responsibility

The situation regarding COVID-19 has greatly deteriorated in our society, due to the sharp rise in infections, to the substantial number of deaths, and to the spread of the virus in essentially all parts of the country.

The million dollar question now is, what to do about it?

The blame game will not help: i.e. the government blaming the people for not taking the disease seriously at first and for ignoring instructions and guidelines; and the people blaming the government, especially the previous government, for not being prompt enough, efficient enough, and ready enough.

Let us not cry over spilled milk.

What is required, especially at this point in time, is for each party to shoulder its responsibilities religiously, as the responsibility is mutual.

The people must do what is expected of them, and the government must do what is expected of it.

As far as the people are concerned, they must observe the rules to the letter; and there is no room for laxity.

A study of good international practices, i.e. the countries that are considered success stories in tackling COVID-19, reveals that a crucial factor in confronting and limiting both the spread of the virus and of its negative impact has largely to do with people's conduct on a daily basis.

Highly disciplined people who wear masks at all required times, practice physical distancing day and night, avoid crowds and social gatherings of sorts, and observe the correct cleanliness habits, have greatly succeeded in containing the virus and preventing its spread and disastrous effects.

It is all about observance of regulations and all about discipline.

This is the story we learn from the Taiwanese, the South Korean, the Japanese, and even the Chinese experiences.

Why cannot our people do the same?

In principle, they can and should, even though culturally speaking discipline has not been a virtue for our modern-day culture.

The family, the school and the various societal institutions concerned have not succeeded in instilling and enforcing disciplined individual conduct in daily situations.

Perhaps, and ironically so, what we as a country have failed to do voluntarily on our own, COVID-19 will force us to achieve.

Ultimately, the message is simple: fighting COVID-19 is neither difficult nor costly. All people have to do is to implement what the peoples of the nations just mentioned implemented.

This is not too much to ask; and if people do not learn to do the obvious in ordinary times, they must learn to do it the hard way in extraordinary times.

As far as the government is concerned, a lot is expected of it. I will confine myself here to some of what it should be urgently doing.

First and for most, it needs to conduct a quick and efficient review of what went wrong to date, so as to do what is right, avoiding and rectifying the previous failings and mistakes.

Secondly, it has to continue to spread awareness among the people regardless of how responsive or not the people are. If it insists, results may and will happen; if it gives up and starts playing the blame game, no results will happen.

Thirdly, it should keep abreast of the latest developments regarding what we scientifically know about COVID-19 and should keep disseminating and spreading the correct and accurate messages to people. The more we know about the virus and the more the information is conveyed to people, the more armed we will be in fighting this virus.

Fourthly, the government needs to work on qualifying the health sector to enable it to cope with the virus and with any other future health threats.

Since COVID-19 hit last March, we learned a lot about the limitations and shortcomings of our health system, many of which we were not previously aware.

There is an opportunity now for the government to rectify these shortcomings and introduce and enforce all the necessary changes in order to make the system more efficient and robust, taking into account that we have all that it takes to create a relevant, vibrant, and advanced health system.

This is the other part of the story we hear from successful international experiences: Those in charge of the health systems in these countries have the vision, the will, and the management skills to realise expectations and achieve the desired results.

Admit it or not, our responsibility is joint; and each party should live up to what is expected of it.

Poll: How Arab Americans will vote and why

When they go to the polls to cast their ballot for President of the United States, 59 per cent of Arab Americans say they will vote for Democratic candidate Joseph Biden with only 35 per cent supporting the reelection of President Trump. This is one of the findings of a nationwide poll of 805 Arab American voters conducted by the Arab American Institute during the second week of October 2020.

Overall, Joseph Biden is viewed favourably by 74 per cent of Arab American voters and unfavourably by only 25 per cent, while President Trump's favourable/unfavourable ratio is a lukewarm 48 per cent to 51 per cent. Even a majority (55 per cent) of Arab American Republicans have a favourable view of Biden.

One of the few positive signs for Donald Trump is the fact that he has galvanised support among Arab American Republicans and brought home some of those who, during the first two decades of this century, had stopped self-identifying with the GOP. The 40 per cent Democrat/33 per cent Republican split among Arab American voters represents a narrowing of the gap between the two parties. The partisan divide of 40 per cent to 38 per cent in 2000 had grown each election cycle since then. By 2016, it had become 52 per cent to 26 per cent. Today's party identification numbers are similar to 2002 and 2004 when it was 39 per cent to 31 per cent.

As a result, while Biden holds a significant lead over Trump in this year's poll, the margin is somewhat less than the gap that separated Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump. Back in 2016, Clinton's margin over Trump was 58 per cent to 25 per cent, with a significant number of Arab American Republicans not voting.

In this 2020 poll, the Democratic candidate Joseph Biden wins among almost all demographic groups, but by a somewhat smaller margin than former President Barack Obama in 2008. Biden leads among Catholics (55 per cent to 43 per cent), Muslims (60 per cent to 30 per cent) and naturalised citizens (64 per cent to 23 per cent). Where Biden's margins are largest are among younger Arab American voters (67 per cent to 27 per cent) and senior citizens (66 per cent to 26 per cent).

When provided a list of 14 policy concerns and asked to identify the issues they feel are most important in determining their votes in this election, 40 per cent of Arab Americans said their number one concern was "deteriorating race relations in the US today." This was followed by jobs and the economy (23 per cent), health care (21 per cent), the environment and climate change (17 per cent), and Social Security and Medicare (10 per cent). On all of these issues, except for "jobs and the economy," Biden was favoured over Trump by a significant margin.

The issue of deteriorating race relations looms large for Arab American voters with 70 per cent saying they have a positive view of the nationwide demonstrations supporting Black lives and 74 per cent holding critical views of policing practices in the US.

Resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was the only foreign policy issue mentioned in the above list of overall concerns and was listed as a top priority by only 5 per cent of Arab

American voters. But when it comes to identifying their major issues of concern in the Middle East, 45 per cent of Arab Americans said that resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was one of their top concerns.

This was followed by “meeting the humanitarian concerns of the Syrian people” and “addressing the ongoing political and economic crises in Lebanon.” By a margin of two to one, President Trump was seen as having been more ineffective than effective in handling of each of these critical concerns. And by margin of 49 per cent to 33 per cent, Arab American voters said they believe that Biden would be better than the sitting president at improving US relations with the Arab world.

Turnout will be very high in this election with slightly more than 80 per cent of Arab Americans saying they are very likely to vote. Most Democrats say they are either voting early in person or by mail (52 per cent), while most Republicans are waiting until election day to cast their votes (62 per cent). Interestingly, more Trump voters (75 per cent) are concerned that their ballots might not be counted than Biden voters (63 per cent).

The Arab American vote will be most critical in the key battleground states of Michigan (where they can be as much as 5 per cent of the vote), and Ohio and Pennsylvania (where they are between 1.7 to 2 per cent of likely voters).

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doc. J5. Nov 03,2020

Escalating the demographic war: The Strategic goal of Israeli racism in Palestine

The discussion on institutional Israeli racism against its own Palestinian Arab population has all but ceased following the final approval of the discriminatory Nation-State Law in July 2018. Indeed, the latest addition to Israel’s Basic Law is a mere start of a new government-espoused agenda that is designed to further marginalise over a fifth of Israel’s population.

On Wednesday, October 28, eighteen members of the Israeli Parliament (Knesset) conjured up yet another ploy to target Israeli Arab citizens. They proposed a bill that would revoke Israeli citizenship for any Palestinian Arab prisoner in Israel who, directly or indirectly, receives any financial aid from the Palestinian Authority (PA).

Worthy of mention is that these MKs not only represent right-wing, ultra-right and religious parties, but also the Blue and White (Kahol Lavan) ‘centrist’ party. Namely, the proposed bill already has the support of Israel’s parliamentary majority.

But is this really about financial aid for prisoners? Particularly since the PA is nearly bankrupt, and its financial contributions to the families of Palestinian prisoners, even within the Occupied Territories, West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza, is symbolic?

Here is an alternative context. On Thursday, October 29, the Israeli newspaper, Haaretz, revealed that the Israeli government of right-wing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu plans

to expand the jurisdiction of the Jewish town of Harish in northern Israel by 50 per cent. The aim is to prevent Palestinians from becoming the majority in that area.

The contingency plan was formulated by Israel's Housing Ministry as a swift response to an internal document, which projects that, by the year 2050, Palestinian Arabs will constitute 51 per cent of that region's population of 700,000 residents.

These are just two examples of recent actions taken within two days, damning evidence that, indeed, the Nation-State law was the mere preface of a long period of institutional racism, which ultimately aims at winning a one-sided demographic war that was launched by Israel against the Palestinian people many years ago.

Since outright ethnic cleansing, which Israel practiced during and after the wars of 1948 and 1967, is not an option, at least not for now, Israel is finding other ways to ensure a Jewish majority in Israel itself, in Jerusalem, in Area C within the occupied West Bank and, by extension, everywhere else in Palestine.

Israeli dissident historian, Professor Ilan Pappé, refers to this as "incremental genocide". This slow-paced ethnic cleansing includes the expansion of the illegal Jewish settlements in occupied East Jerusalem and the West Bank, and the proposed annexation of nearly a third of the Occupied Territories.

The besieged Gaza Strip is a different story. Winning a demographic war in a densely populated but small region of two million inhabitants living within 365 sq. km, was never feasible. The so-called "redeployment" out of Gaza by late Israeli prime minister, Ariel Sharon, in 2005 was a strategic decision, which aimed at cutting Israel's losses in Gaza in favour of expediting the colonization process in the West Bank and the Naqab Desert. Indeed, most of Gaza's illegal Jewish settlers were eventually relocated to these demographically-contested regions.

But how is Israel to deal with its own Palestinian Arab population, which now constitutes a sizeable demographic minority and an influential, often united, political bloc?

In the Israeli general elections of March 2020, united Arab Palestinian political parties contesting under the umbrella group, The Joint List, achieved their greatest electoral success yet, as they emerged as Israel's third-largest political party. This success rang alarm bells among Israel's Jewish ruling elites, leading to the formation of Israel's current "unity government". Israel's two major political parties, Likud and Kahol Lavan, made it clear that no Arab parties would be included in any government coalition.

A strong Arab political constituency represents a nightmare scenario for Israel's government planners, who are obsessed with demographics and the marginalisation of Palestinian Arabs in every possible arena. Hence, the very representatives of the Palestinian Arab community in Israel become a target for political repression.

In a report published in September 2019, the rights group, Amnesty International, revealed that “Palestinian members of the Knesset in Israel are increasingly facing discriminatory attacks”.

“Despite being democratically elected like their Jewish Israeli counterparts, Palestinian MKs are the target of deep-rooted discrimination and undue restrictions that hamstringing their ability to speak out in defense of the rights of the Palestinian people,” Amnesty stated.

These revelations were communicated by Amnesty just prior to the September 27 elections. The targeting of Palestinian citizens of Israel is reminiscent of similar harassment and targeting of Palestinian officials and parties in the Occupied Territories, especially prior to local or general elections. Namely, Israel views its own Palestinian Arab population through the same prism that it views its militarily occupied Palestinians.

Since its establishment on the ruins of historic Palestine, and until 1979, Israel governed its Palestinian population through the Defence (Emergency) Regulations. The arbitrary legal system imposed numerous restrictions on those Palestinians who were allowed to remain in Israel following the 1948 Nakba, or ethnic cleansing of Palestine.

In practice, however, the emergency rule was lifted in name only. It was merely redefined, and replaced, according to the Israel-based Adalah rights group, by over 65 laws that directly target the Palestinian Arab minority of Israel. The Nation-State Law, which denies Israel’s Arab minority their legal status, therefore, protection under international law, further accentuates Israel’s relentless war on its Arab minority.

Moreover, “The definition of Israel as ‘the Jewish State’ or ‘the State of the Jewish People’ makes inequality a practical, political and ideological reality for Palestinian citizens of Israel,” according to Adalah.

Israeli racism is not random and cannot be simply classified as yet another human rights violation. It is the core of a sophisticated plan that aims at the political marginalisation and economic strangulation of Israel’s Palestinian Arab minority within a constitutional, thus “legal”, framework.

Without fully appreciating the end goal of this Israeli strategy, Palestinians and their allies will not have the chance to properly combat it, as they certainly should.

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doc. J6. Nov 03,2020

Confronting France’s Muslim problem should be through dialogue

Religious extremism is not exclusive to Muslims as demonstrated by Buddhist zealots in Myanmar, Jewish fundamentalists in Israel and white Christian supremacists in the United States. There are other examples as well but the focus in the past two decades has been on various Islamist movements that have embraced a revisionist and violent dogma that is shunned by the majority of Muslims around the world. Neither Al Qaeda nor Daesh is a true representation of what over a billion Muslims believe and practice every day.

When French President Emanuel Macron says that “Islam is a religion which is experiencing a crisis today, all over the world”, he is in fact generalising and creating a stereotype that is false, insulting and misleading. He is no authority on Islam as a religion and he should draw the line between the faith that is embraced by billions of people and what is now called political Islam with its various manifestations.

What Macron should focus on instead is the state of France’s 5 million Muslims who are citizens and most were born in the country. What he should investigate are the causes of radicalisation among Muslim youth in France. His remarks had angered Muslims all over the world; triggering calls for a boycott of French products. Sadly, his speech was later followed by the hideous killing by a young Chechen of a French teacher, who had displayed offensive cartoons of Prophet Muhammad to his class. Few days later, a Tunisian immigrant attacked worshippers in a Nice church killing three. These are revolting murders that are condemned by all, especially French Muslims. Nothing can justify the killing of innocent people in the name of religion, any religion.

Following the two murders Macron should have shown moral leadership that is needed in a polarised society. Even before the terrible murders he should have initiated a dialogue with French Muslim organisations aimed at resolving the challenges that a majority of French Muslims face especially the state’s failure to integrate many into society. The mainstream organisations have embraced the principles of the Republic, including the separation of state and religion, while those on the fringe feel left out and are easy prey for extremists.

France has a Muslim problem and it had it for some time. There have been 36 terrorist attacks attributed to Muslims in the past eight years. This week, Macron expressed his understanding for the shock expressed by Muslims at the offensive cartoons. “I understand and respect that we can be shocked by these caricatures. I will never accept that we can justify physical violence for these caricatures and I will always defend in my country the freedom to say, to write, to think, to draw,” he said. Finding common ground where the principles of the Republic and the freedom of worship can coexist is something that must be arrived at without foreign interference. This must be done through dialogue and cooperation rather than incitement.

This week, more than 20 European Muslim organisations have called on the French president to end his “divisive rhetoric” and show moral leadership. In an open letter, they stated that “maligning Islam and your own Muslim citizens, closing mainstream mosques, Muslim and humanitarian rights organisations, and using this as an opportunity to stir up further hatred, has given further encouragement to racists and violent extremists”.

The main issue for French Muslims is socio-economic and has to do with schooling, social integration and economic opportunities. The state is right to curtail foreign intervention but it must also provide alternatives and give young French Muslims the opportunity to succeed. Even Macron in his controversial speech admitted that the country's Muslim citizens had been let down by successive governments. He admitted that France had created its own "separatism" by dumping poorer people in suburban ghettos with poor housing and few jobs.

Macron should be wary of unleashing waves of Islamophobia in France that would target millions of moderate and law-abiding Muslims. According to studies, a minority of French Muslims embraces a radical, paranoid anti-Western version of Islam. For Macron and his ministers to talk about civil war, the fight to death and France under siege is not the right way to resolve France's Islamist crisis. Dark clouds loom ahead as the far-right prepares to take over in the coming elections banking on rising hatred and distrust with the French society.

On the other hand, one should not fall for Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's opportunistic rhetoric targeting Macron. His tussle with Macron goes beyond religion and is purely political. Erdogan sees himself as the titular head of Sunni Muslims, and his incitement is both dangerous and reckless. Erdogan's controversial approach to regional politics has undermined his credibility both at home and outside. His use of religion to mobilise followers seeks to divide and serves no good purpose.

Last Friday, French Muslim Council circulated a sermon to mosques that said this: "The law of the Republic permits these cartoons but obliges no one to like them. We can even detest them. But nothing, absolutely nothing, justifies murder." This is the kind of message French Muslims should embrace.

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doc. J7. Nov 04,2020

What if Clinton won 2016 US presidential election instead of Trump?

What if Democrat Hillary Clinton had won the 2016 US presidential election instead of Donald Trump? The US and the world would have been spared four roller-coaster years of Trump, of his narcissism, ignorance and irrationality and his never ending presence in all media. She should have won as she garnered nearly three million more votes than he did but was bilked of the office by an obsolete, undemocratic system which, undemocratically, gives greater weight to votes from less populated states.

By contrast with Trump, who seeks to reign only over his base and do the bidding of reactionary conservatives, Clinton would have made an effort to serve the entire citizenry of the US. She may not have succeeded with inclusiveness in a country as deeply divided as is the US, but she would not have stoked bitter partisanship as Trump has done.

Trump recruited neophytes and party hacks for his administration; Clinton would have surrounded herself with people who can do the job of running a country. Instead of providing a steady hand on the tiller of the ship of state, an erratic, self-centered Trump fostered chaos.

Clinton would have promoted sanity and order and addressed the concerns of disadvantaged minority communities.

Clinton would have made a major effort to strengthen the Affordable Care Act, enacted during the Obama administration. During her husband's first term in office, she formed a team of experts to draw up a massive healthcare plan for the US. Unfortunately, politicians on both sides scorned her plan as "socialised medicine" and berated unelected First Lady for presuming to put forward such revolutionary legislation. If passed and implemented, the dysfunctional US healthcare sector would have been better able to cope with COVID-19 and earlier, lesser pandemics.

Clinton would have promptly consulted scientists before responding to the challenge posed by the pandemic as soon as it became a global menace in early January. Her response would have been the opposite of Trump's dismissal of the dire threat posed by the disease and refusal to mount a campaign to contain it. It is now estimated that if there had been an early, effective anti-COVID drive, 83,000 out of the current more than 230,000 deaths could have been prevented and several million of the current 9 million might not have been infected.

If Clinton had contained COVID, she would have prevented economic meltdown, rising unemployment, the closure of businesses and schools, and repeated lockdowns.

Clinton would not have withdrawn the US from the Paris climate accord and would have encouraged US firms to invest in "green" energy sources while ending or cutting subsidies for the coal and oil industries. She would also have made an effort to regularise gun ownership with the aim of reducing the high level of shooting deaths and woundings in the US. Since such policies are anathema to Trump's base of supporters, Clinton would have had a struggle but Clinton is a determined person.

On the foreign scene, Clinton would have not alienated US allies, been tough on Russia, worked out reasonable trade relations with China, and kept the US in the agreement requiring Iran to dismantle its nuclear programme in exchange for lifting sanctions. If allowed to resume normal political and economic relations with the international community, Iran might have adopted less contentious regional policies.

Although a strong supporter of Israel, Clinton would not have abandoned the two-state solution of the Palestine-Israel dispute or defunded UNRWA, the agency providing for Palestinian refugees, or other aid programmes benefitting Palestinians. The Palestinian mission to the US would have remained open and the US consulate in East Jerusalem which serves Palestinians would continue to operate.

The "if Clinton" issue is relevant to the 2020 election because if her fellow Democrat Joe Biden wins the presidency, he has repeatedly said he would adopt an agenda similar to that of Clinton.

If elected, Biden would have to mount a Herculean effort to cancel much of the destructive legacy of the Trump era. This will sidetrack his efforts to carry out the moderately progressive policies. If Biden is backed by Democratic majorities in both houses of Congress, he will be in

a better position to root out Trump's fait accompli but if the Senate remains in the hands of the Republicans this would be a very tough fight if they remain devoted to Trump.

Biden is in a better position to beat Trump in 2020 than Clinton was in 2016. Cool and collected Clinton did not and does not possess Biden's chief assets; warmth and likeability and the ability to appeal to working class voters as well as the educated elite. Consequently, she failed to win over pockets of alienated white men and women who determined the outcome in strategically located communities in "swing states" which decide the race in the Electoral College.

Biden has three other determining advantages. He is running at the end of three plus exhausting years of right-wing revanchist radicalism and anarchy under Trump. Clinton's bid for the presidency followed eight relatively well-regulated years of Barack Obama. Clinton would have extended his regime. US voters, however, like to alternate periods of Democratic and Republican rule.

Unlike Biden who empathises with fellow citizens who have suffered from COVID, lost jobs, or been evicted, Trump, who is incapable of putting himself into someone else's shoes, considers afflicted "nobodies".

Finally, Clinton is the first woman to be chosen as the candidate for the presidency of one of the main US political parties. Biden is an old white man. Unlike the 75 countries which since 1950 previously had women prime ministers or presidents, the US is still reluctant to have a woman in the top job. Twenty-nine countries currently have female heads of state or government. The US lags far behind.

In 1972 the first Black woman to enter US national politics by campaigning for and losing the Democratic presidential nomination, Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm summed up the situation in an interview with the BBC, "I have certainly met much more discrimination in terms of being a woman than being black."

doc. J8. Nov 07,2020

Palestinian hunger strike

After 91 days of hunger strike the Palestinian prisoner, Maher Al Akhras, was finally allowed to see his family. The photograph of Maher hugging his daughter has become the symbol of his struggle and sacrifice against Israel's systematic policy of "administrative detention", essentially imprisonment without charge, trial or the fundamental right to be brought before a court. He has now been on hunger strike for 100 days.

There are currently 350 Palestinians detained by Israel without charges. Since 1967, almost 800,000 Palestinians have spent time in Israeli jails. Every Palestinian family knows what it is to have a relative in an Israeli jail, often without charge, and usually under military law. This injustice highlights the arbitrariness and cruelty of an Apartheid regime enshrined in every aspect of Israel's relationship with Palestine and the Palestinians.

Some in the international community, including European countries, refer to Israel as “the only democracy in the Middle East” and profess to have a shared value system based on democratic institutions, adherence to international law and respect for human rights.

How can these values be shared with Israel when it violates them on a daily basis? Building a just and lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians is not possible when Israel has impunity for its illegal and unjust actions, does not face any accountability, and faces no sanctions for these actions.

Once again, Palestinian human rights organisations remind the international community of its obligations to promote and protect human rights and international law.

For the government of Israel, the life of Maher Al Akhras may be of little significance. While Israel has, for now, not declared a formal annexation of further occupied Palestinian territory, there have been decades of de facto annexation of Palestinian lands, natural resources and assets through Israel’s illegal colonial expansion, home demolitions and expulsions, and daily violence by Israeli occupation forces and settlers against defenceless Palestinian communities. This is the background to Al Akhras’ struggle.

As part of the occupation, not a single day goes by without Palestinians, including children, facing illegal detention, torture in military prisons, and uncertainty as to their fate in a system which regards them as not worthy of the same legal rights as citizens of Israel.

What can be done to save the life of Maher Al Akhras? Israel must end its unjust and inhumane system of administrative detention. For this to happen, the international community, including Ireland, must make respect for international law and the equal rights of Palestinians a basic condition of its relations with Israel. The reaction of US secretary of state, Mike Pompeo, to the situation of Al Akhras (“Israel has the right to defend itself”) perfectly reflects the approach of the wider international community towards the just demands of Palestinians. Once again, it seems, Israel has no questions to answer and relations continue as normal. Israel counts, for example, that the Irish foreign minister will continue to actively oppose the ban on settlement products and services being discussed in the Irish parliament. Banning settlement products is a basic requirement and international obligation to make clear to Israel that its ongoing human rights violations and crimes under international law should immediately stop.

Unlike Al Akhras, there is no certainty that all Palestinian prisoners will go on hunger strike. However, all Palestinians share a commitment that his sacrifice will not be in vain.

Israel’s judicial system as applied to Palestinians disregards the notion of equality for all before the law and has become a tool in the overall system of oppression of an entire people. Israeli courts accept principles, such as administrative detention, settlement expansion and home demolitions that openly violate basic requirements of justice and respect for human rights.

As Palestinian human rights defenders we cannot allow this situation to go unchallenged. We will continue to call on the international community, including the International Criminal

Court, to assume its responsibilities and defend the rights of the Palestinian people to justice, fairness and equality. This can only go through focusing on fully ending the Israeli occupation and its colonial-settlement enterprise.

Maher Al Akhras should not have to give his life in order to vindicate his fundamental human rights and those of his people. His hunger strike should be a powerful message to those in the international community who have up to now turned their faces from the just demands of the Palestinian people. We fervently desire that this awakening does not come too late for Mr Akhras.

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doc. J9. Nov 08,2020

After Vienna's operation, do we expect a new wave of terrorism?

The terrorist attacks that targeted France a few weeks ago have expanded to the Austrian capital of Vienna. While the operation was a copy of similar attacks in Paris in 2015, there is a new style here suggesting the planning of the operation was more sophisticated than a single individual or small group making their own decisions.

In recent years, the concept of "lone wolf attacks" have referred to unsophisticated operations using simple techniques such as knife attacks, using cars and vehicles as weapons, gun shootings and in some cases homemade bombs. These lone wolf attacks have become more brutal and violent, like the recent attacks in France, which included a beheading. For many reasons, this attack in Vienna demonstrated a more advanced and sophisticated approach.

To start with, the history and symbolism of Vienna is important in the context of intercultural conflict. It is one of the major centres of cultural development in Europe, and is the city of music and culture. In open confrontation between cultures, Vienna is a symbolic gate from the east to the west, and it was the Battle of Vienna where the Ottomans suffered heavy losses and significantly weakened their forces. It is entirely possible that a sophisticated terrorist group that believes it is in a war against western society would target a city with this kind of symbolism.

The style of the operation was more of a commando approach, suggesting we are seeing a new wave of terrorism that is better coordinated, equipped and trained. We saw a coordinated and simultaneous attack designed to create panic amongst the security services and then the suicide shooter killing civilians. The terrorist wanted to die and the plan was to cause as much damage as possible, indicating the potential of becoming a suicide bomber once his ammunition was spent.

The timing was also sophisticated, on the final evening before lockdowns kicked in, where people were gathering in public places to farewell each other. A random shooting attack in

this situation is likely to lead to casualties and maximise panic, fear and terror. Further, it creates confusion amongst the security establishment who are distracted setting up new frameworks and plans for lockdown restrictions.

While there has been some focus on the origin of the terrorist with speculation of everything from north African to central Asian, it turns out his background was Balkan, proving that terrorism is not tied to a specific geographic area. Further it changes the standard models and approach of the security services tracking threats based on ethnicity.

It is increasingly difficult to track and watch all potential threats in our society; a more effective methodology is necessary to manage the risks. It is worth adding that this particular Balkan was already known to authorities, as he had previously been convicted of trying to join Daesh, the very organisation whose name he carried out these attacks.

So, it is difficult to label this operation as a lone wolf attack, it is far too well planned, resourced and sophisticated to be an individual, and far more likely to be the work of an organization.

Security threats are increasing during COVID-19 and open political disputes could be increasing risk, alongside the increasing poverty, economic frustration and political and social unrest. All of this combined is creating fertile ground for terrorist groups to recruit and operate to further their objectives.

doc. J10. Nov 09,2020

These things are clear

As I sit to write this piece four days after the election, Joe Biden is leading in enough states to make it clear that he will win enough electoral college votes to become the 46th President of the United States. What was also clear is that Republicans will likely retain control of the Senate and the Democrats, while still the majority in the House, have lost some of the seats they had picked up in 2018. We are a deeply divided country. That much should be clear.

If this were a normal election year, that might be the end of the story. Alas, it is not. In 2020, nothing is normal and this crazy election is not going to be over for a while.

Donald Trump is not now nor has he ever been psychologically able to accept the reality of losing or being second best. Even when he doesn't win or isn't the best, he has been prone to create "an alternate reality" in which he convinces himself: that he really has won; that he was a victim of someone else's cheating; that someone else is responsible for the setback; or that he is the victim of a conspiracy.

In a very real sense, Donald Trump has been preparing the ground for contesting a loss ever since he was first elected president in 2016. Not able to accept that Hillary Clinton had won more popular votes, he charged that millions of his opponent's votes were fraudulent. He even appointed a partisan presidential commission to validate his claim. Despite the fact that the commission was comprised of his supporters, it disbanded after several months unable

to prove any widespread cheating. Nevertheless, Trump has continued to make this same charge about fraudulent 2016 votes.

For the past three months Trump has been claiming that Democrats were going to try to steal this year's election. He made the groundless accusation that hundreds of thousands of mail-in votes were going to be used to "stuff ballot boxes" or that votes for him were going to be tossed out in order to elect his opponent.

Recognising the danger posed by the growing pandemic, legislatures in several states, with bipartisan support had approved plans to provide voters with a mail-in option. Polls show that Democrats, apparently more concerned with the health risks of in-person voting, took advantage of this option. At the same time, a sizable majority of Republican voters waited until election day to cast their ballots. Because the in-person votes were counted first, on election night, as expected, Trump was in the lead. But as the mail-in votes were slowly counted, Biden's totals eventually eclipsed Trump's putting Biden in the lead.

In response, Trump angrily tweeted "STOP THE COUNT", and in some cities his supporters stormed polling places echoing this demand. The president's lawyers filed numbers of lawsuits demanding, among other things, that many legally cast mail-in votes be disqualified. And on Thursday, Trump delivered shocking remarks from the White House calling into question the integrity of the entire election. A number of Republican governors and senators were so stunned that they felt compelled to quickly reject the president's behaviour.

What is clear is that President Trump will not accept losing, will not concede, and will use every available path to challenge the outcome. He and his supporters are continuing to call the election fraudulent and calling on supporters to "go to war" to protest the vote. The misinformation they are spreading on social media is flagrant false. It is designed to cast doubt on the entire process and to incite anger, causing confusion and unrest, with the possibility of violence. The uncertainty created by all of this will only lead to deeper division, casting a pall, not only over this election, but the very foundations of our democracy. We will in all likelihood not see a peaceful transition of power. That much is clear.

What is also clear is that when Joe Biden is sworn in as President, he will inherit this division and the dysfunctional political system that has spawned it. Gone are the days when despite differences Republicans and Democrats worked together to solve pressing problems facing the nation.

When Newt Gingrich was elected Speaker of the House of Representatives, he ushered in an era of hyper-partisanship that worked to stymie then president Bill Clinton's every move. When Barack Obama was elected president, then-Minority Senate Leader Mitch McConnell declared that he would do everything in his power to ensure that Obama was a one-term president. After McConnell became Majority Leader, Republicans routinely blocked Obama's appointments and refused to pass compromise legislation.

At the ceremony announcing his last Supreme Court nominee, Trump noted that it is the responsibility of a president to fill vacancies to the federal courts. He chided Obama for being irresponsible noting that when he entered the Oval Office in 2017 there were over 100 court

vacancies. What Trump did not acknowledge was that the reason for these unfilled judgeships was not because Obama had not named replacements, but because McConnell would not let the Senate approve them. What is clear is that unless Democrats can win the few Senate seats that remain to be contested in January 2021, Biden will confront the same obstructionism.

To succeed, Biden may have to play by the rules Republicans have created. To get things done, he will be forced to issue Executive Orders by-passing the Senate where it is possible to do so. This was what Obama was forced to do. He will also need to use Executive Orders to undo the damage to our regulatory and immigration systems by President Trump's excessive use of Executive Orders.

At the same time, not only President Biden and Democrats, but Republicans as well, will need to deal with the reality that Trumpism will remain a potent force in American politics. When the GOP funded and organised the Birther Movement and the Tea Party to counter Obama's appeal, they ushered in a wave of race-based populism. This may have served the Republican's short-term goal of taking control of Congress in 2010, but the angry beast they created back then, devoured them first. Across the country, fearful of alienating this base, more traditional conservative Republicans felt forced to take increasing hardline uncompromising stances.

When Donald Trump first entered the 2016 presidential contest, the GOP establishment dismissed his candidacy certain that a more traditional Mitt Romney-style conservative Republican would win the nomination. They were wrong. And despite their initial disgust for Trump's xenophobia and bigotry, crude and vulgar language, and his shocking incitement to violence, they eventually fell in line, once again fearful of angering his supporters - the very base they had helped to create.

As a result of their complicity, new and more virulent movements have taken root in this base - from the QAnon conspiracy cult, to the xenophobic and racist Christian Patriot churches, and militant groups like the Proud Boys, the bogaloo bois, and a host of armed militias that have sprung up nationwide. All of which have received varying degrees of endorsement from the president.

The fact that Donald Trump won the votes of over 70 million Americans means that while he has lost the election, his appeal will remain. Republicans will either make a concerted effort to tame this phenomenon or they will see not only the continued drift of their party towards extremism, but the danger of violence in cities across the US. This too is clear.

It seems clear that, as Donald Trump said a few weeks ago "This will not end well." Far from being over, this election may very well continue to play out for weeks to come. Trump and the GOP have been telegraphing their strategy for over a month now. They will continue to challenge validity of the vote in court. They will demand recounts. They will incite their followers to demonstrate at vote-counting facilities. In the end, many Americans will lose faith in the electoral process and America's democracy will be tarnished in the eyes of the world. That much is clear.

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Trump is out but Trumpism will last for a long time to come

Donald Trump has lost his reelection bid. That reality is yet to sink in for the occupant of the Oval Office. He is now a lame duck president who should be working with President-elect Joe Biden to facilitate a smooth transition by January 20. But Trump, being who he is, has rejected election results, which had pushed the 78-year-old Democratic nominee across the 270 electoral vote benchmark on Saturday, five days after more than 140 million Americans cast their vote, of whom an unprecedented number, almost 100 million, voted early.

While Trump screamed foul, accusing the Democrats of stealing his victory; more than 70 million voted for him, 4 million less than those who voted blue, Biden spoke about national healing, uniting Americans, restoring common decency and moving forward. Trump's team will contest the results in some states. But there is little or no evidence that fraud and illegal voting had taken place. His hope of bringing his case to the US Supreme Court appears weak at best. Even then and with a majority of Conservative judges on the bench, it is highly unlikely that the court can help him.

Instead of uniting a deeply polarised country, Trump is pursuing what he had been doing for more than five years; ever since he stormed the political stage as an unorthodox Republican candidate in 2015; advocating an agenda of xenophobia, misogyny, racism, bigotry and white supremacy. Trump will not go down easily but he will in the end. By then, he will have dealt an additional damage to the national social fabric. Not since independent candidate George Wallace contested the 1968 presidential elections, and lost, had the US seen such an openly racist candidate. Trump arrived at the scene following eight years of the first African-American president to reach the White House; Barack Obama. Trump's uncanny success in defeating conventional Republican rivals, and later winning the presidency against Hillary Clinton, remains one of the most bizarre events in modern American politics.

His attacks on globalism, China, free trade, the UN, NATO, climate change and finally the scientists who warned him of the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic solidified his base of mainly less educated middle aged white workers, who were becoming increasingly frustrated and angry at the huge demographic shifts that the US had seen in the last two to three decades while, at the same time, seeing their blue collar jobs move to China. Trump touched a raw nerve and was able to put together a motley voter base that included Evangelicals, white supremacists and angry middle-aged white workers.

Trump used Islamophobia to drum up support from his base while demonising China for stealing American jobs and later for spreading the virus. His anti-immigrant rhetoric was the icing on the cake along with his promise to build a wall along the borders with Mexico. His populist, divisive, fear mongering style endeared him to many, who overlooked his personal and moral track record. It was a bleak moment in America's history; one fueled by fear, anxiety and a clear departure from universal American values.

But even if Trump is going down Trumpism is not. With 70 million people voting for him even when more than 230,000 Americans had succumbed to COVID-19, even when the economy

had shed millions of jobs and millions of Americans are unable to pay their rent, keep a job or pay their health insurance premiums, his populist dogma will live on. It will take years for the country to come together. Even out of office, Trump will continue to play the victim and peddle conspiracy theories.

Biden was never an ideal or a charismatic candidate. But he will bring back civility to the office of the presidency; a sure and trusted choice. The American people; those who loathed the Trump era, wanted to restore dignity, tolerance and a balanced leadership. So did the world! America remains the leading global force and its influence on regional politics cannot be discounted.

It remains to be seen if Biden will be able to steer American politics, both domestic and foreign, from Trump's trajectory. Without a majority in the Senate he will have a tough time appointing his key staff. We know that he will cancel many of Trump's Executive Orders through ones of his own. The US will rejoin the Paris Climate Agreement and will renegotiate a way to save the Iran nuclear deal. We know that he will restore aid to the Palestinians and UNRWA and revive the two-state solution, putting an end to the "Deal of the Century" . And we know that he will work with the rest of the world in fighting the pandemic; giving scientists a crucial say in what to do.

But his attempts to roll back some of Trump's audacious achievements will be stymied. Without a majority in the Senate will not be able to confront one of Trump's lasting legacies which is the packing of the US Supreme Court with a majority of Conservative judges. The Green New Deal, a progressive agenda, will be blocked by Conservatives for being too far on the left.

Biden may still be able to restore bi-partisanship on other issues. The Republican Party will have to rid itself of Trump's most stinging stigmas. The US under Biden will be embroiled in domestic challenges. But the world will breathe a sigh of relief that the tide of Trumpism, for now, has been checked. America needs a reprieve and so does the world!

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