

# Teim



## TEIM Election Watch Analysis

### ELECTORAL REPORT:

### ALGERIA/Parliamentary elections

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### Rafael Bustos

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## Background of the elections:

Parliamentary elections were held when the previous 5-year term ended and at a time when President Abdelaziz Bouteflika was ill but still exercising his powers. On 11 April, two powerful car bombings took place in Algiers (30 dead and 220 wounded), for which a terrorist group (GSPC), which declared itself to be a branch of al-Qaeda in the Maghreb, claimed responsibility.<sup>1</sup> Demonstrations and declarations of condemnation followed. The parties asked for high participation as a kind of rejection of the violence and show of support for the politics of reconciliation. The candidacy of the Islah-MRN party leader Abdellah Djaballah was invalidated because his party had not held a re-election convention. Ait Ahmed, in turn, announced that his party, the FFS, would boycott this election.

## Quantitative indices of democracy:

Algeria was classified in the following democratic performance rankings just before the elections:

Measurement	Name and year of report or database	Institution	Index	Points, ranking and classification
Political rights and freedom	<a href="#">Freedom House Report</a> 2007	Freedom House (FH)	PR: political rights CL: civil liberties	PR: 6, CL: 5 (Scale of 1, free to 7, not free) <b>Classification: Not free</b>
Degree of democracy in earlier elections	<a href="#">Polyarchy 2.0</a> 2004	Peace Research Institute of Oslo and Tatu Vanhanen	ID: Synthetic democracy index, Part: participation, Comp: competition	ID: 4.9 Part: 32.8 Comp: 15 (Democracy minimum: ID:5, Part: 10, Comp: 30) <b>Classification: does not achieve democracy minimum</b>
Consolidation of authoritarian and democratic institutions	<a href="#">Polity IV</a> 2004	Center for International Development and Conflict Management, Univ. of Maryland	Democracy: consolidation of democracy institutions Autocracy: authoritarian consolidation Polity: synthesis of both	Democracy: 3, Autocracy: 1 Polity= +2 (Scale of +10, very democratic to -10, very authoritarian) Classification: weakly democratic
Perception of corruption	<a href="#">Transparency International Corruption Perception Index</a> Nov. 2006	Transparency International	TICPI: corruption perceptions index	<b>TICPI: 3.1 points out of 10,</b> (Scale of 1, very corrupt to 10, not at all corrupt) Rank: 84 out of 163 countries

<sup>1</sup> However, one of the founders of the GSPC, Hassan Hattab, disavowed al-Qaeda in the Maghreb and criticised the 11 April attacks as well as the true intentions of this group (see the Reuters information from France24, "Le fondateur du GSPC désavoue al-Qaida", 17 April, available at: <http://www.france24.com/france24Public/fr/archives/nouvelles/2007/Avril/afrique/20070417-Algerie-manifestation-GSPC>)

Management of political and economic change	<a href="#">Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI) 2006</a>	Bertelsmann Foundation	MI: Management Index, quality of transformation management	MI: 3.63 points out of 10. Rank: 91 out of 119 countries Classification : Management with little success
Democracy, including press status and corruption	<a href="#">World Democracy Audit</a> Mayo 2007	World Audit	World Democracy Ranking: political freedom (FH) + press and corruption (TI)	World Democracy Ranking: 101 out of 150 countries, division 4 out of 4

### Quantitative analysis of electoral democracy:

The elections analysed in this profile produced the following electoral democracy quantitative results:

Degree of democracy in these elections	Measurement of democracy in these elections according to the Polyarchy 2.0 index, calculated by <a href="#">TEIM Election Watch</a>	ID: 7.2 Part: 20 <sup>2</sup> Comp: 36 <sup>3</sup> (Democracy minimum: ID: 5, Part: 10, Comp: 30)	Classification: <b>democratic</b>
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### Definition of the electoral system and parties:

Party-list proportional representation (List PR<sup>4</sup>) with the Hare quota for parliamentary and local elections; electoral threshold of 5% for parliamentary and 7% for local elections. In practice, the electoral system has a notable majority bias due to different factors (threshold, constituency size and system of distributing seats). It is formally a multi-party system with a tendency to fragment, marked, however, by the two dominant official parties, the FLN and the RND, which alternate or share power.

### Impact of the electoral procedure and size of the constituency on the elections:

The majority effect is the product of the special application of the Hare quota and is intensified in turn by the relatively conservative design of the constituencies, with an abundance of small constituencies in both the 1997

<sup>2</sup> Calculated with a participation of 6,692,891 and an estimated population census of 33,858,000 inhabitants in 2007, as opposed to 32 million in 2004 (Source: United Nations Population Division, available at: [http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/wpp2006/2006\\_wppchart.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/wpp2006/2006_wppchart.pdf)).

<sup>3</sup> To calculate competition, we subtracted the percentage of seats won by the winning coalition parties that form the government, i.e., the presidential alliance, made up of the FLN, RND and MSP from 100. Note, however, that earlier calculations from Vanhanen for Polyarchy 2.0 sometimes used the number of votes for the winning coalition or party.

<sup>4</sup> The names of the electoral systems are those used by IDEA, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance. For details, see the Electoral System Design on their webpage: <http://www.idea.int/esd/world.cfm>

elections and the 2002 and 2007 elections (17 and 15 constituencies of 4 and 5 seats respectively, out of a total of 48). It is a well-known electoral rule that the smaller the constituency, the greater the distortion produced and vice-versa, up to a certain limit.<sup>5</sup>

### Election results:

Participation: 35.67 %, 6,692,891 voters out of 18,761,084 registered voters.  
Invalid votes: 965,064 (14.4%). Valid votes: 5,727,827

	Name of party or list	% of valid votes	No. of seats	% of seats
Government coalition	National Liberation Front (FLN)	23%	136	35%
	National Rally for Democracy (RND)	10.3%	62	15.6%
	Society of Peace Movement, MSP	9.6%	51	13.4%
Opposition	Independents	9.8%	33	8.4%
	Workers Party (PT)	5.0%	26	6.6%
	Rally for Culture and Democracy (RCD)	3.3%	19	4.4%
	Algerian National Front (FNA)	4.2%	15	3.3%
	Others (16)	35%	47	13%
Total	23	100%	389	100%

Source: Algeria Constitutional Council, Algeria Home Office and TEIM data calculation

### Evaluative analysis of the elections:<sup>6</sup>

#### Participation:

According to the figures from the Home Office, participation was 35.67%, the lowest officially recognised level to date. This was well below the earlier rate of 46% for the 2002 parliamentary elections, consolidating an appreciable trend towards lower rates that has been affecting all types of elections, but especially parliamentary ones. As is customary, participation was lower in the cities and on the coast than in rural areas and the interior. This observer's impressions confirm very low attendance at the polls in the capital, Blida and Medea. The al-Qaeda video from the Maghreb calling for a boycott and a small attack in Constantine the day before may have had some impact, but the people had already decided beforehand not to vote. Security measures were strengthened, but the Algerians did not need al-Qaeda to abstain from voting. The highest percentages (50-60%) were recorded in the south and the interior high plains. In Kabylie, a traditionally

<sup>5</sup> Agustí Bosch explains it thus: "It is estimated that systems with uninominal constituencies produce a malapportionment index that is almost double that of small [proportional] constituencies (with 2-6 seats) and that they produce malapportionment indices that are also almost double those of medium-sized constituencies (6-10 seats). For their part, systems with larger constituencies do not substantially improve apportionment". (A. Bosch, *Guía del sistema electoral [Guide to electoral systems]*, Autonomous University of Barcelona Publication Service, Barcelona, 2004, p. 21.

<sup>6</sup> This section uses TEIM's 6 election criteria which are: Participation, Competition, Transparency, Representation and Debate, Openness and Significance. See the home page for an explanation of each of these criteria.

pro-abstention area, participation almost reached that of the capital (17% on average in the two Kabyle capitals as opposed to 18.4% in Algiers), a rise already noted in the 2004 presidential elections, while in the emigrant voting constituencies, the percentage was low, close to that of Algiers (18%) and much lower than the 33% recorded in 2004.

#### Competition:

A total of 24 parties presented candidates alongside the independent candidates with an uneven presence in the country's *wilayat*. The only important exclusion was that of the moderate Islamist leader Abdellah Djaballah (5% in the last presidential elections and the head of the party with the third most votes in parliament) who could not run since his candidacy had been invalidated when his party did not hold a convention to renew his position as leader. Djaballah immediately called for the voters to abstain, as did Ait Ahmed's FFS, who called for a boycott of the elections. The losing candidates received between 23 and 32.9% of the votes, depending on whether the winner is considered to be the FLN alone or the presidential coalition (FLN-RND-MSP).

#### Transparency:

Although Home Secretary Yazid Zerhouni, who was responsible for presenting the results, took pleasure in relating an episode of fraud that was quickly controlled (in Ruiba) when several polls were discovered to contain votes before the process had even begun, the spectre of fraud was not completely kept at bay. The National Election Monitoring Commission (CNPSEL) at first recognised widespread signs of electoral fraud which it then retracted hours later, agreeing on a version that was closer to that of the Home Secretary – that the elections were generally without incident. The controversy went on for several days in the press, fed by the differences between the statements by Zerhouni and Buchair, the Commission president. There were no international observers for these elections, unlike the case in the last presidential elections. Personally, as an observer of these elections, I was surprised by the exceptional slowness in the publication of the results, from the Thursday on which the elections were held (Friday was a half holiday) until mid-morning on Saturday when the provisional results were announced. It is true, however, that this delay is allowed by the election law, which establishes a maximum deadline of 48 hours. The denunciations and complaints presented by the parties were rejected by the Constitutional Council which, broadly speaking, accepted the data released by the Home Secretary.

#### Party representation and debate during the election:

It is clear that one of the reasons for the abstention and the blank and invalid votes (almost one million) was the absolute lack of renewal in the political class. A mere look at the propaganda posters containing the photos of the candidates in Algiers made it clear – because of the age and faces of the candidates – that the contenders have changed very little. The debate took place away from the parties, in the media, as is becoming the norm. But this time, some parties reproached the press for having encouraged abstention. In general, the electoral spaces and slots assigned to the TV and radio for the parties were respected. The archaic style of the presentations with their long, static speeches doubtless contributed to driving an even larger wedge between the voters and the parties. Television also was taken up by President Bouteflika's tour of several places around the country. During the election campaign, public attendance at

political meetings was low, and other observers verified that not even the MSP managed to fill the sports centre as it had in other years.

#### Openness:

The victory of the presidential coalition was a given. No one in Algeria expected any surprises and none occurred. The only real unknown was how much of the abstention rate was going to be admitted publicly.

#### Significance:

The change in parliament was minimal, with the governing coalition repeating its absolute majority. The FLN lost the majority that it enjoyed by itself, but the party has ensured it with its two coalition members. Furthermore, the importance of Islah as a solid opposition party was broken down into a myriad of small parties, up to 14, which add up to approximately the same as Islah in 2002. The elections did not result in any important changes in the government, either, despite the rumours that Said Sadi (RCD) and Louisa Hanoune (PT) were going to enter it. There were no changes in the members (all but 3 returned) and none at all in their policies.

### **Consequences and impact on the political system:**

The low participation rate sent a strong signal to the political class and is not attributable to either the terrorist threats or to the call by a political party for a boycott. The roots are deeper. The citizenry has lost confidence in electoral changes, at least as long as this political class stays in power. Apart from these socio-political and economic reasons, in which corruption is quite evident (the much-talked-about Khalifa case, for example), it is important to note that the voter card with a stamp confirming that the bearer has voted is no longer 'requested' by the administration. The low participation rate was seen not only in the victory of abstention, but also in the 14% invalid votes and the extremely slow growth of the electorate, from 17,981,000 in 2002 to 18,761,084 in 2007, in a country where voter registration is voluntary.

The second consequence is the fragmentation of parliament (from 10 parties and independent lists to 23) and the loss of legitimacy in the lower chamber due to the high abstention and high number of invalid votes (14%).

Finally, in the Islamist ranks, the disappearance (temporary?) of Djaballah and his party (Islah) as an important political force (from 43 to 3 seats, losing the number 3 position it gained in 2002) has not brought with it any important rise for the MSP, which is also Islamist, as could have been expected because of their ideological similarity. The MSP only saw an increase from 7.05% to 9.6% of the votes (and from 38 to 51 seats).

### **International political reaction:**

The main international media reports underscored the low participation rate and, secondarily, the atmosphere of the terrorist threat. However, there was no response or reaction from the main chanceries. Unlike on other occasions, none of the usual messages of congratulations or messages to the winning parties were issued. This lack of reactions reflects the compromising situation created by the high abstention. Furthermore, in France, the election coincided

with the formation of a new government and the transfer of powers from the departing Foreign Minister, Philippe Douste-Blazy to Bernard Kouchner, who will prepare Sarkozy's possible trip to Algeria in July. Neither the European Union through its high representative for the CFSP nor the foreign relations organisations in Spain and the United States made any pronouncement. The United States has been very cautious as far as making any evaluations, since it had at that moment ended a diplomatic mini-crisis with Algeria that resulted from an alarmist warning issued by the US embassy in Algiers. Spain's relations with Algeria were also at a particularly sensitive juncture, with open wrangling over gas and the backdrop of negotiations about the Western Sahara, and the country probably chose not to be heard from in the days after the election.

### **Implications for Spain:**

This election means little or no change for Spain in its relations with Algeria. The continuity in the form and orientation of the government is absolute and in parliament, the repetition of the majority ensures a calm end for the presidency, at least from the parliamentary point of view. The technocrats also continue in their positions, led by the Minister of Energy, Chakib Khelil. Therefore, there will be no changes in reform policies or in planned public investments or reconciliation policies. The message that can be drawn here is that no one wanted any surprises and there was a desire to be able to count on stable institutions as a precaution against any possible contretemps. The only change of any interest that occurred in the government took place in the Foreign Office where Mohammed Bedjaoui gave up his post to Murad Medelci. The new minister is a man from the west, from Tlemcen like Bouteflika and many of his collaborators, and an expert, head of commerce and finance and loyal advisor to the president. He replaces a renowned jurist in this ministry.

Overall, the delicate issues of gas and the Western Sahara that concern Spain and Algeria are both followed very closely by the President of the Republic and will still be negotiated with a global view of the interests of the state, i.e., completely apart and independent of the slight touch-ups that may occur in the heart of the government. The President's state of health could intensify the prudent nature of Algerian positions in foreign affairs, in such a way that excessive risks are avoided at all cost. In terms of negotiations about the Sahara, this would entail making no significant concessions to Morocco with respect to its starting position and in terms of gas, which is tied in part to the first issue, to continue to exert reasonable pressure on Spain. This pressure could be intense at times, but will only last as long as there are negotiations and always without endangering the Medgaz pipeline and, even less, the main supply contracts. Spain, in turn, cannot influence the length of the negotiations being overseen by the UN, but can better explain its position in Algeria and especially eliminate the reasons for the lack of agreement on the gas issue, and fundamentally, improve Sonatrach's access to the distribution of gas in Spain.

### **Conclusions:**

Overall, these elections sent a strong signal to the Algerian authorities that their many reforms and investments are not sufficient as long as political renewal continues to be bogged down. Despite the questions raised by such low

participation, Algerian society has expressed, and in a healthily democratic way, that it expects real changes and will not be content with less and is fully aware of the social problems that persist despite the manna of hydrocarbons. On the other hand, these results give a certain stability to a presidency that needs to tighten its safety belt and calmly 'pilot' the final stretch of Bouteflika's term (less than 2 years). But caution is called for here, because this worrisome distancing between the citizens and the political class cannot be overcome indefinitely by the President's charisma.

### **Reference to two other Internet analyses of this election:**

1- "Algeria's Parliamentary Elections 2007" by Nazim Fethi and Boualam Senhadji, for the Konrad Adenauer Foundation's MENA Election Guide, found at: <http://www.mena-electionguide.org/country.aspx/23/Algeria>

2- "En Algérie, l'abstention n'a pas besoin d'Al-Qaeda!", Interview by Zyneb Drief with François Burgat about the parliamentary elections. [http://www.rue89.com/2007/05/16/parliamentarys\\_algeriennes\\_l\\_abstention\\_n\\_a\\_pas\\_besoin\\_d\\_alquaida\\_par\\_francois\\_burgat](http://www.rue89.com/2007/05/16/parliamentarys_algeriennes_l_abstention_n_a_pas_besoin_d_alquaida_par_francois_burgat)

### **Summary of the conclusions in French:**

Dans l'ensemble, ces élections envoient un signal fort aux autorités algériennes, étant son contenu que les réformes multiples et les investissements considérables ne suffisent pas à moins que la rénovation politique sorte de l'impasse où elle se trouve. Les divers points d'interrogation suscités par le taux très élevé d'abstention mis à part, la société algérienne a exprimé qu'elle s'attend à des changements en profondeur et que sur ceci elle n'acceptera aucun rabais, d'autant moins que les graves problèmes sociaux persistent malgré la manne des hydrocarbures. D'autre part, ces résultats donneront une certaine stabilité à la présidence de la république, qui a besoin de se rattacher la ceinture de sécurité afin de pouvoir "piloter" en tranquillité le trajet final du mandat de Buteflika (moins de 2 ans). Mais attention, parce que le charisme présidentiel ne suffira indéfiniment à compenser le dangereux écartement enregistré entre les autorités et la citoyenneté.