

Teim



TEIM Election Watch Analysis

ELECTORAL REPORT:

ALGERIA/Presidential elections
8 April 2004

Rafael Bustos

Last revision: 1 April 2009

Election Watch
Taller de Estudios Internacionales Mediterráneos
Universidad Autónoma de Madrid

www.election-watch.org

ISSN: in progress

www.election-watch.org

Background of the elections:

Abdelaziz Bouteflika, the current President elected in 1999, ran for re-election for a new 5-year term. These elections were preceded by great expectations when several figures from the Army withdrew their support from Bouteflika, and criticism of the front-running candidate intensified in the private press. The second FLN candidate, Ali Benflis, the former Prime Minister, was shaping up to be a serious rival for Bouteflika and there were expectations that a second round of elections would have to be held, with unpredictable results.

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	Freedom House Report 2005	Freedom House (FH)	PR: political rights CL: civil liberties	PR: 6, CL: 5 (Scale of 1 = free to 7 = not free) Classification: Not free
Degree of democracy in earlier elections	Polyarchy 2.0 2004 (referring to the 1999 elections)	Peace Research Institute of Oslo (PRIO) and Tatu Vanhanen	ID: Synthetic democracy index, Part: participation, Comp: competition	ID: 15.6, max. 49 Part: 46.2, max. 70 Comp: 33.8, max. 70 (Democracy minimum: ID: 5, Part: 10, Comp: 30) Classification: democratic
Consolidation of authoritarian and democratic institutions	Polity IV 2003	Center for International Development and Conflict Management, Univ. of Maryland	Democracy: consolidation of democratic institutions Autocracy: authoritarian consolidation Polity: synthesis of both	Democracy: 0 Autocracy: 3 Polity: -3 (Scale of +20 = very democratic to -20 = very authoritarian) Classification: Authoritarian
Perception of corruption	Transparency International Corruption Perception Index 2006	Transparency International	TICPI: corruption perceptions index	TICPI: 2.8 points out of 10, (Scale of 1 = very corrupt to 10 = not at all corrupt) Rank: 97 out of 158 countries
Management of political and economic change	Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI) 2005	Bertelsmann Foundation	MI: Management Index, quality of transformation management	MI: 3.63 points out of 10, Rank: 91 out of 118 countries Classification: Management with little success
Democracy, including press status and corruption	World Democracy Audit May 2005	World Audit	World Democracy Rank: political freedom, press and corruption	World Democracy Ranking: 106 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 2004 index, calculated by TEIM Election Watch	ID: 4.9, max. 49 Part: 32.5, ¹ max. 70 Comp: 15, ² max. 70 (Democracy minimum: ID: 5, Part: 10, Comp: 30)	Classification: Not democratic
--	--	--	--

Definition of the political system:

Hyper-presidential system with interference by a non-political body, the Army.

Definition of the electoral system and parties:

Two round majority system (TRS) for presidential elections and party-list proportional system (LPR) with the Hare formula for parliamentary and municipal elections. System of a false or apparently multi-party nature with two dominant official parties, the FLN and the RND.

Impact of the electoral process and size of the constituency on the elections:

In two round majority system elections, these factors are less important than in parliamentary elections. First, although the votes are counted by wilaya or province (the electoral districts), there is really only one constituency – the country – since what counts is the total number of direct votes on a national level and not the number of wilayas won. Second, the TRS formula has a bearing on the candidates' political manoeuvres. In this case, since a second round was expected, none of the smaller candidates withdrew in favour of one of the two bigger candidates, with the exception of the MSP, which abstained from presenting a candidate.

¹ Participation was calculated out of an estimated population of 32,364,000 in 2004 (Source: *Office National des Statistiques*) and the participation of 58% of the voter rolls, i.e., 10,508,777 voters (Source: *Conseil Constitutionnel*).

² Competition was calculated by adding the percentage of votes received by the losing candidates in the first and only round of the election.

Elections results:

Candidate name	Party	% votes
Abdelaziz Bouteflika	Coalition: FLN, ³ RND and MSP	85.0
Ali Benflis	National Liberation Front (FLN)	6.4
Abdallah Djaballah	MRN-Islah	5.0
Said Sadi	Rally for Culture and Democracy	1.9
Louisa Hannoun	Workers Party	1.0
Ali Fawzi Rebain	AHD 54	0.6

Source: Rafael Bustos for Arab Reform Database (Carnegie Endowment for Peace and FRIDE) with subsequent corrections made by the author

Qualitative analysis of the elections:⁴

Participation:

According to the numbers from the Home Office, participation was 58%. However, it is important to note that real participation was certainly lower than the official number. In Kabyle – as usual for the last few years – attendance at the polls was especially low, around 17% in Little Kabyle. The emigration participation rate was 33%.

Competition:

The election filter (75,000 signatures from registered voters or 600 signatures from members of municipal and provincial councils) was important for excluding several candidates with possibilities like Ahmed Taleb Ibrahimi and Sid Ahmed Ghozali. The losing candidates obtained 15% of the votes.

Transparency:

The elections were technically clean since reports of fraud by the opposition were not proven and there were mechanisms in place, like records delivered to the party supervisors, to keep the elections clean. There were, however, incidents in some polling stations during the elections. The OSCE, among other bodies, considered the transparency of the elections to be 'acceptable'.

Representation and debate:

The FLN was a divided party, blocked by the regime, which tried to weaken the Benflis faction. In the rest of the parties, the insufficient rotation of posts continued, especially among the leadership. The debate took place somewhat outside of the parties, which has become usual.

³ Actually, the FLN split into two parts (one in favour of Bouteflika and the other for Benflis) after the pro-Bouteflika faction did not recognise the validity of the convention that chose Benflis as Secretary General. Bouteflika won the support of the presidential alliance formed by the RND and the MSP, which are Islamist in orientation, in the first and final round. The majority UGTA union and some parts of the FIS (AIS and Rabah Kebir) requested the vote for Bouteflika.

⁴ 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: <http://www.observatorioelectoral.es>

Openness:

Although the election regulations were apparently respected, flagrant irregularities did occur, especially before the campaign (e.g., a pre-election tour by the President, the FLN's accounts were frozen, the Benflis sector was hounded, the use of disproportionate public funds for the leading candidate's conventions, etc.). These irregularities were decisive in the results of the final election.

Significance:

The results from this type of plebiscite leave little or no space for alternatives for change, since they basically present the President with a blank check.

International political reaction and implications:

The USA and France were pressured to congratulate Abdelaziz Bouteflika, thus legitimising the elections. President Chirac even travelled to Algiers to congratulate Bouteflika, hours before the official results were announced. Most of the foreign authorities accepted the elections, despite the flagrant and dubious practices that took place before and during the campaign and the insufficient number of observers on the ground (scarcely 130).

Conclusions:

This was a surprising election, at least for many observers and for the Algerian media, which did not expect that it would be so decisively settled in the first round. The use of public resources and other pre-election tricks determined the results, eliminating all expectations for a second round. A posteriori, it is easy to conclude that the Army probably played the uncertainty game to the end to give the impression of democratic opportunity, when, in reality, they had already changed their position, throwing their weight behind the candidate with the most international support, Bouteflika.

Reference to two other Internet analyses of this election:

1- Volpi, Frederic, Algeria 2004: Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose, on Algerian Presidential Elections, consultable en <http://www.fride.org/File/ViewLinkFile.aspx?FileId=272>

2- Martinez, Luis. Un chercheur français commente la victoire de Bouteflika : «Le résultat convient à l'armée» Jeune Indépendant (Mohamed Khellaf), 14-avril-2005, consultable en http://www.algeriawatch.org/fr/article/pol/presidentielles/martinez_elections.htm